

# ME talks open amid outcry over settlements, Gaza violence

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators sat down yesterday for the first time since reviving the peace process, with the talks overshadowed by Israeli settlement expansion and Gaza violence.

Teams headed by Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and former Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Qorei met shortly before 1100 GMT at a Jerusalem hotel, Israeli and Palestinian officials told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The meeting, far from the media glare, marked the first time that negotiators met since the conference in the US city of Annapolis last month.

In Annapolis, Israeli Prime Minister

Ehud Olmert and Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas formally relaunched the peace process after a seven-year freeze, pledging to aim for a comprehensive agreement by the end of 2008.

"I intend to invest in trying to create a path for dialogue and negotiations with our neighbours," Olmert said late Tuesday. "At Annapolis we initiated an effort, which I hope will mature into ongoing and serious dialogue."

But the Palestinians headed into the meeting furious with Israel for last week inviting bids to build more housing units in a settlement in annexed east Jerusalem, a city they hope to make the capital of their future state.

"Israel took a step that handicaps and distracts negotiations in launch-

ing a tender bid for building at Abu Ghneim. Under the roadmap it is obliged to stop settlement activity, including natural growth needs," Abbas told AFP in an interview on the eve of the talks.

Israel's move has likewise been blasted by its main ally Washington, the European Union and the United Nations.

Abbas said he had come under "pressure" from the Palestinian leadership to delay the start of negotiations in protest of the expansion of the east Jerusalem neighbourhood, which Israelis call Har Homa.

"We should promote a positive, not a negative attitude. We expect an Israeli response tomorrow. If it is negative, we will study what steps to take," he said.

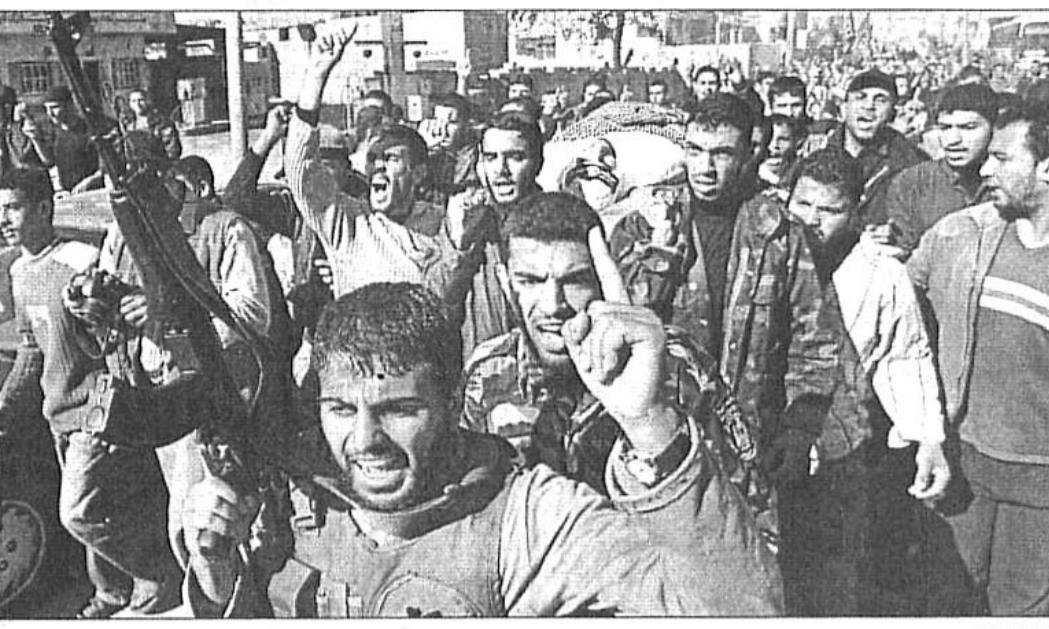
Palestinians carry the body of Omar Khalil, a militant from the Palestinian Popular Resistance Committees, during his funeral in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, yesterday. Israel's security cabinet met yesterday to discuss its response to the ongoing rocket fire from Gaza, officials said, a day after an army incursion killed six militants in the Hamas-run territory.

Livni has warned that another public bid to expand settlements risks sinking the fragile peace talks.

"Another advert in the papers for a construction tender could ruin the negotiations with the Palestinians," the liberal Haaretz quoted her as telling an interministerial committee on Tuesday.

The Palestinians have likewise blasted an Israeli incursion in Gaza on Tuesday that killed six militants, in one of the largest military operations in months in the Hamas-run territory.

"The Israeli policy of escalation on all fronts is aimed at sabotaging and placing hurdles in the path of negotiations even before they start," charged Palestinian presidency spokesman Nabil Abu-Rudeineh.



AFP PHOTO

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## Malaysia's opposition demands crisis talks with PM

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's opposition parties yesterday demanded crisis talks with Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi over a crackdown on dissent triggered by mass protests.

Dozens of protesters, including opposition figures, have been arrested and slapped with charges including attempted murder and sedition after a series of banned street rallies that have infuriated the government.

Anwar Ibrahim, a former deputy premier who was sacked and jailed in 1998, said Abdullah must face issues including mounting racial tensions in the multicultural country dominated by Muslim Malays.

"The main issues we want to raise are the racial and religious tensions affecting this country, protesting the high-handedness of breaking up protests and public assemblies, and the need for free and fair elections," he said.

"These are legitimate grievances of the people regardless of whether they are Hindus or Muslims."

Two major rallies last month, which police broke up with tear gas, water cannons and baton charges, have sent shockwaves through the nation, which is home to large ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities.

An electoral reform protest drew at least 30,000 people, and a week later some 8,000 people protested against discrimination towards Indians.

In a joint press conference, four opposition parties including Anwar's Keadilan and the Chinese-based Democratic Action Party (DAP) deplored the arrests and insisted Abdullah discuss the national crisis.

"We are seeking an immediate appointment with the prime minister to discuss these pressing matters of state and urge him to honour his promise of being willing to listen to the concerns of all Malaysians," they said in a statement.

Meeting on the Indonesian resort island of Bali, environment ministers have until Friday to agree a framework for tackling global warming past 2012, when pledges under the Kyoto Protocol expire.

"If we leave Bali without such a breakthrough, we will not only have failed our leaders but also those who look to us to find solutions, namely the peoples of this world," Ban said.

"This is the moral challenge of our generation. Not only are the eyes of the world upon us. More important, succeeding generations depend on us. We cannot rob them of their future."

Ban urged ministers to set a deadline of the end of 2009 for wrapping up a deal that curbed greenhouse-gas emissions and helped those who are least to blame for global warming yet most at risk.

But he admitted that the Bali talks would not meet the expectations of those clamouring for immediate targeted commitments to slash carbon pollution.

He led a minute's silence for victims of Tuesday's attacks in the Algerian capital, one of which devastated the offices of the UN refugee agency and UN development programme, killing at least 11.

## Over 50 Taliban killed in Afghan clashes

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan's defence ministry said yesterday that more than 50 Taliban were killed in two days of "intense clashes" near the southern town of Musa Qala, which was taken by the militants this week.

The fighting in southern Helmand province's Sangin district which neighbours Musa Qala erupted after the Taliban were forced out of the town, the ministry said in a statement.

"The terrorists, after being defeated in Musa Qala, attempted to put pressure on Sangin district. During 48 hours of intense clashes around Sangin, over 50 terrorists have been killed," it said.

It said three of the dead were

foreign nationals. al-Qaeda-linked foreign fighters are said to be helping the Taliban in their insurgency against the government and its Western allies.

Three Taliban commanders were also killed in the fighting, which was supported by the Nato-led air force, the statement said, adding that no civilians or friendly forces were killed.

The town then became a base for the fighters, whose insurgency is at its bloodiest this year with around 6,000 people dead. The town was recaptured on Monday.

Helmand province is Afghanistan's main opium-growing area and a stronghold for the Taliban militia, who were toppled from government in 2001 for harbouring Al-Qaeda leaders after the September 11 attacks.

## Pak troops kill 20 militants in Swat

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistani troops killed 20 militants in an ongoing offensive against supporters of a pro-Taliban cleric in the restive northwestern valley of Swat, officials said yesterday.

Troops pounded suspected hideouts in the valley's Puchaur and Loee Narmal towns. The operation, which started overnight and continued into Wednesday morning, killed 20 militants, a security official said, requesting anonymity.

Provincial government spokesman Amjad Iqbal confirmed the attack, saying that troops "extensively engaged militant locations, which resulted in a number of militant casualties."

Earlier, 20 supporters of pro-Taliban cleric Maulana Fazlullah -- who has been leading a campaign to impose Islamic sharia law in the region -- were killed and up to 15 hurt in an artillery barrage.

According to government reports, around 330 militants have been killed in the area in recent weeks during an army campaign to clear the scenic valley of militants. The military said Saturday that almost all had been forced out.

## Army general assassinated in crisis-hit Lebanon

AFP, Beirut

At least one Lebanese army officer and his bodyguard were killed on Wednesday in a powerful car bomb that further destabilised the country as it grapples with a deep political crisis and presidential void.

An army spokesman told AFP that Brigadier General Francois El-Hajj, head of military operations, was killed in the blast along with his bodyguard as their car drove past the Baabda municipality during the morning rush-hour.

The Red Cross said eight people were wounded in the blast, none of them seriously.

The attack was the first of its kind against the Lebanese military, seen as a unifying force in a country mired in its worst political crisis since the end of a 1975-1990 civil war.

Several officials said Hajj, 54, was targeted as he was tipped to replace as army chief General Michel Suleiman, the frontrunner to become Lebanon's next president but whose election has been blocked by a stand-off between pro- and anti-Syrian camps.

Lebanon has been without a president since November 23 when incumbent Emile Lahoud ended his term with rival parties unable to agree on a successor.

An army spokesman said that Wednesday's blast took place during the morning rush hour at 7:10 am (0500 GMT), as Hajj was heading to the defence ministry nearby.

## Rich countries should commit to slash carbon pollution

### UN chief tells climate confce, demands breakthrough

AFP, Bali

Talks on halting the juggernaut of climate change swung into top gear here yesterday with a blunt warning from UN chief Ban Ki-moon that the world was counting on a breakthrough.

Amid beefed-up security at the conference venue following devastating twin bombings in Algiers, representatives from more than 180 countries faced what sources described as deadlock on several key issues.

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Afghan policemen try to remove the destroyed suicide bomber's car at the site of an attack in Kandahar yesterday. A suicide attacker blew up a bomb-filled car near an Afghan army convoy in the southern city, killing a civilian, a police chief said.

## Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Project Director  
Textile Engineering College  
Joranganj, Mirsarai, Chittagong

Date: 04/12/2007

## Invitation for Tenders

Sealed tender are invited from publisher/suppliers/workshop and firm in accordance with the "Public Procurement Regulation-2003" for the undermentioned supply of Books, Instruments & Chemicals and Repairing Bus & Jeep as per terms & conditions stated below.

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Textiles & Jute.
2. Agency	Department of Textiles.
3. Procuring entity name	Project Director "Upgradation of Joranganj Textile Institute to Textile Engineering College" project Textile Engineering College, Joranganj, Mirsarai, Chittagong.
4. Project name (if applicable)	Upgradation of Joranganj Textile Institute to Textile Engineering College.
5. Source of funds	GOB.
6. Tender Package No	01/2007.
7. Tender name	Procurement of A) Books, B) Instruments & Chemicals C) Repairing Bus & Jeep.
8. Time for completion of delivery	60 days.
9. Eligibility of tenderers	The tenderers should submit renewed trade licence, income tax certificate, VAT certificate & bank solvency certificate.
10. Price of tender document	Tk. 500/- each group.
11. Amount of tender security	For Group (A) 50,000/-, (B) 10,000/- & (C) 6,000/-.
12. Name and address of the office(s) selling tender document	(i) Principal & Project Director, Textile Engineering College, Joranganj, Chittagong. (ii) Director, Department of Textiles, BTMC Bhaban (5th floor), 7-9, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. (iii) Deputy Chief, Ministry of Textile & Jute, Bldg. No-6, Room No-1105, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.
13. Name and address of the office(s) receiving tenders	(i) Director, Department of Textiles, BTMC Bhaban (5th floor), 7-9, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. (ii) Deputy Chief, Ministry of Textile & Jute, Bldg. No-6, Room No-1105, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.
14. Last date and time for selling tender document	Date: 30/12/2007. Time: 2:00PM.
15. Last date and time for submission of tenders	Date: 31/12/2007 Time: 2:00PM
16. Name and address of the office opening tenders with date & time	i. Department of Textiles, BTMC Bhaban (5th floor), 7-9 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215. ii. Date: 31/12/2007 Time: 2:30PM
17. Special instructions	i. The tenderers should submit sealed closed offer. ii. Rates must be quoted both in figures & in words for each item iii. Each page of submitted offer should be signed by tenderer iv. The tenderers should submit earnest money as Bank Draft/Pay Order in any schedule bank in favour of Project Director. v. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.
18. Brief description of goods & services	Details in the tender schedule.

Principal & Project Director  
Textile Engineering College  
Joranganj, Mirsarai, Chittagong

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