

1989

George H. W. Bush is inaugurated the 41st President of the United States of America.



1990

Protests in Azerbaijan, part of the Dissolution of the Soviet Union.

1991

Sudan's government imposes Islamic law nationwide, worsening the civil war between the country's Muslim north and Christian south.

1992

Air Inter Flight 148, an Airbus A320-111, crashes into a mountain near Strasbourg, France killing 87 of the 96 people on board.

The run-up to Israel's election

Israeli elections to the benefit of Mr Netanyahu

... suggest the government will bolster Netanyahu's maximalist agenda, scuppering any hopes of establishing a Palestinian state. Palestinian leadership severed ties with Netanyahu a while back in protest.

Bank's vast agricultural basin – presumably with Mr Trump's blessing. Mr Pompeo offered his apparent backing in November by claiming that Israeli settlements in the West Bank were not necessarily "inconsistent with international law".

With that as a cue, Mr Netanyahu's government convened a panel this month to draft an official proposal to annex the Jordan Valley.

Naftali Bennett, the defence minister and a settler leader, revealed last week that Israel was creating seven new "nature reserves" on Palestinian land. Another 12 existing Israeli-seized sites are to be expanded. Israel would annex Area C "within a short time", Mr Bennett added.

On Saturday, he also ordered the army to bar from the West Bank prominent Israeli left-wing activists who demonstrate alongside Palestinians against land thefts by the settlers and the army. He equated these non-violent protesters with extremist settler groups that have assaulted Palestinians and torched their olive groves and homes.

Referring to the International Criminal Court in the Hague, the Palestinian foreign ministry warned that establishment of the nature reserves would "speed up (Mr Bennett's) appearance before the ICC as a war criminal."

Nonetheless, the settler right is growing ever bolder on the annexation issue – as evidenced by Israel's increasingly fraught ties with neighbouring Jordan.

King Abdullah II recently declared relations with Israel at an "all-time low". Meanwhile, Ephraim Halevy, a former head of Israel's Mossad spy agency, blamed Israel for showing "contempt towards Jordan" and creating a crisis that jeopardised the two countries' 1994 peace treaty, a legacy of the Oslo peace process.

If Israel annexes large swaths of the West Bank, stymying Palestinian statehood, that could unleash waves of unrest among the Kingdom's majority population – Palestinians made refugees by Israel during the 1948 and 1967 wars.

It could also provoke a mass exodus of West Bank Palestinians into Jordan. Senior Jordanian officials recently told a former Israeli journalist, Ori Nir, that they viewed annexation as an "existential threat" to their country.

All Israeli rightwingers need is a nod of approval from the White House. With Mr Netanyahu desperate to pull a rabbit out of his hat, and with an obliging patron installed in Washington, there is reason enough for them to believe that the stars may finally be aligned.

...ants Iran's allies

Hizbollah and their allies, figures



Ordinary Lebanese are struggling to cope with the deep recession yet Hizbollah is only concerned with consolidating its power in government while the FPM is preoccupied with the issue of presidential succession.

elections, it was mainly channelled through its support of Hizbollah. In the years leading up to the occupation, the FPM was dismissive of Syria and Mr Bassil did not bother with diplomatic niceties, often citing collaboration with congressman Eliot Engle to pass the Syria act in Congress in 2004. Why bother when Hizbollah was calling all the shots?

But times have changed. In October last year, Mr Bassil said he was willing to meet Mr Al Assad in Damascus. Since 2006, the FPM has struck a heinous alliance with Hizbollah. And while a few years ago, the Syrian regime seems doomed to have collapsed, it is now bolstered by Rus-

sia and controls most of the nation's territory. Several Arab countries are vying for better ties with Mr Al Assad, after having lost hope in the capacity of Lebanon's anti-Iranian block to curb Tehran's influence.

A month ago, it seemed unlikely that a Sunni academic with little Sunni support could stand up to Mr Aoun and his son in law Mr Bassil, in favour of pro-Syrian groups. Yet this is exactly what Mr Diab has done. For once the "axis of resistance" cannot blame the US or scapegoat Syrian refugees for the current impasse. Bickering among different factions within the alliance, who oppose Mr Diab, has stalled government formation.

Russia has so far stood on the sidelines in Lebanon, but if pressured, Moscow is more likely to side with Damascus rather than with a non-state actor such as Hizbollah.

The US may also face a dilemma as it disengages from the region. Hizbollah is starting to face increasing limitations to its political ascendancy in Lebanon, not only due to a months-long popular uprising and American sanctions. It also has to contend with the return of Syrian influence and rivalries between its allies. Syria may not be able to call the shots just yet, but its presence can no longer be ignored.

Premier's global role, vision praised



VENUS S

The United Nations (UN) expects to observe its 75th anniversary on September 21, 2020. The theme selected for the occasion is 'The Future we want, the UN we need: Reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism'.

The world establishment has achieved most of its aims ranging from reducing poverty to addressing climate changes and proposing means of containing it to diffusing tension in war torn areas. It proved to be instrumental in bringing world order, peace and stability.

However, there exist some serious downfalls, observed in its more than seven decades of operation. Lately, the issue that concerns the deployment of peacekeeping troops in man-made conflicts (war) or natural disaster areas where the blue helmeted soldiers have raped the very victims they are supposed to protect leaving wives without husbands and babies without fathers remained a shame and blemish on the global organization.

The UN's General Secretary letter shows that the world community is counting on the Premier's vision and advice. I believe that HRH Premier's contribution will prove to be the key to solving the encounters the world is now witnessing and possible conflicts that may happen in the future.

During this year's celebrations, the UN is aiming to reach to a wide range of people with various experiences and backgrounds. Engage them in a dialogue and hopes to come up with constructive suggestions that benefit the UN and the global community.

On this vein, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, recently sent a written message to His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, hailing his global role in promoting peace, human rights and sustainable development.

In his message, the UN head said, "It is encouraging to realize that the UN can count on the support of Your Royal Highness at times when we face many challenges and dangers". He appreciated Bahrain's strong relations with UN body and its agencies.

The Premier's name is not new at the UN. A host of awards conferred on him speaks volumes of his contribution to the world body. This includes the 2006 Special Citation of the Habitat Scroll of Honour Award for his "impressive efforts in lifting the living standards of all Bahrainis through an active focus on poverty alleviation and modernization while preserving the cultural heritage of his country. (UN reports).

The approval of the UN General Assembly of the Premier's suggestion to fix April 05 as a Day of Conscience has received appreciation not only at the UN but also among the world leaders.

The Premier has become the first Arab leader to suggest such a proposal that can potentially deter confrontation and urge people to use their God-given conscience to settle conflicts and avoid unnecessary wars that can bring about destruction and impede development.

Thus, from this year onward, April 05, will not be an ordinary day in the world. It will be celebrated locally and globally for the first time ever as Day of Conscience and the fact that it is initiated of our Premier makes us very proud and reflects his wise leadership. The Premier has fixed his name at the UN for generations to come.

The UN needs to fine-tune some of its projects to serve the world community better. The only way forward is to involve as many people as possible with various backgrounds in brainstorming programmes and come up with constructive and workable ideas and recommendations.

The UN's General Secretary letter shows that the world community is counting on the Premier's vision and advice. I believe that HRH Premier's contribution will prove to be the key to solving the encounters the world is now witnessing and possible conflicts that may happen in the future.

This year's theme rightly addresses the need to participate the masses and if properly implemented, we will have a new-look UN that serves the challenges the world community faces.



TOP
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TWEETS

01



Let us pause at #GospelofToday (John 1,29-34), perhaps even contemplating an icon of Christ, Son of God made lamb, to free us from evil. Yes, we are still poor sinners but not slaves, no, but children, children of God!

@Pontifex

02



It was a pleasure meeting in Berlin with EU High Representative @JosepBorrellF today to discuss our shared challenges, including ways we can work together toward greater peace and security in the Middle East and North Africa.

@SecPompeo

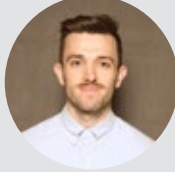
03



In the run up to 'Pariksha Pe Charcha 2020', lakhs of students, parents and teachers shared their inputs and suggestions. These are extremely valuable, giving insights into the pressing issues when it comes to exam preparation, the exam itself and the time after examinations.

@narendramodi

04



Schiff on the Trump argument that he can't be impeached for abuse of power: "That's the argument I suppose you have to make if the facts are so dead-set against you ... You had to go so far out of the mainstream to find someone to make that argument." Via ABC

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Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)