



News from the Nations

Anti-Semitism in Britain

Attacks on Jews in the UK rose to record levels last year, a new report has revealed. There were 594 anti-Semitic incidents in Britain in 2006, up thirty-one per cent from 2005, according to the Community Security Trust (CST), and more than half of them were in London. CST spokesman Mark Gardner said, "This is unacceptable racism that many Jews had hoped was a thing of the past, and I appeal to all political parties and democrats everywhere to act against this hateful trend". Concern over increasing anti-Semitism in Britain is reflected in the government's broad acceptance of the grim conclusions of last year's Parliamentary inquiry into hatred directed at the Jewish community. In a twenty-page command paper that will be presented to Parliament, ministers have backed action on most of the inquiry's recommendations and expressed understanding of communal anxieties. The new measures build on faith-discrimination legislation introduced since 1997. "British Jews, like all communities, must be able to live their lives free from fear of verbal or physical attack", they say. There was particular disquiet that anti-Semitism, "unlike other forms of racism, is being accepted within parts of society instead of being condemned".

Syrian peace offer

According to the *Jerusalem Post*, Syrian Information Minister Mohsen Bilal was quoted as saying that "Syria wishes to revive the peace process with Israel with the help of US and Russian mediators". He added that, "if Israel rejects the Arab peace initiatives, the only way to get the Golan Heights back would be the way of resistance".

Israel leads in water technology

Israel's exports of water and related technology are a "gold spring", said Israel Export Institute chairman David Artzi recently, as quoted in the *Jerusalem Post*. Israel is one of the world leaders in developing desalination and filtering technology, exporting approximately \$1 billion worth of water technology in 2006 to countries around the world, with 2007's exports expected to reach \$2 billion, according to the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour. A survey commissioned by the ministry revealed that the world market for water technology has grown ten per cent in each of the past five years, and is expected to be a \$600-billion-a-year market by 2008. "Israel's water-related production has the potential for great growth and just like we have seen our hi-tech sector grow out of military use into everyday use and become our greatest export, our water production technology has the potential to tap into new markets around the world", said Minister of Industry, Trade and Labour Eli Yishai. Meanwhile the ministry convened a meeting of various government offices, agencies and academic institutions in which the advancement of Israel's water production and water industry and the export of the country's water-related technology were the primary subjects under discussion. Over the next year, the ministry plans to market heavily Israel's water industry around the world, beginning with a new promotional video, as well as an updated website showcasing the industry. Desalination processes can help solve Israel's water problems as well as produce water for export—and not a drop to waste.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROJECT UNSTOPPABLE

Iran urged Western governments to "accept the new reality" of its nuclear programme recently as the régime disclosed a central plank of its strategy for resisting outside pressure. Teheran will try to present the world with a *fait accompli* by pressing ahead with uranium enrichment on an industrial scale at its nuclear facility in Natanz. Iran says that Western governments must accept this defiance before any substantive talks on the future of the nuclear programme can begin. "The suspension of enrichment is not acceptable either as a precondition to negotiations or as a result of such talks", said Foreign Minister Mottaki. He said that Iran was "ready for dialogue" if there was "something new to say—the other party must accept the new reality of Iran's large-scale enrichment of uranium".

Attacks on Jews worldwide

According to a Tel Aviv study reported in the *Jerusalem Post*, "global anti-Semitism is spiralling upward, driven by cultural clashes in Europe and by increasingly virulent anti-Zionism in the Arab world".

Israel to erect fence in Judean desert

The Jerusalem Post reports: "Despite protests by Green groups and orders by Defence Minister Amir Peretz to come up with 'technological alternatives', a senior officer has told the Jerusalem Post the IDF has decided there is no choice but to construct a physical structure along the 30 kilometres of the security barrier that run through the Judean Desert. In January, Peretz ordered that construction in the area be suspended after environmentalists and settlers argued the barrier would scar the landscape, harm wildlife and disrupt the ecosystem. The route runs 30 km from Metzadot Yehuda (Beit Yatir) to Nahal Tavor. Peretz's decision followed a request by a number of Knesset members. But senior officers in the Central Command told the Post there was 'no alternative to a physical barrier' and that the only way to stop terrorist infiltration from the south was to erect a fence. Deputy OC Central Command Brig.-Gen. Kobi Barak is in charge of the construction and is scheduled to present a new plan to Peretz for approval in the coming weeks. According to details of the plan . . . a security fence will be erected along 25 km of the 30 km route. The five km mountainous section between Mount Hezron and Mount Holet will be protected by radar and other sensors. According to Barak's plan, the route will include a physical barrier like most of the eastern security fence set to run from Gilboa in Galilee down to Meitar near Beersheba, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2008. The barrier in the Judean Desert, however, will be two-thirds the height and will be 30 metres wide including a patrol road instead of the standard 50. 'Wherever there is not a fence there are terrorist and criminal infiltrations', a top Central Command officer said; and another senior officer said,] 'At the end of the day there is no alternative to a physical barrier and a fence is the only way to guarantee Israel's security'".

Arab leaders snub Olmert's peace call

Mr Olmert's recent invitation to Middle East countries to join a regional peace summit has met with a lukewarm response from Arab leaders. Mr Olmert issued the invitation during a press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the current head of the European Union. "I invite all the heads of the Arab states, including the Saudi king, whom I consider a very important leader, to hold talks with us . . . If the Saudi king initiates a meeting of moderate Arab states and invites me, and the head of the Palestinian Authority, in order to present us the Saudi ideas, we will come to hear them and we will be glad to voice ours". However, Syrian sources quoted in their paper (according to a report in the *Jewish Chronicle*) said that "Israel was trying to use the pretext of delaying talks by a few years to actually avoid them because of their refusal to recognise the Palestinian right of return". Israel has come under pressure from its international allies to respond positively to the Arab League peace initiative, relaunched recently at the Riyadh summit. They say Mr Olmert's near-zero approval ratings at home could be boosted by a diplomatic success in the peace process. The plan promises full recognition of Israel by all member states in return for Israel's withdrawal to the 1967 borders and a "just "resolution over refugees.

The British view of Iran

A new poll suggests that ninety-one per cent of Britons believe an Iranian nuclear arsenal would pose a threat to Israel. But just twenty-four per cent support military intervention by Israel to stop Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. The poll, commissioned by the Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre (Bicom), also reveals sixty-nine-per-cent backing for economic sanctions against Iran to prevent such an eventuality. Forty-three per cent support military intervention by a multinational force and eight-four per cent feel that Iranian nuclear weapons would be dangerous for Britain. Bicom chief executive Lorna Fitzsimons said the capture of the sailors had hardened public attitudes and was not a public relations success for Iran. Ms Fitzsimons warned, "the clock is ticking—the European Union is one of Iran's biggest trading partners and needs to exert more economic pressure to influence Iran into a nuclear climb down".

MOST BRITONS WANT LOOSER TIES TO EUROPE

An overwhelming majority of people want a referendum on Britain's relationship with Europe and the possibility of "loosening" ties. A new poll has found that sixty-nine per cent of Britons would like to vote on the proposal that the UK should have a looser relationship with Europe, maintaining free trade and cooperation on common policies but opting out of political and economic integration. Only twenty-seven per cent said they wanted the UK to stay a full European Union member on current terms, participating in further integration, according to a survey for the Centre for Policy Studies. Asked to chose their "ideal relationship", thirty-six per cent said that the UK should have a looser arrangement with Europe, and twenty-nine per cent said the UK should withdraw from the EU altogether.