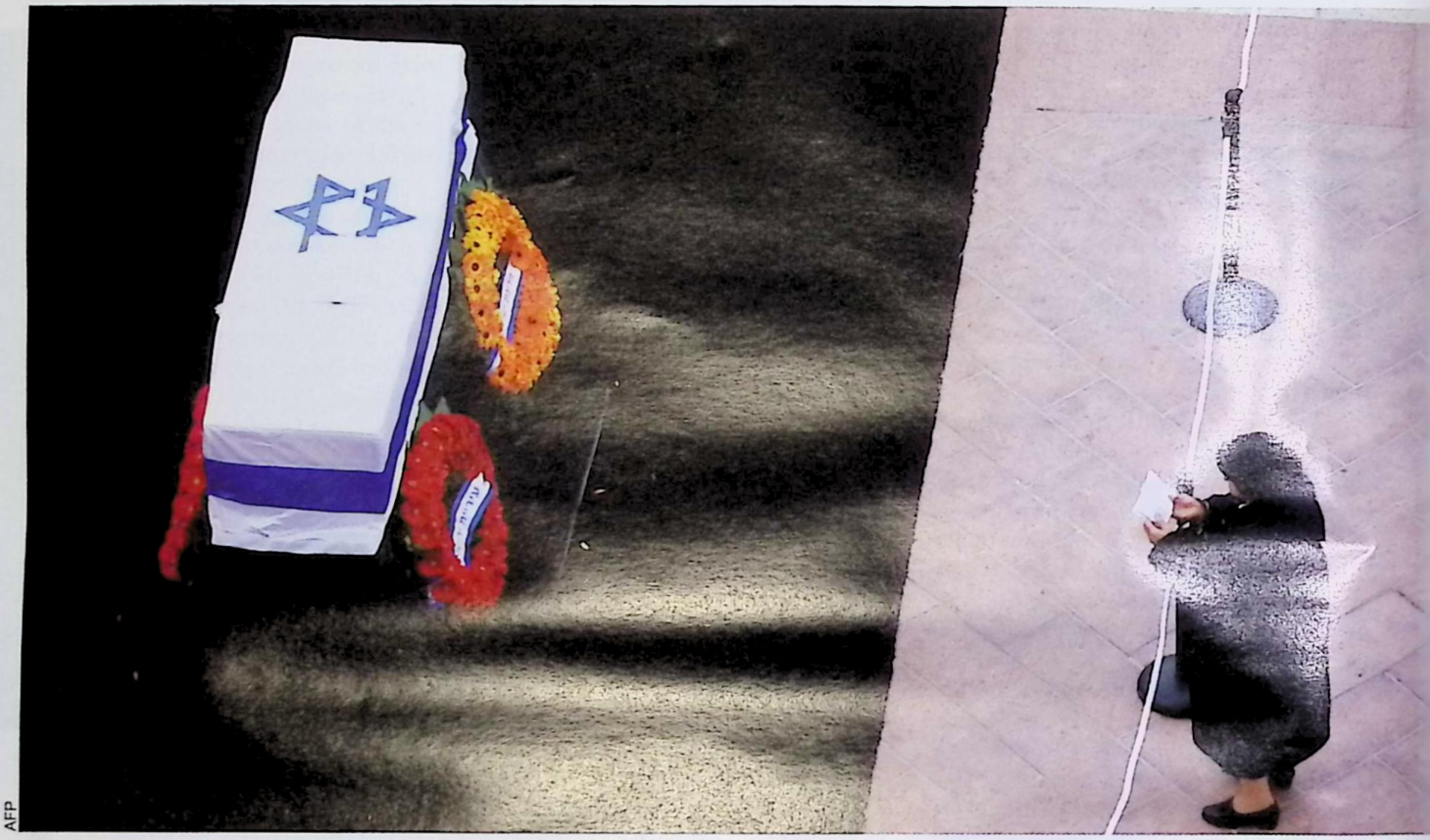
Two white sisters in Asia

M Shahid Alam examines the racial underpinnings of Israel's attempts to woo Australia as a strategic and geo-political ally in Asia



AFP

"Israel has not fully acknowledged the value of working together with Australia in Asia. It's a way for us to cooperate with, and enhance our position in, countries neighbouring Australia."

Naftali Tamir
Israeli ambassador to Australia

IN a recent interview published in Haaretz, Naftali Tamir, the Israeli ambassador to Australia, articulates a perennial need for "white" collaborators that has defined the Zionist project since its inception.

He speaks bluntly of an Israeli partnership with Australia, founded on racial solidarity, to "enhance" Israeli influence over East Asia. Only, perhaps, in the nineteenth century could a Western diplomat have spoken so plainly about race as the basis of a political alliance. Infinitely better armed against their Arab victims, the Israelis have no need for caution. They can dispense with diplomacy, with political correctness.

The Israeli ambassador feels no compunction in speaking the language of racial stereotypes. "Israel and Australia are like sisters in Asia," he says. "We are in Asia without the characteristics of Asians. We don't have yellow skin and slanted eyes. Asia is basically the yellow race. Australia and Israel are not -- we are basically the white race. We are on the western side of Asia and they are on the southeastern side."

The Israeli ambassador's plan is ambitious. With Israel dominating the western flanks of Asia and Australia anchored off the east of Asia, it appears that these two white sisters have all of Asia cornered. The plan is malicious, too. It expects to appeal to, and deepen, Australian anxieties about the growing power of people with "yellow skin and slanted eyes." If necessary, the ambassador can also remind the Australians how they got to be in Asia: like the Israelis, they, too, had the power to steal other peoples' land.

There is little that is surprising in any of this. The appeals to white racism and the claims of racial or civilizational solidarity with the West have been the foundations of Zionist success since the movement first proclaimed its colonial aims in 1895. Israel has succeeded by taking advantage of, and by constantly arousing and deepening, Western racism, especially as it relates to Arabs and Muslims.

Israel has succeeded by encouraging