

## India can help in Middle East peace process: Arab League

The Arab League sees a bigger role for India in the Middle East peace process and hopes that [New Delhi](#) with its good relations with all concerned parties would be able to help in finding a just and lasting solution.

The chief of the Arab League Mission in India, Ahmed Salem Saleh Al-Wahishi, told a news conference here Thursday that since India was emerging as a major player in the international community, he was optimistic it would help Palestinians realise their dream of a Palestine state.

He noted that India has always been supportive of the Palestinians' cause and the demand for independent Palestine.

'Every country has sovereignty to have its own relations with other countries. In fact, we feel that India's relations with all parties will help in playing a bigger role in the peace process,' he said when asked about India's growing relations with Israel.

He recalled that Mahatma Gandhi had backed the cause of Palestine. 'Mahatma Gandhi had said as England belongs to English and France to French, Palestine belongs to Palestinians. When he said 'Palestinians', they include Muslims, Christians and Jews,' Al-Wahishi said.

He said India's participation in the Annapolis conference in the US last year was the recognition of its growing role in international arena and the peace process in the Middle East.

'We see a big role for India in the peace process because of its historic ties with Arabs, its support to the cause of Palestine and the way it is emerging as a key player at the international level,' he said.

The ambassador was optimistic that a solution to the vexed problem could be found during the tenure of US President George W. Bush. 'We are looking forward for a just and lasting solution by creating separate state of Palestine during Bush's tenure,' he said.

He said the Palestinians' demand for their own state was legitimate and had the backing of the international community. 'We will never give up this legitimate right,' he said.

To another query, Al-Wahishi said it was in the interest of the US and the international community to ensure lasting peace in the Middle East in view of the rich resources in the region and various problems like terrorism raising their heads.

Al-Wahishi is here to participate in a public meeting being organised by the Indo-Arab League to express solidarity with Palestinians.

Indo-Arab League chairman Syed Vicaruddin said the meeting would be held here on Sunday to mark 60 years of the 'Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories'.

Central ministers S. Jaipal Reddy, Ram Vilas Paswan, Communist Party of India (CPI) general secretary A.B. Bardhan, Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) leader Sitaram Yechuri and Palestine's Ambassador to India Osama Musa will also address the meeting.

Vicaruddin said the Indo-Arab League, working to promote better relations between India and the Arab League since 1967, was holding the meet to protest 'the continued atrocities of the Zionists on Palestinians'.

He demanded that India take the initiative for peace in West Asia.

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