

## **Foreign policy - an issue of self-respect**

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Sir : PLO President Yasser Arafat was in the news recently because of his visit to India to receive the prestigious Indira Gandhi award. On what grounds the award was conferred upon him is not our concern. But the disgraceful thing (to India) about his visit was that he gave a 'no objection certificate' to India to have diplomatic relations with Israel by recognizing it as a sovereign state. It was as if that India wouldn't have forged relations with Israel without Mr. Arafat's consent. Is it not a shame on India's part to seek advice from the president of a non-existent country on the foreign policies India has to follow? Isn't it a blow to our country's self-respect? Doesn't India have an independent foreign policy, being one of the biggest countries in Asia? The Congress (I) Government, it seems, has no qualms about the disrespect to the national dignity and honour from such persons.

A small country like Israel which has a population of 40 lakh showed to the world, how much importance it gives to national dignity, during the Gulf war recently. When such a small country can show such confidence, why cannot India show at least a fraction of it? Who is Mr. Arafat to tell us what we should and shouldn't do? India doesn't need any advice and it is high time, the Government of India learnt how to safeguard the national dignity hereafter. The country's honour, dignity and self-respect should be given utmost importance and let our leaders at least learn a lesson or two in this regard from Israel.

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