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THE IRISH TIMES

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Mayhew challenges 'Peace first' plan.

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EVIDENCE emerged yesterday of a divergence of policy priorities on Northern Ireland between the Irish and British Governments following statements by the Northern Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew.

Although the Taoiseach, Mr Reynolds, has maintained that the cessation of violence is central to the success of any settlement, Sir Patrick yesterday indicated that he had no difficulty with political talks running parallel to a "search for a cessation of violence".

Asked by reporters to comment on the Taoiseach's statement to the Fianna Fail Ard-Fheis that

the beginning of the peace process could become a reality before the end of this year, Sir Patrick said: "I don't myself think that this is a process that will benefit from governments, for example, saying this must be achieved in a fortnight, that must be achieved in a month. I don't think any government is doing that."

Senior sources in Dublin later commented that "the Northern Ireland dossier is on the Prime Minister's (Mr Major) desk rather than in Stormont". Sir Patrick Mayhew "is not the Prime Minister".

Meanwhile, Mr Reynolds insisted that "peace cannot wait... the killing of innocent civilians must stop... time is not on our side". Underlining that

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stance, a Government spokesman said the Taoiseach still firmly held the view that the "best option" would be a cessation of violence "and talks would follow".

Speaking to reporters during a visit to Kells, Co Antrim, yesterday, Sir Patrick was asked how he felt about Mr Reynolds's weekend statement that the search for peace took precedence over the re-starting of inter-party talks. Sir Patrick replied: "They are not in-

compatible. They go one in the other."

Government sources said that Mr Reynolds had not set an actual deadline but was determined to push the process forward with all speed. He would not be deflected from the urgency of this task and was trying to nudge everybody towards progress, the sources said.

They added that it was merely "an interpretation of reality" to

say that peace was a prerequisite for a settlement. The Government hoped that by the time Mr Reynolds and Mr Major meet at the Anglo-Irish summit on December 3rd, a framework for peace would be worked out. It also believed that the joint declaration by Mr Reynolds and Mr Major may contain enough to induce an IRA cessation of violence and that a talks process could follow.

The two Governments have been working closely on how to produce such a formula and, according to sources, a whole series of contacts are being set up between the parties involved in the conflict. There have been no direct links between the Irish Government and paramilitaries, the sources said.

It is still not clear when the SDLP leader, Mr John Hume, will meet the Sinn Fein president, Mr Gerry Adams, to assess the responses of the British and Irish Governments to their initiative. Both men are now understood to favour the publication of their proposals, but may wait until the outcome of the Anglo-Irish summit on December 3rd is apparent before releasing details.

Frank Millar, London Editor, adds: Mr Major will hold separate meetings this afternoon at 10 Downing Street with the Ulster Unionist Party leader, Mr James Molyneaux, and the DUP leader, the Rev Ian Paisley. These will complete a round of meetings with the leaders of the North's four main constitutional parties, whom Mr Major is hoping to persuade to rejoin the three-strand talks process.

Mayhew says governments 'at one' on approach; Harney calls for Hume/Adams proposals to be made public; Public inquiry urged on shooting of woman; Sectarian suspects released by RUC: page 6