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Industrial estate for Ma'ale Haedumim

Government spokesman says the timing is 'purely coincidental'

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The Government has decided to build an industrial estate for Jerusalem at Ma'ale Haedumim, 14 kilometres from the city limits along the road to Jericho. The decision was taken at yesterday's Cabinet meeting. Information Minister Aharon Yariv insisted later that its timing — following the Rabat summit, the PLO successes at the UN, and the anti-Israel resolutions of Unesco — was "purely coincidental," and that it was not to be viewed as "Israel's answer" to these political setbacks.

Some observers felt, nevertheless, that the timing of the decision was significant, and that world opinion was bound to connect it with these recent West Bank-related developments in the international arena.

Another Jerusalem industrial project approved by the Cabinet yesterday envisions a "garage, workshop, auxiliary services area" to be developed at Anatot, a rural suburb to the north of Jerusalem, within city limits. Some Anatot garage-owners have already anticipated — and thereby possibly influenced — the Government's decision by setting up their makeshift workshops and service centres at Anatot.

The third factor in Jerusalem's industrial planning — the municipal abattoir — is to remain at French Hill, at least for the next five years. The Government has pledged to spend up to IL2 million on the abattoir to improve its ecological qualities.

The three-tiered industrial plan for the capital was submitted to the Cabinet by a special committee chaired by Attorney-General Meir Shamgar and was approved in principle by all the ministers. There were, however, some dissenting votes on the question of implementation of the Ma'ale Haedumim project.

The Shamgar committee in fact submitted an earlier report several weeks ago, which recommended that the abattoir be transferred from French Hill to a site north of Anatot. But this had to be revised when Housing Minister Avraham Ofer presented his five-year housing plan, which called for residential housing in the same area. The Shamgar committee thereupon decided, after consultation with the Ecology Authority, that the abattoir could remain where it was provided money was allocated to refurbish it.

Mr. Yariv told newsmen that the Ma'ale Haedumim project would require no annexation "for the time being." Nor would it be correct to necessarily assume, Mr. Yariv cautioned, that the planned industrial estate would henceforth be considered an integral part of the State of Israel.

He said the estate would extend over some five or six thousand dunams. In 1972, he recalled, the military governor had closed off over seventy thousand dunams of land in the Ma'ale Haedumim area — and the industrial estate would arise on sections of this. Most of the land in the area belonged to the Jordanian government, but he thought that some expropriation of land from private owners might also be necessary.

There certainly would be expropriations for the garage-and-services area planned for Anatot, he

said. A ministerial committee would be set up to review each expropriation request by the Lands Administration — the body which would have overall control of implementing the projects.

Ma'ale Haedumim would be classified a "development area," Mr. Yariv added, enabling investors to obtain preferential loans and taxation conditions.

The Information Minister could not provide an estimate of how long it might be until the first factory arose at the site, but informed sources told *The Post* the Government's intention was to move immediately into the detailed planning stage and that it was thinking in terms of two or three years rather than a decade as a reasonable period for implementation.

The advantage of Ma'ale Haedumim, Mr. Yariv explained, was that it was far enough from the city for the industrial estate to be ecologically acceptable, and yet near enough to make it conveniently accessible. At the moment, there was no infrastructure at all at the site — apart from the main road linking Jerusalem to Jericho. The estate will be built on both sides of the road.

Eventually, Mr. Yariv added, residential housing might be built on the estate to accommodate persons employed there.

Other Cabinet sources explained that both Arabs and Jews would work on the estate — and there might perhaps be Arab-owned enterprises on it as well as Jewish. Thus, the project could be considered "building for public purposes," which an occupying power is permitted to undertake under international law.

The Cabinet also decided yesterday to speed up the construction of Government housing for low-income Arab families in the Azariyeh suburb of Jerusalem (on the road to Jericho). The Ministry of Housing is to embark on a pilot project, forty units which will be offered to needy families on easy terms.

Asher Wallfish adds:

Mapam's two representatives in the Cabinet, Health Minister Victor Shemtov and Absorption Minister Shlomo Rosen, said they supported the creation of an industrial zone at Ma'ale Haedumim, but felt the decision should be postponed for six months. Decisions of this nature should not be made to appear as an Israeli reaction to the Rabat summit or to events at the UN, they said. The two abstained in the vote. But several Ministers said that if such an impression were created in the outside world, that was only to the good.

Until such time as detailed plans for the industrial zone are worked out, and the tens of millions of pounds allocated to develop the zone — which lacks power as well as water — the decision will have a political impact, according to one view in the Cabinet. And it will enhance Israel's security presence in Judea as well as Samaria.

The source revealed that National Religious Party ministers in the Cabinet had urged the establishment of new settlements in other parts of the West Bank, arguing that this would be an appropriate Israeli response to the Rabat summit and the UN vote. But the sense of the Cabinet did not favour this proposal, and the NRP men did not force a vote.