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**INDIA ANNOUNCES IT WILL ESTABLISH
FULL DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH ISRAEL**
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 29 (JTA) -- India has agreed to upgrade diplomatic relations with Israel to the ambassadorial level.

The announcement was made Wednesday by Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy in Moscow, where he was attending an international conference on Middle East regional issues.

It was announced simultaneously in New Delhi by Indian Foreign Secretary J.N. Dixit, who was quoted as saying that the two countries will open embassies "as soon as physically feasible."

The news was promptly welcomed in New York by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Shoshana Cardin, chairman of the umbrella organization, noted that it came only a week after Israel established full diplomatic ties with China.

"We are gratified that India, the world's most populous democracy, and Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, have established formal diplomatic relations," Cardin said.

Cardin said Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao will meet with the Conference of Presidents this weekend in New York, where he will be attending the U.N. Security Council summit meeting Friday.

India extended de facto recognition to Israel in 1951, when both countries were newly independent. But it refused to establish normal diplomatic ties with the Jewish state.

That policy was attributed to India's desire not to antagonize its huge Moslem minority. India has also been, for many years, a leader of the bloc of non-aligned nations, which has supported the Arab cause against Israel in world forums.

Was Part Of A Dwindling Minority

Israel nevertheless maintained a consulate in Bombay, although there was no reciprocal Indian representation in Israel. Relations between the two countries were frigid for decades.

But that never prevented many Indians from coming to Israel to study or visit its scientific and agricultural institutions. India, in turn, became a favorite haunt of Israeli tourists.

According to media reports, Foreign Secretary Dixit denied that the decision to exchange ambassadors with Israel was "linked to anything."

He said India wanted to encourage the ongoing Middle East peace process but declined to say whether it sought a role in it.

India has found itself recently among the dwindling minority of countries that refuse diplomatic relations with Israel. At the same time, it was prodded by the United States to join the ranks of countries that have changed their policies in favor of normal diplomatic ties with Israel.

They include the former Soviet Union and its successor republics, all the countries of the former Eastern European Communist bloc, and just last week, India's huge neighbor, China.

Signs of a shift in India's stance emerged in December, when its representative at the United Nations joined the majority in voting to rescind the General Assembly's 1975 resolution denigrating Zionism as racism, which it originally supported.

**ISRAEL SATISFIED WITH MOSCOW TALKS
AS FOCUS SHIFTS TO WORKING GROUPS**
By David Landau

MOSCOW, Jan. 29 (JTA) -- Israel was satisfied with the way the multilateral conference on the Middle East wound up here Wednesday, as it divided into working groups on regional issues.

"We accomplished all that we set out to do," Foreign Minister David Levy told Israeli journalists at a news briefing Wednesday night.

The thesis that the Arabs will not sit with Israel on matters of economic cooperation without there being progress on the bilateral track has been disproved, Levy observed with relish.

"This is a victory for the policies of the government," he said, adding that Secretary of State James Baker had told him "that he saw the Moscow conference as a great achievement for Israel."

According to Jason Isaacson, director of government and international affairs for the American Jewish Committee, who was an observer here, "Israel seems to have confidence in the process and seems to be benefiting from the process."

There was particular gratification in the American and Israeli camps that Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states sent representatives to most of the working groups.

The Russian hosts were also optimistic.

"Today we can say with relief that the expectation of skeptics did not come true. The Moscow meeting was a diplomatic success," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Petrovsky said at another news briefing.

Talks In Washington, Tokyo

More than 20 countries participating in this phase of the peace process formed working groups Wednesday to seek progress on five regional issues this spring at various sites around the world.

Because of the Moslem festival of Ramadan and the Passover holiday in April this year, the next round of meetings of the working groups will not take place till early May.

At that time, a seminar on arms control and military confidence-building measures will be held in Washington.

"Arabs and Israelis together will learn about other systems of confidence-building and tension-reduction," said Gen. David Ivri, director general of the Defense Ministry, who heads the Israeli delegation in the arms control talks.

Simultaneously a seminar on questions of environmental protection will be held in Tokyo, under Japanese auspices. The Japanese propose first, however, to send a study mission to the region to examine environmental issues, with particular reference to the West Bank and the Gulf of Aqaba.

The economic development working group plans to reconvene in Brussels, while Turkey and Austria each have offered to host the next session of the water resources group.

At the working group session on refugee resettlement, the Israelis suggested that the refugee issue be extended to Jews who fled Arab countries after the creation of the State of Israel.

But that was rejected by Arab participants. The refugee group will meet in Canada.

The Palestinians took no part in the two-day conference, because they insisted on including delegates from East Jerusalem and outside the administered territories, in violation of the ground rules set at the peace conference opening in Madrid last October.

Israel was backed by the United States and the Russian hosts in its refusal to accept delegates from the so-called Palestinian diaspora.

Most delegates indicated that they endorse the American-Russian proposal that representatives of the Palestinian diaspora be admitted to future sessions of the working groups on refugee resettlement and economic development.

Baker Criticizes Palestinians

But Levy reiterated Israel's firm rejection of that proposal.

Nevertheless, Yosef Hadass, director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, expressed confidence that his government could resolve the disagreement with Washington.

"We are continuing to discuss it with utter frankness," he said. "I am sure that even on very difficult questions, we will reach an understanding. We are two friendly nations."

The Palestinians at their daily news conference Wednesday were vague about where they stand on the American position.

One of their leaders, Saeb Erekat of Jericho, insisted that diaspora representatives must participate in all five working groups.

The Egyptian foreign minister, Amr Moussa, made it clear that the other Arab delegations support the American-Russian position.

Secretary of State Baker met Wednesday evening with Palestinian delegates Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi. He reportedly criticized them for boycotting the Moscow conference.

In his closing remarks Tuesday, Baker noted that the Palestinians had much to gain from participating in the multilateral talks.

But Israel and its supporters tried not to let the disagreement over Palestinian representation overshadow the historic significance of Arab states sitting down to negotiate with Israel in the Russian capital.

As Isaacson of the American Jewish Committee put it: "This is an extraordinary event, and it should not be undermined or deflected in any way by the last-minute P.R. stunts of the Palestinians."

"There has been genuine, measurable progress toward resolving the problems of the Middle East," he said.

NEWS ANALYSIS:

PLO TENSION WITH PALESTINIANS BEHIND BOYCOTT OF MOSCOW TALKS By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 29 (JTA) -- The Palestinians' failed attempt to seat delegates unacceptable to Israel at this week's conference in Moscow on Middle East regional issues is seen here as a reflection of tensions within the Palestinian camp rather than a stratagem to circumvent the peace conference ground rules.

The problem is mainly between the local Palestinian leadership living under Israeli rule, which received high marks for its conduct during the three rounds of bilateral talks with Israel since October, and the Palestine Liberation Organization headquartered in Tunis, which is ex-

cluded from direct participation in the peace process.

There have been, in fact, two Palestinian delegations since the peace talks opened formally in Madrid on Oct. 30. That is because Israel has remained firm in its refusal to negotiate with Palestinians living outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in the so-called Palestinian diaspora.

The official negotiating team, headed by Dr. Haider Abdel-Shafi, a Gaza physician, has conformed to the Israeli restrictions. It was accompanied to Madrid, and to the subsequent bilateral talks in Washington, by an advisory group headed by Palestinian activists Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi.

Both are residents of East Jerusalem, which made them ineligible to participate directly in the talks. Ashrawi, however, became spokeswoman for the Palestinians, and Husseini was regarded as the de facto leader of the Palestinian delegation.

Israel declined to make an issue of the duality.

The Palestinian delegates -- those accredited, as well as their "advisers" -- have maintained regular contact with PLO headquarters in Tunis. Nevertheless, the Madrid opening and the Washington talks put the PLO in the shadows while boosting the image of the local Palestinian leadership.

That irked the PLO. Palestinian leaders, notably Husseini, came under pressure from radicals opposed to the peace talks, such as Riad Malki of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Had the delegation made any substantial achievements during the Washington round of talks, the internal and external pressures could have been shrugged off.

Few Tangible Results So Far

But the euphoria of the Madrid opening quickly dissipated. The Palestinian delegates, hailed as saviors, returned empty-handed from Washington.

To be sure, Palestinians were, for the first time, treated as equals at a peace conference. But they made no political gains. There was no independence, no autonomy, no change of living conditions in the territories under Israeli rule.

The Washington talks failed to get beyond wrangling with Israel over procedure.

Meanwhile, Palestinian extremists have reverted to terrorism, fatally shooting four Israeli settlers from ambush in the past two months.

The Israelis retaliated with curfews, mass arrests and deportation orders against 12 Palestinian activists, which are now being appealed before the High Court of Justice.

With pressures mounting and their frustrations unrelieved, the Palestinians hoped for a bold victory in Moscow. Maintaining that the Madrid rules did not apply there, an enlarged delegation showed up.

It included senior PLO officials, such as Yasir Abed Rabo, Abdullah Horani and Suleiman al-Najar; Anis al-Kassem of Amman, representing diaspora Palestinians; and East Jerusalemites Husseini and Ashrawi.

But their hopes were dashed when the Americans and Russians agreed that no structural changes would be permitted in the delegations.

The Palestinians boycotted the conference, even though the United States suggested they be included in two of the five working groups on regional problems established Wednesday.

GUSH EMUNIM PLANS TO SET UP 40 NEW WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 29 (JTA) -- In a coordinated strategy to disrupt the Middle East peace process, the Gush Emunim settlers movement is planning to establish 40 new settlements in the West Bank, according to a report Wednesday in the Israeli daily Ma'ariv.

The plan, which was to have been a secret coup, would negate any kind of autonomy plan Israel might offer Palestinians in the course of peace talks.

The program entails creating settlements through its Amana settlement movement, Ma'ariv reported.

Gush activists freely admit their plan is intended to frustrate the government's peace moves, to "strengthen our hold on the area and pre-empt any plans to implement an autonomy scheme," a Gush spokesman said.

Gush Emunim remains convinced that any degree of autonomy would lead to creation of a Palestinian state.

Amana leaders are said to have targeted about a quarter million acres of government land in the West Bank, of which an unsettled 150,000 acres would be carved up into 40 new villages.

Gush Emunim developed the scheme in cooperation with the West Bank Jewish settlers council. But according to Ma'ariv, differences have arisen between them.

The West Bank council, aware of the logistical and financial problems attending what was to have been a secret project, was planning to proceed cautiously, Ma'ariv reported.

Amana wanted to move swiftly, before the talks between Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab states develop into serious discussions.

Amana says it has already assembled 10 new settler groups eagerly waiting to move into the area.

It was planning a secret, nighttime operation, reminiscent of pioneer Jewish settlers in Palestine in the 1930s and early 1940s, who erected illegal tower-and-stockade settlements overnight, under the noses of the British Mandate authorities.

But the West Bank council prefers to avoid a confrontation with the government.

An Embarrassment To Shamir?

Disclosure of the secret plans is likely to embarrass Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir in an election year, at a time Israel is desperately seeking multibillion dollar U.S. loan guarantees to resettle new immigrants.

Shamir, in fact, is walking a tightrope.

He wants to avoid antagonizing Washington, which has linked the loan guarantees to a freeze of Israel's settlement-building program. At the same time, he does not want to alienate West Bank settlers and their supporters, who are a core constituency of Likud.

According to Ma'ariv, confidential information was supplied to Shamir by the Central Bureau of Statistics documenting 9,000 building starts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1991, in addition to 2,500 caravans and mobile homes set up in the territories.

Scores of new caravans were sent to the Samaria region in the past few days to enlarge existing settlements.

The figures represent a substantial increase

over 1990, when there were no more than 1,600 building starts in the territories.

Jewish militants continue to encroach on Silwan, an Arab village within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, where they have already occupied Arab homes they say once belonged to Jews.

In addition, they are reportedly planning to build 200 housing units for Jews on a large plot bordering the village.

Meanwhile, a clash is developing between two government ministries.

By order of the West Bank Civil Administration, controlled by Defense Minister Moshe Arens, work was halted Tuesday on a 7.5-mile road serving Jewish settlements, which was ordered built by Housing Minister Ariel Sharon in the Samaria region of the West Bank.

The purpose of the road is to bypass Arab villages west of the settlement of Ariel.

The civil administration says planning of the new route is incomplete and the legal ownership of the land has not been established.

The regional Council of Jewish Settlements denounced the ruling.

TENTATIVE DATE FOR ELECTIONS IS JUNE 23, ACCORDING TO LIKUD

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 29 (JTA) -- Likud said Wednesday that June 23 will in all probability be the date of the next Knesset elections. But the Labor Party would like to hold them sooner.

June 23 has emerged as the "probable election date, after consultations with the coalition partners and Labor," said Sara Doron, chairwoman of the Likud Knesset faction.

That is five months before the expiration of the 12th Knesset's tenure in November, when elections are mandated by law.

Early elections became inevitable after Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's coalition government was deprived of its parliamentary majority last week by the defection of two far-right parties, Tehiya and Moledet.

Neither Likud nor Labor opposes going to the polls early. But Doron may have erred if she implied that a date had been agreed to by the rival parties.

The date is not final, said Micha Harish, secretary-general of the Labor Party. He said Labor would continue to try to persuade Likud to advance elections by a week, to June 16.

Harish charged that Likud deliberately wants to schedule them after June 20, when the high school term ends.

According to Harish, his rivals fear "that many 18-year-olds will vote against the Likud," whereas on June 23, many of those youths may already be vacationing abroad, far from the polling places. Israel does not have absentee ballots.

Harish said a final decision would be made Thursday at a meeting of the Labor Party leadership bureau.

Meanwhile, the Tehiya party has announced it will introduce a no-confidence motion next week accusing the government of "giving in to American dictates" on the issue of loan guarantees.

By abstaining, Tehiya helped the government defeat a series of five no-confidence motions in the Knesset on Monday. Submitted by Labor and its left-wing allies, the motions concerned economic and social issues.

REACTION MIXED TO SENTENCING OF MAN CLEARED OF KAHANE MURDER

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Jan. 29 (JTA) -- While mainstream Jewish groups expressed their satisfaction with the maximum sentence imposed Wednesday on the man acquitted of killing Rabbi Meir Kahane, the extremist followers of the late Jewish Defense League founder are as furious as ever.

El Sayyid Nosair was convicted Dec. 21 of shooting two men and commandeering a taxi on Nov. 5, 1990, following Kahane's assassination.

But the jury acquitted him of firing the shots that killed the rabbi, a verdict that left legal experts puzzled and that presiding Judge Alvin Schlesinger described as "against the weight of what I consider the overwhelming evidence."

Saying that Nosair "brought to our streets a wave of terror," the judge sentenced the Egyptian-born American citizen to $7\frac{1}{3}$ to 22 years in prison. Including time already served, this would make him eligible for parole in early 1998.

While mainstream Jewish organizations could not fault the sentencing court, they were clearly not ready to accept as final Nosair's acquittal on the charge of murdering Kahane.

The Anti-Defamation League and the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York plan to press their determination to have the U.S. Justice Department investigate the possibility of filing civil rights charges against Nosair.

Meanwhile, the fractious followers of Kahane say they will mete out what they described, in a noisy protest in front of Manhattan's Supreme Court, as the "Torah justice" of an eye for an eye.

Rabbi Binyamin Ze'ev Kahane, son of the former Knesset member and head of one of the groups competing for his father's mantle, has made explicit death threats to Nosair, while representatives of other groups have been only slightly more coy.

Kahane Supporter Removed From Court

Supporters of Nosair say he was the victim of an injustice. An active Moslem who, according to his attorneys, has converted 30 fellow inmates at Rikers Island prison to the faith, Nosair maintained his innocence in a presentencing statement.

Nosair, who did not take the stand in his own defense, enraged Kahane followers in the gallery when he expressed condolences to those wounded that night and to their families, including the family of the slain rabbi.

"Death to Nosair! Death to Arab dogs!" shouted one Kahane follower before being removed from the court.

Comparing his prosecution to that faced by "all prophets found in history," Nosair further invited Kahane's family to visit him and discuss religion.

In the courtroom, as throughout the trial, spectators were divided: On one side of the aisle followers of the rabbi; on the other, supporters of Nosair.

Following the sentencing, both Kahane followers and the Islamic Leadership Council, a group organized by the Islamic religious authorities of the New York metropolitan region, staged loud but well-separated demonstrations amid 200 policemen.

Placards declaring "Death to Nosair" were matched by those saying "Zionism is Racism" and "Fear Allah, Fear Nosair."

BUSH SPEECH SEEN AS SIGNAL TO JEWS THEY MUST NOW LOOK AFTER THEIR OWN

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Jan. 29 (JTA) -- President Bush's State of the Union address Tuesday evening reconfirmed to the Jewish community that it will largely have to look to itself to meet the needs of Jews at home and abroad.

The Jewish community, which is hard hit by the recession, must face the "harsh reality" that it can depend on no one but itself, said Mark Talisman, director of the Washington Action Office of the Council of Jewish Federations.

While Bush's economic proposals left many Jewish leaders unsatisfied, his attack on bigotry, including anti-Semitism, was welcomed.

"If you read the papers or watch TV, you know there's been a rise these days in a certain kind of bitterness, racist comments, anti-Semitism, an increased sense of division," Bush said.

"Really, this is not us," he said. "This is not who we are. And this is not acceptable."

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said he was pleased that the president used his "bully pulpit" to denounce racism and anti-Semitism specifically.

Bush's address focused almost exclusively on economic issues. His only mention of Israel came after he reminded his audience of the liberation of Kuwait from Iraq last year.

"Soon after, the Arab world and Israel sat down to talk seriously, and comprehensively, about peace, an historic first."

Talisman, who said he had witnessed 33 State of the Union messages, said he was disturbed by the intense partisanship shown Tuesday night by both Democrats and Republicans. "We need problem-solving," not partisanship, he said.

Sharp Cut In Resettlement Funds

The president's speech was a "mixed message" for the Jewish community, Talisman said.

He said that while the president is proposing increases for some domestic needs, such as the Head Start program and emergency food and shelter, funds for resettling refugees are being cut from \$421 million to \$227 million.

This will hit hard local Jewish communities that are already reeling over the burden of resettling thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union.

The Jewish community is also suffering from the recession, as are many other Americans, Talisman said. Jews who used to be donors to their federations are now coming to them for aid.

Jews have a high percentage of elderly, many of whom are on fixed incomes, Talisman said. They are hurt by the same low interest rates that help younger people, he pointed out.

He also said that Jews involved in sales, whether retail or supply, have been hard hit by the high unemployment caused by the recession.

On a more partisan note, Steve Gutow, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council, called Bush's speech "the wrong medicine for the nation's economic ills."

He said Bush's "tax package amounts to a regressive proposal based on patented Republican trickle-down economics."

But his Republican counterpart, Matthew Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, said Bush demonstrated that he is "dealing in an aggressive manner with the economic problems of our country."