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# Ma'ale Adumim housing by July

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THE FIRST accommodation at Ma'ale Adumim will be ready for occupation in June or July, Housing Minister Avraham Ofer revealed at the Alignment Knesset faction last night.

Briefing one of the stormiest faction caucus sessions for many months, prior to today's debate on urgent motions for the agenda about Sunday's settlement bid at the sites midway between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, Ofer conceded that all the implications of the Government decisions about the site had not been clear to him at first.

Ofer said that while families, and not only single persons, would be housed at the temporary work camp, and while kindergarten facilities would be available if the recreation rooms were used for tots, no school would be built at the desert industrial site as long as the camp was provisional.

The plants would employ Jews only, he said. Even if Jerusalem industry so far had attracted more Arabs than Jews, Ma'ale Adumim enterprises were not meant to attract Arabs. Ofer said the Government was solidly united in the consensus that Jerusalem must be buttressed on all sides.

The row erupted when Mapam Health Minister Victor Shemtov took the floor to speak as "an ordinary member, not a Minister" and demanded that the Alignment condemn a "provocative settlement bid aimed at sparking a ferment on the eve of the Kissinger talks and at dictating the Government's acts and priorities."

Shemtov drew interruptions from maximalist Ministers Gad Ya'acobi (Transport) and Shlomo Hillel (Police) when he contended that the Government did not have strategic or military considerations in mind when it decided about Ma'ale Adumim.

Shemtov charged that the Cabinet decisions of November last year were a political rejoinder to the Rabat Summit which was not meant to be implemented, and this was why Finance Minister Yehoshua Rabinowitz told the Lands Administration that it had no funds to start work.

(As Cabinet Ministers with differing views, present in unusually large numbers, argued over their own past decisions, their duelling was echoed by back-benchers. Maximalists Mordechai Ben-Porat and David Coeren, on one hand, argued with Yosef Sarid and the Mapam members on the other, till the general laundering of Alignment linen took on the size of a major row.)

Shemtov's final advice to the Alignment was to stop throwing away any more millions which would be better invested elsewhere and to drop a project which had no urgency.

Commerce Minister Haim Bar-Lev allayed tempers considerably with a factual account of the plants due to be set up on the 600 dunams now being levelled. Many firms were interested in Ma'ale Adumim because of the far-reaching incentives there and some at least would be suitable. Only large, serious enterprises would be accepted, he said. There would be no workshop-firms making clever gimmicks, the sort on which the Ministry had burnt its fingers elsewhere.

The three plants already decided on in the first stage — one of which turned out industrial pre-fabs — would give jobs to several hundred men, he said. The temporary accommodation would go up on a hill 800 metres from the edge of the industrial zone.

Mordechai Ben-Porat charged deliberate delays by several Cabinet Ministers in the last few months, including the Ministers of Housing, Commerce, Finance and Justice. He said the camp could have been completed by now, had the will been there. He asked how the Justice Ministry could possibly have lost the land registry file and done nothing about it for three months.

He made the faction gasp with his parting shot: "If this Government stops promoting settlement in the areas, it should liquidate itself — and fast!"

Foreign Minister Yigal Allon said that no Ministers "addled" with Cabinet decisions and none dragged their feet on them, either.

He said Ma'ale Adumim was just as vital as the Rafah Approaches, and should have been settled seven years ago. In future decisions of a territorial nature, it would have crucial political and strategic importance—even in minimalist terms—he said. Leaving semantics aside, Ma'ale Adumim was a settlement to all intents and purposes, Allon said, though that did not give any group the right to dictate the Government its pace.

The meeting was kept in a good humour by one uninvited listener, who kept as quiet as a mouse — because he was just a mouse. The creature was spotted by Bar-Lev, who like an experienced ex-Chief of Staff, pounced on it and despatched it with a *hefly kik*. By this time Mathilda Ghez had fled to the other end of the room, from whence she refused to return even after Bar-Lev showed her the corpse.

The rash of wisecracking included the following:

Ben-Porat: Now we know who's been leaking secrets all this time.

Bar-Lev: I know a good joke about a mouse. It's a pity there are ladies present.

Shemtov: They talk about mice in Assaf Harofe Hospital, but even the Knesset has them.

Bar-Lev: And this one was tiny, so its parents must be around some place.