

No Palestinian state before 2012: Israel

REUTERS, Jerusalem

No Palestinian state will be founded in the next two years, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said yesterday, citing difficulties in US-mediated peace negotiations as well as divisions among the Palestinians.

Lieberman appeared to be referring to a call by the "Quartet" of Middle East peace brokers -- Russia, the United States, European Union and United Nations -- for an accord to be in place by 2012.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who launched indirect talks with the Palestinians in May, has accepted their demand for statehood while insisting any state be shorn of some powers and sovereignty over all of the occupied West Bank.

The US-backed administration of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas also faces opposition from Hamas Islamists who spurn the Jewish state and control the Gaza Strip.

"I'm an optimistic person, and I don't see any chance of a Palestinian state arising before 2012," Lieberman, a far-rightist in Netanyahu's conservative coalition government, told reporters after meeting Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov.

"One can dream, one and imagine, but the reality on the ground is that we are still a long way from reaching understandings and agreements on the creation of a Palestinian state by 2012," Lieberman said.

Abbas's prime minister, Salam Fayyad, has said Palestinians could declare statehood unilaterally if the diplomatic deadlock continues. But the Palestinian president has played down this possibility.

Russia differs from its Quartet partners in having openly engaged with Hamas.

Defending the Russian policy, Lavrov said, "In all our talks with Hamas, we have tried to convince them to switch to the political track and support the Arab peace initiative."



A protest clashes with riot police in front of the parliament in the centre of Athens yesterday during a protest march as part of a general strike against the austerity measures. Thousands demonstrated in Athens and major cities on June 29 as the country was gripped by the fifth general strike this year and thousands of foreign travellers faced fresh travel misery. Over 15,000 people according to police estimates took part in street protests in the capital and the main northern city of Thessaloniki to force the government to abandon a EU and IMF-mandated pay and pension cuts.

PHOTO: AFP

Storm to slow US oil spill ramp-up

REUTERS, Houston

High winds and large waves expected in the Gulf of Mexico as the first named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season passes to the west are likely to slow efforts to contain the largest oil spill in US history.

As costs associated with the spill mount, shares in London-based energy giant BP Plc are languishing near 14-year lows, prompting the New York Federal Reserve to investigate potential systemic risks posed by the company.

The Gulf oil crisis is in its 71st day with no firm end in sight. The economic and ecological costs -- to tourism, wildlife, fishing and other industries -- continue to mount for four states along the US Gulf coast.

HURRICANE

Tropical Storm Alex, forecast to reach hurricane strength on Tuesday, is projected to travel well west and south of the under-sea gusher about 50 miles off the Louisiana coast.

But plans to move a third containment vessel to the leaking well could be pushed back by about a week by high waves associated with Alex, a BP spokesman said on Monday.

US government officials estimate that 35,000 to 60,000 barrels are leaking from the blown-out well each day. BP's current containment system can handle up to 28,000 barrels daily. The planned addition would have raised that to 53,000 bpd, said Kent Wells, a senior vice president with BP.

Deep below the ocean floor, drilling of a pair of relief wells intended to plug the leak for good by August will continue "unless, unfortunately, a storm heads directly our way," Wells said.

US nets 10 suspected Russian spies

Moscow says spy accusations baseless, improper

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia yesterday said US allegations that it had broken up a major Russian spy ring just days after President Dmitry Medvedev met Barack Obama in Washington were baseless and improper.

US authorities said on Monday they had arrested 10 suspected spies who had recruited political sources and gathered information for the Russian government.

"Such actions are baseless and improper," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "We do not understand what prompted the US Justice Department to make a public statement in the spirit of Cold War espionage."

"We deeply regret that all of this has happened against the background of the relations recently declared by the US administration," it said.

US authorities have charged 11 individuals with carrying out deep-cover work in the United States to recruit political sources and gather information for the Russian government.

The individuals were accused of collecting information ranging from research

programmes on small-yield, high-penetration nuclear warheads, the global gold market and trying to obtain background on people who applied for jobs at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), according to criminal complaints filed in a US federal court.

The Justice Department accused them of operating under orders of Russia's SVR agency as "illegals"; the term applied in the intelligence world to agents infiltrated to live and operate under false identities, rather than officers who use diplomatic cover or other legitimate cover.

Authorities said 10 of them were arrested on Sunday in Boston, New York, New Jersey and Virginia on charges including conspiracy to act as unlawful agents of the Russian Federation and money laundering.

Moscow has repeatedly accused Western powers of maintaining spying operations against Russia despite the end of the Cold War. Western powers also complain of Russian activity, especially in the commercial and scientific areas.

IRAQ WAR INQUIRY Petraeus gives evidence

AP, London

The head of Britain's inquiry into the Iraq war says his panel has held a private meeting with US General David Petraeus.

John Chilcot leads a five-member panel appointed by the British government to examine the case made for the war and errors in planning for post-conflict reconstruction.

The inquiry has taken live testimony from politicians and military and intelligence officials including ex-British Prime Minister Tony Blair and held private talks in France and the US.

Chilcot said Tuesday his panel held a meeting with Petraeus in London earlier this month, before Petraeus was appointed the new head of US forces in Afghanistan. Chilcot did not provide further details.

China struggles to save 107 buried in landslide

AFP, Beijing

Hundreds of rescuers struggled in treacherous conditions yesterday to pull out 107 people buried in a landslide in southwest China, but said there was only a "slim" chance of finding survivors.

Around 600 rescuers were searching through the mud and debris for signs of life in Dazhai village in Guizhou province after the landslide Monday, local government spokeswoman Pi Yingfang told AFP.

"The rescue is under way but it's still raining hard and the local terrain is complex, which is affecting the rescue process," said Pi, who represents the authorities in Guanling county.

"Some of the rescuers have stopped work due to fears of more landslides, but others are still searching for survivors." State television showed rescuers walking on a wide thick trail of mud that appeared to have almost entirely covered houses in its wake, and diggers had arrived at the scene to begin sifting through the dirt and rocks.

More than 100,000 cubic metres of mud and rocks, the equivalent of 40 Olympic-size swimming pools, has fallen on the houses, the official People's Daily newspaper said.

The landslide was the latest weather-related disaster to hit China, which has suffered from floods and landslides for more than two weeks since summer downpours have pounded parts of the nation's south, east and centre.

N Korea slams G-8 for sinking criticism

AP, Seoul

North Korea yesterday rejected Group of Eight criticism over its alleged deadly sinking of a South Korean warship, a day after the isolated communist nation threatened to bolster its nuclear capability.

The North's Foreign Ministry accused the G-8 leaders of a "sinister political purpose," saying in a report carried by the country's official Korean Central News Agency that the G-8 has been reduced to an "evil group."

An international investigation led by South Korea concluded in May that North Korea torpedoed the 1,200-ton vessel near the two Koreas' disputed western sea border in March.

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- * Should have at least 5 (five) years of working experience in SME Banking/serving small entrepreneurs with proven track record.
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- * Must be of target oriented and a dynamic fellow with strong interpersonal skills.
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VACANCY NOTICE



Bangladesh

United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh announces a vacancy for the post of Engineer for "Police Reform Programme - Phase II" Project.

The duration of the contract is 06 (six) months initially under Special Service Agreement, subject to renewal upon satisfactory performance and availability of funds.

For details of the Job Description and instructions to apply, please visit our website: <http://www.undp.org.bd/jobs>. Applications should be submitted no later than 11:00 am, Tuesday, 06th July 2010.

Only nationals of this country are eligible to apply.
Female candidates are particularly encouraged to apply.

VACANCY NOTICE



Bangladesh

United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh announces a vacancy for the post of District Facilitator for "Local Governance Support Project-Learning and Innovation Component (LGSP-LIC)" Project.

The duration of the Contract is one (1) year initially under Service Contract modality, subject to renewal on an annual basis upon satisfactory performance and availability of funds.

For details of the Job Description and instructions to apply, please visit our website: <http://www.undp.org.bd/jobs>. Applications should be submitted no later than 11:00 am, Wednesday, 14th July 2010.

Only nationals of this country are eligible to apply.
Female candidates are particularly encouraged to apply.