

Little sympathy in OIC for Pak.

17/10 By Kesava Menon 110-13

MANAMA (Bahrain) OCT. 11. Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) get together to ponder the consequences that could befall the member-states as the U.S. retaliates for the terrorist strikes of September 11. They conclude their meeting without a word of concern for Pakistan, member-state which (next only to Afghanistan) has to cope with the most grievous of these consequences. Failure gives out an unmistakable stench.

The events of September 11 exposed the consequences of Pakistan's failed bid to reach for strategic stakes beyond its capacity. Till then Pakistan had been peddling before the OIC the great potentialities that had been opened up vis-a-vis Central Asia. But the only means that Pakistan could devise to exploit the potential was through the Taliban's control of Afghanistan. It now seems almost inevitable that the Taliban, given space and time, would have helped produce the even more fanatic Al-Qaeda.

Almost every single OIC member-state has now to cope with the consequences of Pakistan's strategic over-reach. As the OIC member-states, especially the Arabs, scurry for cover they have no time to consider the consequences for Pakistan itself. A U.S. administration, operating on the principle "with us or against" have placed the Arab states under multiple layers of pressure to undertake painful measures. Small wonder that the communique issued on Wednesday at the end of the Foreign Ministers Conference does not in-

clude a word of concern for the internal problems that could rack Pakistan or about the manner in which the U.S. should deal with the country.

Neither is there a word about Kashmir, the Pakistani cause that the OIC had eventually come around to adopting as its own. In previous OIC formulations, the insertions about the need to make a distinction between terrorism and struggles for self-determination had included a mention of Kashmir second only to the mention of Palestine.

The communique issued yesterday merely states that the Conference stressed its "rejection of any linkage between terrorism and Islamic and Arab peoples, including the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples' right to

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self-determination, self-defense, sovereignty, resistance against Israeli and foreign occupation..".

This communique demonstrates that the Arab member-states of the OIC are currently concerned only with marking out the areas in respect of which they hope the U.S. will not put them under pressure. They do not want innocents to be killed in the fighting in Afghanistan; they do not want any other Islamic or Arab state to be targeted (Iraq, Iran and Syria have found mention off and on as other potential targets); they do not want the Palestinian issue to be forgotten in the West's preoccupation with the Taliban and they do want reassurance that Islam will not be equa-

ted with terrorism. If the U.S. moves adversely on any of these areas the Arab states will not be able to cope with the consequences.

Till September 11 Pakistan could strut on the platform provided by the OIC. Despite its deference to Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan had a clout in the world of the Muslim-majority states. Pakistanis believed they were entitled to this status and the others did not seem to begrudge it this status either. Its size, its nuclear weapons and its capacity to provide the personnel who could administer the OIC and articulate its policies were among the factors that created Pakistan's status. But what really fixed Pakistan's sense of its own importance and the rest of the OIC's perception of Pakistan's power, was the role it had played as a front-line state in the defeat of the Soviet Union.

There was a lot of myth-making involved in the projection of Pakistan's contribution to the defeat and eventual demise of the Soviet Union. But these myths remained unexamined in the euphoria that the conservative and centrist sections of the OIC felt at the ending of the Soviet menace. The reputation that Pakistan has built for itself as a competent strategic player was but slightly tarnished by the evidence of its many other problems. There was, in the OIC world, much admiration for the manner in which Pakistan had extended its influence over Afghanistan and for its success in keeping its much bigger adversary, India, off-balance.

That reputation has been blown away even more swiftly than the dust cloud from the World Trade Center.

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Voices from the other side

IT IS a matter of no little concern that at a time when the Muslim world is facing a grave crisis, there is no organisation representing their interests which can articulate their viewpoints with some degree of credibility. As much is evident from the latest meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference. It has made the customary noises condemning the terrorist attacks on the US but also urging Washington not to extend the scope of its retaliation beyond the perpetrators of the September 11 outrage. This caution was apparently meant to dissuade the US from targeting Iraq and Syria, both of which suspect that they may be singled out for punishment after the US has dealt with the Taliban. However, the point about an organisation of this nature is that it reflects the views of only the ruling oligarchies and is not representative of public opinion.

From this standpoint, it is obvious that whatever the OIC may say or do really does not matter on the ground in the Muslim countries. At the moment, the OIC may be closer to the views of ordinary people in its condemnation of terrorism. But no one can be sure because none of these countries is a democracy in the modern sense. The rest of the world, therefore, will continue to live in ignorance of what really is the response of the Muslim

world to Osama bin Laden's espousal of insensate violence. The OIC is not of much help in reading the mood. Nor are the demonstrations organised by religious outfits in support of the Saudi outlaw virtually in all Islamic countries from Egypt to Indonesia. It can be safely presumed that these organisations, too, are not representative of public opinion and echo the views of only a small bigoted segment of the population.

Although there is not much possibility of these agitations getting so far out of hand as to threaten any of the governments, whether in Pakistan or elsewhere, the impression of the entire Muslim world experiencing a period of severe strain will continue to persist. And, yet, because all these are closed societies, there can be no reliable assessment of how severe the strain really is. The uncertainty is all the greater because of the involvement of religion in this confrontation, making it far more volatile than a conventional skirmish over territories or spheres of influence. Given these difficulties in understanding the Muslim world, policy makers have to be extra careful in formulating their war strategies. In this context, the OIC's caution against widening the conflict needs to be kept in mind even if it has been issued at the behest of what the Americans regard as rogue States.

THE END

RD-1A 12/12
Turn words into action: OIC

DOHA, DEC. 11. The world's Islamic countries meeting in Qatar found a new realism in the aftermath of the September 11 terror attacks and, dropping the usual anti-Zionist rhetoric, opted for diplomatic action directed at Washington to contain the Israeli military offensive.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in a final statement issued late yesterday called on the U.S. administration to implement the "positive elements" of its new support for a Palestinian State. The body representing 1.2 billion Muslims, urged Washington to set a "precise mechanism and calendar, to turn words into action" after the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush and the Secretary of State, Mr. Colin Powell outlined the new approach last month.

"The U.S. is called upon to implement positive elements contained in their vision of a settlement of the Palestinian question," the statement said, although it did add criticism of Washington's "unlimited" support for the Hebrew State. It was a clear break with the traditional inflammatory rhetoric which has often plagued Arab and Islamic reaction to the Israel-Palestinian issue. The OIC set up a Ministerial committee to lobby on behalf of the Palestinians.

Hardline Syria as well as Mali,



DRIVEN TO THE WALL?: A portrait of the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, clinging to the wall, is surrounded by debris at a post of his elite Force 17 guards in Beit Hanoun, north of Gaza City on Tuesday. — AFP

Morocco, Qatar and the chief of the OIC have been tasked with contacts with the United States, Russia and European Union, the Moroccan Foreign Minister, Mr. Mohammed Bin Aissa told AFP. According to a final statement the committee is to work for an "immediate halt to the Israeli aggression and plans to dismantle the Palestinian Authority." It will also lobby for international observers to be sent to protect Palestinians, Foreign Ministers decided in the meeting which grouped 51 of the OIC's 57 members.

Following the September 11 suicide hijackings in the U.S., which have been blamed on Muslim

Arabs and brought accusations that some elements were financing terror, the OIC countries, "preferred to be realistic in their attitude towards the U.S. and Israel," one delegate told AFP. "The meeting has shown a sense of responsibility...even if it did not fulfil Islamic and Arab aspirations," said the Qatari Foreign Minister, Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem al-Thani. He sought to play down calls for a break in relations between Israel and the Arab or Islamic States which have diplomatic ties with Israel. "Breaking off relations would make no sense and the problem is not on this level," he told a press conference in Doha. "Our public views should not be mocked," he said, stressing that he preferred peaceful action to settle the West Asia conflict.— AFP

Two children killed

Telegraph reports from Jerusalem:

Israeli helicopters fired rockets into a queue of Palestinian cars in the centre of Hebron on Monday, killing two children aged three and 13, in a botched attempt on the life of a leading Islamic activist. The target was Mohammed Sidr, 24, a member of the Iranian-backed Islamic Jihad who the Israelis said organised a shooting in Jerusalem in which two persons died.

THE PHOTO

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OIC condemns terrorist attacks in U.S.

HD-19 11/10

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (Bahrain), OCT. 10. The Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) concluded their emergency meeting in Doha today with a condemnation of the September 11 attacks in the U.S. and a call for the trial of the perpetrators.

However, the OIC Foreign Ministers appeared to have by-passed most of the issues that were expected to cause disputes between them.

In a satisfactory development for India, the Foreign Ministers did not make any mention of Kashmir while reiterating their standard line that a distinction must be drawn between terrorists and those people who are fighting foreign occupation.

Too much must not be read into this omission in the Conference's final communique, since most member-states were particularly interested in keeping the struggle of the Palestinians and Lebanese on a plane different from terrorism.

The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdus Sattar, attended the meeting, but his position on the non-mention of the Kashmir issue in the final communique is not clear.

At a briefing at the end of the conference, Qatar's Foreign Minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassam al Thani, said that the Foreign Ministers had agreed that the September 11 incidents were an act of terrorism.

Before the Conference got underway, there were differences between the member-states over the U.S. retaliation, particularly the military strikes on Afghanistan.

Some of the hard-line States were known to be pressing for a condemnation of the military strikes in the final communique, while the moderate States allied to the U.S. could not go along. A condemnation was envisaged as a measure to preempt the U.S. from extending their anti-terror campaign to other States.

Iraq and Syria in particular are apprehensive that the U.S. could include them as targets.

The Conference refrained from either supporting or opposing the U.S. campaign against the Taliban regime. However, they said that they were opposed to the expansion of the campaign to include other Muslim and Arab States and urged that innocents should not be hurt in the campaign against the Taliban.

With the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, putting in a rather surprising appearance at the meeting, the Conference emphasised the urgency of finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute.

The OIC is worried that the desire to resolve this dispute, which the U.S. administration currently displays, might vanish once the need to keep Arab States in the coalition against the Taliban is over.

Sheikh Hamad made a candid observation on the weaknesses of the leadership in the Arab and Muslim worlds which forced them to repeatedly confront crises such as the present one. He said that the U.N. would be asked to call a special session to arrive at a conclusive definition of terrorism and to appoint a commission to study its causes.

THE HINDU

11 OCT 2001

OIC to discuss situation

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 28. A special meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference will be held on October 9, at Doha to discuss the situation arising out of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. Announcing this at a news conference here today, the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Mr. Riaz Mohammad Khan, said the Foreign Ministers of the OIC would take part in the deliberations.

Islamabad had just received an intimation about the meeting from the OIC secretariat and was not in a position to discuss the issues likely to figure there. The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr.

Abdul Sattar, would attend the meeting.

The developments in Afghanistan, particularly in view of the U.S. charge that the Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, and his Al Qaeda, were involved in the September 11 attacks, would dominate the proceedings.

Within days of the Bush administration pointing fingers at Osama and demanding that he be handed over or Taliban face the consequences, the Taliban supremo, Mullah Omar, had appealed in a public statement to the United Nations and the OIC to conduct an impartial investigation into the attacks on the American cities.

THE HINDU

29 SEP 2001

Mirwaiz allowed to attend OIC meet +

NEW DELHI, JUNE 24. In a positive gesture ahead of the summit meeting between the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the Centre has allowed the former All-Party Hurriyat Conference chairman, Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, to attend a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference at Mali starting tomorrow.

Mirwaiz Farooq left for Mali's capital Bamako today to participate in the Foreign Ministers' meeting of the OIC, in which the

APHC enjoys an observer status. The five-day meeting will discuss Kashmir, Afghanistan, Palestine and other issues relevant to the Islamic world, the APHC spokesperson, Mr. Abdul Majid Bandy, said here.

The Mirwaiz was likely to meet the Pakistani Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, and Ministers of other Islamic countries to brief them about the conglomerate's stand vis-a-vis the Indo-Pakistan summit.

Before leaving for Bamako, Mirwaiz Farooq said the proposed

dialogue between India and Pakistan was a positive step towards finding a lasting solution to the Kashmir issue. Expressing the hope that the Hurriyat would be included in the talks, he said it would make serious efforts to bridge the gap between the two countries.

In November last, Mr. Farooq and another Hurriyat leader, Moulvi Abbas Ansari, were allowed by the Centre to visit Doha to participate in the OIC summit.

— UNI

Ghani Bhat praises PM: Page 13

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OIC to snap ties with Israel

REUTERS

DOHA, May 27. - Muslim countries have agreed to stop political contacts with Israel until it ends deadly clashes with Palestinians and pays heed to UN resolutions on settling the West Asia conflict.

Winding up an emergency one-day meeting yesterday, the 56-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference said it had decided to "halt all political contacts with the Israeli government so long as the aggression and blockade against the Palestinian people and its national authority continue and as long as Israel refuses to implement (related) UN resolutions".

The OIC called for closure of Israel's missions and offices in member-states.

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