

# Third party monitors closer to reality

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JULY 26. The specifics of the G-8 proposal to deploy third party monitors to observe the ceasefire, which exists in theory though not yet in practise, between Israelis and Palestinians have not as yet been worked out. But its likely content is discernible. Israel says it is willing to accept third party monitoring in the form it is likely to take and the Palestinians can claim that they have achieved a major success if external monitors are posted in the territories.

Although a final decision has yet to be announced it seems very likely that the "third party" monitors to be deployed will consist essentially, or wholly, of officials from the U.S. State Department or the Central Intelligence Agency. These officials will join a smaller group of CIA officials who are already in the Israel/Palestine territories trying to supervise, or at least report on, compliance with the ceasefire by either side. The terms of the ceasefire were worked out by the CIA chief, Mr. George Tenet and both sides had agreed to the terms. While the degree of violence on a day-to-day basis has definitely come down since the ceasefire, the fact that violent incidents also take place on a daily basis shows that neither side is seriously implementing the agreement. With 10 months of violence behind them, neither side is going to acknowledge that the ceasefire is holding until there is a complete end to the violence.

Israel had initially opposed the deployment of external monitors because, among other objections, they saw it as an infringement on their sovereignty. They do not have the same inhibitions if the monitoring team is made up solely of U.S. officials since they represent Israel's main ally and since

they are already engaged in the exercise of moderating between the two sides. The Palestinians would ideally like to have had a European content in the monitoring team. But they already have achieved a political victory with the U.S. joining the European Union in recognising the need for external monitors. Egypt, which has provided the leadership to the wider Arab world in its approach to the conflict, is expected to support this format.

This victory does provide the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat with the political space from within which he can call for an end to the uprising. The Palestinians had maintained that they would stop their attacks only if two conditions were fulfilled and external monitoring was only one of them. They would not stop, the Palestinians have warned, until there was a complete end to construction activity in or related to Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The situation in respect of the second condition is hazy since a part of the Israeli Government has said that construction has been stopped while another part insists that Israel has the right to cater to "natural growth". In any case, Mr. Arafat can point out to his people that the U.S. administration has expressed itself in favour of a complete freeze in construction once a ceasefire comes into real effect. The arrangements worked out by the international committee headed by the former U.S. Senator, Mr. George Mitchell also provides for an end to construction. Neither side has wholly committed itself to holding the ceasefire pending the deployment of the monitoring arrangements. But there are some signs that Mr. Arafat has begun to move in that direction.

THE HINDU

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# Fugitive's arrest threatens Israeli nuclear secrets

SAM KILEY & MICHAEL EVANS  
THE TIMES, LONDON

## 'PALESTINIAN DEMAND A GIMMICK'

JERUSALEM/WASHINGTON, July 25. - Israel is facing the possibility of embarrassing new scrutiny of its unconfirmed nuclear weapons programme after the arrest of an American arms dealer in Spain, who has been on the run for 16 years. He had been charged with selling 850 Kryton nuclear triggers to the Israelis.

Richard Smith (71) has been a fugitive from America since he jumped \$100,000 (£ 68,500) bail and fled from Los Angeles before being brought to trial on 30 charges of arms trafficking and forged documents. He left with his wife on a yacht.

Smith was arrested in Malaga two weeks ago. He had been living in Spain since 1985.

The US state department denied to comment on the case but confirmed that officials were aware of the arrest. Sources indicated that it was now up to the Spanish High Court to rule whether there was a case for extraditing Smith to America. He is expected to be taken to Madrid while his extradition is considered.

Israeli officials admitted yesterday that if he was returned to the USA for trial his case could produce embarrassing disclosures about a nuclear programme which has never been officially acknowledged.

When Smith was arrested in May 1985, Israel said that the Kryton triggers were for the

JERUSALEM, July 25. - Israel rejected as a "gimmick" today a Palestinian demand that it arrest around 50 Jewish "terrorists" on a most-wanted list the Palestinian authority plans to present at a US-mediated security meeting.

"This list is a gimmick, part of a propaganda campaign to divert attention from the fact that the Palestinians refuse to act against Palestinian terrorists," charged Prime Minister, Mr Ariel Sharon's, spokesman Mr Raanan Gissin.

**Violence:** A Palestinian was blown up when a volley of Israeli tank shells slammed into his car in Nablus, West Bank, today. Salah Darwazeh (36) was a member of the radical Islamic movement Hamas, which vowed to avenge his death. - AFP

pharmaceutical industry. But the special microswitches are also a vital part in the mechanism of exploding an atomic weapon and are banned for export.

After Smith disappeared, Israel returned several unused Kryton switches and claimed the others had not been used for nuclear purposes.

Smith, an electronics engineer, ran a business in Los Angeles which manufactured Kryton microchips and Nasa space agency was one of his customers. Between 1980 and 1982 he is said to have forged documents which enabled him to export the chips illegally to Israel.

Israel's unofficial nuclear weapons programme at the secret underground facility at Demona was first divulged by Mordechai Vanunu, an Israeli technician, to *The Sunday Times* in the 1980s. He was convicted of treason and sentenced to life imprisonment after being lured from London to Rome by Israeli agents. Vanunu

was held in solitary confinement until March 1998.

If Smith is extradited to America, there are fears in Israel that he will expose the network of sympathetic companies which have helped the Israeli nuclear programme over the years.

US Intelligence believes that Israel has up to 100 nuclear weapons, some of which are alleged to have been made with nuclear fuel diverted illegally by Israeli agents in America.

The case of Smith is one of many which have caused friction between America and Israel.

Southern Spain's Malaga police said: "In 1985 Los Angeles authorities filed an international warrant for Smith's arrest and extradition. So we're complying with that. The case has been transferred to the High Court."

It was unclear why the Spanish police had taken action only two weeks ago, 16 years after the original extradition request. Smith was arrested on 10 July.

# New party may bring little cheer to Turkey's Islamists

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JULY 21.** Turkey's Islamists are a hardy lot. Within weeks of the dissolution of their last political formation they are back at the organisation-making game. They, however, re-enter the spotlight weakened by division and in the process have lessened their chances for impacting on the current political situation.

Mr. Recai Kutan, who headed the Virtue Party till it was dissolved last month by Turkey's Constitutional Court, had announced the formation of a new formation called Saadet (Happi-

ness) and is expected to seek registration with the Interior Ministry soon. He has appealed to all Turks whose lives have been disrupted by the tough economic reform programme being implemented by the Government under IMF guidance to flock to his banner. This stress on the economic issues before the people is an element that religious outfits across the West Asian region have been adopting in the current phase of their search for political pre-eminence.

Turkey's Islamists did not really set up an enviable record in eco-

nomic management when they were in power for a brief period three years ago. But there is widespread anger at the reform programme for Happiness to exploit and the raising of such issues helps them cover their radicalism. Covering up its radicalism is a measure that Happiness must take in the current circumstances. The Interior Ministry might not block its registration but State prosecutors could insist that it should be banned as it was merely a new version of Welfare which was banned because it challenged Turkey's secular constitution. In a

pre-emptive defence against such a possible move, Mr. Kutan has announced that his new party while protecting religious rights will not challenge the secular principles of the State. At the same time, he has announced that his party stood for a complete constitutional change so as to enhance the protection of human rights.

All the camouflage might not help Happiness. This party is already identified by most Turks as the formation of the more conservative wing of the Islamist movement. Most people also believe

that the real power in the party will be the former Prime Minister, Mr. Necmettin Erbakan. A reason for the declining popularity of the Islamists in recent years is the widespread belief among the people that Turkey's establishment will never allow a formation that is closely associated with Mr. Erbakan to gain control of government. That being so, people find little benefit in voting for it. Happiness might retain the loyalty of its core conservatives but stand a good chance of losing those who think more flexibility is required.

Such a formation of flexible Is-

lamists may soon appear on the Turkish scene. The Constitutional Court has just issued a ruling that the former Istanbul Mayor, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan can return to politics. Mr. Erdogan is expected to set up a formation intended to appeal to the centre-right. Once both efforts fructify, there is expected to be fierce competition for not just the Islamists' vote bank. A hundred members of the Turkish Parliament who were elected on the Virtue ticket are currently listed as independents following the dissolution of that party. Mr. Kutan and Mr. Erdogan will be vying for their loyalty.

# Paying for Israel's existence

**R**UBY Wolbromsky, a clinical psychologist, drives thrice a week from his home in the West Bank settlement of Efrat to treat patients in Jerusalem 15 km to the north. Other days, he takes his wife, Lynda, and five children to see a film, shop, eat in a restaurant, visit a doctor.

It used to be a pleasant spin through the hills along a new highway, bypassing the Palestinian towns of Bethlehem and Beit Jala, besides the settler-hostile Deheisheh refugee camp. But since the Intifada erupted nine months ago, the drive has lost its pastoral charm.

Three of the Wolbromskys' neighbours, a man and two women, have been shot dead on the Jerusalem road. A 14-year-old boy their daughter, Gila, used to baby-sit for, was bludgeoned to death while hiking with a schoolfriend. The family's own van has been stoned four times.

That wasn't what they expected when they moved to Israel from Canada in 1986 and made their home in Efrat, a cluster of stone-faced, red-roofed villas. "It seemed like the best of both worlds," explains Lynda, a slim, 43-year-old high-tech executive. "It was suburban in the way we grew up with and at the same time it was in Israel."

She is not prepared to admit that they were naive. Not yet, she smiles, anyway. The couple deny that the settlements are illegal or an obstacle to peace. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak was willing to give up 92 per cent of the occupied territories, they argue, but that brought Intifada, not peace.

Ruby, a chunky, loquacious 47-year-old, admits he's worried when he leaves home. He is tense as he drives past the Arab village of el Khader or roadside cliffs where an assailant might be lurking. He lowers his hands on the steering wheel so that if a rock comes through the windscreen the shards won't cut them.

"Our van was hit a month and a half ago," he says. "You hear this boom. Your heart skips a beat. Your whole body goes into a shock reaction. If it shatters your windscreen, you're blinded for a few seconds."

His wife insists that they try to maintain a normal family life but concedes that they don't move around as freely as before.

The Efrat settlement in the West Bank is a cluster of stone-faced, red-roofed villas. The idyllic setting was transformed into a hell hole with the second bloody uprising nine months ago.

ERIC SILVER reports

"If we want to take the kids to Jerusalem just for fun," she says, "we think twice. We try to stuff more into it when we do go." Their son Amiad, 13, travels on an armour-plated bus when he goes there to play baseball. Lynda worries what will happen to him in the city, which suffered two car bombings in May.



Rima Tmaizi (28), centre in black, mourns with relatives in front of the body of her 3-month-old son Diya in the southern West Bank village of Idna, west of Hebron, on Friday. Three Palestinians, including the infant, were shot dead. — AP/PTI

Efrat doesn't feel like a community under siege. No one has bothered to mend the settlement's rusty, broken barbed-wire fence. Yet the tension is a constant. The children are reluctant to talk about it.

Salman Haidar's column, WIDE ANGLE, will resume soon

Amiad brings out his grey baseball shirt. It has "Kobi" and the number 8 stitched on the sleeve in memory of Ya'acov (Kobi) Mandell, the murdered hiker, who played in the same league. Gila, who used to baby-sit for Kobi, confesses that she feels "scary" when she hears people have been killed. "I was angry with the people who killed Kobi, but also angry with the Arabs in general because none of them condemned it." Ruby doubles as *pater familias* and psychologist. "People here are less vibrant now, less spontaneous, less available to their spouses and their kids," he explains.

"I force myself to party once in a while, I break into a dance with Lynda, I pick up my kids and swirl them around. I get together with friends and take out a bottle of whisky."

Ruby serves on a local emergency team. One of their jobs is to break the news to bereaved families. Ruby spent a day counselling Kobi Mandell's parents on the night of the settlement of Tekoa. "Losing a child who is bludgeoned to death and trying to imagine what your son goes through in the last minute of his life is worse than any hell I can imagine," he says. Like every Western immi-

grant, the Wolbromsky family could pack up and go back. They could leave Efrat and move down the road into Israel proper.

Ruby admits they have thought about it. "Every minute, every day," he acknowledges, "I worry whether I'm being a responsible parent in exposing my kids to the

risks of living here." In the end, they are toughing it out.

Life, Lynda argues, wasn't meant to be easy. As the daughter of a mother who survived the Holocaust, she says she feels a debt to Israel. The

Holocaust would not have happened had there been an Israel. There would have been a place for the Jews and there would have been one army in the world that said, "We'll not let this happen to the Jews."

Someone, she adds, has to pay the price for Israel's existence. "We've chosen to take responsibility."

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

## Arabs look for U.S.-E.U. convergence on W. Asia

2077 By Kesava Menon HD-16

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JULY 19. The Arab world will keenly await the outcome of the G-8 summit that opens in Genoa tomorrow to see whether the U.S. and the European Union will arrive at a convergence in their approach to West Asia. And the decision of the G-8 Foreign Ministers today to approve the posting of international monitors to observe the Israel-Palestinian cease-fire has come as a positive sign to the Arab world.

While the E.U. has taken a balanced and proactive approach to the confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians, the U.S. administration's struggle to maintain what it considers a neutral and non-direct involvement has been seen by the Arab world as a pro-Israeli approach.

Both the U.S. and the E.U. agree that the plan, drawn up by the international committee headed by the former Senator, Mr. George Mitchell, to end months of violent confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians is the only game in town. This plan calls for a step-by-step approach to restore normalcy and has been supplemented by another plan drafted

with the aid of the CIA chief, Mr. George Tenet, that deals with the arrangements for a cease-fire that must be put in place before the Mitchell plan becomes operable. The difference between the U.S. and E.U. approaches lies in their differing ideas about the kind of pressure they must apply on the Israelis and Palestinians and the matters in respect of which this pressure must be applied.

An essential component of the Mitchell-Tenet arrangements is that negotiations on substantive issues can only commence when there is a reduction in the levels of violence. Israel has interpreted this to mean that they need not begin negotiations till the violence has completely ceased. The Palestinians point out that it is impossible for any administration in any country to ensure zero violence and insist that negotiations must begin once they are shown to be making 100 per cent effort even if that does not produce 100 per cent result. Further, the Palestinians point out that their people can only be persuaded to give up their militancy if they can see that they are going to benefit from negotiations.

While the U.S. administration has tended to go along with the Palestinian argument that

"100 per cent effort" should be the criterion for compliance with the Mitchell-Tenet arrangement, it has left it to Israel to determine the levels of Palestinian violence that it can tolerate. This amounts to an underground support for the Israeli position that it wants a "100 per cent result". It is in this context that the Palestinians are demanding that international observers be posted in the Israel-Palestinian territories to monitor the levels of violence and certify whether the Palestinians are doing their bit or not. U.S. intelligence and security officials are involved in the security talks that have been sporadically held between the two principals but they have no authority to certify the levels of Palestinian compliance with the Mitchell-Tenet arrangements.

So far, the U.S. has resisted the demand for the posting of international observers. But the E.U. has supported the proposal. The U.S. and E.U. are also not in agreement about the stage or conditions in which Israel and the Palestinian Authority must re-commence negotiations on substantive issues. The Arab world waits with interest to see whether a convergence will be arrived at during the G-8 summit.

# Fresh Israeli attack in West Bank sparks widespread violence

Bethlehem, July 18

ISRAEL SENT fresh tank and infantry units into the West Bank last night after a day that saw the assassination of Palestinian militants, mortar attacks and widespread small arms clashes.

The stage was set for a vicious upswing in the 10-month intifada with the killing of two Hamas activists and two other men in a missile attack on a family farm. The Israel army announced at midnight that it was reinforcing positions across the West Bank.

However, a spokesman said the new forces would not retake territory under Palestinian control. Three missiles launched from helicopters slammed into a chicken coop on the Saadeh family farm south of Bethlehem, demolishing the shed, incinerating the birds inside and strewing feed and feathers across a swath of vegetable garden and olive grove. The assassinations were the second stage of Israel's retaliation for Monday night's suicide bombing at a railway station on the main Tel Aviv-Haifa line.

The attack by the Islamic Jihad killed a male and a female

soldier. They were the first Israelis killed inside the Jewish state since a suicide attack on a Tel Aviv disco shocked both sides into reaching a ceasefire last month. However, even the very fleeting moments of calm produced by that ceasefire over the last month appeared decisively over yesterday, with Hamas vowing revenge and Palestinian militants staging their first mortar attack in the West Bank in the uprising.

Until yesterday, Bethlehem had been one of the few places in the West Bank where the ceasefire had taken hold. But within an hour of the attack, Palestinian militants fired a mortar round on the Jewish settlement of Gilo, nestled between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, in what appeared immediate revenge for the assassination.

A second round fell hours later on a road leading south from the illegal Jewish settlement. There were no injuries, but the appearance of mortars, and on a settlement so close to Jerusalem, is bound to cause deep anxiety in Israel. In Bethlehem, witnesses said two helicopters fired two missiles in quick succession, followed minutes later by a third. The target

of the attack was Omar Saadeh, 45, and the military commander of Hamas in the Bethlehem district. Another of the dead men, Taha Oroush, aged 37, was also a Hamas activist, Israeli military officials said. The army said the two men had been plotting an attack inside Israel, presumably against the Jewish Olympics, which opened on Monday.

However, Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi, a Hamas official in Gaza, said the Saadeh family had gathered to await the release of a relative from an Israeli prison when the gunships launched their missiles. "Hamas will never forget the blood of its martyrs and when our civilians are brutally killed the military wing of Hamas will never keep silent," Mr Rantissi.

Saadeh, a spare car parts dealer, was in the habit of retiring to his chicken coop in the afternoons, often with family and friends. Yesterday, he had apparently invited his brother, Ishaq Saadeh, aged 51, and a teacher of conflict studies and peace resolution at a local Roman Catholic school, and a cousin of the two men, Mohammed Saadeh.

The Guardian

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# Three killed in pin-point attack

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JULY 17.** Three, possibly four, Palestinians are believed to have been killed in Bethlehem today when a lone Israeli helicopter fired rockets into a building.

This helicopter gun-ship attack appears to have been in retaliation to a suicide bombing last night at the railway station in the town of Binyamina inside Israel proper in which two Israeli soldiers, a man and a woman, were killed. Israel had pounded Palestinian security posts in the West Bank with tank shells after last night's attacks but that was perhaps considered an insufficient response by the Government.

Two of the men killed today have been identified as activists of the militant group Hamas. Israel has let it be known that this was a pin-point attack and a continuation of its Government-approved policy of assassinating Pales-

tinians they hold responsible for planning military strikes. This policy has come in for international condemnation but Israel refuses to abandon it claiming that they have no alternative so long as the Palestinian Authority refuses to take into custody those who are known to be involved in planning and carrying out attacks like the suicide bombings.

The Palestinian Authority had condemned last night's bomb attack. The West Bank Preventive Security chief, Mr. Jibril Rajoub, has also warned the Palestinians against attacking targets inside Israel proper. This would only harm the Palestinian cause, he pointed out.

AP reports:

An Islamic militant group pledged on Tuesday to carry on with "resistance operations," despite what a Palestinian security official called a firm warning from Mr. Yasser Arafat that further suicide bombings in Israel could

lead to arrests. The Palestinian leader issued the warning in a late-night meeting with faction leaders including representatives of Islamic Jihad and Hamas, the security official said on condition of anonymity.

"Arafat gave a clear and firm warning for Islamic Jihad and Hamas that any new operations in Israel mean that they are pushing us into doing arrests of their own activists," the security official said. Mr. Abdullah Shami, an Islamic Jihad spokesman in Gaza, said the meeting had been scheduled even before Monday's suicide bombing in Binyamina.

He did not mention any warning from Mr. Arafat, but said the Palestinian Authority "understands very well the feeling of anger in the Palestinian street." "No power in the world can stop the resistance operations that come as a reaction to the Israeli aggression. We have nothing more to lose," Mr. Shami said. He did not say if activities would be limited to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Arresting militants has been a sensitive issue, with Israel demanding Mr. Arafat jail those responsible for attacks. Palestinian authorities have been reluctant to do so and Israel has acknowledged assassinating or kidnapping some suspects in operations in Palestinian areas. With incidents of violence escalating, the cease-fire that never took hold appeared even deeper in jeopardy; each side charged that the other was responsible for the violations.

Israel's response to the suicide bombing came late on Monday, when tanks shelled Palestinian police posts in two West Bank towns, Jenin and Tulkarem.

In Washington, the State Department issued a statement calling for restraint by all parties.

The Israeli Police Commissioner, Mr. Shomo Aharonisky, said on Tuesday that police remain on high alert following Monday's bombing. "Unfortunately, the warnings are just multiplying and not dropping," he told Israel's army radio.

Binyamina is north of the Israeli sea coast city of Netanya, a frequent target of Palestinian bombers. Netanya is just 15 km from the West Bank, at Israel's narrowest point.

Also on Tuesday, the Israeli army reported Palestinian mortar fire and grenade attacks in the Gaza Strip during the night. No injuries were reported. — AP



Police examine the scene at a rail station bus stop in the Israeli town of Binyamina where a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up on Monday, killing two other people and wounding at least seven. — Reuters

APD-15

## Flare-up despite Arafat-Peres talks

**HEBRON (WEST BANK), JULY 16.** Israeli tanks rolled into the Palestinian sector of Hebron early Monday and exchanged heavy fire with Palestinian gunmen in the deepest incursion since Israel withdrew from most of the city in 1997.

The Israeli raid was triggered by Palestinian shooting attacks at Israeli army posts and a Jewish settlement near Hebron late Sunday. In the incursion, Israeli tanks wounded nine Palestinians, destroyed four Palestinian police posts in Hebron and one in a nearby village.

Later on Monday, an Israeli tank and four military vehicles entered Palestinian territory on the outskirts of the West Bank town of Tul-karem and fired three shells at a deserted Palestinian checkpoint, the witnesses said.

The latest exchanges made it increasingly unlikely that a U.S.-backed truce, declared a month ago, will take hold. Fighting has been escalating in recent days.

Tension was especially high ahead of Monday's opening of the Maccabiah Games, an Olympic-style event for Jewish athletes.

Two Palestinians were killed in Jerusalem early Monday while trying to assemble a bomb near the stadium.

The flareup came despite an upbeat assessment by the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, after a meeting in Cairo, Egypt, on Sunday with the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, that the cease-fire could be made to stick.

"I'm leaving Cairo with the sense that there is hope," Mr. Peres said after talking to Mr. Arafat for more than an hour.

The opening ceremony of the Maccabiah Games was to be held at the Stadium on Monday evening, in the presence of the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon. More than 1,000 officers will guard athletes and spectators, police said.

The events in and around Hebron began at about 11 p.m. (2000 GMT) on Sunday when Palestinian gunmen opened fire on Israeli army posts and the Jewish settlement of Beit Haggai from six different locations, said Palestinian witnesses.

The Israeli army said its commanders repeatedly asked the Palestinians to cease fire, and only then launched the raid.

Israeli tanks rumbled into Palestinian-controlled areas of Hebron from three directions. Tanks destroyed four checkpoints manned by Force 17, a security service with special ties to Mr. Arafat. A fifth checkpoint was razed in the village of Dura, south of Hebron.

During the Israeli incursion, Palestinians returned heavy fire, and the fighting lasted until about 4 a.m. (0100 GMT) when the Israelis withdrew. Israeli forces fired several tank shells, as well as tank-mounted machine guns.

Nine Palestinians were wounded in the fighting.

"What happened last night was a very dangerous escalation of violence by the Israeli government," said Col. Awni Natsche, deputy commander of the Palestinian police in

Hebron. "It was all against our civilian people and this leads us to the conclusion that Israel believes only in force." — AP



# Peres denies plan to weaken Arafat

By Kesava Menon

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**MANAMA (BAHRAIN) JULY 15.** The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, met in Cairo today after they had held separate meetings with the Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak. Mr. Peres assured Mr. Arafat that Israel recognised him as the premier representative of the Palestinians and that they had no plans for demolishing his authority. This meeting does not really re-ignite hopes that a very tenuous cease-fire will settle more firmly but it was still a very necessary holding operation.

Military observers in the region, who have access to the Israel Defence Forces have been talking about the plans that Israel was supposed to have drawn up to strike a devastating blow to the Palestinian Authority in the event of another major terrorist strike. These views have been buttressed by comments appearing in the Israeli press. The idea of an eminent devastating Israeli attack got a sort of more authoritative status when *Foreign Relations* a newsletter of the Janes Group of publications set out some details of Israel's supposed battle plan. Military observers and *Foreign Relations* were more or less in agreement on the matter of the troop strengths that Israel was supposed to have ear-marked for the operation.

According to the military observers Israel had apparently earmarked a brigade strength of paratroopers and an armoured brigade along with special forces and supporting troops for the operation. *Foreign Relations* said that Israel thought their campaign might result in as many as 3000 Palestinian casualties and they were themselves prepared to lose at least a couple of hundred men. The objective, in the assessment of all, was the destruction of the entire superstructure of the Palestinian Authority. At the end of the exercise Israel envisaged that Mr. Arafat would once again find himself in exile without any authority over the Palestinian territories.

It is doubtful whether the US would have allowed Israel to ever implement such a plan. The US administration has already begun to feel the heat of the resentment within the Arab world. A reversal of the status quo that has prevailed for the last seven years does not at all look very likely. However the Israel Government, and especially the Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, have repeatedly said that their patience is running thin. Over the week end they announced a tightening of the policy on retaliation against attacks by Palestinian militants. Their response to further acts of "provocation" Israel, has said would be immediate scaled according to the scale of the provocation.

# Hizbollah claims it has only tape of abduction

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) JULY 15. The Hizbollah has added its own twist to the on-going tussle over a videotape between Israel and the United Nations by claiming that it possesses what is probably the only tape of the abduction of three Israeli soldiers.

That is not a matter that concerns India directly. But what should be of greater concern to India is the niggardly manner in which Israeli leaders have refuted the irresponsible and slanderous charges the Israeli media has levelled against the Indian Army.

*Maariv*, an Israeli paper with a wide circulation, has taken upon itself the task of maligning the Indian Army. The paper does not have a website in English and what is known of its report is culled from the press briefs sent out by the Israel Government Press Office and the news agencies.

A *Maariv* reporter has claimed that he spoke to an Indian jawan serving with the UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) and that the jawan told him that he and his colleagues had observed the abduction of three Israeli soldiers in south Lebanon last October. If *Maariv* did have such a conversation, a report should have appeared soon after the incident and it would certainly have generated a greater controversy. There is little to show that this conversation took place in October last year. Had it not taken place then, the reporter would have gone to India to record the conversation. Because 2 Madras, the battalion

1672  
serving with the UNIFIL then, was rotated back to India by December 2000. It would have made no sense for *Maariv* to interview a soldier of 5/9 Gorkha, which replaced 2 Madras, to find out what the men of the other battalion had observed a year ago (even assuming that the reporter had the guts to cross the international border into Hizbollah-controlled territory). The *Maariv* report does not say that its journalist travelled to whichever part of India 2 Madras is posted in now.

According to the excerpts of the *Maariv* report made available, the Indian jawan told the paper that he and his colleagues had observed the abduction, asked the Hizbollah not to go through with it and felt sad that they were not able to prevent it. (How an Israeli reporter for a Hebrew paper managed such a long conversation with an Indian soldier is another matter.) If this conversation did take place then there is nothing exceptional in it since the jawan's remarks merely bring out the invidious position the UNIFIL finds itself in. Its contingents can do nothing to prevent any sort of attacks from either direction.

The peculiarity of the UNIFIL's mandate precludes the necessity for the Hizbollah to bribe anyone. Why would they waste the "thousands of dollars" they are believed to have given to the UNIFIL men when the latter could have done nothing to stop them. Here *Maariv* very cleverly cites some unidentified "security-diplomatic source" as the authenticator of its story. Tied up with its earlier claim about a conversation with an Indian ja-

wan this gives the impression that the soldier told the reporter that his colleagues had taken money, women and alcohol from the Hizbollah.

While such unidentified military men have been cited liberally by the Israeli media there have been few attempts by the Israeli leadership to point out how these wild charges could affect their emerging relationship with India. The Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, was the first to point out that Israel did not need to make new enemies by making such wild allegations. The Defence Minister, Mr. Ben Eliezer, has now joined the act and said that Israel is not blaming India. What, one wonders, would be the situation if they were indeed blaming India. These have been just about the only comments from the Israeli side that could amount to a defence of the Indian Army's reputation.

Meanwhile, the U.N. has expanded the inquiry into the videotape affair to include an investigation of the bribery charges. Israeli soldiers and civilians were kidnapped throughout the two decades and more than that their army was in occupation of south Lebanon. It does not appear that the U.N. thought it fit to look into the performance of the UNIFIL units responsible in these areas.

PTI reports from Jerusalem:

Hizbollah leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, on Saturday denied bribing Indian peacekeepers in Lebanon to carry out abduction of the Israeli soldiers.

# UN in quandary as Israel presses for kidnap tape

Jerusalem, July 9

THE UN is caught in the middle of a tug-of-war between Israel on one side and Lebanon and the Islamic guerrilla movement, Hizbullah, on the other over a videotape relating to the kidnap of three Israeli soldiers last year.

Israel has demanded an unedited copy of the video from the UN, in the hope that it might find out what happened to its soldiers, and who within Hizbullah was responsible. The fate of the three is uncertain, though they may still be held captive.

The tape was filmed by an Indian contingent of the UN mission in Lebanon, Unifil, 18 hours after the kidnapping of the Israeli patrol. It shows a vehicle with mock UN markings, apparently used by Hizbullah to lure the soldiers. Bloodstains, UN uniforms, forged number plates and several Lebanese individuals can also be seen on the video. The UN fears that the lives of its neutral personnel in Lebanon, who monitor the border with Israel, could be endangered if Israel uses the tape to identify Hizbul-

## 'Israel should stop threatening Arafat'

EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak warned Israel on Monday to stop threatening to get rid of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, saying the region's problems would not be solved by force.

"It's very dangerous. They must stop saying things like we'll kill Arafat, they can't behave like thugs," Mubarak told newsmen near Alexandria. According to Israeli newspaper reports, Israel's domestic security service has concluded the Jewish state would be better off if Arafat were made to "disap-



HOSNI MUBARAK

pear." He said international and Arab communities would be enraged by such a short-sighted "crime."

AFP

lah members responsible for the kidnapping. Lebanon and Hizbullah warned the UN this weekend not to hand it over.

As a compromise, the UN has offered to provide Israel with an edited version of the tape in which the faces of the Lebanese, who may or may not be Hizbullah guerrillas, would be obscured. But Israel wants the whole, uncensored tape.

The three soldiers were kidnapped near the disputed Shebaa Farms area last October, shortly after the Palestinian Intifada began.

The Israeli government is enraged that for months afterwards the UN denied that there was a videotape. The UN insists that the person making the denials was unaware of the tape's existence. **The Guardian**

# U.N. to hand over videotape of kidnapping to Israel

*Handwritten: 10.17.91*

**UNITED NATIONS, July 8.** The U.N. has finally agreed to hand over videotape related to the kidnapping of three Israeli soldiers by Hizbollah guerrillas on the Lebanese border. The U.N. had previously denied that the tape existed; now it is insisting on obscuring the faces of the terrorists involved.

The U.N. said it had to ensure the confidentiality of its internal documents and protect its personnel.

The soldiers were kidnapped on October 6 last year in the disputed Har Dov border zone — which the Lebanese call the Shebaa Farms — several months after Israel withdrew from south Lebanon, ending its 22-year occupation. The area has been a regular flashpoint between Israel and Hizbollah guerrillas ever since.

The 30-minute tape, recorded a day after the soldiers were kidnapped, shows armed guerrillas

preventing U.N. peacekeepers from seizing two four-wheel-drive vehicles with fake U.N. registration plates that were probably used in the abduction.

The U.N. had infuriated Israeli officials by repeatedly denying that the tape had been made and agreed to hand it over only after Mr. Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, Israeli Defence Minister, intervened last week by telling the peacekeepers he knew that the video existed and wanted it released. The U.N. finally admitted its existence on Thursday.

Mr. Jean-Marie Guehenno, the undersecretary-general for peacekeeping, said the U.N. was handing over the video out of concern for the soldiers' families. "In our view, nothing on that tape sheds light on the circumstances of the abduction or on the conditions of the abducted soldiers," he said.

Mr. Yarden Vatikay, an Israeli

Defence Ministry spokesman, said the U.N.'s behaviour was highly suspicious. "We think the U.N. should investigate the whole issue. From the beginning they have acted in a strange way, denying that they had information," he said.

"The U.N. must hand over every detail they have, without censorship and without eliminating information. This incident started under the nose of the U.N. position and this raises some questions in itself. They hid the tape, they are eliminating evidence and we don't know what else they are hiding."

Mr. Guehenno firmly denied suggestions that the U.N. kept quiet about the tape for fear of reprisals by the Hizbollah on U.N. troops deployed in south Lebanon. "We are not covering up anything. We are covering the faces because we have to protect the security of our people," Mr. Guehenno said.

Mr. Guehenno claimed that he

learned of the existence of the tape only on June 6 after Gen. Seth Kofi Obeng, the commander of the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), took it to New York. The area where the footage was taken is manned by members of the Indian battalion.

Three weeks later, on June 27, Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, the U.N.'s special co-ordinator for the West Asia, and Mr. Staffan de Mistura, its special representative for south Lebanon, denied the existence of the tape to the Israeli Defence Minister.

After learning that Mr. Roed-Larsen had "involuntarily" misled Mr. Eliezer, Mr. Guehenno called Mr. Yehuda Lancy, the Israeli Ambassador to the U.N., to stress that the U.N. wanted to maintain "frank and open" relations with Israel.

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## Iraq, UN to sign MoU on oil export

REUTERS

BAGHDAD, July 8. - Iraq is conducting talks with the United Nations on signing a memorandum that would enable it to resume oil exports under the "oil-for-food" programme for another five months, the official Iraqi News Agency reported.

"Talks are continuing between the UN and Iraq to sign the oil-for-food deal," INA quoted Iraq's UN envoy as saying in a dispatch from New York late last night.

Ambassador Mohammed Aldouri is expected to sign the memorandum of understanding at the beginning of this week, INA added.

An MOU must be signed to allow Iraq to sell oil despite being under UN sanctions. The UN security council last Tuesday had approved a five-month extension, to 30 November, of the oil sale programme.

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WEST ASIA / U.S. EFFORTS UNDER STRAIN

## Blasts expose fragility of truce

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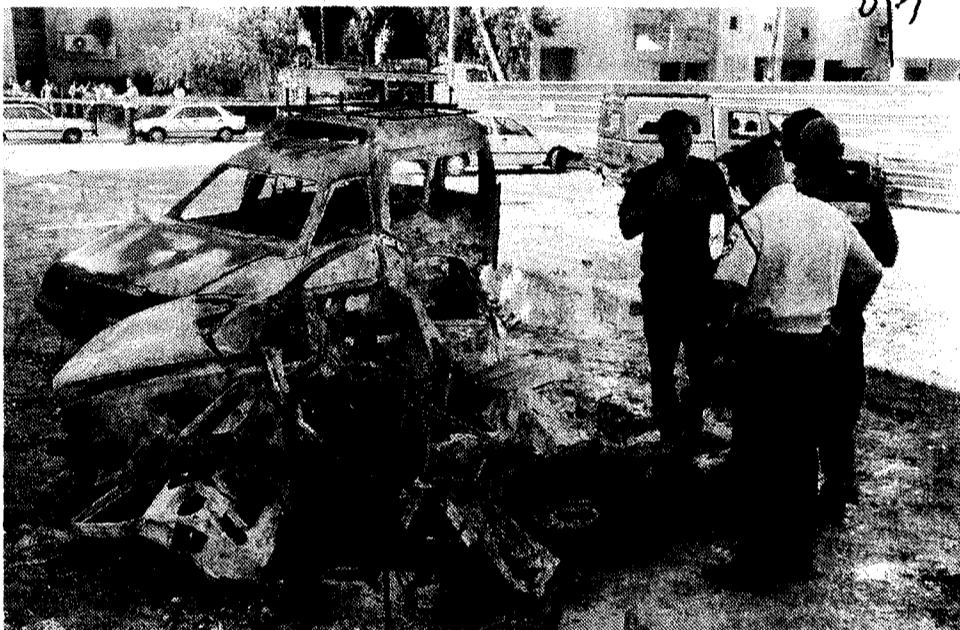
**JERUSALEM, JULY 2.** An Israeli motorist was killed in a shooting attack and two car bombs blew up in central Israel on Monday, a day after three Palestinian militants were killed by missiles fired from an Israeli helicopter.

The violence was the deadliest since a shaky U.S.- brokered ceasefire took effect June 13, raising concern that Washington's mediation was collapsing.

The U.N. West Asia envoy, Mr. Terje Larsen, generally optimistic about peace prospects, was gloomy. "The events of the last couple of days show how fragile the ceasefire is, and all indications are now that it will not hold," said Mr. Larsen after meeting the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat. "It's now incredibly important for all parties concerned to hold back." The Israeli motorist was near the Arab village of Baka al Gharbieh in Israel, very close to the West Bank, said the army. The victim, a resident of the northern Israeli community of Zichron Yaakov, was outside his car when he was shot.

Even after the truce took effect, Palestinian gunmen persistently targeted Israeli motorists. More than two dozen Israelis have been killed in roadside shootings in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in more than nine months of Israeli-Palestinian fighting. Attacks on motorists in Israel have been rare.

Earlier on Monday, two car bombs blew up simultaneously in the working class town of Yehud in central Israel. The blasts, about 500 meters apart, blew out windows on nearby parked cars and damaged a building, but no one was hurt.



Police investigators view one of the two cars which were blown up in the city of Yehud in central Israel on Monday. — AP

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a radical Palestinian group, claimed responsibility, saying the blasts came in revenge for Sunday night's helicopter attack.

An Israeli Cabinet Minister, Mr. Matan Vilnai, said the explosions would delay the start of the weeklong test period of the truce.

Mr. Arafat, meanwhile, said the Sunday

night killings of the three Palestinians were a "severe violation of the ceasefire".

Also Monday, the military announced that the armed forces chief, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, cut short his visit to the United States. The army said Gen. Mofaz had completed his meetings with U.S. defence officials and gave no reason for his early return. — AP

THE HINDU

# Israel pounds Syrian position in Lebanon

*Kfar Shouba (Lebanon), July 1*

ISRAELI WARPLANES struck a Syrian anti-aircraft position in eastern Lebanon on Sunday, two days after Hizbollah guerrillas wounded an Israeli soldier in a disputed border area.

At least one Lebanese and two Syrian soldiers were reported wounded in Sunday's air raid, Lebanese military officials said.

The Syrian-backed Hizbollah responded by firing at Israeli positions in the disputed Shebaa Farms, witnesses said, while Israeli troops shelled the Lebanese border town of Kfar Shouba, wounding at least one person.

The shelling, which also hit the nearby town of Shebaa, ended after about an hour, but Israeli warplanes continued to circle low over the area and over other towns in south Lebanon.

Witnesses and Hizbollah said

its fighters had hit an Israeli radar installation in Shebaa Farms, setting it afire.

Other witnesses said the Israeli aircraft had targeted a radar site and anti-aircraft guns near Serain, south of the ancient Roman town of Baalbek in the strategic Bekaa Valley, where Syria has a concentration of more than 20,000 troops it keeps in Lebanon.

A Reuters correspondent said two radar antennae had been destroyed and the hills on which they sat were scorched black, sending acrid plumes of smoke into the sky. Blackened pieces of a truck and electrical equipment were scattered about.

Israeli warplanes were also circling low over the southern Lebanese town of Hasbaya and Rachaya. It was the most serious Israeli strike on Syrian forces in Lebanon since April, when Israel killed at least three Syrian sol-

diers in a strike on another radar position after a Hizbollah attack in Shebaa that killed an Israeli soldier. The Bekaa is a broad and fertile valley, which from a Syrian viewpoint, is a natural invasion route to Damascus.

In Jerusalem, Israel confirmed the attack and described it as part of its policy of making Syria pay for the actions of the Hizbollah fighters it backs. "The Israeli Government determines that the criminal activities of the Hizbollah are taking place with the knowledge and backing of Syria," a statement released by Israel's security cabinet said.

Hizbollah, the main force in driving Israel from south Lebanon in May last year after a 22-year occupation, called its counterstrike a defense of national dignity, and its head Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah said Israel was storing up trouble for itself.

Reuters

## Arafat, Peres meet in 'good atmosphere'

LISBON (PORTUGAL), JUNE 30. The Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, met overnight and discussed the West Asia conflict for more than two hours, opening the way for direct talks between the two sides, officials said on Saturday.

The two officials met in a "good atmosphere" at the Portuguese Premier's residence, said an Israeli lawmaker and former diplomat. "There will be a follow-up," she added.

However, in separate comments, the two leaders disagreed on the use of international observers to monitor a test cease-fire.

"It was a good meeting," Mr. Peres told reporters as he arrived at an international meeting of Socialist political leaders.

Mr. Arafat praised Mr. Peres as a "peace partner" and said: "We have to thank him from all our hearts for his efforts."

Later, Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres addressed some 400 delegates at the 50th anniversary meeting of the Socialist International organization.

The Palestinian leader called for the deployment of foreign monitors in the conflict areas to oversee a tentative cease-fire brokered by the CIA Director, Mr. George Tenet.

"We need your voice to send international observers, without delay, to the Palestinian territory. I would like to ask why does the Government of Israel reject the dispatching of international observers to consolidate and protect the cease-fire," Mr. Arafat said.

The United States and Europe endorse the use of monitors to try to keep the fragile truce in effect — something the Israelis oppose.

In his speech, marked by a measured tone, Mr. Peres condemned terrorism and said security was the first step to peace.

"The only ingredient necessary to get the locomotive of peace on its way, in our view, is security, not occupation. You have security, you'll have freedom," he said. "A good neighbour is better than a good gun, and we are looking for a good neighbour." — AP



# Israel defies world on settlement

Jerusalem, May 30

ISRAEL YESTERDAY deepened its defiance in the face of international pressure for a freeze on Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza and admitted it was building 700 housing units in the illegal outposts.

Housing Minister and former Soviet dissident, Natan Sharansky, told the Guardian he had approved tenders for more than 700 houses at Maale Adumim — by far the largest Jewish settlement in the West Bank, with more than 23,000 residents — and Alfei Menashe.

The move gives the lie to assurances by Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, on Sunday, that Israel accepts a central condition of a report on the Palestinian uprising by former US senator George Mitchell, which calls for a freeze on Jewish settlements.

Sharansky said: "I don't think we should give any concession or prize for terrorist activity and that is what happens when we are asked to stop housing projects."

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In his 32-page report, Mitchell singled out the 145 Jewish settlements, considered illegal under international law, as one of the greatest obstacles to finding an escape from eight months of bloodshed.

That point was underlined yesterday when two Palestinian suicide bombers struck an Israeli army position and gunmen from both sides launched deadly attacks, casting a shadow over US-brokered talks. One man with explosives strapped to his body blew himself up at a checkpoint in the Gaza Strip, wounding two soldiers but killing only himself, the Israeli military said. Soldiers shot dead a second bomber who threw grenades but failed to detonate his load of explosives during his attack near a cluster of Jewish settlements.

The Palestinians insist that Israel must accept the Mitchell report — and freeze settlements — before a ceasefire.

Sharansky shrugged off charges that he was jeopardising peace efforts. Instead, he argued that the new houses were approved by the then Labour

prime minister, Ehud Barak, last December, and the construction tenders were issued on April 5, well before Mitchell called for a freeze.

But Peace Now, which campaigns against settlements, says the move was provocative. "Sharansky was looking for anything to show he was a settlement builder, and perhaps anything to torpedo a settlement freeze," said a spokesman, Didi Remez.

Israel maintains it will limit the expansion of settlements, for which it has expropriated as much as 58 percent of Gaza and the West Bank, to "natural growth". "We believe people in Maale Adumim have the right to live there," Sharansky said.

"We have to take care of current needs, which means if people want to improve their conditions, or buy houses for their children, they can."

Peace Now says "natural growth" is fiction, meant to encourage migration to the West Bank and Gaza from within Israel proper. Although foundations are being laid for

the 496 new units in Maale Adumim, work has yet to start at Alfei Menashe, largely because private builders complain they are unable to find any takers.

"You have 9,844 housing units in the end phases of construction, or lying vacant," said Gilad Ben Nun, who leads research on settlements for Peace Now.

"You could freeze construction now and have enough housing units for natural growth for the next four years. What they are saying about existing demand is a blatant lie."

Settler groups argue that they are entitled to expand without limits because the Oslo peace accords deferred discussion on their fate until a final agreement. Nearly eight years later, and after Barak built more than 3,000 houses in Jewish settlements, Palestinian officials admit they made a fatal error.

"Our major mistake was not to stop the settlements before moving on any major negotiations," said planning minister, Nabil Shaath.

The Guardian

**MITCHELL COMMISSION REPORT: Israel still refuses to see the light**

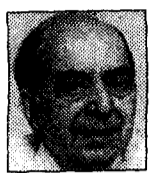
# Sharon's way has blood and tears

It is ironic that it should require the labours of the Mitchell Commission to pinpoint a transparent fact, that the entire Oslo process between Israelis and Palestinians can be little more than a charade if the occupying power sets about changing the contours of the occupied territories while it talks peace. Yet that is precisely what has been happening for the past eight years and more under both Labour and Likud dispensations.

The question to ask as relations between Israelis and Palestinians reach a new fork is whether there is the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. It is an axiom that things often get worse before they get better, and as the second Intifada rages in the occupied territories and the hardline Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon uses warplanes and invades the supposedly autonomous Palestinian territories, have we reached the bottom?

The detached stance of the US Bush administration is unsustainable because the cards are stacked against Palestinians, thanks to American geopolitical interests and the clout of the American Jewry. Once these interests are threatened by the level of violence and the outrage in the Arab world, Washington has perforce to intervene. President George W. Bush is coming to recognise this even as his negotiating tactic will be different from his predecessor's.

For all his sins, Ehud Barak made a valiant attempt at belling the cat but failed and a divided Israeli nation that could have inched towards facing reality reacted by swinging to the other extreme. Oslo, flawed as it was, was built on the principle of land for peace. In the end, there was little land transferred to the Palestinians and peace remained elusive. As Mr Sharon is discovering yet again, answering stone-throw-



**TALKING TURKEY**

S. NIHAL SINGH

**The Israelis are mortgaging their future the longer they shy away from facing reality and the more they rely on their edge in weapons and technology to keep Palestinians in check**

ers with warplanes and live ammunition is not the answer.

Nor is Mr Sharon's proposal of shelving the difficult issues the answer because it would translate into consolidation and expansion of the occupation, with Palestinians perennially living under the threat of curfews and blockades, their livelihood gone and their lives in tatters. Oslo had left the difficult issues till the end and what happened? The final issues were never genuinely discussed under the Oslo framework, deadlines of Israeli withdrawals slipped and more occupied land was colonised.

Former President Bill Clinton's high-profile interventions highlighted the nature of the problem. While Oslo could serve as an umbrella, only Washington had the power to resolve the problem. His successor's arm's length approach was, in effect, a gift to Israel. Tel Aviv received all the protection and benefits of the American connection while it was free to deal with the Palestinians as it wished.

If peace proved a mirage for the



There cannot be a resolution on Mr Sharon's terms

Israelis under Barak, security is proving a mirage under Sharon. A divided nation has yet to find the answers even as it switches leaders and its American mentor and protector takes a measure of the problem. Palestinians are at the receiving end of much of this because occupation begets violence and as curfews and prohibitions blight their lives and livelihood, the young in particular rebel at their lot while partisans with other agendas promote their causes.

The way out of the impasse was shown by Mr Barak's failed attempt, and the US has to be intensively involved to get the

**There must be a contiguous, viable Palestinian state. East Jerusalem, particularly areas covering the Muslim holy sites, must return to Palestinians. Settlements on occupied land must go**

parties back to the drawing board. There is no option but to tackle the basic issues of occupation, settlements, Jerusalem's status and the right of refugees' return. But Israel is currently flirting with the seducers who promise security even as the situation has been muddied by the decision of the Labour leader and present foreign minister, Shimon Peres, to lend his support to the Sharon experiment.

How long the present phase in Israel will be is anyone's guess but the Israelis are mortgaging their future the longer they shy away from facing reality and the more they rely on their edge in weapons and technology to keep Palestinians in check. Some of the Israeli conservatives' scenarios are so fanciful that their implementation would bring disaster. There will be many more years of blood and tears for Palestinians and Israelis alike if the Sharon way of doing things is allowed to proceed unhindered.

Yet the contours of a fair settlement are now well known and recognised. There must be a contiguous, viable Palestinian state.

East Jerusalem, particularly areas covering the Muslim holy sites, must return to Palestinians. Settlements on occupied land must go because a future Palestinian state cannot allow another state to exercise sovereignty over pockets on its land. Settlements clubbed around Jerusalem can be given to Israel in exchange for Israeli land elsewhere. Israel must concede the principle of the refugees' right of return while seeking to limit and regulate their flow.

As previous colonial powers have discovered in leaving their colonies, reconciliation begins when colonised people are treated with dignity. The Israeli twist is it is not a distant metropolitan power that can go away. Israelis are not merely occupying Palestinian land but covet it and must in the end coexist with the colonised. Although tilted against Palestinians, Oslo was a recognition of this fact. In retrospect, Israelis found it easy to use individualist terrorist acts directed by Palestinians opposed to Oslo to deny and ultimately frustrate the basis of the accords.

The Bush administration is learning the hard way that its own options are limited. It sounds good to declare that Americans cannot be keener to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian problem than the parties concerned. But the problem in its present form was created and defined by US geopolitical interests and affinity with Jews. For the Palestinians, it has never been a level playing field and their problems have merely been accentuated by the end of the Cold War and the emergence of Israel's protector as the sole superpower. This geopolitical reality and the Arab states' own divisions are responsible for the present impasse. There cannot be a resolution of the problem on Mr Sharon's terms.

core issues of the conflict.

For now, the Bush administration is right to pursue its effort to restore calm on the basis of the Mitchell Commission Report. But it must draw up a wider strategy (as I believe it will) to fight terrorism, champion the region's only democracy and maintain close ties with moderate Arab regimes while preparing to confront the rogue ones, if necessary. In the end, as I said to Yasser Arafat more than once at Camp David, our region's problems won't be solved by a descending angel, but by leaders with the skill and the courage to make painful, tough and brave decisions to move toward peace.

In spite of all the bitterness and death of the past few months, the moment a Palestinian leadership with that courage emerges, the Israeli public will embrace it in genuine partnership.

The framework will be essentially the same as the one that Mr Arafat rejected last summer. Every senseless loss of Israeli and Palestinian life since then is a consequence of his failure of vision.

*EHUD BARAK was Prime Minister of Israel from 1999 to 2001  
By arrangement with the New York Times*

**K**okhav Yair, Israel: The Mitchell Report opens another page in the story of the West Asia conflict. With its provisions for a ceasefire, a cooling off period, confidence-building measures and an eventual return to the negotiating table, the report represents a positive contribution.

Two elements deserve particular attention. The first is the requirement that there be a complete, unconditional halt to the violence. This must not be watered down. The second is that Israel should build no new settlements. But neither should a young man, back from his Army service and starting a family, be barred from building a new home alongside his father's. It is a matter of degree and of common sense, like so much in life.

Violence is not a matter of degree. It's either there or it isn't. It has to stop.

For Israelis, the peacemaking efforts of the last 10 years are collapsing before our eyes. When Yasser Arafat rejected peacemaking at last summer's Camp David summit, the left in Israel understood that Israel's desire for peace, and our readiness to consider compromise, were not sufficient by themselves to achieve an accord. And the right realised that the dream of having Jews live

## 'Israel should disengage itself from Palestinians'

throughout all of Judaea and Samaria is not a realistic political objective. We thus need a new strategy, not just an accumulation of tactical steps. The Likud Party's strategy for the past generation, with Ariel Sharon as a chief proponent, was to establish settlements everywhere, not only in areas essential to Israel's security, in an effort to clarify to the Palestinians that the longer they waited to make peace, the worse the deal they would get. It hasn't worked. In fact, it couldn't. What Israel ought to do now is take steps to ensure the long-term viability of its Jewish majority. That requires a strategy of disengagement from the Palestinians, even unilaterally, if necessary, and a gradual process of establishing secure, defensible borders, demarcated so as to encompass more than 80 per cent of the Jewish settlers in several settlement blocs over about 15 per cent of Judaea and Samaria, and to ensure a wide security zone in the Jordan Valley. We need to erect appropriate

BY EHUD BARAK



**As I said to Arafat at Camp David, our region's problems won't be solved by a descending angel, but by leaders with the skill and the courage to make painful, tough and brave decisions to move toward peace**

barriers to prevent the entry of suicide bombers and other attackers. That process, under the circumstances, should begin unilaterally, but we should keep the door wide open to the possibility of resuming negotiations, were a Palestinian leadership to demonstrate a genuine readiness to make painful decisions. The Palestinians would need to show a renewed commitment to honouring accords, ending violence and confronting their own radicals.

By keeping the door open to a renewed dialogue, Israel would ensure international support for the struggle against terrorism.

Unfortunately, Mr Sharon's government is unlikely to pursue so strategic a policy. In the short term we can anticipate more and possibly escalating violence, international intervention and perhaps some kind of interim accord under which more territory would be handed over to the Palestinian Authority — buying periods of quiet, but failing to tackle the

# Powell winds up with accord on timeline

JERUSALEM, June 29 — The U.S. Secretary of State, Mr. Colin Powell, wound up a quick peacemaking mission with a shaky agreement with Israel and the Palestinians to start down the road to peace after months of bloody conflict. Mr. Powell set up a delicate timeline on Thursday in talks with the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, and the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat.

"It is a plan, it will work if we can get the violence ended and so let that be our strongest wish," Mr. Powell said. The timeline agreement starts with a seven-day period, demanded by Mr. Sharon, in which there is to be no violence. If there is, both Israeli and U.S. officials said the countdown to a six-week cooling-off period and then confidence-building measures starts again.

"If there are incidents, the clock will stop," the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, said. On Friday, he briefed the King Abdullah of Jordan and was flying to Paris for a meeting with Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. In Jordan, Mr. Powell was met at the airport by King Abdullah. The two men climbed into the king's two-seater BMW sports car, and with Mr. Powell behind the wheel, drove to the Barakah palace for their talks. Mr. Powell returned to the airport as a passenger in a U.S. Government limousine.

Prominent columnist, Mr. Taher Adwan, wrote in the independent *Al Arab AlYawm* newspaper that the King would repeat to Mr. Powell Jordan's rejection of "smart" sanctions against Iraq. Mr. Adwan wrote it is important that Mr. Powell understand Jor-

dan won't join in any effort that would damage relations with its trade partner Iraq.

Some Jordanian mosque preachers lashed out at the U.S. in Muslim noon prayers in the Jordanian capital Amman. A preacher told worshippers at one mosque that Mr. Powell would try to persuade Arab leaders to accept the killings of Palestinians at "the hands of the criminal Jews."

Mr. Powell's visit to Jordan was overshadowed by the King allowing a Muslim radical leader to return home after nearly two years in exile in Qatar. Newspaper editorials, radio and television broadcasts focused on the royal amnesty to Hamas leader, Mr. Ibrahim Ghosheh.

Mr. Powell endorsed the use of monitors to try to keep the fragile truce in effect. On Thursday, an Israeli woman settler was am-

bushed and slain on the West Bank.

At a news conference with Mr. Sharon, Mr. Powell, described the seven-day period as one "in which we will measure the chairman's (Arafat's) actions."

The second stage, Mr. Powell said, would be a six-week cooling-off period, as recommended by a commission headed by the former Senate Majority Leader, Mr. George Mitchell. This would lead to so-called confidence-building measures. Among those proposed by the commission is a freeze on construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr. Sharon reaffirmed his commitment to the Mitchell recommendations and the cease-fire arrangement. "Israel is committed to peace", he said. "We are all committed to peace." The U.S., under both Presidents Mr. Clinton and Mr. Bush, vetoed proposals by the Palestinians in the U.N. Security Council to send a U.N.-supervised force to the area.

Mr. Powell said the U.S., was still opposed to the proposal. But he said monitors selected by the two sides could be useful.

Mr. Sharon was sceptical of the idea. He said when a school bus was attacked, a monitor was not needed to confirm the attack. Mr. Powell made his statement standing alongside Mr. Arafat at a news conference in Ramallah on the West Bank. He said later he had not discussed it with the Palestinian leader or with Mr. Sharon. "There was no intention on my part to surprise the Minister," he said. Mr. Powell said what he had in mind was an arrangement like the one approved by the Israeli and the Palestinians to oversee security measures during an Israeli pullback on the West Bank.

Any arrangement would have to be decided by the two sides and nothing would be imposed upon them from the outside, Mr. Powell said. In Ramallah, he had said, "There will be a need for monitors and observers to see what is happening" to prevent violence.

Those monitors would go to points of friction between Palestinians and Israelis and serve as go-between to resolve disputes, Mr. Powell said. He said he had not decided on the composition of such a force. Mr. Arafat said the force should be drawn from the U.N., the U.S., the European Community and others.— AP

# AD-16 Burns mission 30/5 raises peace hopes

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN) MAY 29.** Israeli and Palestinian security officials were scheduled to meet later this evening after the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Mr. William Burns, shuttled back and forth between the leaderships of the two sides. Hopes that these talks can lead to further steps to de-escalate the situation strengthened on the impression that the Palestinians were ready to drop their demand for simultaneity. However, the Palestinians have yet to call for a ceasefire, despite Israeli demands and U.S. urgings, and the violence continues.

Though the Palestinian leadership has not ordered its enraged public to refrain from attacking Israelis, the fact that their security chiefs are to meet their Israeli counterparts suggests that the Palestinians could be ready to begin exercising restraint on the ground. If there is a definitive abatement of hostilities, a complete cessation does not appear on the cards as yet it would be in fulfilment of the first stage of the four-stage process that an international committee has recommended. The international committee headed by the former U.S. Senator, Mr. George Mitchell, had recommended that a cessation of hostilities should be followed by a cooling off period, the building of mutual confidence through a series of measures and finally the resumption of negotiations on substantive issues.

Till now the Palestinians were demanding that one of the Mitchell committee's specific recommendations that Israel freeze construction activity in Jewish settlements should be implemented at the outset. In the last authoritative comments on the subject from the Israeli side, the Defence Minister, Mr. Benjamin Ben Eliezer, had strongly hinted that all construction activity would indeed be stopped though there might not be a formal declaration to this effect. This comment, and possibly further clarifications brought by Mr. Burns, seems to have had its effect on the Palestinian side. A senior Palestinian official was quoted as saying yesterday that they were no longer insistent that the declaration of a construction freeze should come simultaneously with a Palestinian declaration of a cease-fire.

Both sides have set up committees to draw up time-tables for the implementation of the Mitchell committee recommendations. The U.S. mediating team will probably try to reconcile the two different time tables being drawn. At present, the Palestinians appear to give the impression that they will be satisfied if the final time table specifies that the declaration of a settlement freeze will occur at one particular stage of the process to come.

The Israelis have considered the settlement freeze as a confidence building measure that should be

taken up only if there is a cessation of hostilities and a cooling off period prior to that. Accordingly, it seems that the Palestinians could agree to a cessation of hostilities and a cooling off period provided the time table specifically stipulates that the settlement freeze will take place at a particular date.

The Palestinians have also been demanding that Israel implement all points in agreements arrived at before the uprising broke out in September last, specifically a third Israeli troop re-deployment in the West Bank. Israel has hinted that at least the reiteration of the promise to re-deploy could be made at an early date. But the Israelis will surely make the implementation of the agreement on a troop re-deployment contingent on the Palestinians fulfilling some measures that they too have promised. At this point in time the potential for both sides to make promises that will satisfy the other side does exist. But the whole process of peace negotiations has been taken through its tortuous course by broken promises and on this score the future looks far from rosy.

Meanwhile, pro-peace elements in the region would be pleased by an exclusive report in today's *Haretz* that details how the two sides had virtually clinched agreement on the issue of the right to return in the talks held in Taba in January this year. According to the report, Palestinian negotiators had conceded that refugees could be offered a menu of options. These included settling in the countries where they have resided since leaving Palestine in 1948, returning to the territory of the Palestinian Authority (or state to be), migrating to any other country that was willing to take them in and lastly returning to Israel.

## Russia backs plan

By Vladimir Radyuhin

**MOSCOW, MAY 29.** The visiting Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, has secured Russia's support for his plan for a new international meet to resolve the West Asia impasse.

The Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov, made it clear after his talks with the Palestinian leader that Moscow would support convening an international summit, modelled on last year's meeting in the Egyptian resort of Sharm al-Sheikh. Mr. Arafat flew to Moscow early Tuesday for crisis talks on the escalating violence between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

"It is quite obvious that we need to pool the efforts of the international community. Russia is ready to support efforts in this direction," Mr. Ivanov told reporters, describing joint proposals by Egypt and Jordan and a plan drawn up by the former U.S. Senator, Mr. George Mitchell's commission as "an acceptable basis for continuing efforts to restore stability and calm in the Middle East."

**G**EORGE Mitchell and Javier Solana were expansive as they waxed eloquent on television over the Mitchell Commission report on the West Asia crisis. Aditi Bhaduri, an expert on West Asia, has creditably covered the main points of this report in *The Statesman* of 15 May.

However, there are some covert issues concerning the crisis which have not featured in the report because these are highly sensitive and making them public might be imprudent. It would be worthwhile highlighting these for drawing the attention of the international community towards them with the hope of extracting a reaction from various power centres, a reaction that will help defuse the crisis that claims lives daily. There are several issues at stake.

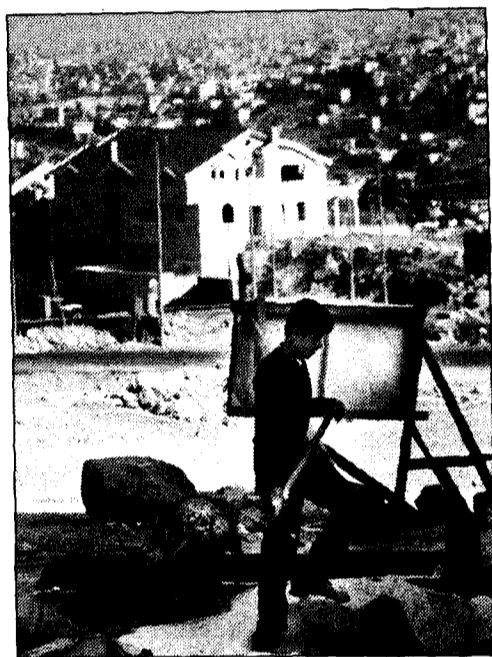
First, the Israeli army is seized by a peculiar internal problem: it finds itself in a fix, what with its high professionalism on the one side and its standing as a "people's army" on the other. While there is no equivocal view over this uniqueness during a regular war, unsavoury confrontations arise during peace. The army's junior commanders at company and battalion level have been ingrained with one commandment, namely, "Use your initiative to the maximum - you will not be penalised if you exceed limits but you certainly will be punished if you fall short in the execution of orders."

"The problem gets compounded in the precise definition of these orders during peace-time soldiering. A standard non-war task for the army is the protection of Jewish settlements on the west bank of the River Jordan and as is well known, the settlement contretemps is the bane of the two warring sides in West Asia. Jewish settlers have developed a singularly antagonistic mindset towards their Palestinian cohabitants of the West Bank, aided and abetted by mentors in high places. A situation has reached today where the Israeli field commanders in that area have become more than accommodative of the wishes of their citizens under pressure from the top.

A point of no return has reared up whereby any Israeli commander who disregards his settler's, more often than not, unjust demands against the Palestinian neighbours and wants to act in an impartial way, may get passed over for promotion! There has been such cases. So strong is the nexus between Tel Aviv and the senior settlers, especially the rabbis, that career army officers invariably opt to play safe even if that means going against military ethics. This underlying current caused former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's exit.

One hopeful method out of this extraordinary state of affairs is involving the European Union which is expected to attain superpower status soon; hence Mr Solana's inclusion in the commission is welcome. The EU needs to impose severe trade sanctions on Israel till Tel Aviv not only calls a halt to further building of West Bank settlements but also demolishes all the partially built structures there. Russia, too, could join the EU's action

# Anything for a ceasefire



A Palestinian labourer mixes cement in the West Bank Jewish settlement of Efrat on Thursday. Thousands of new homes have been approved or are under construction. — AP/PTI

along with the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Second, the *locus standi* of Jerusalem merits a pragmatic look. Mr Barak had initiated bipartite talks with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat during his tenure wherein Jerusalem would be treated as purely a holy place and the Temple Mount/al Haram shrines would be respected by both sides, to be used solely for their respective religious purposes. There would be absolutely no reference to "ownership" of any kind. The Palestinians should now reconsider this sensible idea as also select some other place as its projected capital, Nablus perhaps or Ramallah.

This would satisfy Mr Arafat's ego, considering he had said: "...the Arab has not been born who will forsake Jerusalem as Palestine's capital ...." Mr Arafat needs to realise one apparent fact of life - he is gradually getting marginalised.

Third, Israel has become fully self-sufficient in indigenous weapons for its armed forces. So, it came as an unpleasant surprise to see the Israeli air force using American F16

*2003 5/2*  
The Mitchell Commission should have insisted on a UN-sponsored Ceasefire Force to be deployed in West Asia promptly, says JK DUTT, suggesting that the EU and Russia can threaten sanctions to stop Israel from expanding settlements on the West Bank. Better still, the Jewish lobby's stranglehold on the US presidency could be eased

planes for carrying out strikes on Palestinian positions. They would generally use their own Kfir aircraft for such operations. Obviously, the arms merchants are at work and that, too, quite successfully because the USA has no business supplying arms to Israel. Presumably, the same can be said of Russia's Kalashnikov company which has a flourishing market with the Arabs.

A freeze on arms merchandising in the region is necessary, again through sanctions.

Fourth, it is conceivable that a possible route to defusing the crisis for all times lies in the hands of Syria via the Golan Heights. These heights which are occupied by Israel have to be demilitarised under an express proviso that after Israel vacates, these will not be used as Arab artillery and mortar observation posts for firing on Israeli villages in the plains around the Sea of Galilee. A discussion on this between former US President Bill Clinton and the late Syrian President Hafez al Assad had ended in a deadlock.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon should restart the discussion now with the broad-minded younger Assad and co-opt young King



Yasser Arafat and Javier Solana, EU's Foreign Policy Representative, in the Palestinian President's office in Gaza City last Monday prior to the release of the Mitchell Commission report. — AP/PTI

Abdullah of Jordan who, like his father, is equally levelheaded.

Lebanese representatives, too, have to be inducted, the tactical relevancy being Israel having pulled out of Southern Lebanon last year, which was truly a historical gesture. This could be a plus point for Mr Sharon in allaying Arab fears.

Fifth, any incumbent of the White House will ever have to equate with one powerful local political group, the Jewish lobby. This lobby exerts tremendous influence on all of USA's West Asian policies, so having them oriented as to suit the Jews.

The US President has little option but to acquiesce. The lobby initially exercised only

its financial clout but lately it has also waded into the political arena, witness Al Gore's running mate, Joseph Lieberman, in the last election.

To counter the Jewish lobby, one or two corresponding lobbies comprising other ethnic groups such as Indian Americans, Chinese, Hispanics, Africans, Europeans and so on should likewise set up their caucus and pitch in.

Many Indians are doing extremely well in the USA - some of them should enter big league politics as has happened in Canada. Once the Jewish lobby's stranglehold can be eased, the US presidency will be able to adopt a more equitable approach towards West Asia.

Last but not least, the Mitchell Commission

should have insisted on a UN-sponsored Ceasefire Force (CFF), to be deployed immediately. This force's mandate will be to enforce a ceasefire by employing military intervention and to remain *in situ* till a final solution is found to the crisis.

The CFF should be a corps-sized unit comprising three army divisions, one each from India, the EU and the USA plus an aircraft carrier from, say, the UK under the overall command of a Lieutenant-General which India, too, could offer.

The CFF has to be highly mobile, possess an adequate strength multiplier capacity and be ruthless in its mission of literally barrelling a ceasefire. A permanent ceasefire can come about in this fashion.

In conclusion, it behoves both the warring sides to pay heed to the Jewish singer Dahlia Lavi's soul-stirring number of the 1970s, *Jerusalem*, a song that she composed after she lost her husband in the Yom Kippur war.

The first and the last verses go thus:

Where the cobblestone's wet with the blood of ages/Where the echo of time turns history's pages/Where the cry of foes stills the

voice of sages/Where Jerusalem is .....  
When will tomorrow's sons, tomorrow's daughters/Have a taste of the bread cast upon the waters/And put down the sword that performs the slaughters/Where Jerusalem is .....

(The author is a retired Lieutenant-Colonel, Indian Army.)



Israeli police grab a "Peace Now" activist during a protest near Yakir on Tuesday. Israeli peace activists claim the addition of nine trailer homes on the edge of the settlement. — AP/PTI



## WHOSE TRUCE IS IT IN WEST ASIA?

A 'COMPLETE CESSATION' of all potential acts of anti-Jewish violence by the Palestinians is the latest definitive demand from the Israeli side. In the opinion of Israel's ultra-nationalist Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, a demonstrably decisive stoppage of such violence can alone persuade him to consider peace talks of any kind with the Palestinians. With a U.S.-brokered truce, effective from June 13, gradually gaining a notional acceptance by both the prime adversaries in West Asia, the present Bush administration is beginning to face its first major diplomatic test as a peace facilitator in that region which has long been a byword for instability. Mr. Sharon, who has met the U.S. President this week, wants to invoke Israel's time-tested strategic friendship with the U.S. to pressure him to rein in the Palestinian leadership in a way that could tilt the scales in favour of the Jewish state even during the current period of a 'truce'. The U.S. is keen to avoid consigning to the scrap heap of history a very significant truce accord which the head of the Central Intelligence Agency has recently helped the Israelis and the Palestinians to put together. Spearheading the salvage mission, the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, has called upon the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, to make "a 100 per cent effort" to restrain the radicals on his side in their campaign against the perceived oppression by the Jewish state. Whether or not this signals a certain distance between the U.S.' compulsions of neutrality as a peace facilitator and the Israeli leader's partisan inclinations, Gen. Powell's latest pledge for a "complete engagement" with Mr. Arafat will indicate some new vigour in Washington's diplomatic endeavours over the basic Palestinian issue. Mr. Sharon, on his part, has taken upon himself the task of engaging the U.S. exhaustively so as to gain its understanding of his current plans to marginalise the Arab hawks on the Palestinian side.

If the durability of the latest truce should be determined by such tactical considerations of Israel and the U.S., the reason simply is the complexity of Mr. Arafat's task within his Palestinian constituency and on the larger Arab stage. The fundamental issues dividing the Israelis and the Palestinians have remained unchanged for long. No new ideas have also been envisioned by either of these disputants or even the U.S. in recent months. In a sense, the parties seem to suffer from a strange fatigue of the soul and also the mind in their separate and collective efforts to address the puzzle of Palestinian statehood. While Mr. Sharon may often seem to lead or orchestrate Jewish extremism of the anti-Arab kind, Mr. Arafat contends with the hawkishness of the Hamas and others who see Israel as the bastion of evil.

While the larger international opinion remains favourable to the Arab cause concerning the right of the Palestinians to some form of negotiated statehood within defined boundaries, Mr. Arafat knows that his diplomatic options are severely circumscribed by the ongoing powerplay in West Asia. Despite some recent signs of a possibly proactive role in West Asia by post-Soviet Russia, the fact remains that Moscow's own diminished global status is holding it back. The Palestinian leaders, who accepted the overwhelming primacy of America's diplomatic role in West Asia in the early 1990s, appear to be learning the hard way that their best hope is to sustain the U.S.' goodwill in the face of what they see as an increasingly intransigent Israel. For the present, the U.S. has set its heart on the copybook of the Mitchell Commission, which recently recommended the sequential steps of a truce, a cool-off period for the implementation of confidence-building measures and eventually the 'final status' talks on the Palestinians' political future. The truce itself is largely a mirage still.

# Powell to talk peace with 'divided' Israel

Ewen MacAskill  
Jerusalem, June 27

US SECRETARY of State Colin Powell arrived in the Middle East on Wednesday to discuss a US plan for Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking amid signs of a rift with Israel over a shaky American-brokered cease-fire.

Powell stopped first in Alexandria to meet Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak. He was due in Jerusalem late in the day ahead of talks on Thursday with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

Before Powell left Washington, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and President Bush held talks at the White House, which revealed apparent differences between the two sides. With Sharon sitting beside him, Bush told reporters, Israelis and Palestinians had made progress in recent days, and were closer to peace than they had been.

The Israeli leader, however, flatly refused to take the next step in the US peace blueprint — implementing such "confidence-building measures" as a freeze on Jewish settlement expansion — until Palestinians ceased all violence for 10 days.

"I said it very clearly. Israel will never negotiate under fire," Sharon told reporters after the meeting, his second with Bush since taking office in March.

Israel's governing coalition too had undergone severe strain on Tuesday when the cabinet split along Left-Right lines over a plan to dismantle 15 Jewish settler outposts on the Palestinian West Bank and in Gaza.

Defence Minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer had said on Monday that the removal of the outposts would be achieved by force if necessary. He added that he had told



ARIEL SHARON

the Israeli Army to ensure this was carried out by next week.

But the announcement backfired, provoking a squabble between the Labour and Likud cabinet members. In a further embarrassment, Sharon stepped in to disown Ben-Eliezer's plan.

The Jewish settlements on the West Bank and in Gaza, illegal under international law, are one of the main causes of friction between Israel and the Palestine. The shaky ceasefire, negotiated by the CIA director, George Tenet, has been violated repeatedly since it came into force two weeks ago.

Violence continued throughout the West Bank yesterday. Israel, retaliating to Palestinian gunfire, added Hebron to the long list of Palestinian areas it has sealed off from the outside world.

While Bush told reporters he was sending Powell to the region to "make sure there is a realistic assessment of what is going on," Sharon, however, cast doubt on Powell's chances

of success. "I don't know if he will succeed in achieving a result because Arafat has simply decided to continue terror. That's the problem. And if massive pressure is not brought upon him, he won't stop it," Sharon said.

Senior Arafat aide Ahmed Abdel-Rahman said the Palestinians "appreciate the objective and balanced position that President Bush expressed in his meeting with Sharon. We consider it a starting point to enhance security and to start peacemaking," he said.

Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said his side sought Sharon's compliance with the peace proposals of a panel led by former US senator George Mitchell "as a package."

Sharon insists each part must be implemented separately.

Abed Rabbo said Israel must first implement the work plan drawn up by truce broker George Tenet, the US CIA director. "In fact Sharon, since the first day, had refused to start implementing the work plan of Mr Tenet, mainly to set a timetable for lifting the closure (blockade) around the Palestinian cities, towns and areas and there are other measures that were included in Tenet's plan."

For the Palestinians, Abed Rabbo said, the issue was not just a timetable for lifting the closures. "It's also an international monitoring and observation committee...to supervise the implementation of a timetable and any future agreement."

Palestinian officials plan to ask Powell to pressurise Israel to freeze construction at Jewish settlements within six weeks, before a complete end to hostilities.

The Guardian and Reuters

# Russia to block US-British plan on Iraq

Bernie Woodall  
UNHQ, June 26

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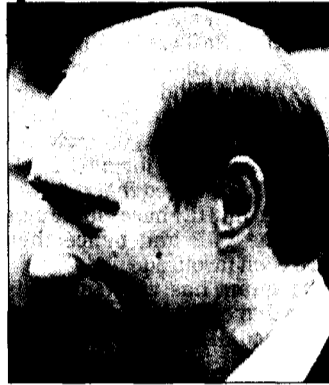
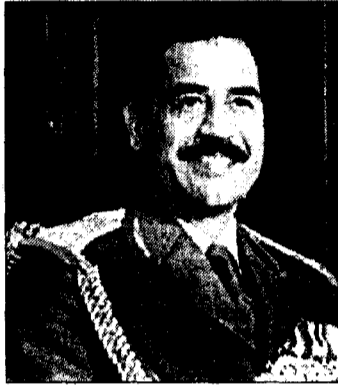
RUSSIA HAS told its key counterparts on the UN Security Council it would reject a US-British resolution to revamp sanctions on Iraq if the measure were put to a vote, diplomats said.

"We cannot allow it to pass," Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, said in a weekend letter to the United States, and presumably to Britain, France and China also, the envoys reported.

Ivanov stopped short of using the word "veto" but council diplomats said late on Monday it was clear Moscow was threatening to kill the measure. Russia, the US, Britain, France and China are permanent members of the 15-nation Security Council with veto power.

"This is not a negotiating stance. This is what they plan to do," said one council member.

Russia, Iraq's closest ally on the council, has long opposed the embargos. Ivanov last week criticised the US-British plan and said he would probably offer an alternative, which diplomats expected at a public meeting on Iraq, scheduled for late on Tuesday. Word of Russia's position came hours after Secretary of State Colin Powell visited the United Nations on Monday to



SADDAM AND PUTIN: FRIENDS IN NEED

speak at a major UN AIDS conference.

He told reporters after his address that the council might not meet its self-imposed July 3 deadline for adoption of the British-drafted resolution on the plan.

"We have been unable to resolve all the technical issues," he said. "If no resolution is arrived at, we will have to figure out what to do — how to extend the current situation and how long."

Russia has raised objections to the plan for months, saying the United Nations should instead seek ways to move toward a suspension of the sanctions, imposed when Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

At issue is a resolution that seeks to ease restrictions on civilian goods, retain bans on military hardware and come to an agreement on a lengthy list of "dual use" supplies that can be used for both military and civilian purposes.

It also aims to stop smuggling, worth about \$1 billion a year, and have the monies paid to a separate account rather than to Baghdad directly.

On Monday, Iraq's ambassador in Moscow, Mozher al-Douri, said Baghdad would favour Russian firms doing business in the country in return for Moscow's opposition to the resolution.

Before the sanctions were

imposed in 1990, Russia supplied Baghdad with military goods worth up to \$8 billion to be repaid with oil. Its only chance to recoup some of the outstanding debts is if sanctions are lifted and Russian firms are allowed to invest in Iraqi oilfields.

The new resolution would be part of the oil-for-food plan, an exception to the sanctions, which allows Iraq to sell oil to meet basic demands of ordinary Iraqis. The plan has expanded over the years to a large variety of goods but Iraq's oil revenues are put in a UN escrow fund out of which suppliers are paid.

Powell acknowledged the list of "dual use" goods was in dispute. "Where the difficulty has arisen is we have been unable to resolve the various technical issues with the list. And that has become quite a problem which all sides have been working out," he said.

Iraq stopped oil flows on June 4 and threatened to stop trade with its neighbors if the resolution were adopted.

If the council does not reach an agreement on changing the sanctions, it would probably continue the current oil-for-food plan. Powell, however, would not be drawn into a discussion about how long the program might be extended.

Reuters



HD-16

# Sharon sets tough terms for talks

227/6

**NEW YORK, JUNE 26.** Hoping for U.S. support in stabilising a cease-fire with the Palestinians, the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, prefaced a meeting with the President, Mr. George W. Bush, by setting tough conditions for resuming peace talks.

Mr. Sharon was to meet Mr. Bush on Tuesday at the White House, his second visit in three months. The meeting reflects stepped-up U.S. involvement in the West Asia conflict, after an initial period when the Bush administration tried to limit the U.S. role. Speaking in New York on Monday, Mr. Sharon demanded a "total cessation of violence" by the Palestinians before progressing with a U.S.-backed plan for restarting peace negotiations. During a reception in New York for Jewish leaders, he said he would tell Mr. Bush, "We cannot change it, and you have to know we will not change" the demand for an end to all violence.

The U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, has talked of seeking a "100 per cent effort" from the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, to stop nine months of violence, but Mr. Sharon said he would not become involved in a debate over how much violence is acceptable. Later, at a banquet hosted by the American-Israel Friendship League, Mr. Sharon said, "It is not enough that Arafat lower the flames of violence temporarily. He must



**The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, speaks at the America-Israel Friendship League awards dinner in New York on Monday. — AFP**

put out the flames of violence permanently." However, in a speech on Monday at the United Nations, Gen. Powell said he was "anxious to get into the Mitchell plan" after a reduction in violence, referring to a report by an international commission headed by the former U.S. Senator George Mitchell that set out a process for restarting peace negotiations, beginning with a cease-fire, progressing through a cool-

ing-off period, confidence-building measures and finally, negotiations.

One of the confidence-building measures is a complete halt to construction in Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Mr. Sharon opposes the construction halt, though he has accepted the Mitchell proposal, and some analysts say he wants to draw out the earlier phases as much as possible to postpone a confrontation over the settlements.

Mr. Sharon's second invitation to the White House, while Mr. Arafat has yet to see Mr. Bush, is seen as U.S. support for the Israel position in general. However, American Jewish leaders and some diplomats, requesting anonymity, did not believe that Mr. Sharon would be able to persuade Mr. Bush and Gen. Powell to back his zero-violence condition.

Gen. Powell is to leave for West Asia hours after Mr. Sharon meets Mr. Bush. Gen. Powell has said that his goal is to shore up the shaky cease-fire negotiated two weeks ago by the CIA Director, Mr. George Tenet.

The Palestinians charged that Israel violated terms of the Tenet plan by killing a Palestinian militant on Sunday. Mr. Osama Jawabri (28), a leader of Mr. Arafat's Fatah group in the West Bank city of Nablus, died when a public telephone he was using exploded. — AP

## TURKEY'S UNENDING CRISIS

CAUGHT IN THE battle between a military top brass that zealously guards its self-proclaimed role as protector of democracy and an Islamic political group with an extremist agenda, Turkey appears set to slip deeper into crisis. Already facing its worst economic turmoil, with the currency plunging and loss of thousands of jobs since the start of the year, the country's shaky political system has just suffered a major jolt. The constitutional court, Turkey's highest whose rulings cannot be challenged, has banned the main Opposition party, the religious-oriented Virtue Group, on the ground that it was a focal point for pro-Islamic and anti-secular activity. The court has ruled that Virtue violated a law that prohibits religious activities which could undermine the secular polity. Two leading members of the party were expelled from Parliament, including one woman member who caused a stir two years ago when she was denied permission to take the oath of office for refusing to remove her headscarf, considered a symbol of Islamic piety. Because of its religious connotation, the wearing of scarfs by civil servants and students is banned by law. The court ruling has the potential to cause political chaos.

The banned party has 102 members in the 500-member Parliament and on their next step depends the fate of the shaky coalition Government of Turkey's left-wing Prime Minister, Mr. Bulent Ecevit. If the balance that is holding the coalition together is upset, the resulting political instability could undermine the effort to pull the country out of the economic rut. The political-economic link is similar to most other developing countries which have launched on difficult structural reform programmes. Without political support, Mr. Ecevit will find it impossible to push through belt-tightening programmes that are often unpopular. Virtue is the

fourth religious-oriented party to have been banned since the Islamic movement was founded more than 30 years ago. The first and only Islamic Government was dismissed in 1997 following a campaign sponsored by the military which charged that Welfare, the party in power, was attempting to introduce religious rule. The then Prime Minister, Mr. Necmetin Erbakan, was barred from politics for life. Virtue, which has now been banned, sprang from the ashes of the Welfare Party and will most certainly be born in another manifestation of political Islam.

The court ruling in favour of secularists is the latest act in a long-drawn battle between the two sides. In a strange twist to the rule elsewhere, the armed forces in Turkey have taken on the mantle of protecting democracy from religious extremists. But Ataturk's country, which for most of the second half of the last century was ruled by pro-U.S. military dictatorships, finds the road to democracy strewn with many unforeseeable obstacles. The democracy wave that swept parts of Europe as the Cold War wound down witnessed the return of the military to the barracks. And democratic elections revealed surprisingly sizeable support for stridently Islamist political groups, to the acute discomfort of the military and its long-time backers in the West. Turkey's long and in some measure unique battle will continue as long as the powerful military continues to meddle and refuses to allow politics to seek its own solution. This is clear from the experience of countries such as Algeria. In the main, of course, Turkey's problem arises from its existentialist dilemma. Two factors govern this. The first is its strategic geographic location, as the gateway from Asia to Europe, and the second is an eagerness to shed the Asian tag and join the European club.

100-12

# Down to a simmer

21/6

**T**HERE HAS been a sharp drop in the levels of violence between Israelis and Palestinians ever since both sides accepted the "Security Implementation Work Plan" that was brokered by the CIA chief, Mr. George Tenet, on June 13. Neither side has mentally discarded its maximalist position and stray incidents of violence have occurred since the agreement was forged. But if this tenuous peace holds the next week should see the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, push the West Asian antagonists to the next phase of the renewed effort at co-existence.

Mr. Tenet really got down to work after each side had unilaterally declared a ceasefire. The Israeli declaration came soon after the international committee headed by the former U.S. Senator, Mr. George Mitchell, submitted its report. A ceasefire was the primary demand that the Mitchell committee had demanded of both sides. The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, had a valid reason for not reciprocating immediately — he wanted a freeze on construction activity in Jewish settlements to be imposed concurrently — but his delay carried a political cost. A suicide bomb attack in Tel Aviv which killed 22 Israelis occurred between the submission of the Mitchell report and Mr. Arafat's ceasefire call. The balance of international opinion had tilted in Israel's favour by the time Mr. Arafat issued his call. When Mr. Arafat did order his people to desist from attacking (or as they would say counter-attacking) Israelis it appeared that he did so under international pressure.

The Palestinians would consider it unfair that the Tel Aviv bomb incident should be viewed in isolation from the cycle of violence that has rocked the territory for the past nine months. But its occurrence after the submission of the Mitchell report, which was widely viewed as the last chance for a peace between the two sides, made it a singularly different event. It was also the sort of event that seemed set to provoke (and possibly justify) the massive action that Israel has threatened for a long time. So when Mr. Arafat did order the ceasefire it appeared as if he had done so out of fear. In retrospect, Mr. Arafat might have actually welcomed such an Israeli strike since it would have tilted international opinion back in his favour again and perhaps have led to the fulfilment of the Palestinian demand for the posting of an international observer force in the territories. But U.S. and European leaders

*Since the deal brokered between the Israelis and the Palestinians by the CIA chief, Mr. George Tenet, there has been a drop in the violence. But, says Kesava Menon, there are few guarantees that it will last.*

persuaded Mr. Arafat not to run the risk. With both sides declaring ceasefire, the first phase of the four-phase plan for normalisation recommended by the Mitchell committee was started. The committee had recommended that after a ceasefire the two sides should observe a cooling-off period, undertake confidence-building measures and then finally resume negotiations on substantive issues. This last phase is not likely to arrive any time soon even if the two intermediate stages are somehow implemented. When considered in detail the Tenet plan basically tries to tackle the intermediate phases.

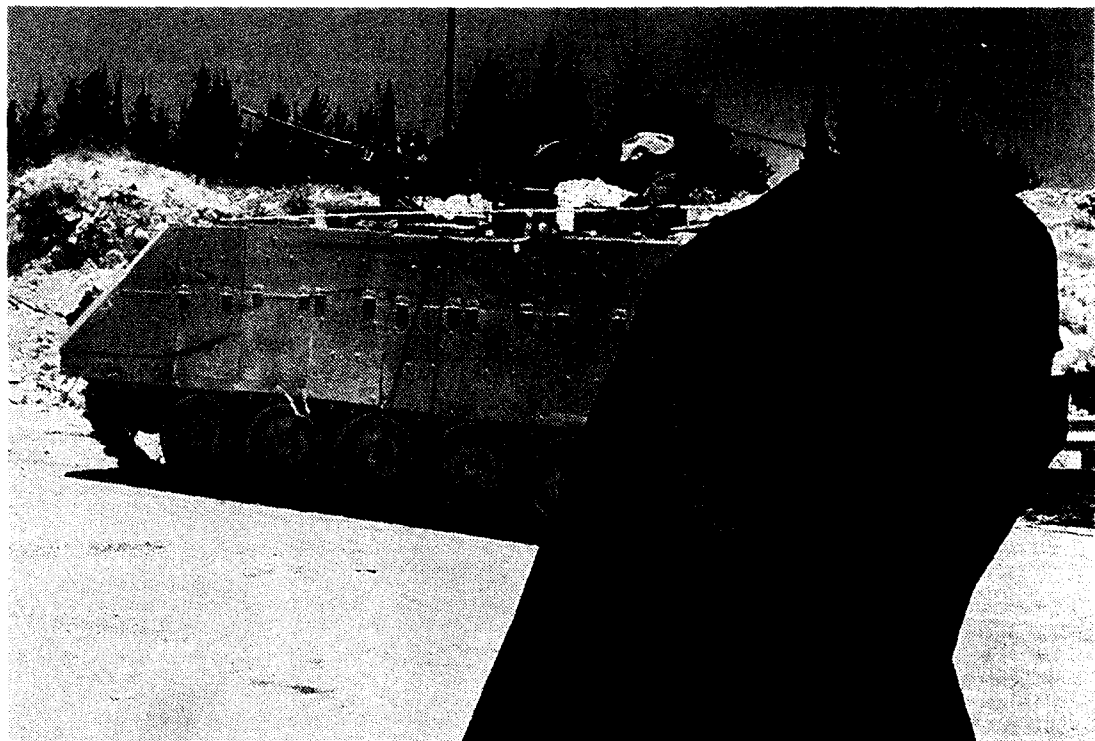
Under the Tenet plan, Israel had to revoke its pro-active policy of intruding into Palestinian territory to interdict militants before they carried out any action. (Since it would have been very difficult to pinpoint what sort of movement on the Palestinian side amounted to a threatened strike this policy left a lot of leeway to junior level troops and the potential for misguided action was immense). Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, had announced

a revocation of the pro-active policy along with his ceasefire order and the Tenet agreement sought to cement this position.

Israel was also asked, under the Tenet plan, to ease its stranglehold on Palestinian towns and villages, to open the international crossing points into Palestinian territory and allow freer movement of Palestinian civilians. Once the situation had begun to settle down Israel was to re-deploy its troops, especially its armour, to the positions they were in before the Palestinian uprising started in late September last year. Israel was also to clear some outposts that Jewish settlers had set up on hillsides in the West Bank. Somewhere down the line Israel was to finally announce a freeze on all construction activity in the settlements. This freeze on construction activity is the major demand of the Palestinians and a cessation of the current hostility will only occur when such a freeze is put into effect.

For its part, the Palestinian Authority was asked to order the personnel of its myriad security forces to desist from attacking Is-

raelis. They were also asked to interdict militants from the "national and religious forces" who were trying to launch attacks (including suicide bomb attacks) inside Israel or against the settlers. The Palestinians were also to wind up the hostile propaganda or incitement against Israel in their media. Palestinian security officials were to work with their Israeli counterparts to ensure that not just armed attacks but hostile demonstrations too were contained. U.S. officials were to be represented on a joint committee that would supervise these arrangements. For all its good intentions, the Tenet plan left ambiguities that both sides were happy to exploit. Israel was demanding impossible standards of compliance from the Palestinians when they said they would make no move on the settlement freeze unless all acts of violence were ended. On their side, the Palestinians were demanding a complete freeze on construction activity in the settlements even before the ceasefire had begun to take hold. Meanwhile, extremists on both sides had declared their opposition to the implementation of the Tenet plan and over the last week there have been reports that Jewish West Bank settlers, like their counterparts among Palestinian extremists, were launching attacks on civilians on the other side. By the weekend, the ceasefire was just about holding but there were few guarantees that it would last.



**A Palestinian woman walks past an Israeli tank in the West Bank town of Hebron... uneasy co-existence.**

# West Asia ceasefire looks shaky as U.S. envoy meets Arafat

140-12  
29/11  
**RAMALLAH (WEST BANK), JUNE 23.** The U.S. West Asia envoy, Mr. William Burns, held talks with the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat today on a truce that showed signs of unravelling after two Israeli soldiers were killed in a suicide bombing.

The militant Islamic group Hamas, which claimed the attack, pledged to carry out more bomb-

ings during a mock funeral for suicide bomber Ismail Bashir al-Massoubi, 27, in the Gaza strip.

In the southern Gaza strip, dozens of families sifted through the rubble of homes destroyed by armoured

Israeli bulldozers in a pre-dawn raid near the border with Egypt and the Jewish settlement of Netzarim.

At least 18 homes were destroyed and 19 families made homeless in the raid which the Israeli army said it carried out for "security reasons" after a spate of grenade attacks against Israeli soldiers in recent days.

"It's obvious there can be no military solution to this problem," Mr. Burns told reporters after his talks with Mr. Arafat in

Ramallah, in the West Bank.

"It's only through a political process that security can be re-established and also a return to a normal life for Palestinians living under very difficult circumstances." I also stressed the importance that the American administration attaches to both sides fulfilling their obligations under the security work plan put together by George Tenet, again as a means of ensuring the security and returning to normal life both peoples deserve," Mr. Burns said.

Mr. Saeb Erekat, senior Palestinian negotiator who attended Saturday's talks, said: "President Arafat reiterated to Mr. Burns our full commitment to carrying out our obligations under the Tenet understandings.

"We asked the U.S. through Mr. Burns to help us face the difficulties our people are facing on the ground from the settlers' violence, the army, the siege and we urge the U.S. to do something to protect the Palestinian people," Mr. Erekat added.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, leaves Israel on Sunday for Washington talks with the President, Mr. George Bush. He is due to stop over in London for talks with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair.

Mr. Sharon told Israeli television in an interview on Friday the ceasefire did not limit Israel's "right of self-defence to stop squads who are planning or embarking on terrorist attacks". — Reuters



**The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat (right), shakes hands with the European Union's foreign policy chief, Mr. Javier Solana, as the E.U. West Asia peace envoy, Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos (centre) smiles, at the end of their meeting in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Friday. Top diplomats of the E.U. and the United States are engaged in a race against time to stop the fragile ceasefire between the Israelis and the Palestinians from collapsing completely. — AFP**

# W Asia peace plan on verge of collapse

Jerusalem, June 21 *AG-11*

ISRAEL REPORTED new flashes of violence on Thursday as the United States stepped up efforts to hold together an Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire which is in danger of collapse after 10 killings in one week.

President Bush telephoned Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat late on Wednesday to urge them to honor the truce brokered last week by US Central Intelligence Agency chief George Tenet.

Bush called on the two leaders to make an "all-out effort" to stop the violence and announced he was sending Secretary of State Colin Powell to the region next week to "secure efforts to preserve the ceasefire and build upon it".

Since the truce began last Wednesday, six Palestinians and four Israelis have been killed, mortar bombs have landed on Jewish settlements in Gaza and several dozen Palestinians have been wounded in confrontations with Israeli troops. In the latest violence, the Army said Palestinians fired a large mortar bomb at a collective farm inside Israel along the Gaza border early on Thursday.

The blast shattered windows of cars more than 50 metres away but no one was hurt.



GEORGE W BUSH

"This represents an escalation in the Palestinian violence and in the size of weapon used against Israel," the Army said in a statement.

The Army also said its troops had come under fire overnight in two areas of the Gaza Strip, and three hand grenades were thrown at soldiers near the border with Egypt. No one was hurt.

Palestinian witnesses said the town of Nazlet Issa, near the administrative border with Israel, had been placed under curfew. The report was not immediately confirmed, but Israel Radio said shots had earlier been fired from the area at an Israeli car.

The Palestinians, who began an uprising against Israeli occupation in Gaza and the West Bank nearly nine months ago, did not comment on the new violence. They blame Israel for the bloodshed which has killed almost 600 people since last September. "The situation we have lived in for the past nine months is such that we have been in a state of self-defence in the face of Israeli aggression," Jibril Rajoub, the top Palestinian security official in the West Bank, told Voice of Palestine Radio.

Israel's security cabinet said after a special session on Wednesday it would continue to observe the truce, before a trip by Sharon to meet Bush at the White House next Tuesday. But the cabinet said Israel would not fully lift blockades or implement any timetable for a troop withdrawal in the West Bank and Gaza Strip until there is "a cessation of terror".

A trilateral committee of Israeli, Palestinian and US security officials met to discuss a timetable for implementing terms of the ceasefire at a Jerusalem hotel late on Wednesday. Israel Radio reported the meeting ended without progress, but Rajoub said: "It was constructive and we agreed to conduct extensive meetings in the coming 48 hours."

Reuters

# Israel says it will adhere to ceasefire

JERUSALEM, JUNE 20. Israel decided today to keep up its part of a shaky week-old ceasefire deal with the Palestinians brokered by the United States, as the Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, prepares to visit Washington next week.

The Israeli Security Cabinet, after a crucial three-hour meeting called by Mr. Sharon to reassess the truce, said the Palestinians had failed to honour their commitments but that Israel would continue to hold its fire for now.

Mr. Sharon has been faced with angry calls from hardliners to pull out of the accord engineered by the U.S. intelligence chief, Mr. George Tenet, after a string of deadly attacks, including the killing of two more Jewish settlers on Monday.

"The Palestinian Authority has still not fulfilled its obligations under the Tenet document — halting terrorism, arresting terrorists, stopping incitement to violence and

taking measures to prevent attacks," said the Cabinet in a statement. "Despite this, Israeli will continue its efforts to implement the Tenet document," it said, adding: "Israel reserves the right to defend itself and prevent attacks against its soldiers and civilians."

The Tenet accord is based on the Mitchell report which calls for an immediate end to the violence, followed by a series of confidence-building measures including a halt to construction in Jewish settlements on land occupied by Israel since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

The Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, said yesterday that his side would "do all that we can" to observe the ceasefire and charged Israel was not holding up its end of the deal by maintaining a blockade around Palestinian territories.

## Arafat meets Mubarak

The Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mub-

arak, and the Palestinian President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, today held talks on regional developments, reports said from Alexandria in Egypt.

The two leaders, who met in a suburb of the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria, ended their meeting without speaking to the media.

They had been expected to review Arab and international efforts to restart peace talks aimed at ending the eight-month-old Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation, diplomatic sources said.

These were the first face-to-face talks between the two since the U.S.-brokered ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians began a week ago.

The two leaders first met one-on-one in a closed session which was later expanded to include officials from both sides. Mr. Arafat headed for Gaza after the talks.

# Sharon no to Peres-Arafat meet

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM, June 17. - The Prime Minister, Mr Ariel Sharon, today rejected a proposal that his foreign minister meet Mr Yasser Arafat, saying there can be no negotiations as long as the violence continues.

The move sparked an angry exchange with the foreign minister, Mr Shimon Peres, suggesting a possible crack in the partnership between ideological rivals whose close collaboration in recent months has been seen as the key to keeping a lid on Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Despite a marked reduction of hostilities, sporadic violence

continued today as the sides traded accusations of non-compliance with the truce negotiated last week by the CIA director, Mr George Tenet.

In Gaza and the West Bank, Palestinians set off two bombs near Israeli soldiers.

But elsewhere, Israeli tanks and armoured vehicles pulled back from sensitive points in Gaza, and Israeli and Palestinian commanders inspected a key junction together for the first time in months. A young Palestinian was killed by Mr Arafat's forces last night, apparently in an effort to prevent fire at Israeli targets.

Mr Peres favours continued

contacts with Mr Arafat, but Mr Sharon insists there can be no peace negotiations until all violence ceases. "Arafat must understand he will not be able to drag Israel into negotiations under fire," said Mr Sharon's aide, Mr Raanan Gissin.

The industry and trade Minister, Ms Dalia Itzik, a Peres ally, complained that at a Cabinet meeting, hardline ministers turned Mr Peres into a punching bag, and Mr Sharon did not defend him. She warned, "It could very well be that we will need to be in the Opposition," a reference to quitting Mr Sharon's government.

Annun visit: The UN Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, wrapped up his West Asia tour today, urging Israel and the Palestinians to seize the opportunity for peace, while the two sides prepared for talks on furthering their shaky US-brokered truce, adds AFP.

But the visit sparked a dispute between moderates and hardliners in Israel's government after Mr Sharon forbade a proposed meeting of Mr Annan, Mr Peres and Mr Arafat in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

Mr Annan had a meeting scheduled with the Israeli President, Mr Moshe Katsav, and Mr Peres on the last day of his week-long trip.

THE STATESMAN

# Bombings mar West Asia ceasefire

Jerusalem, June 17

TWO PALESTINIAN bombings on Sunday in the West Bank and Gaza Strip missed their marks, but cast further doubt on the prospect that political contacts advocated by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan would begin any time soon.

An explosive device went off near a military vehicle that also came under gunfire outside the West Bank city of Nablus, the Israeli army said. One soldier was injured, it said; rescue workers said the soldier was injured in the hand.

In the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian drove a donkey cart loaded with explosives toward Israeli soldiers in Israeli-controlled Dahaniyeh village, detonated the explosives and ran, said Israeli army spokesman Maj. Ran Adam. Israeli soldiers shot the man in the leg, then took him to an Israeli hospital for treatment, Adam said. Nobody else was injured, he said.

Not all explosives had detonated and soldiers were deactivating what was left, Adam said. Though violence has diminished, he said the area along the Egypt border remains a hotspot.

"There are less shooting incidents in the area, less roadside bombs. That shows that things are different. But on the border (at) Rafah, the events were very heavy," he said.

The Israeli army also reported several shootings at Israeli targets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip before dawn Sunday. An Israeli post in Rafah came under gunfire and a hail of grenades, the army said. Soldiers returned fire. Eight Palestinians with slight to moderate injuries were treated early Sunday at Rafah hospital, said Dr. Ali Musa.

Late on Saturday, Rafah residents tried to stop Palestinian gunmen from firing on Israeli troops from their neighborhood, witnesses and Palestinian security officials said. The gunmen then started shooting randomly, apparently killing 12-year-old Suleyman al-Massari and injuring four others, they said.

Palestinian security officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said on Sunday they were searching for the gunmen, who are considered to have violated Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's ceasefire order.

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



# Israel starts to implement Tenet plan

Jerusalem, June 14: Israel's armed forces have been given orders to start implementing US CIA director George Tenet's ceasefire plan, the defence ministry said on Wednesday.

The Army has been ordered to ease restrictions on travel by Palestinian security officers and to allow the free movement of goods into and out of Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, defence minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said in a statement.

"Every effort must be taken so the process will succeed and to show seriousness and good intentions," Mr Ben-Eliezer said.

He said that, within 48 hours, Israel would "carry out more activities to ease the life of the Palestinian population and to start chang-

ing the deployment of its troops on the ground."

Mr Tenet chaired an inaugural meeting of an Israeli-Palestinian security committee on Wednesday to kick off the ceasefire plan, which Israel accepted on Tuesday and the Palestinians approved early on Wednesday.

Under the truce deal, Israel must start lifting its blockade of the Palestinian territories 48 hours after the first session of the trilateral security committee.

Israeli Army spokesman Ron Kitrey said the regulations governing when soldiers are allowed to open fire had been tightened.

"The personal responsibility to open fire in self defence will require an extra level of authority," he told Israel's Channel II televi-

sion. The defence ministry said that Israel and the Palestinians would prepare a plan next week to "ensure there is quiet on the ground and conduct full security cooperation." The ceasefire plan, which has not been officially released, requires Israel to ease its blockade on the Palestinian territories and pull its troops back to positions held before a Palestinian revolt erupted last September. It requires the Palestinian Authority to collect illegal arms, arrest militants, try to prevent attacks from its territories and refuse sanctuary to people who have carried out attacks.

Meanwhile a report from Amman said that Jordan began implementing measures on Thursday restricting the entry of Palestinian resi-

dents of the West Bank, saying it was an attempt to block any mass displacement of people from their homeland.

Jordanian interior minister Awad Khulaifat said in a directive that, with few exceptions, Palestinian holders of "green card" — temporary Jordanian passports — will not be allowed into the kingdom.

Mr Khulaifat, also deputy prime minister, said the measures were taken to abort any attempts by Israel to displace the Palestinians "and to preserve the historic and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people."

The measure, first announced by Mr Khulaifat on Monday — he described the step as temporary — is expected to affect thousands of Palestinians. (Reuters)

## Palestinian, Israeli die in West Bank shootout

Ramallah, June 14: A clandestine meeting on Thursday between Israeli security men and a Palestinian agent ended in a shootout in which the Palestinian and an Israeli officer were killed, a Palestinian official said.

The security official said Ayub Da'dura, who was in a Palestinian prison for two years for collaborating with Israel, had gone to meet his Israeli handlers in the West Bank and shot them, killing the military officer and wounding his bodyguard.

A third person in the car then killed Da'dura, the official said. "We have this information from very well-informed (Israeli) sources," the official added. Earlier, an Israeli police spokesman said the wounded Israeli had killed Da'dura. An Israeli general told Israel Radio that an Army officer was dead. Israeli Major-General Doron Almog said in a live radio broadcast "Today there was an attack in the West Bank and an Israeli officer was killed. It is very painful for all of us."

At least 457 Palestinians, 112 Israelis and 13 Israeli Arabs have been killed since the fighting erupted in September. (Reuters)

## Bush seeks 'concrete action' in West Asia

Brussels, June 14: US President George W. Bush called on Wednesday for "concrete actions" by Israel and the Palestinians to carry out a US-backed ceasefire designed to end eight months of West Asia violence.

"I am encouraged that both Israel and the Palestinian Authority have agreed to a ceasefire plan," Mr Bush told reporters after meeting Nato leaders in Brussels, where he is on the second leg of a five-nation tour of Europe.

"But this is just a first step. It's one thing for folks to sign a piece of paper, it's another thing for the parties to act," Mr Bush added.

US CIA director George Tenet on Wednesday won Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's agreement to the proposals, already accepted by Israel, after late-night talks with the Palestinian leader.

Mr Bush described Mr Tenet as "cautiously optimistic" about the plan, which aims to end violence since the uprising last September. (Reuters)

## Peace prospects brighten in W. Asia

**JERUSALEM, JUNE 13.** The CIA chief, Mr. George Tenet, today brought together senior Israeli and Palestinian security officials to begin implementing a U.S.-brokered truce the two sides have accepted reluctantly and with serious reservations. <sup>HD-16</sup>

The meeting, capping a week of negotiations, was held under a heavy cloak of secrecy at an undisclosed location in Tel Aviv.

Mr. Tenet left the U.S. embassy compound in Tel Aviv at noon, and embassy officials said he was headed to the three-way session. Palestinian officials later confirmed the meeting had started.

The Tenet deal raised the prospect of ending nine months of fighting that have claimed nearly 500 lives on the Palestinian side and more than 100 on the Israeli side. <sup>14/6</sup>

Yet, previous high-level truce efforts have collapsed, including personal intervention by the former U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, and both sides remained wary.

Mr. Tenet's cease-fire deal marked the highest-profile West Asia mediation effort yet by the Bush administration which in its first months had kept its distance from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Later in the day, Israel said it considered the truce to have taken effect with the end of the three-way meeting, at 3 p.m., and Israeli media said the two sides would begin carrying out some of the cease-fire provisions in the next 48 hours. However, Palestinian officials described the meeting as a failure, saying their Israeli counterparts did not commit to specific steps, such as easing a security closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A senior U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the session was constructive, but suggested there was no final agreement on implementation.

Meanwhile, the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, praised the cease-fire, but said he was eager to see proof that it will end violence in West Asia.

While Mr. Tenet was trying to cement the truce, two Israelis were injured in Palestinian shooting attacks on Wednesday. A 21-year-old Israeli woman was seriously wounded while standing at a bus stop near the Jewish settlement of Ofra in the West Bank. — AP

THE HINDU

## 'Palestinians, Israelis accept truce plan'

JERUSALEM: Both Israel and the Palestinians have accepted a plan to call a truce, the U.S. embassy said on Wednesday, raising the prospect of an end to nearly nine months of fighting that has



taken almost 600 lives.

After a late-night meeting between CIA director George Tenet and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Palestinian officials said they accepted the plan in principle, but still had reservations about two of its elements. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had announced his acceptance of the plan a few hours earlier.

The U.S. embassy released a statement saying that the plan had been accepted by both sides. "Its purpose is to resume security cooperation, end the violence and restore the situation on the ground that existed" before hostilities erupted last September, the statement said.

Palestinian officials, requesting anonymity, said they objected to one element, creating a buffer zone between Israel and the West Bank. Also, they wanted to add a timetable to the provisions calling for Israel to lift restrictions and pull its forces back to positions they held before the fighting. (PTI)

## 'Hindu dress code not yet endorsed by Taliban chief'

KABUL: A controversial plan by Afghanistan's Taliban regime to make Hindus wear yellow stickers to distinguish them from Muslims may not go ahead, Afghan's foreign minister said on Wednesday.

Wakil Ahmed Mutawakel said the dress code had not yet been endorsed by Taliban chief Mulla Mohammad Omar.

He described Mulla Omar, the Taliban militia's supreme leader, as the final authority who could accept or reject the proposal.

"We are waiting for his verdict," Mr Mutawakel said.

Instead of being made to wear the yellow cloth, Mr Mutawakel said Hindus may instead be made to carry an identity card or a piece of paper that they could keep in their pockets.

The Taliban's religious police in may advised Hindus in Afghanistan to carry a thumb-sized yellow piece of cloth inside their pockets as a mark of distinction. (AFP)

THE HINDUS OF AFGHANISTAN

1999

# West Asia security meeting put off

REUTERS

RAMALLAH (West Bank), June 11. — The CIA director, Mr George Tenet, postponed at least till today a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian security officers after running into a snag over his blueprint for a lasting truce.

Yesterday, Israel welcomed Mr Tenet's truce proposals, while the Palestinians expressed reservations about the plan the details of which haven't been released officially.

"Mr Tenet suggested the best thing, if not the most perfect, to both sides in order to enter into an actual ceasefire," the Israeli foreign minister, Mr Shimon Peres, said.

Sources said Israel had responded positively to most of the proposals to cement a ceasefire which Mr Yasser Arafat declared on 2 June, a day after 21 people died in a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv.

A senior Palestinian security officer said: "We submitted our written response to the American side, which included our reservations over the American document." The official didn't elaborate.

Mr Tenet, in the region since Wednesday, had planned to host a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian security officers yesterday, but it was postponed by at least a day to give him time to study the responses of each side, sources said.

Israel and the Palestinians have accused each other of violating the truce over the past week. "I think this confrontation with the Palestinians will be a long one," the Israeli army chief, Mr Shaul Mofaz, said in a speech yesterday.

"We don't see a real desire by the Palestinian Authority to end terrorism. We don't see actual efforts of prevention. We don't see actions or results because the shooting continues from the Palestinians," he said. The army said Palestinians fired four mortar bombs at the Jewish settlement of Kfar Darom in Gaza late yesterday, causing no injuries or damage.

THE STRAITS

# Arab deaths hit West Asia diplomacy

11/11  
11/16  
Jerusalem, June 10

A FRAGILE cease-fire hung precariously in the balance on Sunday after Israeli tank fire killed three Palestinian women while they sat in the family tent near a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian hospital officials in Gaza said Selmiya al-Malalha, Hekmat al-Malalha and Nasra al-Malalha were killed and three others were wounded, two seriously, by the tank fire. The deaths late on Saturday were the first fatalities since Palestinian President Yasser Arafat vowed last week to join an Israeli truce to end eight months of fighting in which at least 453 Palestinians, 110 Israelis and 13 Israeli Arabs have died.

The Israeli army said tanks fired three shells at "two armed figures" who were in an open area near the Netzarim Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip after several Israeli military positions near the settlement came under Palestinian fire. "The forces returned fire only at the sources of the fire," the army said in a statement.

The killings threatened to derail a US-led drive to cement the tenuous cease-fire and pave the way for a renewal of peace negotiations which deadlocked shortly before a Palestinian uprising against occupation erupted last September.

Senior Israeli and the Palestinian security officials were expected to meet CIA chief George Tenet in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Sunday to respond to the US spy chief's cease-fire blueprint.

Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson, whose country currently holds the EU presidency, and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana were to throw the weight of the EU into the peace drive in meetings with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Arafat on Sunday.

Israeli newspapers on Sun-

day reported details of Tenet's proposal to implement a full ceasefire.

According to newspapers, Tenet called for Israel not to attack Palestinian targets, to pull its troops back to positions held before the revolt erupted and for the army to prevent revenge attacks against Palestinians and damage to their property. The newspaper reports added that Tenet's plan called for the Palestinian Authority to arrest Islamic Jihad and Hamas militants, halt incitement and destroy mortar round stockpiles. In addition, the plan calls on Palestinians to thwart attacks against Israelis from Palestinian-ruled territory and prevent those carrying out attacks in other areas from taking sanctuary in Palestinian Authority areas.

The CIA chief's proposal also recommended a renewal of security cooperation between the sides, including joint patrols and a security council which would meet once a week to ensure the cease-fire was implemented, the Yedioth Ahronoth and Maariv newspapers reported.

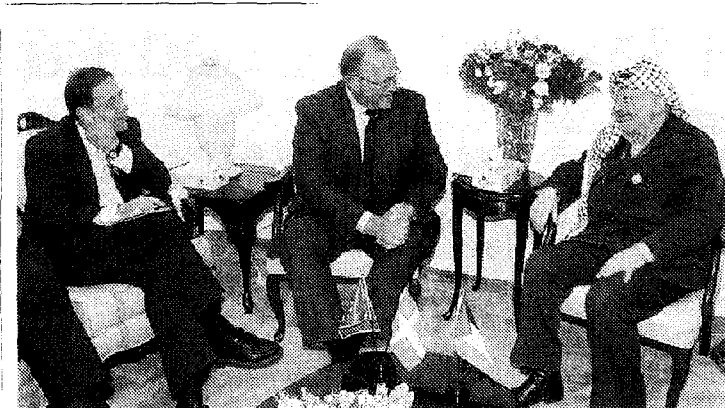
Officials were not immediately available to comment on the reports, but the details were consistent with various demands made by both sides.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was to visit the region next week to coordinate the international push for a truce and renewal of peace negotiations. Arafat vowed, after a Hamas suicide bomber killed 20 people in Tel Aviv 10 days ago, to join a truce Israel called on May 22. Fighting has since eased though the ceasefire has been punctured by violent confrontations.

The Israeli army reported at least 13 incidents of gunfire directed at Israeli targets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Friday and Saturday including the firing of seven mortar rounds in Gaza.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



The Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat (right), meets the Swedish Prime Minister and European Union Chairman, Mr. Goran Persson (centre), and the E.U. Foreign Policy Commissioner, Mr. Javier Solana, in Ramallah on Sunday. — AFP

## E.U. tries to save truce

RAMALLAH (WEST BANK), JUNE 10. The European Union led international efforts to save the flimsy West Asia ceasefire today after Israeli tank fire killed three Palestinian women.

Senior Israeli and Palestinian security officials were expected to respond to U.S. CIA chief, Mr. George Tenet's blueprint for a lasting truce in a meeting in the West Bank town of Ramallah later today. Officials were also due to hold talks with the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. William

11/6 WPM  
11/6 WPM  
Burns. The Swedish Prime Minister, Mr. Goran Persson, whose country currently holds the E.U. presidency, said after meeting the Palestinian President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, in Ramallah on Sunday he hoped the killing of the women would not destroy the truce.

11/6 11/6  
The three women were sitting in a family tent when they were killed by Israeli tank shells on Saturday, Palestinian hospital officials said. — Reuters

THE HINDS

11/6 11/6

**G**ERMAN Foreign minister Joschka Fischer heard the explosion which rocked Tel-Aviv and killed 20 young Israelis outside a beach-front disco last Friday night from his hotel room 200 metres away. The first thing that went through his mind, he said later, was his own children, aged 17 and 22, just the kind who go out dancing on a Friday night.

He was so appalled by the carnage that he not only joined the mourners but went to Ramallah the next day and insisted that Yasser Arafat rein in the gunmen and the bombers. Mere condemnation, he berated the Palestinian leader, was no longer enough. To ensure there was no ambiguity, Mr Fischer worked with Mr Arafat on the text of his ceasefire call.

The disco atrocity transformed Israel's international image, literally overnight, from bully boy to victim. The Palestinians reverted to their old role as the bad guys, which is just what Israeli publicists pray for. But Israelis don't relish being victims. That wasn't why they created a Jewish state. They know that to appear

## Of provocation & restraint

For Ariel Sharon, Yasser Arafat remains an unreconstructed 'terrorist'. Israelis are not too optimistic about the ceasefire, though Hamas made a show of joining it, writes ERIC SILVER

vulnerable is to invite more bombings, shootings and boycotts.

Two weeks before the disco bombing, Ariel Sharon's national-unity government reacted to a suicide attack that killed five Israeli shoppers in Netanya by sending F-16 warplanes and helicopter gunships to bomb the West Bank and Gaza. This time, although the provocation was even more horrendous, ministers responded with calculated restraint. "It is hard to remember an occasion in recent Israeli history," marvelled the star political columnist Yoel Marcus in *Ha'aretz*, "when the government has made such a surprising, correct and wise decision."

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had no illusions. For him, Mr Arafat remains an unrecon-

structed "terrorist". Israelis are not investing too many hopes in the ceasefire, though Hamas (the people who sent the disco bomber) made a show of joining it. "I wish I were wrong," confided Defence Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, "but in my opinion, Mr Arafat's steps are tactical, not strategic. We will judge him by results, but at the same time we are preparing for any eventuality." Shimon Peres, the 77-year-old foreign minister who never gives up, seized the opening to woo Mr Sharon away from knee-jerk retaliation and grant diplomacy one more chance. The sympathy bonus was not to be squandered this time.

The world community responded. Mr Fischer extended his stay and shuttled between Jerusalem and Ramallah. Russia, the Palestinians' historic patron, sent a special envoy, Andrei Vdovin. George Bush's new West Asian trouble-shooter, William Burns, was expected to follow. "What was achieved over the last few days," Mr Peres rejoiced, "is a demonstration of what a political act, supported by the international community, can do in the most effective manner - without shooting, pain and accusations. It was a show of strength for diplomacy." Mr Peres was speaking on Tuesday after a first session with the Russian envoy.

Post-Communist Moscow is no longer the West Asian spoiler. Mr Vdovin repeatedly stressed its standing as a co-sponsor of the half-forgotten Madrid peace conference a decade ago. Russia was working not against, but in concert with, Uncle Sam, the Europeans, the UN, not to mention the Egyptians and the Jordanians. To the astonishment of those who portrayed Mr Sharon as a reckless war monger in the Israeli election campaign at the beginning of 2001, the Likud leader is not just giving Mr Peres his head, but shielding him from the wrath of the right.

He may be 73, set in his perceptions, but having attained the premiership against all the odds, he is learning new lessons. "It is true that when I was in Opposi-

tion I attacked," he conceded to a Likud critic. "That's your role in Opposition.

But the person in charge has to take all the issues into consideration. The overall responsibility is on my shoulders." "In the same way, a few days earlier, Mr Sharon resisted the demands of bereaved West Bank settlers for instant revenge. He enjoys being "the person in charge", and he's not going to let the settlers and their friends dictate how or where he should lead. Above all, he sweated blood to get the Bush administration on his side, and he's determined not to lose it.

The danger, as the waspish commentator Nahum Barnea predicted in *Yediot Aharonot*, is that he is falling into a honey trap. Where does he go from here? If Mr Arafat reneges on his ceasefire, Mr Sharon can say: "I tried. Now you know who is the real enemy of peace. Don't accuse us of disproportionate use of force." But what if Mr Peres's perennial optimism proves right and the diplomatic momentum gathers speed? All of the international players agree that the only available road map is the Mitchell committee's report, delivered in May by ex-Senator George Mitchell and his team of cosmopolitan factfinders.

The report calls for an immediate ceasefire, followed by a freeze on all settlement building. Mr Peres and Ben-Eliezer, Labour ministers both, are happy with that. But would Mr Sharon, the "father of the settlements", be equally willing? If and when the ceasefire gels, he will not be able to evade the choice. Neither the Palestinians nor the Americans will buy the cop-out of "building for natural growth."

First, because it was used in the past as a cover for rapid expansion of the Jewish West Bank communities, and second because there are thousands of apartments now standing empty there. As a minister in Menachem Begin's first Likud government in the late 70s, Mr Sharon paved the way for, and presided over, settlement evacuation from Sinai under the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. But the attachment to the West Bank, heart of the ancient Jewish homeland, raises a massive ideological hurdle. A total freeze will require exceptional political courage. Mr Sharon is no coward, but that would test even his heroic reputation.

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

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by **JUDD**

**FOUR RACK TOTAL**  
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

**DIRECTIONS:** Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in *The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary* (Merriam-Webster) and *OSW Official Scrabble Words* (Chambers). **JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW**

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F <sub>4</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>8</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>1</sub>	Y <sub>4</sub>		RACK 1 = <b>38</b>
C <sub>3</sub>	L <sub>1</sub>	A <sub>1</sub>	S <sub>1</sub>	P <sub>3</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	D <sub>2</sub>	RACK 2 = <b>62</b>
A <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	L <sub>1</sub>	O <sub>1</sub>	G <sub>2</sub>	RACK 3 = <b>66</b>
B <sub>3</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>1</sub>	Z <sub>10</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>1</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	RACK 4 = <b>104</b>

PAR SCORE 170-180  
JUDD'S TOTAL **270**

2-9-01  
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THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

201

## TOWARDS A TRUCE IN WEST ASIA

A 'PROMISING BEGINNING' towards peace in West Asia has been indicated by the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat. This is how the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, is willing to assess Mr. Arafat's latest call to the Palestinians to observe a ceasefire in their 'intifada' or uprising against the prolonged occupation of their territories by the Jewish state. Mr. Peres does not of course reckon Mr. Arafat's call as a move for complete ceasefire. Israel, or more precisely the moderate section of its leadership, shares the U.S. administration's latest view that Mr. Arafat's unconditional call for an end to violence in West Asia might, if heeded by both Palestinians and Israelis in a reciprocal fashion, lead to a firm truce. In the calculation of the Bush administration, a truce could first shape a definitive 'cooling-off period'. This, in turn, would be useful to fashion confidence-building measures with the purpose of creating a climate for 'final status' talks. The focus of such negotiations will be the delineation of a Palestinian state in a manner that could settle the fundamental dispute between the Jews and the Palestinians within a framework of peace and stability. The Bush administration is keen to stay engaged in West Asia, in respect of the Palestinian question, for a calibrated diplomatic intervention. The model of peace-odyssey sessions, which the previous Clinton administration held in conjunction with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, is disfavoured by Washington at this stage. The failure of those sessions is blamed, in the final analysis, on the inadequacy of efforts to create a sense of trust between the primary parties, Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

This explains the dynamics of the current diplomatic intervention by the U.S. It was in the context of last week's suicide-bombing by the Palestinian Hamas group inside Israel that the U.S. sought to restrain Mr. Ariel Sharon, the Jewish supremacist Prime Minister, from ordering a

massive retaliation in line with his practised policy. The bombing was the worst incident of its kind since the commencement of the latest Palestinian 'intifada' several months ago, and a fierce retributive strike by Israel would have only complicated the situation. Even as Mr. Sharon was counselled to hold fire and measure his response, the U.S. mounted pressure on Mr. Arafat to call for a truce. Washington's overall objective was to seize the momentum generated by the publication of the Mitchell Commission's recommendations on ways to pull West Asia from the brink. By and large, the panel's report has found favour with the moderate sections of Israelis and Palestinians. For Mr. Arafat, the new signs of Washington's renewed interest in a resolution of the Palestinian puzzle are too precious to be ignored. That should account for the readiness with which he made a direct appeal to the Palestinians to cease violence.

The radical Hamas has hardened its position after sending out mixed signals about its gameplan in this evolving situation. It was first willing to scale down or be selective about the attacks it might have been planning against the Israeli interests. Yet, the overall initial mood in official Israel has been one of some willingness not to write off the Arafat offer in a hurry. While this may have opened a very narrow window of opportunity for the peace lobbyists, the international community should also adopt a 'hands-on' approach to encourage the two warring parties to work out a ceasefire and a cooling-off period. It is a good sign that Russia is beginning to reverse its waning interest in West Asia, given the Bush administration's circumspection about the diplomatic minefield. The basic issues having remained largely unaltered since the beginning of the Madrid-Oslo process in the early 1990s, the search for solutions must still be preceded by an exercise of psycho-conditioning the parties for peace.



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# Hamas official rules out truce with Israel

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Gaza, June 5

11/24 6/6

A SENIOR official from the militant Islamic group Hamas said on Tuesday his movement had not agreed to implement a cease-fire between the Palestinians and Israel and would continue to attack Israelis "everywhere."

"Our policy is to continue the Intifada (uprising) and resistance. We are not changing our policy. Resistance means to attack the Israelis everywhere by all means," Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, a senior Hamas official in Gaza, said. "We are not offering any cease-fire."

Hamas claimed responsibility for an attack in Tel Aviv on Friday in which a suicide bomber killed 20 people in the deadliest attack in Israel since a Palestinian uprising against occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip began in September.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, facing international pressure and the threat of Israeli reprisals, called on Saturday for a cease-fire.

A Hamas official had suggested on Monday that his group might consider holding back attacks inside Israel, conditional on Israeli actions.

"The previous talk about willingness to (agree to a cease-fire)...was due to miscommunication between the military wing and the political wing" of Hamas, said al-Zahhar, a member of the group's political arm.

Hamas opposes Israeli-Pales-

tinian peacemaking. The group has carried out bombings in Israel in past years which killed scores of Israelis and has played a prominent role in the current Palestinian uprising which erupted after peace talks.

Israeli forces arrested a senior Palestinian official and two others on Tuesday in the West Bank, Palestinian Authority officials and witnesses said.

The officials said an Israeli patrol stopped a Palestinian taxi travelling between the West Bank towns of Jenin and Nablus and arrested Majdi Alawneh, a senior Palestinian liaison official with Israel in Nablus.

"We protested to the Israelis and asked them to release Alawneh immediately," said an official in the Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs. Family members said two Palestinian youths were also arrested by Israeli troops in a village near the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

Israel Radio reported that as many as 10 Palestinians, including Alawneh, had been arrested on "suspicion of terrorist activities". Israeli security officials could not immediately comment on the reported arrests.

The arrests came as Israelis and Palestinians, locked in eight months of violence, tried to implement a ceasefire to end the bloodshed that erupted in September after peace talks reached a deadlock.

Reuters/AP

FILE PHOTO: AP/WIDEWORLD

# Hamas agrees on ceasefire, but backs out later

Gaza, June 5: A senior official from the militant Islamic group Hamas said on Tuesday that his movement had not agreed to implement a ceasefire between the Palestinians and Israel and would continue to attack Israelis "everywhere."

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ABOVE: Palestinians chant slogans against Israel during a demonstration of the Islamic militant group Hamas in Ramallah on Tuesday. The militant Islamic group Hamas said that it would continue to attack Israelis everywhere, setting back hopes that the Palestinians were inching towards a ceasefire with Israel. (Reuters)

LEFT: A Palestinian girl prays during a ceremony to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed in the Abraham Mosque in Hebron on Monday. (Reuters)

## Arrest Tel Aviv suicide

THE ASIAN AGE

36 JUN 2001

# Arafat stopped from flying to Gaza

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

JERUSALEM, June 5. - Israel has blocked Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat, from travelling from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip in his helicopter, effectively confining him to the West Bank, Israeli public radio said today.

Mr Arafat's helicopter would have been required to pass through Israeli airspace to complete the trip.

"The Israeli army did not physically prevent Arafat's helicopter from taking off," an army spokesman told AFP. "It was apparently at the political level that the decision was made to refuse the right to take off."

"This measure is part of the pressure that must be applied to force Arafat to fight against those who plan terrorist acts," Israeli telecommunications minister Mr Reuven Rivlin told Israeli public radio.

The Israeli army controls security at the airport in Gaza City, as well as at the crossing points between autonomous Palestinian territories in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, into Jordan and Egypt, respectively.

Israel reinforced its blockade of the Palestinian territories after a Palestinian suicide bomb attack on Friday night outside a Tel Aviv discotheque that killed 20 Israelis - mainly teen-



Palestinian protesters with a placard saying intifada should continue. At the Ein el-Helweh refugee camp, near the city of Sidon, on Tuesday. - AP/PTI

agers. More than 100 Israelis were injured in the bombing.

Following the attack, Mr Arafat on Saturday ordered his forces to put in a total and immediate ceasefire.

The truce received a qualified boost yesterday from Palestinian groups Hamas and Fatah, which announced their own ceasefire, but made them conditional on Israel's withdrawal from all occupied territories.

Israeli foreign minister Mr Shimon Peres said today that it could take weeks for the Palestinians to deliver the ceasefire

which their leader Mr Arafat has promised.

Peres said he believed that Mr Arafat's powers were limited.

"But his ceasefire declaration proves that he is in relative control of the situation and could arrest those responsible for (anti-Israeli) attacks," he said.

"We have said that the ceasefire should be tested over eight weeks and the Palestinians have spoken of four weeks. I suppose the Americans will fix a date somewhere in the middle," he added.

Mr Peres said the report by the

US-led Mitchell commission into the violence that broke out last September called for a "test period" of four to eight weeks.

Then peace talks should resume on the basis of Israeli government programme, which is grounded in UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which foresee an exchange of land for peace, he said.

Mr Peres added that Israel "would prefer that the first phase of the negotiations concentrate on the application of accords already signed" by the two sides.

THE STATESMAN

7-6-00

# Arafat declares ceasefire

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

GAZA CITY, June 3. - Mr Yasser Arafat ordered the security services in a written statement to "implement a total and immediate ceasefire on Israeli targets," an official Palestinian official said.

Mr Arafat ordered his services to implement this ceasefire "in all sect under the Palestinian Authority's control, even by force," a high-ranking Palestinian security official said last night.

"Orders regarding the imposition of the ceasefire as early as tonight have been given following meetings between security officials, and forces will be deployed in the field to ensure its implementation," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

He said this order demonstrated Mr Arafat's commitment to an easing of violence. For the first time, Mr Arafat said yesterday he was ready to do "whatever necessary to achieve an immediate and unconditional ceasefire" with Israel.

His pledge came after a suicide attack in Tel Aviv on Friday night which killed the bomber, 18 Israelis and injured more than a hundred.

The Palestinian official said: "By ordering the ceasefire, Mr Arafat met European, US and Arab requests." The Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that the Palestinian leader spoke yesterday to the US Secretary of State, Gen Colin Powell, the Egyptian President, Mr Hosni Mubarak, the UN Secretary General, Mr Kofi Annan,

and the Arab League Secretary General, Mr Amr Mussa.

Israel cautious: Israel reacted with scepticism today to Palestinian ceasefire moves but held off retaliation for a suicide bombing that killed 20 people, adds Reuters.

"Israel is still freezing in the coming hours the military steps it had planned to take in retaliation for the Tel Aviv bombing," an Israeli political source said after the Prime Minister, Mr Ariel Sharon's Cabinet held its weekly meeting.

Funerals were scheduled for 10 of the suicide bombing victims today.

**Warplanes fly over south Lebanon:** Israeli warplanes entered Lebanese airspace today, flying low over southern border towns and the Bekaa Valley.

Witnesses said the jet aircraft broke the sound barrier and carried out mock raids in, what has become, an almost daily ritual since the beginning of last month.

Lebanon's Hizbollah movement yesterday praised Friday's Palestinian suicide bombing of a Tel Aviv nightclub. Hizbollah (Party of God) guerrillas spearheaded a Lebanese guerrilla campaign that forced Israel to withdraw its forces from south Lebanon in May last year, ending 22 years of military occupation.

**Russia to send envoy:** Russia today called for swift implementation of a US-led committee's recommendations for ending West Asia violence following last week's Tel Aviv bombing, and said it was sending a special envoy to the region.



Israeli Anna Sinichkina (16), one of the victims of Saturday's suicide bomb attack, rests as Maya Lesnov visits her in a hospital in Tel Aviv on Sunday. - AP/PTI

As part of international efforts to ease tensions after Friday's attack on a Tel Aviv nightclub.

"(Mr) Ivanov and (Gen) Powell expressed their deep concern at the development of the situation in West Asia," the foreign minister, Mr Igor Ivanov, telephoned his US and Israeli counterparts and the Palestinian President, Mr Yasser Arafat, the foreign ministry said.

Mr Ivanov made the calls to Mr Arafat, the US Secretary of State, Gen Colin Powell, and the Israeli foreign minister, Mr Shi-

## DISPUTED DEATHS

RAMALLAH (West Bank), June 3. - Two Palestinian brothers were killed in the West Bank today in circumstances disputed by Palestinian and Israeli police.

Palestinian police quoted witnesses as saying that the two men died when their truck crashed after being shot at by Jewish settlers. Israeli police said there was no sign of shooting on the bodies or the car. - Reuters

West Asia peace process, to stop the spiral of violence and restore political dialogue," the ministry said.

It said a Russian envoy, ambassador-at-large Mr Andrei Vdovin, would travel to the region to hold consultations.

**Border with Egypt closed:** An Egyptian border official said Israel closed its Rafah border with Egypt today, as part of Israeli government measures to tighten the blockade on Palestinian areas following the suicide bombing.

A communique issued by an emergency Cabinet meeting yesterday said: "Israel would do whatever is necessary to protect its citizens," but gave no official hint of what concrete action it might take.

Israeli political sources said, however, that initial steps included tightening the blockades of West Bank and Gaza, closing international crossings from Palestinian areas to Jordan and Egypt and closing Gaza's seaport and airport.

WEST ASIA / ARAFAT CONDEMNS ATTACK, ORDERS CEASEFIRE

# 17 Israelis killed in suicide bombing

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JUNE 2. Seventeen Israelis were killed and 90 injured in a suicide bomb attack in Tel Aviv in the early hours of Saturday. The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, has expressed his condemnation of the attack and, more importantly, ordered a complete ceasefire. It was unclear whether the Israeli Cabinet would be satisfied with the ceasefire call they have been demanding of Mr. Arafat or whether they would take some retaliatory action.

A suicide bomber, suspected to be Palestinian, blew himself up, scattering nails and scrap that he had wrapped around himself outside a night-club on the Tel Aviv street front. Israeli police later confirmed that 17 Israelis, 12 women and five men, and the suicide bomber were killed outright. Witnesses said that there was blood and body parts scattered all over the site. Many among the injured have lost their limbs. No group had claimed responsibility for the attack till late on Saturday evening. The Israel Government ordered an immediate and complete closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and held a series of sessions to decide whether they should order a stronger response.

The night club, or rather a cluster of establishments, is a popular spot and is situated at one end of the sea front boulevard which is crowded at all times of the day and night. This night club complex is just a parking lot and six-



Wounded youths are treated after the suicide bombing at the Acha nightclub in Tel Aviv on Friday. — Reuters

lane road avenue across from several major hotels and the Indian Embassy too is not very far away. The night club complex is a little isolated and its surroundings are not well lit so it is more popular with youth and is a fairly wild place on most nights of the week.

Much worse damage could have occurred if the blast had taken place a kilometre north of this spot since that area is packed with restaurants, bars, fast food joints and has much more of a family clientele. In his statement, Mr. Arafat condemned all forms of vi-

olence against civilians and called on people on both sides to observe a complete ceasefire. His aides were quick to point out that this was for the first time since the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising eight months ago that Mr. Arafat had unequivocally called on his fighters to stop attacking Israelis. To that extent, Mr. Arafat does appear to have fulfilled the demands that Israel and the U.S. have been making for the past couple of weeks. But it is not certain that Israel will not consider this call as having come too late in the day.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, had ordered a unilateral ceasefire more than 10 days ago and although Palestinians say that this order has not been strictly observed, the U.S. and the E. U. had lined up behind Israel in demanding that Mr. Arafat respond in kind.

There has been a strident debate going on within Israel about the best manner in which to respond to the spate of attacks launched by Palestinians after Mr. Sharon's ceasefire order. Recent opinion polls show that over half the Israeli population support the call by right-wing politicians for strong retaliatory action. But even some of the hardline Ministers in Mr. Sharon's Cabinet have insisted that they must continue to observe the ceasefire even if it were only to ensure that international opinion remained in their favour.

It is not at all certain that Israel will continue to observe restraint after such a horrific incident.

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# New round of W Asia talks begins

Jerusalem, May 31

ISARELI-PALESTINIAN SECURITY talks resumed yesterday as a car bomb exploded near the Israeli coastal city of Netanya.

Israeli tanks shelled Palestinian targets in the south of the Gaza strip. "Yesterday's security talks ended without any real achievements," Israeli radio said.

Just hours before, the Israeli coastal town of Netanya was hit by a car bomb, sending six people to the hospital for shock in the latest of a wave of attacks.

In Beirut, the Palestinian Islamic jihad group claimed responsibility for the blast, which Islamists say is a sign the

## PLO LEADER HUSSEINI DEAD

FAISAL AL-HUSSEINI, the top PLO official for Jerusalem and a standard-bearer of resistance to Israel, died in Kuwait on Thursday after being hospitalised with pneumonia, Palestinian officials said. "Husseini has passed away," a Palestinian official in the delegation accompanying Husseini said. "He was in a coma after coming down with pneumonia before he breathed his last," other officials said, as Kuwaiti police swarmed through the hotel where he was staying. **AFP, Kuwait**

violence would continue until Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza ends.

Israel and Palestine are to hold further security talks with the aim of reducing violence in West Bank and Gaza strip, Israeli defence ministry said today.

**Sharon angry:** Angered over the recent wave of Palestinian "ter-

ror attacks" despite Israel's unilateral ceasefire, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has said the Jewish State has reached an "intolerable situation" even as housing minister said the ceasefire could not continue indefinitely.

"Israel has reached an intolerable situation because of Palestinian terror and this can

not go on much longer," Sharon told US Secretary of State Colin Powell in a telephonic conversation last night.

Stating that the US should pressurise Palestinian authority chairman Yasser Arafat to put an end to violence, he alleged that Arafat had instructed his deputies to continue terror attacks against Israel.

Meanwhile, housing minister Natan Sharansky told *Jerusalem Post* that the current unilateral ceasefire could not continue indefinitely and if Arafat did not take this opportunity to stop violence, Israel's next step would likely be to go to war.

**PTI/AFP**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

MAY 31 1994

## Iran tests new missile

TEHERAN, MAY 31. Iran successfully tested its first surface-to-surface missile, state-run Teheran Radio reported today.

The guided Fateh-110 missile was developed at the Government-owned Aerospace Industries, the radio said.

"Fateh-110, a super-modern surface-to-surface missile, functions with combined solid fuel, is able to cause great damage and finds targets with accuracy. The missile is classified among Iran's most efficient missiles," the radio report said.

The broadcast did not give the missile's range, say when the test took place or provide further details. Defence Ministry officials were not available today for comment.

Iran has built and tested several missiles, including the Shahab-3, which has a range of 1,300 kilometers.

Washington has said the Shahab-3 enables Iran to hit Israel and U.S. troops stationed in the gulf. U.S. State Department officials have said that Iran is a major recipient of missile technology from Russia, North Korea and China. — AP

THE HINDU



# The Return of Intifada

## Fight to the Finish in West Asia

By SUJATA ASHWARYA CHEEMA

11-10-01  
INTIFADA II, or al-Aqsa Intifada, as the current Palestinian protests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are popularly called, is the most serious uprising in the history of the Palestinian resistance movement against the Israeli occupation. It reflects the increasing Palestinian desperation after more than 30 years of Israeli dominance over their lives and seven years of the Oslo peace process that promised them a framework to chart out their political destiny. In a sense, the uprising was an event waiting to happen and Ariel Sharon's visit to Haram as-Sharif was the catalyst that set it in motion. From a halting intermittent protest, it has turned into a full-fledged revolt that refuses to pause until a definite solution is reached to the Palestinian question.

The Palestinians have risen against the "treacherous" peace process that has obviously failed to deliver them a state and affirm their identity. The dominant political mood is one of rejection of all half-baked interim agreements designed by the US and Israel to procrastinate on granting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

The character and direction of the al-Aqsa intifada is qualitatively different from the one that occurred in 1988. The rocks and stones that became the symbol of the earlier intifada are now supplemented by more conventional weapons. This makes the Palestinians more susceptible to disproportionate Israeli retaliation. Repeated Israeli incursions into Palestinian-held territory in Gaza ceded under the 1993 Oslo accord and the indiscriminate bombing of the Khan Younis and Rafah refugee camps are indicative of this fact.

Besides, the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli struggle attenuates far beyond the obvious manifestations of violence. It is also a war of words. The stridently dissonant vocabulary of the Palestinians and the Israelis has sharpened. Whereas the Israelis speak of 'peace' the Palestinians speak of 'revolution'. The Israelis envisage 'co-existence' while the Palestinians will brook no compromise on 'ending occupation'. For years it was hoped and believed that the Palestinian-Israeli struggle could be settled peacefully — but no more. The struggle now portends a fight to the finish. On the streets, the people and soldiers are fighting alongside their leaders. The armoury is mighty — stones, bullets, and words.

The current uprising has a secular character, led by Yasser Arafat's dominant group in the Palestine

Liberation Organisation — Fatah — unlike the previous intifada, which had a strong Islamic element. However, political Islamic elements are involved in suicide bombings inside Israel — tactics they perfected during the previous uprising. The Fatah radicals have finally run out of patience with Yasser Arafat's formal renunciation of terrorism. West Bank Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti has vowed to keep the intifada going even if Arafat orders it to stop. The leadership of Fatah is indicated by the fact that Arafat's elite Force 17 security service, Fatah tanzim (armed guards) and Palestinian Authority Preventive Security Force, which Israel regards as breeding grounds for 'terrorists', have been the targets of Israeli raids and commando operations.

Significantly, the 'Israeli Arabs' have firmly asserted their 'Palestinianism' in the ongoing uprising — as they had done in the late 1970s to

### IN BRIEF

- Intifada II reveals the Palestinian disenchantment with the peace process
- Israel has stepped up violence against Palestinians
- The US hands-off policy makes de-escalation unlikely

protest large-scale confiscation of Arab land by the Israeli government. The imperfect sympathies that they displayed towards the previous uprising have been supplanted by open participation and they have been accused of constituting a fifth column. Israeli forces have fired on them and at least 13 have died. The intifada has thus expanded into the territory of Israel.

Sharon's government, meanwhile, has taken a 'pro-active' policy towards violence. Sharon has dealt ruthlessly with Palestinian violence but increasingly escalated Israeli violence against Palestinian civilian and military targets. He has increased the use of tanks, helicopters and heavy automatic rifle fire against Palestinians. In recent weeks, Israel has used surface-to-surface missiles to bombard Gaza. The military strategy, according to Israeli government officials, combines classic elements of anti-guerrilla strategy with limited warfare, a small version of tactics dating back to the Vietnam war: sending messages through destruction and killing.

A further elucidation of this policy has been given by Israeli's deputy prime minister Sil van Shalom: "We will no longer be content with retali-

ating, as was Ehud Barak's previous administration, but we will initiate operations." The Israeli bombing of Syrian installation in Lebanon is an example of this policy. Further, Israel's bulldozing of Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza "to eliminate the base for Palestinian fighters" is not only presumptuous but also a manifestation of Sharon's hard-line policy and uncompromising posture.

The new US administration has 'disengaged' itself from the conflict, giving Israel the go-ahead to spurn negotiations. President George W Bush has backed the Israeli position: "First and foremost, the violence must stop". Sharon has made talks conditional upon the end of Palestinian violence, whereas the objective conditions for cessation of violence hardly exist. Isn't it unrealistic to expect a substantial de-escalation in the absence of any negotiation or consultation between the two parties? In addition, Sharon's move to establish 708 new Jewish settlements in the West Bank by 'thickening' the existing ones is extremely provocative.

The hands-off policy of the US is manifested in its response to Israel's repeated violation of the Oslo accord and international law and brutal repression of the uprising. Colin Powell has 'censured' Israel for "excessive use of force" and the State Department has just managed to issue a innocuous statement that repeated raids into Gaza "undermine efforts to defuse the situation and bring an end to the violence and escalation".

One of the foremost accomplishments of the first intifada was to demonstrate the futility of a military solution. This was made evident by the resoluteness of the Palestinian population in taking on the mightiest army in West Asia (by the sheer weight of hurled stones). All signs point towards the fact that the population is willing to brave difficult circumstances once again. With the likelihood of an outside force intervening to improve the situation having gradually withered, the Palestinian sense of isolation and abandonment is complete. Unlike 1993, Palestinians are now unwilling to buy exalted statements about an era of peace, security and regional co-operation through a peace process. The population, this time, is not ready to allow the leadership a free hand in investing the outcome of this second intifada in a form that will reproduce the Oslo imbroglio. The present round of violence, thus, is unlikely to end with any nebulous, interim agreement.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

28 MAY 2001



# Twin blasts rock Israel

FROM HOWARD GOLLER

Jerusalem, May 27 (Reuters): Palestinian militants set off two car bombs in Jerusalem today, injuring up to four people and hampering a US envoy's mission to end eight months of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

The bombings came hours after Muslim states agreed at the end of a meeting in Qatar to sever political contacts with Israel "so long as the aggression and blockade against the Palestinian people and its national Authority continues".

The new envoy, William Burns, condemned the bombings and told reporters he had urged Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to "do everything possible to stop such attacks" during a two-hour meeting in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

The bombs blew up 200 metres and nine hours apart.

One exploded minutes after midnight in a bar district packed

with young Israelis and the other at 9 a.m. off a main shopping street ahead of the Jewish festival of Shavuot commemorating the receiving of the biblical Ten Commandments.

The later one was loaded with mortar bombs which flew over rooftops, landing unexploded on a porch and in a public park hundreds of metres away.

Palestinian militant groups claimed responsibility for the two blasts. Police said two to four people were hurt by glass shards in the second blast, claimed by the Islamic Jihad group.

"I was selling bagels when all of a sudden I heard two strong explosions and four small ones. People started running," said Noah Goldberg, who was working at a coffee shop when the morning blast occurred.

Officials ascribed the lack of serious casualties to luck. Both blasts occurred near the main city police station.

"The streets were empty as it

was only nine o'clock in the morning," police spokesman Shmuel Ben-Ruby said after the second explosion. The bombs dealt a blow to a bid by the US, the traditional broker in West Asia peacemaking, to coax Israelis and Palestinians into halting the bloodshed.

Burns, the assistant secretary of state-designate for Near Eastern Affairs, met Arafat at his West Bank headquarters and said he would urge Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Jerusalem later in the day not to retaliate for the bombings.

"I'll certainly encourage Israel to continue its policy of restraint," he told reporters, adding both sides had to make the effort to revive peacemaking in the face of eight months of violence.

Israeli and Palestinian officials said they did not expect an immediate breakthrough. Statements by both sides on the eve of the meetings offered little hope they were closer to ending hostilities.

THE TELEGRAPH

WEST ASIA / QATAR FOR 'PRACTICAL STEPS' AGAINST JEWISH STATE

# Isolate Israel, Arafat urges OIC

119-12

DOHA (QATAR), MAY 26. The Palestinian President, Mr Yasser Arafat, on Saturday made an emotional appeal to Muslim states to isolate Israel, which he accused of using depleted uranium weapons and poison gas against Palestinians in eight months of violence. But Mr. Arafat, addressing an emergency meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the 56-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Qatar, also made a fresh call for a resumption of peace talks with the Jewish state.

"There are the monstrous massacres against our unarmed people carried out by missiles and bombs from F-16 warplanes, Apache helicopters, tanks and artillery," he told the one-day meeting, which was called at his request. "Their missiles and internationally prohibited bombs, including depleted uranium, poison gases, and radioactive material used against our Palestinian people..." Mr. Arafat said. The Emir of Qatar, hosting the talks, opened the meeting by urging the OIC to take practical steps against Israel, not traditional statements of condemnation "which are no longer sufficient".

Mr. Arafat told the Ministers "the danger... is grave... it cannot be stopped by statements of denunciation, condemnation and censure. There is no way but to take a firm stand that puts aggression and the aggressors in shackles..." The Palestinians are asking OIC members to freeze ties with Israel until it stops attacks on Palestinians, in line with action taken by the Arab League last week. Mr. Arafat also wants the OIC, the world's largest Muslim organisation, to provide strong moral and financial backing for the *intifada*, or uprising, and to lobby the United States and other big powers to press Israel to return to peace negotiations, delegates said.

Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa al-Thani, appealed to the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, to force Israel to stop the fighting, in which more than 560 people, mainly Palestinians, have been killed since the uprising against Israeli occupation erupted last



The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat (right) chats with the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Mr. Amr Mussa, of Egypt in Doha on Saturday. — AFP

September. "It is necessary (for Bush) to intervene immediately to put an end to this worsening situation, it is no longer acceptable to remain silent. (Bush has) to pressure the Israeli Government to force it to stop its aggression and return unconditionally to the basis of the peace process..." he said.

The Emir also demanded that an OIC team visit the United Nations and world powers to push for a U.N. protection force for the Palestinians — an idea raised by the group at a summit in Doha in November but rejected by Israel.

The Palestinian Minister for International Cooperation, Mr. Nabil Shaath, said before the meeting: "We are demanding resolutions that can be implemented. We have to enforce the isolation of the Government of (Israeli Prime

Minister) Ariel Sharon, which is launching a dirty, crazy war on the Palestinian people." Mr. Shaath said OIC members should follow the Arab League's lead and freeze all political contacts with Israel until it halts attacks on Palestinians and "abides by a real initiative for peace built on the Mitchell report and the Jordanian-Egyptian proposal".

The Arab League, whose 22 members also belong to the OIC, called last week in Cairo for a freeze on political contacts with Israel but stopped short of breaking diplomatic relations. Meanwhile, in Washington, Arab-American community leaders have been told by White House officials that Israel's use of U.S.-made weapons was "under serious investigation," the Arab American Institute said. — Reuters

THE NEWSPAPER

# US shuttle diplomacy in pipeline for W Asia

Jerusalem, May 26

ISRAELIS AND Palestinians faced growing international pressure on Saturday to put a halt to eight months of bloodshed as the United States prepared a new round of shuttle diplomacy to defuse the conflict.

William Burns, the new US envoy for the Middle East, was due to hold separate meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Sunday, a US embassy official said.

The visit will mark a new level of involvement by the administration of President Bush, who had adopted a lower profile in Middle East peace-making than his predecessor, Bill Clinton.

Secretary of State Colin Powell urged both sides to exercise restraint, and European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana called on them to "revive hope and trust and return to the peace process."

Palestinian leaders on Saturday appealed to members of the world's largest Muslim organisation, holding emergency talks in Qatar, for financial and political help for their uprising against Israeli occupation.

"We have to enforce the isolation of the Government of Ariel Sharon, which is launching a dirty, crazy war on the Palestinian people," Palestinian International Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath said.

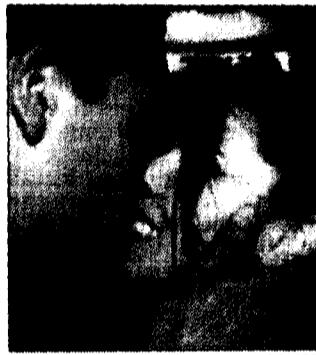
On the eve of a new US diplomatic initiative, there were few signs the two sides were any closer to ending their hostilities, which have claimed more than 500 lives since peace talks broke down last September.

Two Palestinians blew themselves up in a suicide bombing that injured 67 people in the central Israeli town of Hadera on Friday just hours after a truck

## Hall collapse search continues

WEARY EMERGENCY workers are still scouring the rubble of a collapsed banquet hall in west Jerusalem, searching for signs of life beneath tonnes of debris from Israel's worst civil disaster.

Police said at least 23 people have been killed and 300 injured when the upper-level dance floor of the Versailles hall disintegrated under the feet of wedding guests on Thursday night and plunged to the building's lower storeys. Up to 15 people are still missing.



Video grab of the bride Keren being kissed by possibly the groom, Assi Srur, just before the collapse.

remains of victims. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called the collapse a "national disaster" and said his Cabinet would consider an official inquiry into the worst civil catastrophe in the country's 53-year history. Cranes and electric saws were being used to break down hanging fragments of steel and flooring, while other workers cleared debris manually.

Reuters, Jerusalem

driver died carrying out an attack against an Israeli army outpost in the Gaza Strip.

After nightfall, an activist with an armed group within President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction was killed and several others seriously wounded when their car exploded in the West Bank town of Nablus.

A Palestinian source said the men had a bag of grenades in the car and one of the devices detonated by accident. But the Palestinian Authority accused

Israel of carrying out an "assassination".

Gunmen fired assault rifles in the air as thousands turned out in an angry funeral procession for 25-year-old Azzam Mizher, who was wanted by Israeli forces.

The Israeli army said it played no role in the car explosion. Palestinians have accused Israel of carrying out execution-style killings of key leaders of their revolt.

Reuters

# Fresh violence stalks West Asia peace efforts

Gaza, May 25

A SUICIDE truck bomber blew himself up near an Israeli army outpost in Gaza strip on Friday, and Israeli forces retaliated by shelling a Palestinian police station.

About 14 people were injured in the bombing. The Islamic militant organisation Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack, saying the truck driver who died in the blast was trying to "avenge Israeli crimes" against the Palestinian people.

The latest round of violence has all but drowned out a call for a cease-fire issued on Tuesday night by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, a proposal that Palestinian leaders have dismissed as a propaganda ploy.

The booby-trapped truck exploded after it came under Israeli fire on a road connecting the heavily fortified Jewish settlement of Netzarim to Karni, a Gaza crossing to Israel.

The Israeli army said the driver of the truck had ignored instructions to stop and instead sped toward the outpost. It said soldiers fired warnings shots before shooting directly at the truck.

But Palestinian officials said an Israeli tank shell hit the vehicle. The Army said no soldiers were hurt in the explosion. After the blast, Israeli tanks opened fire on a nearby Palestinian police post, destroying it and injuring four policemen, Palestinian officials said.

The Israeli army said it "removed" the Palestinian post only after police fired first at Israeli soldiers.

Witnesses said Israeli forces then thrust about 700 yards into



AP PHOTO  
Israeli soldiers stand by a burning truck at the Netzarim Junction in Gaza Strip with an Israeli army post in the background, on Friday.

a Palestinian-controlled area and cut off the Palestinians' only North-South road through the heart of the Gaza Strip.

Israel has made several brief incursions into the Palestinian-ruled territory since a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation erupted in September after peace talks deadlocked.

At least 447 Palestinians, 87 Israelis and 13 Israeli Arabs have been killed in revolt, which has raged mostly in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Continued violence has raised doubts about the

prospects for halting the confrontation after a US-led international commission urged the two sides to stop the fighting.

For one Palestinian in a Gaza refugee camp, death came on Thursday in the shape of a silent Israeli bullet. The 18-year-old, who was deaf, did not hear a gun battle raging around him when he was shot outside his house, witnesses said.

Hours later, Israeli soldiers shot dead a 15-year-old Palestinian during an incursion into the Canada refugee camp in Gaza, a Palestinian official said.

Reuters

# Truce call falls flat as West Asia burns again

Jerusalem, May 24

DESPITE STEPPED up international efforts to halt West Asia violence, Palestinian militants lobbed mortars at a Jewish settlement on Thursday and Israeli tanks responded by rumbling into Palestinian territory, firing shells and machine guns.

The diplomatic push began this week with the release of a truce plan proposed by an international commission headed by former US Senator George Mitchell. But there's been no let-up in the daily clashes, mostly in

the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Wednesday urged them to take steps to end the fighting that has derailed years of painstaking peace negotiations.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan also spoke to Sharon on Wednesday, while Arafat met in Paris with French President Jacques Chirac. In addition, Sharon declared a unilateral cease-fire on Tuesday, saying

Israeli troops would only respond in "life-threatening" situations.

Speaking in Dublin, Ireland, Mitchell said before the new flare-up of violence that Israel's announcement of a limited truce was a "heartening sign" and that he hoped there would be further progress. But the Palestinians rejected Sharon's move as a public relations ploy and the clashes have persisted.

Palestinians fired two mortar shells at dawn on Thursday at the Jewish settlement of Netzarim in the central Gaza Strip, causing

no injuries. An Israeli soldier was wounded overnight by a roadside bomb as vehicle passed by on the edge of the Gaza Strip, the Army said.

Shortly afterward, five Israeli tanks entered a Palestinian area in central Gaza, opening fire with shells and heavy machine-guns at a Palestinian residential area and blocking a main road to Palestinian traffic, witnesses said. The tanks withdrew after about 30 minutes and the road was reopened.

The shooting was followed by heavy gunbattles on Wednesday

in the southern Gaza Strip, where 38 Palestinians were hurt, according to doctors. On the outskirts of Jerusalem, an 86-year-old Israeli man was seriously injured by a bullet to the chest. Also, a Palestinian shooting ambusher killed an Israeli motorist in the West Bank.

The Mitchell Commission plans calls on both sides to halt violence and urges Israel to freeze construction in Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Several such plans have failed to end the Mid-east bloodletting,

and the report has sparked a new round of angry verbal exchanges between Israelis and Palestinians. Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo dismissed Sharon's cease-fire call as "a public relations practice originally meant for the American and Israeli publics."

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres urged the Palestinians to join the truce effort. "I read that some of our Palestinian neighbours said that this is just a trick, a public-relations trick, on the side of Israel."

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 MAY 2001

# Israel shoots down Lebanese plane

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MAY 24. Israeli forces today shot down a civilian aircraft that had taken off from Beirut, killing the Lebanese pilot. Two very different versions of this episode have been put out by either side. The occurrence of this incident on the day after the first anniversary of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon comes amidst a heated debate in Israel over the significance of that year-old development.

According to Lebanese authorities investigating the incident, a 43-year-old trainee pilot had taken off from the Beirut airport while his instructor was still on the ground. Efforts to block the plane before take-off were unsuccessful and the plane, a Cessna, was tracked on radar as it headed southwards to the town of Sidon. (The Beirut airport runway has a north-south alignment and a plane taking off from it would be overflying Sidon within minutes). Lebanese authorities said their radar had tracked two Israeli aircraft closing in on the Cessna and that their plane disappeared off the screen after a short while.

The Israeli version of the incident is that the plane had crossed into its airspace and was flying over the coastline from Haifa to Tel Aviv. Israeli fighter planes were said to have closed

in on the Cessna and they tried to establish radio links and signalled him to land. But the Cessna pilot ignored all the instructions including a warning shot across the nose of the plane and left the Israeli fighter pilots with no choice but shoot it down.

The downed aircraft fell about 30 km north of Tel Aviv. Israel said it had legitimate fears that the pilot might have been on a suicide mission.

Given the rhetoric from Hizbollah (the Lebanese Shia militant organisation), the tense situation along the Israel-Lebanon border and the ongoing violence in the Palestinian territories, the Israeli fears do appear to be genuine. Provided, of course, that their version that the plane had crossed over into their territory is the correct one.

Israeli aircraft overfly Lebanon with impunity and the Lebanese version that their plane had been intercepted within their airspace need not be wrong. Whichever might have been the point of interception, the identity of the pilot makes it quite unlikely that he was on a suicide mission.

Lebanese authorities have said that the doomed pilot was a Armenian citizen of Lebanon. The Armenians in Lebanon, a business community, have managed to keep themselves out of all the conflict that have ravaged that country and this community (which has a presence in Israel as well) has

hardly been noted for its militancy. From the available information, this episode appears to be a pure personal tragedy which might have occurred because the trainee pilot panicked.

The tragedy is also attributable to the hostility and suspicion between Israel and Lebanon that continues despite Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon a year ago. That withdrawal is still a topic of hot debate within Israel although nothing can now be done to reverse it. The right-wing in Israel continues to decry the withdrawal as a criminal mistake.

They believe and propagate that by unilaterally withdrawing from Lebanon, Israel gave the impression to its enemies that it had lost its deterrent power. This impression, in turn, encouraged the Palestinians to resort to violence since they drew the conclusion that Israel would eventually succumb just as it had succumbed to Hizbollah.

The left wing in Israel does not entirely dispute the connection between the withdrawal from Lebanon and the Palestinian belief in Israeli vulnerability. But, they still maintain that the withdrawal was inevitable and that by decreasing its commitments, the Israeli army was better able to deal with the Palestinian uprising.

THE TIMES

MAY 25 1995

# West Asia: Let us imagine there will be peace

APR 24/15  
BY MARWAN BISHARA

In spite of the continuing violence, Israeli and Palestinian delegations reached on an agreement on ending a century-old conflict at a peace negotiation held in Paris. After sleepless nights, the two sides agreed on several guiding principles. Jerusalem would be an open city, capital of two states, with Israeli sovereignty in West Jerusalem and Palestinian sovereignty in the East. Free trade, open borders and complementary economic policies were underlined as ways to foster confidence and cooperation.

Perhaps it is facile to place importance on the success of these simulated negotiations at the American University of Paris, where I teach. However, it is significant that a deal was reached simply because the students realised they had to base it on justice. They were confronted with the same dilemma that continues to haunt Israelis and Palestinians 53 years after the founding of Israel: What does one prescribe to the 4.5 million Jews and almost 4 million Palestinians fighting over the land of Palestine/ Israel, considering that in the 21st century neither colonialism nor a form of apartheid is a credible option? Separating the two peoples in two sovereign and viable states was the immediate answer. The Israeli delegation recognised 95 per cent of the West Bank and all of Gaza as Palestinian territory and acknowledged the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees. The two sides agreed that though the refugees would return primarily to the Palestinian state, 350,000 could return to Israel over a five-year period.

The Palestinian delegation accepted Israeli annexation of four blocks of settlements on the Green Line, in return for comparable land around Gaza, while Israel agreed to evacuate the rest of the settlements.

My students were transformed by the negotiating process. Michelle, an American Jewish student who had enrolled in the class to deal with fears left over from her last visit to Jerusalem, was empowered by her reconciliation with Amir, an Iranian student whose own psychological barriers were brought down. Consistent and bold in the defence of their causes, the students searched vigorously for ways to bridge their differences. As these simulated negotiations were drawing to a close, the American-led Mitchell Commission, after five months of investigating the roots of the ongoing violence, called for an immediate freeze on Israeli settlements. This recommendation is also underlined in the recently launched Egyptian-Jordanian peace initiative.

The Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, has accepted both. So have most Israelis, according to the Israeli daily *Yediot Ahronot*, but not Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. He has rejected halting settlement activity, proposing instead \$400 million for further expansion.

The Palestinian uprising is mainly motivated by settlement expansion, but Mr Sharon's response to it has been limited to increasing Israeli firepower and tightening the siege of Palestinian territories — which has only escalated the violence. Absent from my class, Israel's leader missed the basic lesson that war, contrary to the Clausewitz doctrine, is not diplomacy by other means. If Mr Sharon's logic continues to triumph, the Israeli-Palestinian dilemma will haunt West Asia for many more years, and many more will die in vain.

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*International Herald Tribune*

THE ASIAN AGE

2 8 10 2011

## NEW CROSS-CURRENTS IN WEST ASIA

A COLLECTIVE SHOW of political unity by the Arab states over the basic Palestinian question is their direct answer to Israel's act of sending F-16 combat aircraft on a bombing mission over a territory that had already been entrusted to the Palestinians under an earlier understanding. The decision by the Arab League Foreign Ministers to observe a political boycott of Israel is quite unusual even by the polemical standards of West Asia's prolonged diplomatic standoff between the Jewish state and its neighbours. On this occasion, the evocative mood of Arab solidarity has been made possible on this scale by a singular act of war-like rage by Israel's ultra-nationalist Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon. He ordered the U.S.-supplied F-16s to pound a security post within the perimeters of the acknowledged Palestinian territory. The raid, the first involving fighter planes in that sub-region for a number of years, was decreed in explicit retaliation for a suicide-bombing attack by an extremist Arab group inside the domain of the Jewish state. For the grisly record of cyclical West Asian terror, the Israeli air strike in question claimed far more Arab lives than the number of Jews killed in the earlier suicide-bombing. In the thinking of the protagonists of Mr. Sharon's show of force, therein lies the purported message that the Jewish state, which is widely believed to command an overwhelming military strength in the region, cannot be trifled with. The sub-text of the message is that retributive force will be used to subdue any escalatory militant move by the "rebellious" Palestinians — a Jewish label for those seeking legitimate political and civil rights.

Israel and its adjoining Arab territories have thus been turned into a battleground for theories of violence by the Jewish military supremacists as also the Palestinian votaries of unbridled angst. Almost inexorably lost as a result is the fragile peace process. The fading moves towards peace in West Asia were set in motion by the

United States, in nominal conjunction with Russia (with its recessive influence of the Soviet vintage) and by Norway (as a facilitator) in the early 1990s. The peace process later reached its zenith at one stage during the presidency of Mr. Bill Clinton in the U.S. The prime diplomatic question now in West Asia is whether the present Bush administration in Washington will decide to play either a facilitator or a mediator of both in respect of at least the Israel-Palestine track of the layered peace process.

For the moment now, the U.S. is echoing the latest Mitchell Commission's report by counselling the Israelis and Palestinians to give up violence and discuss modalities of meeting their expectations of security before beginning 'final status' talks to crack the political puzzle over full-fledged Palestinian statehood. The U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, has of course hinted at the possibility of a more activist diplomatic role by Washington if warranted. The U.S.-sponsored document deals with some of the issues at stake including Israel's practices of establishing and safeguarding controversial Jewish settlements. The report has in fact induced Mr. Sharon to float the idea of a truce. But Washington, which alone seems to possess the diplomatic wherewithal to make a positive difference to the current crisis in West Asia, must first sort out America's own priorities, given especially its perceived preoccupation with toppling Iraq's ruler, Mr. Saddam Hussein, in the same region. Assuming importance, as a result, is the scope for diplomatic intervention by Egypt and Jordan, two Arab states which variously made "peace" with Israel over time, in regard to the Palestine issue. However, the latest decision by the Arab League can only diminish the chances of a new Egypt-Jordan initiative. Both being privy to the League's move, their sense of indignation is the defining Arab mood today.

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THE HINDU

24 MAY 2001



# Arabs reject Sharon truce call

Jerusalem, May 23

ISRAELIS AND Palestinians were waiting to see if eight months of violence would wind down after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called for a ceasefire but rejected a key recommendation from an international commission.

At a televised news conference on Tuesday, Sharon appealed to the Palestinians. "I call tonight for a total truce in the area, and I say again here that if the Palestinians accept this proposal to stop the fire, we will immediately stop the fire," he said.

However, a senior Palestinian official said Sharon's call was just part of the Israeli plan to continue occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip.

Ahmed Abdel Rahman, an aide to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, said, "we reject everything Sharon said about a ceasefire."

In Washington, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer welcomed Sharon's call. He said it is "vital that the parties in the

region unequivocally speak out and call for a cessation of the violence." Fleischer said US President George Bush would "welcome a similar statement" from Arafat.

Following Sharon's appeal, Israeli Defence Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer ordered the Israeli army to stop all firing except "when life is in danger."

In a statement, Ben-Eliezer called on the Palestinians to "immediately stop violence and terrorism as a first step toward a return to the negotiating table" in keeping with the report of the commission, headed by ex-US Senator George Mitchell. The report was published in New York on Monday.

However, Sharon rejected a key recommendation of the commission — a total freeze on construction in Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He said his Government had agreed not to build new settlements, but allowed construction to meet the needs of the Israelis already living in the West Bank and Gaza.

Critics of Sharon's settlement policy said there are already thousands of empty apartments in the settlements. By rejecting the construction freeze, Sharon was playing games with the commission report, said Dovish parliamentary opposition leader Yossi Sarid.

"This is just a pose of accepting the Mitchell report while removing all its content," he told Israel television.

After meeting Arafat, UN Middle East envoy Terje Larsen said an Israeli settlement freeze would be "one of the most important confidence-building measures," and it would help Arafat "cool down the situation."

Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said the findings of the commission must be implemented as a package deal. He called for an international summit meeting to set up a "mechanism to implement the recommendations."

In his statement late Tuesday, referring to Sharon's news conference remarks, Abed Rabbo

did not mention Sharon's call for a ceasefire. Sharon said he accepted the Mitchell Commission formula of a ceasefire, followed by a cooling-off period, confidence-building measures and finally, peace negotiations.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said the Mitchell report should be adopted as it is, and negotiations should begin soon. "This should happen in the next few days. Otherwise the value of the report will dissipate," Peres said.

At the news conference, Sharon said that Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority is acting like a terror organisation. He said Israel "must relate to it as a terror group" until it stops planning and carrying out attacks against Israel.

But Abdel Rahman said Israel's moves are designed to continue its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

"The Palestinian people's response to the continuing aggression is to move forward with the intefadeh (uprising)," he said, "to defend themselves

AP

#10-16 Israel the initial gainer

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, MAY 22. The United States' Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, has tried to please Israelis and Palestinians, and himself, as one analyst has wryly noted, in his response to the report of the Mitchell Committee.

On Monday, this international committee, under the chairmanship of the former U.S. Senator, Mr. George Mitchell, submitted its findings and recommendations based on its enquiry into the seven-month-long uprising in the Palestinian territories. The responses to the report submitted by the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government were appended to the main document.

A major feature of the Mitchell report was that it drew a linkage between Palestinian violence and the Israeli policy of building in settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It endorsed the consensus among neutral observers that the building activity in the settlements is considered a major and continuous provocation by the Palestinians and that the violence is attributable to this to a large extent.

In expressing his views on the report yesterday, Gen. Powell seemed to de-emphasise this linkage. He stressed that the first step must be a cessation of the violence, suggesting thereby that a simultaneous announcement by Israel that it was freezing building activity in the settlements was not required. However, Gen. Powell did point out that there had been and were differences between the U.S. and Israel over the settlement policy.

Gen. Powell has also constituted a three-member panel, consisting of the U.S. Ambassadors to Jordan and Israel and the Consul General in Jerusalem, to explore the ways by which a cease-fire can be brought about. From the remarks he made at a briefing, it was also amply clear that he would neither involve himself nor ask his diplomats to look into other aspects such as the setting out of confidence-building measures or the prospects for re-starting negotiations on substantive issues till a complete cease-fire was in place.

Gen. Powell did not spell out the specific steps that either side should take to make a cease-fire effective. But he did stress the need for both sides to respect all agreements that they have struck between them. The last such agreement was struck at the Egyptian town of Taba after the *intifada* had begun and it did spell out the measures that each side must take. The Palestinian Authority must take steps to curb the militants among its public and Israel must move its military



Palestinian schoolgirls walk past a youth throwing stones at Israeli soldiers with a slingshot during clashes in Hebron on Tuesday. — AFP

back from its current positions at the edge of Palestinian controlled areas so that there is a large physical gap between them and the Palestinians.

When the three-member committee begins contacting the two sides, the Palestinians are bound to insist that Israel re-deploy its forces while Israel is bound to respond that they cannot do so as long as there is a threat of attacks being launched at Israeli troops and civilians from the Palestinian areas. Neither side is likely to budge till the U.S. forces them and it is not clear whether the three-member team has been mandated to hold out threats or blandishments.

An Israeli Government that has insisted that it would be tantamount to rewarding terrorism and violence if it were made to take any step such as freezing settlements before the violence has ceased, has reason to be pleased at Gen. Powell's initial response to the committee's report. It would also note with pleasure that Gen. Powell did not even make use of the opening that Israel's dovish Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, provided through his offer to stop the expropriation of more Palestinian land for settlements. (Gen. Powell did call on both sides not to take unilateral steps, a phrase that U.S. diplomacy has often used to condemn settlement building activity, but Israel has always refused

to regard settlement building activity as a "unilateral step" that fits the description).

So long as there is no cease-fire Israel is free to spurn the negotiating track. This is an opening that would be welcomed with relish by Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, and his hawkish colleagues who have no desire to negotiate with the Palestinians and are probably hoping that the continual attritional costs of the uprising will finally make the Palestinian soften their demands. That too is wishful thinking.

Unless the three-member committee can pull the rabbit out of the hat, Gen. Powell will either have to get his hands dirty early or have them get singed as the region slips into a worse conflagration.

W. ASIA / VIOLENCE STEPPED UP

HD-14  
29/5

## Israeli action fraught with danger

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MAY 21.** Over the seven months and more in which the Palestinian uprising has been raging, one name that has hardly ever been mentioned is that of Mr. Jibril Rajoub, the powerful head of the preventive security forces in the West Bank.

Israel has repeatedly accused the Palestinian security leadership and the political leadership, of course, of having instigated and orchestrated the uprising and they have never hesitated to name names but have hardly ever mentioned that of Mr. Rajoub. Then last night, all of a sudden, the Israelis lobbed tank shells into Mr. Rajoub's bedroom moments after he had vacated it.

Senior Israeli officers and military analysts in the know have stated that there was no intention to assassinate Mr. Rajoub. Surprisingly enough, given the acute sense of suspicion and recrimination that prevails all around, Mr. Rajoub too has said that he did not think the Israelis had made him a target. If anything, these statements show that the situation is even more dangerous than otherwise thought since it raises the possibility of a catastrophe due to inadvertence. Mr. Rajoub might have escaped last night but what if a shell or a bullet were to strike down either him or some other well-known and well-respected figure in the Palestinian leadership.

In the Israeli statements denying the intention to target Mr. Rajoub there are strong references to the fact that Mr. Rajoub is one Palestinian security chief who has been displaying a great deal of restraint. He has more or less kept the personnel of his forces from getting involved in the fighting

and has prevented Palestinian gunmen from using residential areas as their fire bases in the areas under his control. The Israelis never seem to have had the occasion to express anger at Mr. Rajoub quite unlike the case with his counterpart in the Gaza Strip, Mr. Mohammed Dahlan, who was even brought under Israeli fire on one occasion.

For some weeks now the Israelis have been following a proactive policy. They are no longer content with retaliating after a Palestinian attack but are making incursions into Palestinian territory and demolishing sites that could be used as fire bases or hitting Palestinians who they believe might be preparing some sort of action. Discretion to act in such manner has been delegated to junior officers and is no longer strictly controlled by the higher military and political echelons.

According to the reports, the junior officer who ordered the shelling of Mr. Rajoub's house last night did not know that it was indeed the residence of the preventive security chief.

What makes the situation even more dangerous is the complexity of the power structure within the Palestinian Authority. There is supposedly a political line of succession to the Presidency of the Authority should anything happen to Mr. Yasser Arafat. But it is a virtual certainty that whichever of the Palestinian chieftains has the most gunmen will effectively rule the Authority if Mr. Arafat is no longer around to restrain the ambitions.

Both Mr. Rajoub and Mr. Dahlan figure prominently in such calculations. Anything, including fratricidal warfare, could break out if either of them is assassinated.

THE

# Mitchell Commission wants end to violence

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MAY 21. At a time when the international community is anxiously looking at the recent developments in West Asia, the Mitchell Commission has issued a set of recommendations, with the former Senator calling for an end to the eight-month cycle of violence and reprisals. And the Bush administration has echoed this view, with the Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, calling for an "unconditional" end to the violence. "It will keep getting worse unless the Government of Israel and the Palestinians take swift and decisive actions," Mr. George

Mitchell said. The Commission, which was established as a part of the ceasefire brokered last October but one that never really did get off the ground, has called for a number of steps, including the jailing of terrorists by the Palestinians and a freeze on all Jewish settlements.

"Given the high level of hostility and mistrust, the timing and sequence of these steps are obviously crucial. We urge them to begin the process... immediately," the Commission has said. The report is coming at a time when there is genuine concern in the region and elsewhere of events spiralling out of control; and the criticism in

some quarters of the Bush administration not willing to take a direct charge of the goings on.

The Bush administration is not willing to see the Mitchell Commission findings and report as an alternative to the existing policy; rather, something that will facilitate an end to the cycle of violence in that part of the world. Gen. Powell, at the State Department, argued that with the Mitchell Commission's findings there is no change in the peace plan and that the onus was on the leadership of the region. One of the contentious issues has been the ongoing Jewish constructions in the West Bank and

the Gaza, with the Mitchell Commission of the firm view that such constructions must cease. Israel has long argued that such constructions are necessary to keep pace with population growth. Mr. Mitchell and others on the panel had spent a lot of time in the region, including trying to get at the roots of the violence.

The Palestinians have agreed to the panel's findings and are urging the Republican administration to have them as a basis for the resumption of the dialogue. Israel is also in agreement with the report except for the portion calling for the freeze on constructions.

THE HINDU

21 MAY 2001

# SHARON THREATENS FULL USE OF MILITARY

BY JEFFREY HELLER

**Jerusalem, May 20:** Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has threatened to throw Israel's full military arsenal against the Palestinians amid scathing domestic criticism on Sunday of his use of warplanes to retaliate for a suicide bombing.

"We will do everything necessary and use everything we have to protect Israeli citizens," Mr Sharon was quoted as saying in an interview with Israel's largest daily, *Yedioth Ahronoth*.

The right-wing leader convened his security cabinet to discuss the latest escalation in violence in an

eight-month-old Palestinian uprising for independence.

Six people, including a suicide bomber from the militant Hamas movement, were killed in the explosion at a shopping mall in the seaside Israeli city of Netanya on Friday.

Hours later, Israeli F-16 warplanes struck Palestinian security compounds in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, killing at least 12 Palestinian policemen.

*Yedioth Ahronoth*, in an editorial, called the decision to unleash the US-built F-16s in the West Bank for the first time since the 1967 West Asia war "worthless" and

## Peres arrives in Russia for W. Asia talks

### US should stop Israel bias: Syria

**Moscow, May 20:** Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres arrived in Moscow on Sunday for talks on the escalating violence in West Asia, where Israel last week unleashed retaliatory air strikes against Palestinians.

Russia has condemned last Friday's raid, the first time Israel has used warplanes in the eight-month-old Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation, and Mr Peres said that he would give President Vladimir Putin Israel's vision of the crisis. "Our PM, Mr Sharon, spoke to President Putin yesterday and promised that I will convey to him the full picture of events, and I will do it," Mr Peres said. "I expect the negotiations with Mr Putin and foreign minister (Igor Ivanov) to give an indication as to what the way out of the crisis may be," he said. (Reuters)

**Damascus, May 20:** Syria urged fellow Arab states on Sunday to press the United States to choose between uncritical support for Israel and Washington's ties with the Arab world. Syria's government daily *Tishreen* accused Washington of encouraging Israel to continue what it called crimes against Palestinians and urged other Arab governments to exert pressure on Washington to modify its stance.

A front-page editorial urged Arab states to "adopt a brave stand and hold the United States responsible for what is happening and give Washington a chance to choose between its bias to Israel and its friendship with Arabs."

*Tishreen's* criticism follows Israel's F-16 fighter-bomber strikes on Palestinian targets on Friday. (Reuters)

"stupid." Other Israeli dailies echoed the commentary.

The Palestinian Authority called the Israeli attacks a "serious escalation" and urged the international community and the United States to intervene immediately.

The air raid, along with helicopter strikes that wounded at least 50 Palestinians on Saturday in the West Bank towns of Jenin and Tulkarm, moved Arab foreign ministers to recommend suspension of political contacts with Israel. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called the suicide attack appalling, but branded Israel's response "disproportionate."

Israeli troops also killed a Palestinian policeman on Saturday during a gun battle in the West Bank and shot dead another Palestinian in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli Army said both were armed and posed a threat to its forces. A 20-year-old Palestinian was killed by Israeli gunfire while throwing stones at troops in the West Bank city of Nablus. At least 441 Palestinians, 13 Israeli Arabs and 87 Israelis have been killed since the Palestinian uprising began.

The fighting brought new calls for an end to the violence and heightening of a security alert in Israel, where police on the watch

for more suicide bombers set up roadblocks that caused traffic jams at the start of the Israeli work week on Sunday. "I... Call on behalf of the United States for all leaders in the region to... Do everything in their power immediately to bring into being an unconditional cessation of violence," US secretary of state Colin Powell said in Washington. Israeli defence minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, in a telephone conversation with US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, asked US leaders "to do all they could to persuade Arafat to stop the violence," Mr Ben-Eliezer's spokesman said. (Reuters)

## Sever political contacts with Israel, says Arab League

BY MARIAM FAM

**Cairo, May 20:** Arab governments must sever political contact with Israel until the Jewish state ceases military action against Palestinians, representatives of Arab countries demanded Saturday, throwing into doubt whether Egypt and Jordan would continue efforts to mediate an Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire.

A meeting of Arab foreign ministers and delegates made the recommendation. Arab League calls are not binding on governments, but the foreign ministers and other senior officials who attended Saturday's meeting were believed to have been in contact with the highest levels of their governments during the eight-hour gathering.

"The meeting called for severing all Arab political communication with Israel as long as the aggression of the siege on the Palestinian people and their national authority continues," according to a statement issued at the end of the emergency meeting.

Anger in the Arab world is at fever-pitch as Israeli-Palestinian fighting has escalated to the use of warplane attacks, which Israel used Friday in retaliation for a suicide bombing.

The ministers also called for an economic boycott of goods exported from Israeli settlements. (AP)



**STONES FOR ISRAEL:** Palestinian women throw stones at Israeli soldiers during clashes in the divided West Bank city of Hebron on Saturday. Israel launched more airstrikes on Saturday using helicopter gunships in a surge of violence that has killed more than 20 people in 24 hours. (Reuters)

We'll use everything at our disposal to protect Israeli citizens: Sharon

# West Bank security chief hurt in Israeli attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS

RAMALLAH, May 20. - A West Bank security chief was slightly wounded in an Israeli tank attack on his house today, after the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Ariel Sharon, defended his decision to use warplanes against Palestinian targets.

Mr Rajoub's house was hit by tank shells and badly damaged.

Witnesses said one shell exploded inside the house and two landed outside. Later, he said: "This is a new criminal attack against me and my family. But I don't think this is an assassination attempt on my life."

But the Palestinian information minister, Mr Yasser Abed Rabbo, said it was an assassination attempt. "They shelled his house while he was inside."

The Israeli military said its forces fired back at a position where Palestinians were firing. The military statement denied there was an attempt to hit Mr Rajoub. The shelling came during a fierce exchange of fire between Palestinian gunmen and soldiers guarding the nearby settlement of Psagot. One Israeli soldier and two Palestinians were wounded.

**Eric Silver adds from Jerusalem:** After facing the flak for Friday's use of F-16 warplanes against Palestinian security buildings, Israel today strove to reassert control.



Brothers of Tasir Al Arir, a Palestinian farmer, grieve at their home while mourners carry Tasir's body for the funeral in Gaza City on Sunday. Tasir was killed in Israeli air raids on Friday. - AP/PTI

Mr Sharon told the daily *Yediot Aharonot*: "We'll do what it takes and use everything at our disposal to protect the citizens of Israel. Israel does not intend to fold up in the face of terror attacks."

Within hours, however, the army was insisting that the weekend air strikes, the first against Palestinian targets in West Bank and Gaza since 1967, did not represent a strategic change. Maj-Gen Giora Eiland, director of military planning, said: "The decision to use F-16s was a tactical decision. Helicopters wouldn't have been effective against specific targets. It doesn't imply a new phase. They won't be used often."

Foreign statesmen, like the UN Secretary-General, who denounced Israel's "disproportionate" response, will not be satisfied with words alone.

Another air strike could push Egypt and Jordan, the two Arab states which maintain full diplomatic relations with Israel, to close their Tel-Aviv embassies, as recommended by an emergency session of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo on

Saturday.

Asked by a reporter what had become of Israel's claim to act with restraint, Gen Eiland replied: "The policy remains restrained, relative to all options. The situation is still under control on both sides. This is an armed conflict, but it hasn't escalated to a war where both sides use all available options."

What disturbs Mr Sharon's critics is not so much that he might try to bomb Gaza or Ramallah, but that he seems to have no long-term answer to the daily Palestinian mortar fire and roadside ambushes, let alone suicide bombings like that which killed five Israeli civilians in the seaside resort of Netanya on Friday. The F-16 raids, which killed 12, looked to many like a reflex reaction whose main purpose was to appease Israeli public opinion.

Hemi Shalev, a political columnist, accused the government of losing control and of "bombing itself in the knee."

Alex Frishman, *Yediot Aharonot's* military analyst, commented: "It looks like your basic act of revenge, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But revenge as a policy is proof of weakness and frustration. A government that promised to bring calm and personal security finds itself, three months later, swept up in a wave of escalation."

THE STATESMAN

21 MAY 2001

# Israel strikes back hard for Netanya suicide bombing

410-12

215

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MAY 19.** Israel today used helicopter gun-ships to strike at Palestinian security targets in the West Bank town of Tulkarim after having used planes to bombard other targets late yesterday evening and night.

Ten Palestinians were killed in the raids which came in sequence to a suicide bomb attack by a Hamas militant in which six Israelis were killed. World leaders have called for an end to the spiral of violence but unless they intervene with something more than talk, it does not appear the descent into disaster will be stalled.

The Israelis targeted Palestinian security establishments in the raids yesterday and today. While a Hamas militant in the custody of the Palestinian security services in Nablus was supposedly the target of one of the raids yesterday, a Palestinian security official was the target of the other attack in Ramallah. The militant,

Mr. Mahmoud Hanoud, was wounded in the attack but was taken to safety while the security official, Mr. Mahmoud Damra, was not in the Ramallah office when it was struck. Instead, nine Palestinians were killed in Nablus and one body was recovered from the rubble in Ramallah.

Although some individuals have been named as the targets of the Israeli raids, the fact that Palestinian security establishments were attacked appears to connect up with the Israeli accusations that Palestinian officialdom was directly responsible for the violence. The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat's bodyguard unit, Force-17 as it is called, has borne the brunt of the Israeli attacks.

## U.S. calls for ceasefire

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

**WASHINGTON, MAY 19.** The Bush administration is carefully watching



**Palestinians gather as others search for survivors through the rubble of the Palestinian Security headquarters in the northern West Bank town of Nablus on Friday. — AP**

the developments in West Asia in the context of Israel's stepped up attacks on the West Bank.

Washington is also taking note of the fact that for the first time in several years, Israel has used F-16 jets in going after specific targets.

But the Republican administration has not made up its mind if the Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, will travel to the region to meet the Palestinian leader, Mr. Mas.

Yasser Arafat. Gen. Powell is due to leave next week for a trip to Africa and Europe and there is no word yet on whether there will be a West Asia stopover.

Gen. Powell has called for an immediate ceasefire and is asking world leaders to help cool the heightened atmosphere. Of concern here is not just the spiralling violence and bloodshed, but the situation getting out of hand. Gen. Powell, who spoke to the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, on Friday is said to have come away rather frustrated at the end of the conversation.

With the Hamas continuing to say that it will go after Israeli targets, the right wing Government of Mr. Sharon is equally firm that it will continue to hit Palestinian areas in response.

In continuing to express concern at the violence against Israel, the Bush administration is also agreed that the Palestinian Authority does not control the Hamas.

In New York, the Israeli pounding of Palestinian areas has evoked concern and condemnation. The United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has said that he is deeply disturbed at the "disproportionate Israeli response" to the suicide attack on the Israeli mall.

"While I have repeatedly made clear my utter condemnation of terrorism from whatever quarter — and do so again today — I can only regard this response as excessive and misdirected. Its effect will inevitably be to increase bitterness even further on the Palestinian side", Mr. Annan said calling for restraint, end of violence and start of negotiations.

AFP reports:

Mr. Arafat today said the "Palestinian people will not yield an inch." "Warplanes" are used against our towns (but) the Palestinian people will not yield an inch. We will take the path together until we can pray in the Al-Aqsa mosque" in Jerusalem, he said.



# Hamas threatens more attacks

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MAY 18.** Six Israelis and a Palestinian suicide bomber died today when the latter blew himself up outside a crowded shopping mall in the Israeli town of Netanya. The Islamic Resistance Movement has announced that the bomber belonged to it and claimed that they had three more bombers ready to strike deep within Israel. Israel's Security Cabinet was holding an emergency meeting with the possibility that they will order a harsh reaction.

The 20-year-old bomber was identified as Mr. Mahmoud Marwash from the West Bank town of Tulkarm. A security guard apparently took notice of him as he approached the mall and security personnel are reported to have stopped him outside when he blew himself up. He was believed to have been carrying a few kilograms of explosives strapped to his body. Later, at the time of noon prayers Hamas officials in Tulkarm announced that one of their followers had carried out the attack. This is not the first suicide bomb attack to have taken place inside Israel since the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising in September last year.

The Palestinian Authority has issued a statement condemning attacks on all civilians whether Israeli or Palestinian. This is however not likely to mollify an Israeli Cabinet that has authorised the steady escalation of the retaliatory measures they have deployed against the Palestinians. Incursions into the Palestinian controlled territory to combat Palestinian gunmen and mortar men have become a regular occurrence as have the demolition of houses and the up-rooting of farm lands.

The Israeli government has also authorised its security forces to be more pro-active and to strike at Palestinian militants. Disregarding protests from the international community, including the U.S., for a change Israel has also authorised its security forces to re-occupy buildings in the territory handed back to the Palestinians for an indefinite period. If harsh action follows from the Israeli side, as appears likely, the violence is bound to escalate that much more.

## Awful scene

AP reports:

Witnesses said the man had attracted attention because he wore an oversized blue sports jacket on a hot day and walked around nervously in front of the mall for several minutes.

"He (the suspect) ... looked back and forth, standing with his hands in his pockets and then he went to the entrance of the mall," said a witness who gave only his first name, Dudu.

A security guard said he had already been



Police remove the bodies after a suicide bomber blew himself up at a shopping mall in Netanya on Friday — Reuters

alerted by his colleagues when the suspect approached his gate. "I looked at him and our gaze met," he said. "He wanted to come in and saw me and exploded himself." The blast went off at about 11:30 a.m., sending a large cloud of smoke over Netanya, which is 35 km north of Tel Aviv and just 10 km west of the West Bank.

## 'Bloodshed in West Asia must stop'

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

**WASHINGTON, MAY 18.** The U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, has condemned the latest round of bloodshed in West Asia and has called on the leaders of the region to denounce the violence that made it "so difficult" for any political settlement.

Mr. Bush was talking about the latest developments in the White House at an Oval Office ceremony for crew members of the Navy surveillance plane that was involved in an incident in the South China Seas and is now sitting in a tarmac at a military base in the Hainan Island.

He said the U.S. was concerned first for those who had lost their lives and then the affected families. In apparent reference to the suicide bomber who attacked a mall in Israel killing seven people, the U.S. President said he was especially concerned about suicide bombers "who have disregard for themselves and obviously for innocent folks."

Calling for an end to violence, he said, "We must break the cycle of violence in order to begin meaningful discussions about any kind of political settlement."

Speaking at the ceremony, the Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, termed the recent events in West Asia as a "terrible crisis" and a "tragedy."

In repeatedly calling for an end to violence, the Bush administration has pinned the blame on the Palestinians and has frequently called upon the Palestine leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, to denounce the violence. The White House has not said in so many words but an official invitation to Mr. Arafat to meet with Mr. Bush is not going to come about unless there is a marked decline in violence in that part of the world.



# 53 years of Israeli violence, and the killings continue

Suzanne Goldenberg  
Ramallah, May 16

THOUSANDS OF Palestinians marched through the West Bank and Gaza yesterday on a day of protest that left five dead, including a Jewish settler, and more than 130 wounded.

In Ramallah, thousands gathered in the main Manara Square in a din of slogans, nationalist songs and the crackle of automatic weapons to mark 53 years since the day the Palestinians call the *nakba*, or the catastrophe: the founding of the Jewish State that drove more than 700,000 people from their homes.

At noon, a siren sounded for the more than 450 Palestinians killed during the uprising now in its eighth month.

Old men stood with their hands on their hearts. Schoolgirls in striped green uniforms stopped their chatter. Militiamen in black masks, shoving their way through the crowds, froze in their tracks, and as the three minutes came to an end, church bells pealed. Moments later, the gunmen fired in the air, a prelude to the battles with Israeli soldiers at army checkpoints the length of the West Bank.

In the evening, an Israeli woman was shot dead, and her male companion wounded, when Palestinians opened fire on their car, travelling on a road built for Jewish settlers east of Ramallah.

"No matter what weapons Israel uses against our women and children, it will not break the

## SCHOOLBOY DEAD

ISRAELI TROOPS killed a Palestinian schoolboy on Wednesday. Washington, however, appeared to stepping up diplomatic efforts to stem an eight-month-old Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. A senior Palestinian official said preparations were under way for Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Secretary of State Colin Powell to meet next Wednesday in Paris.

Reuters, Jerusalem

will of our people," Arafat said in a televised address taped before his departure from Gaza. "It is time for the international conscience to wake up."

At the junction on the northern edge of Ramallah that has been transformed into a regular theatre of war during the last eight months, two stone throwers were shot dead by Israeli forces minutes after the protesters arrived. A television journalist, Bertrand Aguirre, who reports for the French TF1 station, was shot and wounded, and told reporters he was deliberately targeted by an Israeli border policeman. The Israeli army said it was investigating.

Earlier, a bodyguard for Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the disabled founder of the Islamic militant group, Hamas, was killed near the border fence of the territory. The Israeli army said he was firing a mortar round at Israeli targets. ~~The Guardian~~

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 MAY 1994

# Palestinians vow to carry on fight

19-16 16/5

**RAMALLAH (WEST BANK), MAY 15.** Palestinians jammed town squares across the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Tuesday, marking 'Al Naqba,' the 53rd anniversary of their displacement, with a mournful siren, then marched to Israeli military checkpoints and threw stones at soldiers. Four Palestinians were killed and at least 106 hurt by Israeli fire.

During the commemorations, thousands of Palestinians chanted "no surrender" and others flashed victory signs — a message to Israel that they would not stop their uprising, now in its eighth month, until they won independence.

"Faith, faith, courage, courage, stand strong in the face of this increasing aggression, for the sake of freedom," said the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, in the taped speech broadcast to the rallies over loudspeakers.

"Al Naqba" means catastrophe in Arabic, and this is how Palestinians describe their displacement during Israel's founding. Some 750,000 Palestinians fled or were driven out of their homes during the 1948 West Asia war.

Four Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire on Tuesday, including three stone throwers. The fourth was a bodyguard for Ahmed Yassin, founder of the Islamic militant group Hamas, and the Israeli army said he was killed by an Israeli tank shell as he was firing a mortar round at Israeli targets.

Fierce fighting erupted near the



**Two Israeli girls embrace as they take cover from gunfire, while an Israeli border policeman attempts to evacuate them from the Jewish settlement of Gilo, outside Jerusalem, on Monday. Clashes erupted between the Israeli army and Palestinian gunmen after a military post near the settlement came under fire from the neighbouring Palestinian town of Beit Jala, west of Bethlehem. — AFP**

West Bank towns of Ramallah, Nablus and Tulkarem. At a traffic circle near Ramallah, a regular flashpoint during eight months of Israeli-Palestinian fighting, stone throwers took cover behind overturned car wrecks as a steady

stream of ambulances picked up protesters wounded by Israeli fire. Two Palestinians were killed in Ramallah and 17 were wounded. Palestinian militiamen hiding in empty apartment buildings

shot at Israeli soldiers and at one point, two Israeli tanks rumbled into Palestinian-controlled territory to quell the shooting.

Mr. Arafat had left for Cairo earlier Tuesday, drawing Israeli criticism that he had slipped away to avoid being blamed for possible violence on Al Naqba day. Mr. Raanan Gissin, adviser to the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, said Mr. Arafat's speech was filled with 'words of war' and that he had missed another chance to stop the violence.

The Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, said the Palestinians would not be able to extract concessions from Israel by force. "We are destined to be neighbours and should not try to coerce each other," said Mr. Peres.

In his taped speech, Mr. Arafat lashed out at Israel, though he never directly referred to the Jewish state. Mr. Arafat said that while Palestinians remained committed to peace, "executioners continue to walk through the puddles of our blood with their military escalation and siege of our towns". He complained that the world had stood by silently while the Palestinians suffered. He said the Palestinians would only accept a peace deal based on a complete Israeli withdrawal from lands occupied in the 1967 West Asia war, and recognition of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to former homes in what is now Israel. — AP

THE HINDU

MAY 1991

# Hamas for taking war into Israel

Jerusalem, May 13

ARMED PALESTINIAN factions are split over the best military strategy for forcing Israel out of the West Bank and Gaza. A big debate is going on behind closed doors, with some wanting to target Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlers on the West Bank and Gaza, while others want to expand the war into Israel.

Abu Leila, head of the radical Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), said his group, with Fatah and the small People's party (the former communists), backed the first strategy. Islamic Jihad and Hamas want to take the war into Israel.

Abu Leila's group, which until now has taken a minor role in military action, on Saturday claimed responsibility for attacking an Israeli army post in Gaza with hand grenades. Two soldiers were injured.

Hussan Tahfish, a 16-year-old Palestinian, was killed on Saturday, shot dead after throwing stones. The DFLP, the third largest faction within the PLO, says that limiting the battle to Gaza and the West Bank will be



The funeral procession of a Palestinian man killed when Israeli tanks fired at the Maghazi refugee camp in Gaza Strip on Sunday.

viewed sympathetically abroad as a battle against occupation. Bridges, roads and other key points could be bombed to disrupt the movement of both settlers and Israeli troops.

They believe that car bombs, suicide bombings and other attacks inside Israel are counter-productive, and confirm Israeli fears that if it gives up the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinians

will continue the war until they recover all of Israel.

The debate takes place in meetings of the popular front — the main ones being Fatah, DFLP, Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, heads the popular front, but is said not to be informed of the details of individual actions in the field.

Abu Leila, an Iraqi, said that

## FOUR KILLED

AN ISRAELI tank fired on a Gaza Strip refugee camp, killing a Palestinian, while the leading Palestinian peace negotiator headed to Washington for possible talks on easing tensions.

Earlier on Saturday, Israeli helicopter gunships had fired missiles at the car of an intelligence officer in the West Bank city of Jenin, killing an activist of Arafat's Fatah faction and a bystander. Palestinian hospital and security officials said Suliman al-Arooqe, 45, was killed and 10 others wounded, at least one critically, when the tank fired shells on refugee camp in Gaza.

Reuters, Jerusalem

there was an important split over tactics. A Pak High Commission sheds 'misfits'. At his party's headquarters in Ramallah, he said: "Everyone agrees, more or less, that armed action is necessary in retaliation for Israeli aggression." But, he said, "suicide missions give the Israelis the impression that Palestinians are out to get them."

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 MAY 2001

## 12/5 A VIOLENT DRIFT IN WEST ASIA 189-12

THE POLITICAL INTRANSIGENCE of Israel and the Palestinian leadership is increasingly acquiring the incendiary proportions of a presumptive final battle between the two adversaries. If a decisive war has not been declared by either side at this stage, the reason has less to do with their matchingly aggressive moods. The overall restraining influence of some Arab states in West Asia seems to be the only positive factor at work at this moment, while the United States is still busy reviewing its priorities and options in that region under the present Bush administration. The prime international issue at stake remains as clear as ever before — the need for “final status” talks involving the Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Palestinian statehood as a morally sound and politically workable proposition is, of course, the crux of the peace puzzle that has not yet been sorted out. Under the premiership of Mr. Ariel Sharon, who loves to excel as a modern-day Jewish hawk, Israel’s methods are actually beginning to acquire the stridency of a kind unknown since the commencement of a peace process, which is completely botched for months now, way back in the early 1990s. However, the tragedy of seemingly interminable violence of a cyclical nature has come into renewed international focus in the latest context of some horrific incidents. The killings of an Israeli boy and his U.S.-born associate have evoked a reprisal by the Sharon administration in the form of a renewed military thrust into a pocket of Arab territory, which had already been handed to the Palestinian Authority under a much-heralded accord that at one stage punctuated the now-regressive peace process.

The U.S., which played a critical role in setting the peace process in motion, has once again called for a halt to the cycle of violence concerning the Palestinians and Israelis. The slaying of

an American citizen is of undoubted concern to the U.S., but the Bush administration seems to prefer a deeper review of the peace-promotive choices before it. In one sense, the U.S. has yet to recover from the frustrations of the previous Clinton administration, especially in regard to the “final status” issues such as the political fate of Jerusalem as also the Jewish settlements in acknowledged Arab territories and the contours of a juridical Palestinian state. For the present, therefore, Washington is inclined to practise the art of the possible. While not wishing to go beyond facilitating a renewed dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians at an appropriate time, Washington is merely calling for an end to the cycle of carnage.

Viewing the imperative of peace differently, Mr. Sharon wants “an end to (Palestinian) terror”, not just a scale-down, as the precondition for any parleys with the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat. Mr. Sharon, who tends to dismiss the simple merit of talks as a confidence-building exercise, has not really given up the military solution. There can be no other plausible explanation for the manner in which Israel has embarked on a new missile offensive against the seat of Mr. Arafat’s “security” establishment. Yet, the present wave of turmoil has brought the issue of Jewish settlements into some unprecedented international scrutiny, given that the trouble broke out in the context of the findings by a panel headed by Mr. George Mitchell, a former U.S. Senator. The Bush administration has let an impression gain ground to the effect that the Mitchell Commission’s views might provide room for contemplating a new U.S. initiative in regard to the Israel-Palestinian question. But Egypt and Jordan may also need to shape the outlook in West Asia.

THE HINDU

17 MAY 2001

WEST ASIA / SHARON SHOCKED BY TEENAGERS' KILLING

# Israel pounds Arafat's offices

GAZA CITY, MAY 10. Four rockets hit the Palestinian police headquarters in Gaza City and the offices of the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat's Fatah Movement on Thursday, sending black clouds of smoke into the air.

Palestinian policemen ran out of the walled security compound, while ambulances rushed inside, even as rockets kept crashing down with a loud boom. It was not immediately known whether anyone was wounded. There was no immediate Israeli comment. The Israeli military has frequently struck Palestinian security installations in seven months of fighting, usually in retaliation for attacks on Israeli targets. Palestinian police Lt. Ahmed Abbas said he was sitting on a chair in the courtyard when one of the rockets hit. He said he was thrown into the air and the ground shook under his feet.

Three rockets — witnesses said they were surface-to-surface missiles — hit the Palestinian police headquarters, and a fourth struck Fatah offices about 400 metres east of Mr. Arafat's seaside headquarters. The Palestinian Planning Minister, Mr. Nabil Shaath, said Mr. Arafat was not harmed in the attack, which he called "a war of terror Israel has declared on the Palestinians."

Earlier in the day, a roadside bomb exploded along the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip. The blast killed two Romanian workers sent there by Israel to work on the border fence. A third worker was wounded. On Wednesday, Israeli boys, one an immigrant from Maryland, were found bludgeoned to death with rocks in a cave in the West Bank.

The boys, Koby Mandell (13), and Yossi Ishran (14), had gone on a hike near their home in the West Bank settlement of Tekoa, and were seized, presumably by Palestinians, and were bludgeoned to death with rocks. Newspapers quoted police as saying the boys' heads were so badly disfigured that facial identification was impossible. "Stoned to death," read the headline in the *Yediot Ahronot* daily on Thursday, using the single Hebrew word "Skila," which refers to one of four forms of capital punishment in ancient Jewish



The sister (right) of 17-year-old Hashem El-Mamluk who was killed by Israeli soldiers during clashes near Kami crossing breaks down during his funeral in Gaza Strip on Wednesday. — Reuters

law. Koby's family immigrated in 1996 and settled in Tekoa in 1996. Twenty-one Palestinians have been arrested in connection with the killing.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, said he was revolted by the killings of the teenagers. "It was a heinous deed in which children were intentionally attacked," Mr. Sharon said. Asked whether Mr. Arafat was still a potential negotiating partner, Mr. Sharon said "anyone who causes the killing of Israeli citizens cannot be a partner." If vio-

lence stopped, Israel would be ready to resume peace talks, Mr. Sharon said.

Mr. Arafat, when asked about the killings, responded by saying that Palestinian children have been victimised by Israel. In an apparent response to the explosion in Gaza on Thursday, Israeli bulldozers razed Palestinian farmland and a police station near Kissufim, the fifth incursion into Palestinian territory in two days. Overnight, Israeli troops destroyed four homes and a Palestinian police station in the Rafah refugee camp, and 12 Palestinians were hurt. — AP

THE HINDU

11 MAY 2001

# 2 Israeli boys killed, settlers blame Arafat

Tekoa (West Bank) May 9

TWO 14-YEAR-OLD Israeli boys were found bludgeoned to death in a cave near a Jewish West Bank settlement on Wednesday. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said they were victims of "Palestinian terror."

Sharon held the Palestinian authority responsible, saying it has done nothing to stop attacks on Israelis. Settlers demanded that Sharon declare Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat an enemy of Israel and try to bring down his Government.

There was no immediate Palestinian comment.

The victims were identified as Yossi Ishran and Kobi Mandel. Their families had recently moved to Tekoa, a settlement southwest of Bethlehem, on the edge of the Judean Desert.

Mandel's family immigrated to Israel from College Park, Md., several years ago. Kobi's father, Seth, is a rabbi, and his mother, Sherri, is a freelance writer, according to friends of the family.

Yossi Ishran's family lives in a cramped trailer, waiting to move into a new home. The boy's moth-

er, Rina, is a nurse, and the father, Ezra, a policeman.

The boys' bodies were found in a cave in Wadi Hariton, a dried riverbed about half a mile from Tekoa, where children liked to explore.

Police spokesman Rafi Yaffe said investigators believed they were killed by Palestinians in what appeared to have been a chance encounter.

In the night from Tuesday to Wednesday, about 100 goats were stolen close to the site of the killing, but Yaffe said he did not know if the two events were related.

The boys had skipped school on Tuesday and gone hiking without informing their parents. The parents notified security forces late on Tuesday because they had assumed the boys had gone to Jerusalem after school to participate in a demonstration against what settler leaders say is the Sharon Government's failure to protect their communities. At around midnight, when the boys had not returned, the parents notified security forces who began searching early on Wednesday.

AP



Undated family photographs show murdered Israeli boys Kobi Mendel (left) and Yosef Ish-Ranboth.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 MAY 2001

# Pope preaches forgiveness in Golan heights

Golan Heights (Syria), May 7

POPE JOHN Paul, visiting one of the Holy Land's most bitterly contested places, on Monday urged the region's people to be as merciful as their God, forgive past wrongs and commit themselves to peace.

The Pontiff, who revolutionised ties with the Jews by visiting Rome's synagogue in 1985, said it was now time to turn the page with Islam, too.

The call for mutual forgiveness was the continuation of a theme begun on Friday in Greece, where the Pontiff sought God's pardon for the wrongs committed by Roman Catholics against Orthodox faithful in the past 1,000 years.

The Pope's appeal, made more poignant and pressing by his trembling voice, was made from the Golan Heights ghost town of Quneitra, on a visit to Syria during which he had already made history by becoming the first

Pontiff to enter a mosque.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God," the Pope said in a prayer just inside a Greek Orthodox church, which like the rest of the town was destroyed after Israeli forces withdrew in 1974. Syria has left the destroyed town as a macabre memorial to what Damascus calls Israeli atrocities.

"From this place, so disfigured by war, I wish to raise my voice in prayer for peace in the Holy Land and the world," the Pontiff said. "Genuine peace is a gift from God. Our openness to that gift requires a conversion of heart and a conscience obedient to his law."

Hundreds of people cheered the Pope as he walked slowly from his car to the church amid tight security.

The crowd waved Vatican and Syrian flags, and the yellow flag of Lebanon's Muslim fundamentalist Hizbollah group was also seen.

From Quneitra, the Pope could see Israeli military positions and radar posts on the other side of the Western Golan, which Israel captured in the Six Day War of 1967 and still occupies.

He prayed that God's voice would "resound in the hearts of all men and women, as you call them to follow the path of reconciliation and peace, and to be merciful as you are merciful."

"We pray to you for the peoples of the Middle East. Help them to break down the walls of hostility and division and to build together a world of justice and solidarity. Merciful Father, may all believers find the courage to forgive one another so that the wounds of the past may be healed and not be a pretext for further suffering in the present. May this happen above all in the Holy Land, this land which you have blessed with so many signs of your Providence, and where you have revealed yourself as the God of Love."

Around him bulldozed houses, naked buildings, demolished hospitals, shell-scarred churches and devastated mosques stood as reminders of the bitter conflict between Israel and Syria. Israeli troops destroyed everything before they withdrew in 1974 under a US-negotiated armistice.

He urged leaders of the war-scarred region to "strive to satisfy their peoples' rightful aspirations, and educate the young in the ways of justice and peace."

He also prayed for the leaders of Syria and asked God to "grant them wisdom, farsightedness and perseverance."

The Pontiff has made war and peace in the volatile region a crucial theme of his pilgrimage to Syria to retrace the steps of St Paul, who converted to Christianity on the road to Damascus.

Pope John Paul made history on Sunday by becoming the first Pontiff to enter a mosque and praying there. **Reuters**



Pope John Paul II and Syrian Mufti Sheikh Ahmed Kaffaro at Umayyad Mosque in Damascus on Sunday. **AFP PHOTO**

49-16 7/5

# Israel rejects panel report

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) MAY 6. Israel appears to have set itself up for some hard times through its rejection of a report submitted by an international panel that enquired into the causes of the violence that has rocked the region for over half a year. The main recommendation of the panel that Israel must freeze all building activity in the Jewish settlements runs counter to the policy of the present and past Israeli governments. But it is one recommendation with which the rest of the world would be in agreement and this particular Israeli policy has also drawn the ire of U.S. administrations in the past.

The five-man enquiry panel headed by the former U.S. Cabinet member, Mr. George Mitchell, submitted its report to the Israelis

and the Palestinians yesterday. While the Palestinian Authority has signalled its initial favourable response to the report and called for a summit meeting to implement its recommendations, the unofficial Israeli response has been negative. Israel has rejected the panel's recommendation that it not only refrain from building new settlements but that it also desist from building new housing units in existing settlements. Successive Israeli governments, even those that promised not to build new settlements, have insisted that they had the right to build within existing settlements to cater to the natural growth of the communities.

In actual practice the "expansion" of existing settlements is often indistinguishable from the building of new ones. In the West Bank in particular buildings are

put up on hill-sides nearby but not within the boundaries of existing settlements. Instead of classifying these new communities as new settlements they are categorised as being parts of the older settlements. This is a contrivance to expropriate more Palestinian land while maintaining the facade that Israel is observing the international consensus against the building of new settlements. It is a policy that infuriates the Arabs, draws strong criticism from the European Union and has also on occasion drawn U.S. censure.

Israel's determination to stick to its settlement policy is evident from the reports that the Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, is about to approach parliament for the provision of an additional 1.5 billion shekels (over \$300 million) to fund building activity in the settlements. It remains to be seen

whether such defiance will escape the attention of a U.S. administration that has directed strong criticism against the Israeli Government on at least one occasion already.

Besides the freeze on settlements the enquiry panel is also reported to have called for a lifting of the ban on the movement of people and goods within the Palestinian territories, for Israel to desist from the use of rubber-coated steel bullets against unarmed Palestinian demonstrators and for Israel to desist from demolishing Palestinian houses and levelling farm-land.

The panel is also reported to have rejected the Palestinian demand for the stationing of an international peace-keeping or monitoring force inside the territories.

THE HINDU

27 MAY 2001



IRAN / HIGH VOTER TURN-OUT CRUCIAL TO VICTORY

# Khatami takes a calculated risk

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MAY 5. In filing his nomination papers for the June 8 elections, Iran's President, Mr. Hojatoleslam Syed Mohammed Khatami, has put an end to one guessing game and launched several others, the outcome of which will only be known at the end of the elections. There are very few reasons to doubt that Mr. Khatami will be elected to serve a second four-year term and the real issues in the June 8 poll will be the size of the turn-out and the margin of Mr. Khatami's victory.

Mr. Khatami, who was reportedly very emotional when he filed his nomination papers yesterday, made public what has been speculated upon for quite some time that he was an extremely reluctant candidate. In noting the very heavy price that his supporters have had to pay for the very meagre advance to a more democratic culture in Iran, Mr. Khatami admitted that his side had also made a few mistakes. Alluding to the very many disappointments that he has had to encounter in the course of his first term in office, Mr. Khatami said he would have preferred not to contest but that he could not disregard the love and hope that people had reposed in him. Such is this pleasant mannered cleric's reputation for integrity that even if the drama over his much-delayed and much-speculated upon candidacy was a tactically managed one, it would not damage his standing.

Saturday was the last date for the filing of nominations for the elections. With Mr. Khatami delaying his decision till the penultimate date, the speculation over his candidacy had overshadowed every other aspect of Iranian politics. With so much emotional energy invested in the hope that Mr. Khatami would seek re-election, it could now be difficult for sympathisers not to take the next step and

So far, Mr. Khatami's conservative opponents have not been able to find a candidate who could at least put up a semblance of a fight. It is a sign of the disarray in the conservative camp that the former Intelligence Minister, Mr. Ali Fallahian, a person viewed as being involved in all manner of sinister conspiracies, has felt emboldened to offer himself as a candidate. Mr. Fallahian's only hope is that the various factions that adhere to the conservative tendency will not be able to find a more centrist standard-bearer and will finally choose him to lead the "death or glory" charge.

The former Foreign Minister Mr. Ali Akbar Velayati, who is known to be close to the Supreme Religious Leader, Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, has been spoken of as a possible conservative standard-bearer and it remains to be seen whether he will file his papers before the day is out.

The turn-out question is not just a vital one in this election but is also a double-edged one for the conservatives. If the turn-out is significantly lower than it was in 1997 it will be considered as an indictment of the theocratic regime. For this reason alone, the conservatives have reason to be relieved that Mr. Khatami has chosen to stand. Without his charismatic presence in the contest the turn-out would have most definitely been very low and the credibility of the regime thereby severely damaged. At the same time, if the electorate turns out in the same numbers and give Mr. Khatami just as wide a margin of victory it would solidify the huge gap that has opened between the Iranian public and the theocratic super-structure that has controlled their lives for the past 22 years.

The best hope for the conservatives is that both the over-all turn-out and the margin of Mr. Khatami's victory are lower than what they were the last time around.



The Iranian clergyman and presidential candidate, Mr. Rahmatollah Bigdeli, reads a pro-reform daily which displays a photograph of the President, Mr. Mohammad Khatami, during the last day of registration for the presidential elections at the Interior Ministry in Teheran on Saturday. — AP

actively campaign and vote for him on June 8.

Mr. Khatami's goal in the election is not victory — that appears to be certain — but victory by about the same 75 per cent margin with which he won the Presidency in 1997. Just as importantly, he has to ensure that Iranian voters continue to be believe that they have such a stake in the outcome that they will turn up at the voting booths in about the same numbers that they did last time around, nearly 80 per cent turn out.

# Sharon blames Arafat for West Asia violence

JERUSALEM, MAY 3. The Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon's office said on Thursday that the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, had given a "green light" for attacks against Israel, a statement at odds with remarks by Israel's Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres.

The hawkish Sharon and the dovish Peres have for decades taken sharply different approaches to dealing with the Palestinians, but they have been working together in Israel's unity Government for the past two months.

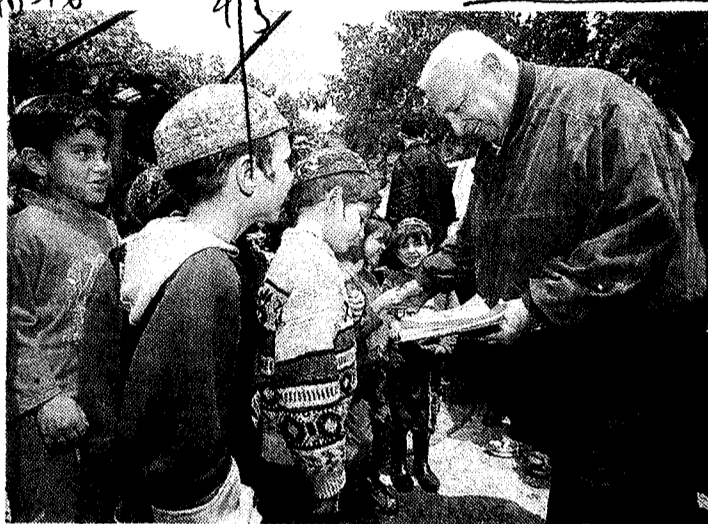
Mr. Peres, in the United States this week discussing a West Asia truce plan, said on Tuesday that "some dissident groups and some forces under Mr. Arafat participated in the killings (of Israelis) without the knowledge of Arafat." "Arafat is our partner," Mr. Peres added. "We don't demonise the Palestinians, who have gone through tragedies."

Mr. Sharon has taken a much tougher line with Mr. Arafat, saying members of his security forces had taken part in attacks, and that the Palestinian Authority, which Mr. Arafat leads, had failed to rein in militants from other organisations during the past seven months of fighting.

A statement issued on Thursday by Mr. Sharon's office said "the present attacks are the result of a strategic decision of Arafat."

"The organisations subject to Mr. Arafat, including Fatah, and also other organisations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah understand that they have a "green light" for continuation of the attacks against Israel," the statement added.

Mr. Arafat leads the Fatah movement, while the other three



The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, talks to children during a visit to the West Bank Jewish settlement of Ofra on Wednesday. — AP

groups are radical Islamic organisations that are not under his control and have consistently opposed Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

Mr. Arafat's Palestinian Authority released dozens of militants from prison after the Palestinian uprising began last fall. Israel has said that former inmates, including members Hamas and Islamic Jihad, are now taking part in attacks.

The statement by Mr. Sharon's office did not mention Mr. Peres by name, but appeared to be a response to the recent comments by the Foreign Minister.

Mr. Sharon won a landslide election victory in February, and when he tapped Mr. Peres to be his Foreign Minister, the two men said they could work together despite their long-standing differences.

were frustrated with Israeli attempts to amend a truce plan put forward by the Egyptians and Jordanians.

"There is neither an agreement nor an understanding," Mr. Qureia said. "There is only the Egyptian-Jordanian peace initiative which Israel is still rejecting." He also criticised an Israeli army operation on Wednesday in Gaza, where Israeli bulldozers demolished 20 Palestinian homes. The Israelis said they carried out the action because the homes had been used by Palestinian gunmen firing on nearby Israeli army positions.

Meanwhile, Mr. Sharon visited a West Bank Jewish settlement where the latest victim of a Palestinian ambush lived, and pledged to stop seven months of violence. But settlers complained that he was not doing enough.

Mr. Sharon visited the widow of settler Assaf Hershkovitz, killed in a highway ambush on Tuesday just 5km from the spot where his father was gunned down Jan. 29. The Prime Minister said on Wednesday that the Palestinians would gain nothing from violence.

But the settlers were not convinced. "Where is the peace?" read a protest banner that greeted Mr. Sharon at Ofra, a quiet outpost in the rolling hills north of Jerusalem.

He told Hershkovitz's widow, Hila, that "people thought there was a solution that would take one day. There's no solution in one day."

She responded: "But there's not even a ray of light. We're in the same situation." — AP

# Fresh violence mars peace prospects

JERUSALEM, MAY 1. Hopes of a breathing space in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict evaporated today as the diplomatic efforts of the Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, were eclipsed by a new round of killings in the West Bank and Gaza.

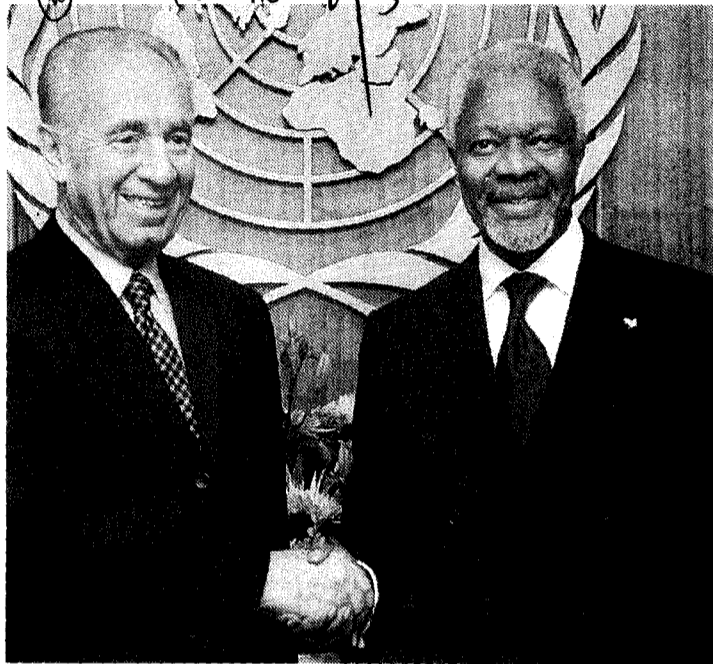
An Israeli settler was killed after his car came under fire as he travelled to work near the West Bank town of Ramallah, and Palestinian officials said a police officer was killed by Israeli tank fire near the Rafah crossing-point between the Gaza Strip and Egypt.

The deaths brought to eight the number of dead in two days — including two Palestinian children — and cast a pall over attempts by Mr. Peres to interest the U.S. in the latest efforts to end the seven-month Intifada.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon's office said the Government held Mr. Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority responsible for the "escalation of violence," because it was failing to halt the spread of "terror."

"The Prime Minister strongly condemns the horrible murder of the Ofra resident Assaf Hershkowitz," the statement said, referring to a settler killed earlier today.

"The Prime Minister places the responsibility for the escalation in violence on the Palestinian Authority which is not fighting terror and its foundations and the first priority of his Government is to return security to the residents of



Israel's Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres (left), with the U.N. Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, before talks at the U.N. headquarters in New York on Monday. — AP

Israel." Mr. Peres is holding talks with U.S. leaders on a Jordanian-Egyptian peace plan, under which Israel would lift its siege of Palestinian-controlled areas and pull back its troops, in return for the Palestinians resuming security cooperation.

However, Mr. Sharon has already made clear his reservations to the plan, and the *Yediot Aharonot* newspaper today outlined

what it said were strict guidelines laid down by his Government to limit Mr. Peres' room for manoeuvre in Washington.

These stipulated that there would be no diplomatic negotiations until "terrorist actions" are stopped, and that there would be no discussion of Israeli settlements — a halt to which is a key part of the Jordanian-Egyptian plan, the paper reported.

In Washington, Mr. Peres repeated that Israel was willing to ease economic and travel restrictions on Palestinians, but he said "the ball was now in the Palestinian camp. Arafat has to prove he can impose the ceasefire, otherwise there won't be any negotiations" with Israel.

Mr. Peres is to meet the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, tomorrow and the President, Mr. George W. Bush, Thursday.

Today's violence began when Assaf Hershkowitz (31), was hit in the chest and lost control of his vehicle near the Palestinian town of Beitin, as his assailants, who had been waiting in a parked car, fled on foot, officials said.

Hershkowitz, who was married to a British immigrant, was the son of another settler who was killed in a similar attack on January 29, officials said.

Two groups claimed responsibility: the brigades of the martyrs of al-Aqsa, who are opposed to the Palestinian President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and the armed wing of the radical Palestinian Islamic movement Hamas, the Ezzedin al-Qasam brigades.

Later, a Palestinian police captain was killed when an Israeli tank fired at a group of protesters trying to stop bulldozers clearing a sector of land near the Gaza-Egyptian border, Palestinian officials said. — AFP

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MAY 2001