

# A game of oneupmanship

**M**R. JOHN Howard is back as Australia's Prime Minister for the third time. His Liberal-Democrat coalition was swept back to power in the November 10 elections on a platform of "border protection" and support to "anti-terrorism" after the September 11 attacks.

Mr. Howard, whose game was up before the "Tampa issue" came to the fore at the end of August, realised that "keeping the refugees out" would mean an easy ride back to power. And that was exactly what happened.

The Tampa was a Norwegian ship which had saved a couple of hundred refugees from sure death; but to Mr. Howard and his political associates it provided a campaign

plank that had a built-in clause for success.

Yes, the Labour leader, Mr. Kim Beazley, who has since quit, did try to focus on issues like general sales tax and education. But he seemed to have lost the polls when he came out in open support of Mr. Howard's anti-refugee policy.

Many Australians thought that the Labour approach, with its Asian focus, would be a different one — that did not, however, prove to be the case. In the end, the ruling coalition was able to "lead" Labour to defeat. It can, however, be argued that had Labour opposed Mr. Howard, it would have provided the ultimate campaign issue to the Prime Minister.

While the ruling coalition claimed that its handling of the economy had brought it

back to power, few would be fooled into believing this. The far-right One Nation party plank was appropriated by Mr. Howard — giving the ideology of Ms. Pauline Hanson a new respectability.

And then Tampa happened at just the right time — allowing Mr. Howard to "use" the issue and then call the election.

An anti-refugee, anti-foreigner plank, plugged so heavily by Ms. Hanson, was taken over by a canny politician who came to realise that such an approach was just what the doctor ordered for the November elections.

*The far-right One Nation party plank was appropriated by Mr. John Howard in the Australian polls, giving Ms. Pauline Hanson's ideology a new respectability, says Amit Baruah.*

No country can be unaffected by such an approach. Australia can hardly expect to be taken as a serious international player if it pursues irresponsible policies back home. The refugees (who continue to arrive) are driven not by the lure of Australia's riches, but desperate conditions back home.

The Western world would be quick to condemn Pakistan and Iran if it

<sup>Australia</sup>  
Indonesian analyst, Mr. Jusuf Wanandi, wrote recently.

"That he (Mr. Howard) has been re-elected, despite being so narrow-minded and out of place for an open, modern Australia, located in the western Pacific together with over two billion East Asians, only shows how immature and full of fear a large number of Australians still are. This brings home serious disillusionment for people like me, who thought that the country (Australia) could inject some civilised values and democratic ideals in the region," he added.

Already, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mr. Hasan Wirayuda, has cautioned Australia against what he called "megaphone diplomacy". At the height of the Tampa crisis, the Indonesian President, Ms. Megawati



Riding the 'nationalism' wave

had closed its borders to Afghan refugees, but presumably it's okay for Australia to do so. Democracy and decency, it needs to be stressed, are standards that can and should be equally held up to the "Western" world.

But what of Australia's international obligations and its international image as it tries to farm out helpless refugees to tiny Pacific islands?

"Following a very ugly campaign, where racism, xenophobia and bigotry became the main tactics to win the election, Australia's status — regionally and internationally — has been badly affected," a senior

Sukarnoputri, refused to take Mr. Howard's calls.

There is little doubt that Australia's approach to the whole refugee issues has come as a setback to its international image. The electoral position taken by Mr. Howard emphasised this even more.

Now that the polls are over, is a more humane approach to the Afghan and Iraqi refugees possible? Or will new Australian-funded refugee enclaves continue to sprout all over the Pacific?

That's a question only Mr. Howard and his Government can answer.

THE HINDU

25 NOV 2001

## *Australia resumes defence ties with Pak*

SYDNEY: Close on the heels of the U.S. lifting sanctions against Pakistan, Australia has resumed defence links with Islamabad and lifted the restrictions imposed on the country following its 1998 nuclear tests.

"We are today announcing the government's decision to lift the measures adopted against Pakistan following its nuclear tests in May 1998, which suspended defence relations between the two countries," Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer and defence minister Peter Reith said in a joint statement here.

"Our decision to lift the measures is one way of demonstrating Australia's support for Pakistan's stand against terrorism at this critical time," the statement added.

"Last weeks terrible acts in New York and Washington demonstrated graphically the pressing need

for the international community to make a strong and united effort to combat terrorism," the two ministers said.

The government of Pakistan has taken a forthright, front-line stand in support of international anti-terrorist efforts. Australia warmly welcomes this, they added.

"In practical terms, the government's decision enables the defence establishments of the two countries to re-establish their links," the statement quoted the ministers as saying. Pakistan has agreed to the return of an Australian defence attache to Islamabad.

Canberra's decision also lifts the suspension of non-humanitarian aid, but in current circumstances it is appropriate that Australia's development cooperation programme with Pakistan continue to focus on humanitarian assistance, they said. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

2 SEP 2001

# Australia intercepts Indonesian boat with 200 asylum-seekers 9/8

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SYDNEY, Sept. 8. - The Australian navy intercepted and boarded an Indonesian boat bound for Australia, carrying around 200 suspected illegal immigrants, Prime Minister Mr John Howard said today.

The migrants were taken off the ship last night and put on the HMAS Manoora, which is heading for Papua New Guinea, carrying 433 refugees turned away recently by Australia, after they were rescued from a sinking Indonesian ferry by the crew of the Norwegian cargo

ship MV Tampa.

Mr Howard said the latest boatload of refugees was intercepted, after it ignored warnings to stop and continued towards Ashmore Island, off Australia's northwest coast. The migrants were "subsequently taken off the Indonesian vessel and placed on HMAS Manoora, the vessel carrying the other people taken off the Tampa. And the Manoora will continue on its voyage and re-provisioned outside Australian territorial waters," Mr Howard told reporters here.

He said a request made to the Indonesian authorities to board the vessel

while in Indonesian waters was turned down. Australian authorities then waited for the boat to arrive in the international waters, before taking action.

"At no stage did this vessel reach the Australian territorial waters. As a result, the question of applications for asylum status do not arise," he clarified.

Mr Howard sparked off a storm of international protest last week when he refused to let the Tampa dock in Australia. However, his popularity rating soared, just months before a general election, where he is seeking a third term.

THE STRAITS TIMES

SEP 9 1989

# Australia fails to practise its own precept

By Amit Baruah

**SYDNEY, SEPT. 2.** Is Australia a white fortress? Would the Australian Government have denied white farmers escaping "persecution" in Zimbabwe permission to land on Christmas Island?

There is a furious debate going on in this country on such issues following Australia's decision not to allow the mostly-Afghan refugees on the Norwegian freighter Tampa to land on Christmas Island.

As the Tampa issue lurches towards resolution, the Government, rather than taking a measured and moderate approach towards the refugee issue, actually seems to be fuelling anti-refugee public opinion.

The *Sydney Morning Herald's* website recently carried a letter calling upon the John Howard Government to hold firm against "Muslim invaders"—the hapless Afghan refugees.

The abuse in the media has gone to such lengths that the Victorian Equal Opportunity Com-

mission acting chief executive, Mr. Matthew Carroll, warned: "The current discussion and debate around refugee policy is being used by some individuals and groups as a forum to engage in racial hatred. They are acts of verbal violence and appear to fall within the category of vilification," he was quoted as saying by *The Sunday Age*.

The provocation for his intervention? "Talkback", or interactive radio, had one caller saying that asylum-seekers "should be barbecued" and "fed to the sharks".

Given the fact that Australia has a mixed population of migrants from different ethnic backgrounds, such abuse only goes to show the racist tendencies in this society.

The case of the Tampa, in fact, has come as a kind of litmus test for Australia and its democratic society. Just as some have called for the refugees to be "fed to the sharks", other sections of public opinion have been embraced by the stand taken by the Howard Government.

With elections due in December, the Liberal coalition needed just the Tampa issue to be one up on the Labour Opposition, which seems to have played into the hands of the Government.

With public opinion polls back-

ing the Government, the Australian State wants to "show" that it is not a "soft touch"—whatever that means.

The decision to send the refugees to Nauru and New Zealand is welcome, but what can one make of Mr. Howard's statement that not a single refugee will be permitted to land on Australian soil, before being shifted to New Zealand or Nauru?

Such a statement is inexplicable, given the fact that other countries have been more than accommodating in bailing Mr. Howard out—what "national ego" will be injured if a few hundred refugees land in Christmas Island and then fly on to New Zealand or Nauru?

Not so long ago, the Australian Foreign Minister, Mr. Alexander Downer, created a controversy here, when in some "private" comments, he referred to poor countries in an insulting term.

While Mr. Downer is clearly entitled to his private views, such remarks reflect poorly on the Foreign Minister of a Government which has been the champion of human rights in East Timor.

Today, much of the Western world and Australia use every available occasion to call on the Indonesian Government to prosecute those responsible for the

atrocities in East Timor. Such a view can only be supported. But what of the treatment of refugees and the mandatory detention policy that Australia follows while processing asylum-seekers' claims?

Should the developing world use the occasion of the upcoming Commonwealth Summit in Brisbane to raise the issue of Australia's objectionable approach to refugees?

Sadly enough, none of the developing countries have spoken up on the issue. India, which once took the lead on such issues, is silent. There are reported to be 13 Sri Lankans on board the Tampa. Colombo, too, is silent. Understandably so. Who wants to own asylum-seekers as *bona fide* nationals.

The movement of refugees from countries such as Afghanistan will not stop given the conditions that exist there.

If Australia is interested in stemming the flow of refugees, it would do well to help address the root causes of such problems in Afghanistan and other "refugee-producing" nations.

The Tampa issue will be resolved, but what happens when the next boat makes its way to Australian waters?

# Kiwis accept 150 refugees

REUTERS

WELLINGTON, Sept. 1. — New Zealand today called for a fresh international approach to the Afghan refugee crisis after accepting up to 150 asylum seekers stranded on a Norwegian freighter off Australia's Christmas Island.

The Prime Minister, Ms Helen Clark, said to help stop more mass migrations, she would urge the UN to provide more financial help for the estimated 3.6 million refugees living immediately outside Afghanistan's borders.

After an international tug-of-war, New Zealand has agreed to accept 45 women, 22 children and their immediate male relatives stranded on the freighter.

"Someone had to break the impasse. We've broken the impasse," Ms Clark said.

The republic of Nauru said it had agreed in principle to provide temporary accommodation for the processing of the remaining 300 currently on board the Norwegian vessel Tampa. After processing, the asylum seekers will be resettled from Nauru to countries which may include Australia, Norway and Canada.

Meanwhile, Australia became increasingly isolated yesterday over its refusal to allow about 460 asylum-seekers to leave the container ship as Norway joined other countries in offering sanctuary, adds The Times, London.

Norway said it would provide asylum to some of the

mostly Afghan refugees on the UN High Commissioner for Refugees had produced a plan to resolve the stalemate.

Australia had earlier refused an offer from its tiny neighbour, East Timor, to give the asylum-seekers a temporary home in camps left over from their own refugee crisis.

How the 150 asylum seekers are to travel to New Zealand and Nauru is being worked out, with Ms Clark favouring flights from Singapore followed by an Australian naval ship.

But while the immediate problem had been solved a bigger one remained, she said. "The best place for this to be contained is on the borders of Afghanistan. Pakistan and Iran have had a guts full. They've got 3.6 million

(Afghani refugees) between the two of them and they are not getting sufficient support," Ms Clark said.

She said the UN had asked for \$200 million in humanitarian aid for Afghanistan in 2000, but raised less than half that amount. Because of lack of support, the refugee problem was spilling into Western Europe and Australasia, she said.

"I'm calling today for a fresh international approach to the Afghan refugee problem," she said.

Ms Clark described the Taliban as "brutal" and "beyond influence" from the international community.

"What I would say to the Taliban is move aside. They are causing their people extreme misery and degradation and the

international community a terrible headache." She conceded that accepting the 150 asylum seekers within New Zealand's annual quota of 750 UN-approved refugees would displace others already in the queue but rejected that New Zealand was now seen as a soft touch.

New Zealand's main opposition National Party today said accepting 150 refugees in the same week that New Zealand had 100 Afghans arriving in a planned resettlement would send the wrong message.

"These (150) are people who have queue jumped in terms of normal refugee avenues and it's quite unfair that they are going to crowd out people who are genuinely refugees," National leader Ms Jenny Shipley said.



The New Zealand Prime Minister, Ms Helen Clark. — AP/PTI

2 SEP 2001

# Australian troops seize control of asylum ship

Christmas Island, August 29

AUSTRALIAN SPECIAL Forces on Wednesday seized control of a Norwegian freighter with 484 sick and exhausted asylum seekers after the captain entered territorial waters.

The ship's owners said the captain felt the three-day-old crisis over his human cargo was getting "out of hand." He needed to move closer to the coast of Australia's Christmas Island in the interests of his vessel and desperate passengers.

But Australia's Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock said the captain had "acquiesced to duress" after some of the asylum seekers threatened to jump overboard.

Prime Minister John Howard said the troops told the vessel's captain to head back into international waters and that while

Australia would provide humanitarian help, it stood firm in its decision not to accept the mainly Afghan illegal immigrants.

"It remains our very strong determination not to allow this vessel or its occupants, save in exceptional humanitarian circumstances clearly demonstrated, to land in Australia," Howard told parliament. But hours after Special Air Services troops boarded the Norwegian freighter Tampa remained in territorial waters.

Christmas Island harbour-master Don O'Donnell said the Tampa was stationary a few miles offshore and that no one had left the ship since troops seized control after it breached the 12 nautical mile limit.

The situation was quiet by the harbour, where a few onlookers were sitting on the beach watching troops in rubber boats bring supplies to the Tampa.

Ignoring exhortations from aid agencies, Australia has refused entry to the Tampa since it rescued the Afghan, Sri Lankan and Pakistani asylum seekers on Sunday from their sinking Indonesian ferry.

Indonesia and Norway have also rejected responsibility for the asylum seekers.

Howard said the Tampa's Norwegian owners, Wallenius Wilhelmsen, did not want to obey the order to sail away from Christmas Island, and that created "a very serious situation."

## Distress call

Conditions on the Tampa, built to accommodate up to 40 people, have been deteriorating, according to Wallenius Wilhelmsen. Hundreds of people were crowded on the deck or taking shelter in empty containers.

Some of the asylum seekers say they will jump overboard if the ship heads back toward Indonesia, 217 miles to the north.

On Wednesday, Australia flew out doctors and medical supplies after the Tampa's captain reported that some asylum seekers had collapsed from fatigue and dehydration after days at sea.

The container ship issued distress calls overnight seeking medical help.

The mid-ocean refugee standoff has shone an international spotlight on Australia's increasingly tough stand toward illegal immigrants ahead of a General election later this year.

Australia accepts more than 10,000 refugees formally resettled each year by the United Nations, about 100,000 new migrants. Howard's conservative Government has branded boat people "queue jumpers."

Over the past 11 days, 1,500 people have turned up along the vast northern coastline, and with reports another 900 are on their way, Australians appear to back the government's stance.

A second large group of asylum seekers trying to travel to Australia is holed up on the Indonesian island of Lombok, police and a UN agency said on Wednesday.

Around 150 asylum seekers from mainly Afghanistan and Iraq were staying at a government guesthouse in Mataram, a city on eastern Lombok. Police said the group had no plan to leave the island, which is next to the resort island of Bali.

Officials at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Jakarta said the group was under police guard, although police denied the asylum seekers were being held.

# India, Australia discuss terrorism, arms control

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

AA-2 29/8  
New Delhi, Aug. 30: India and Australia on Thursday held extensive talks on crucial security issues, including terrorism, arms control, disarmament and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, and agreed to carry forward the dialogue process to make it a regular affair.

A joint statement released at the end of the day-long meet said the next round will take place in Canberra in 2002. The talks were open, constructive and wide-ranging and demonstrated shared perspectives and common interests on a number of important issues, including in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, the statement said. Both sides agreed that the two countries were factors for stability in these regions.

The two sides also discussed specific issues like the role of major powers, particularly security situations in the broad Asia-Pacific region. The role of regional groupings, maritime security, export controls, nuclear and missile non-proliferation and small arms were also on the agenda for talks.

A special feature of the talks was the inclusion in each delegation of senior defence and armed forces representatives.

The Australian team was led by assistant secretary (international affairs) W. Patterson. The Indian side was led by joint secretary (disarmament and international affairs) Sheel Kant Sharma. The teams from the two countries also had senior uniformed military officials. The first-ever strategic talks between the two countries were focused on four issues: global security issues, regional security issues, security and defence policies and exchanges, and specific issues in arms control and disarmament.

India conveyed its concerns on terrorism to Australia. New Delhi also stated that relations with Australia should not be hindered due to the conflicts and tensions of the past. The two sides, as major players in the region, should work together on the security issues.

The senior officials from the two sides also discussed the post-Cold War situation in the region. They also discussed the maritime dimensions of regional security.

THE ASIAN AGE

31 AUG 2001

# Australia's refugee policy under fire

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, AUG 15. If the idea is to deter people from travelling to Australia "illegally", then the treatment meted out to six-year-old Shayan Badraie should be a sufficient deterrent to both families and individuals.

This Iranian boy has been diagnosed as suffering from acute post-traumatic stress disorder after seeing an inmate at the Villawood detention centre attempting suicide by slashing his wrists. Earlier, at the Woomera detention centre for refugees, Shayan saw inmates setting fire to themselves and guards using batons to deal with rioters.

He remains in detention but is currently in hospital for treatment. Australia follows a mandatory policy of detaining all "illegal" arrivals and keeping them there until they are deported or found to be bona fide refugees according to the country's rules. The country's approach to refugees and their families led a Pakistani man to immolate himself outside the Australian Federal Parliament in Canberra earlier this year. The Iranian child, whose story was carried today by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, does not speak and is regularly admitted to hospital for he refuses to eat or drink after seeing the traumatic events at two detention centres. "He, his younger sister, and Iranian parents have been in detention for 17 months. Their application for refugee status has been declined, and they are expected to be deported any day," the *Herald* reported.

According to Mr. Philip Ruddock, Australia's hardline Immigration Minister, the parents had brought their child to Australia "unlawfully", aware that they would be detained when they got to the country. "A lot of psychiatric conditions arise when you have a predisposition to them, and this can be triggered if your parents elect to bring you half way around the world in order to make asylum claims," Mr. Ruddock said, putting the blame for the boy's condition on the parents.

In response, Mr. Duncan Kerr, Opposition justice spokesman, said blaming asylum-seekers for the condition of their child was sickening. "I find this extraordinary...to blame



Fog blankets Sydney Harbour, partially obscuring office towers in the city's central business district, on Wednesday. Australia's asylum policy is increasingly coming under criticism from various quarters. — Reuters

parents for the trauma that happens if their child is placed in circumstances where they are behind the wire for 17 months, witnessing violence, and then blaming the victim, if that is the case, I'm quite upset about that and I don't think it does the Minister no credit whatsoever," Mr. Kerr was quoted as saying.

"Putting one's head in the sand and blaming it on the parents who have come to Australia seeking protection is something that makes me quite ill," he said, demanding that the Government hold an inquiry into the detention centres.

In its annual report for 2001, Human Rights Watch blamed Australia for pursuing a "punitive asylum policy which showed little regard for either abiding or being judged by international human rights standards". Despite only

receiving a tiny proportion of the world's refugees — 9,450 asylum applicants in 1999, compared with 95,110 applicants in Germany — Australia reacted with disproportionate zeal to the arrivals, the human rights watchdog said. Australia, it said, pursued a policy of mandatory detention for all asylum-seekers and other non-citizens who arrived through "illegal" channels.

"In July 2000, the U.N. Human Rights Committee criticised Australia for its mandatory detention policies and for neither informing, nor allowing, NGOs access to inform detainees of their right to seek legal advice. Asylum-seekers were kept in remote detention centres thousands of miles away from major population centres," Human Rights Watch said.

THE HINDU

16 AUG 2001



# The race has just begun

IT IS certain that Australia will have general elections in December. And, as parties begin preparations for the polls in the country of 19 million people, there is a sense of fatigue in the electorate.

During a recent visit to Australia, where this correspondent travelled to Sydney, Canberra and Adelaide, there was a sense of dissatisfaction with the performance of politicians — whether from the ruling Liberal Party / National

*In Australia, the opposition Labour Party has the edge now but the ruling coalition could gain ground as the poll date nears.*  
**Amit Baruah reports.**

the Government usually picks up points as the election nears.

In March 1996, the Liberal/National coalition broke the 13-year-old monopoly of Labour on power. And, now, after six years of coalition rule, Labour is attempting a comeback under Mr. Kim Beazley. It is instructive what the U.S. State Department's country brief has to say about "political conditions" in Australia: "Three political parties dominate the centre of the Australian political

of welfare measures, another issue that has come to dominate the headlines in Australia is that of "illegal" immigrants and their mandatory detention. A recent joint parliamentary committee was severe in its criticism of the Government and the way it had handled the issue. However, party positions on the issue are being influenced by the views of the right-wing One Nation party of Ms. Pauline Hanson. After faring badly in the 1998 general election, One Nation has staged a comeback in State elections.

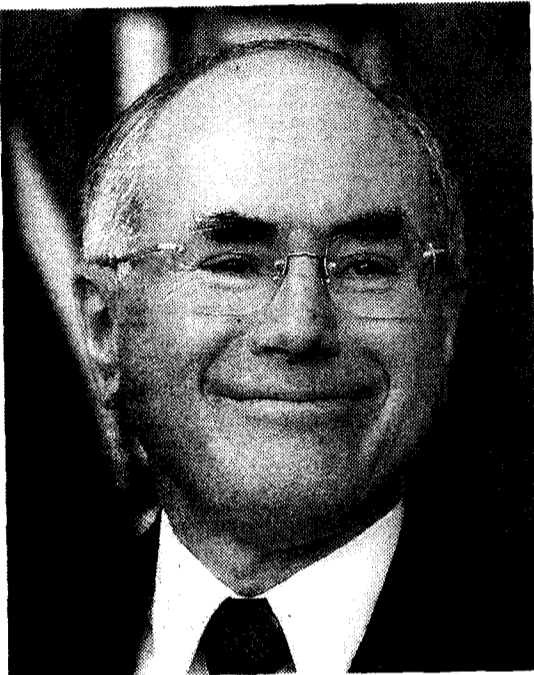
In the country's preferential vote system, some analysts argue, One Nation can make a difference in seats where no party attains an outright victory. Analysts have also described One Nation as an "anti-almost-everything" party. The party is anti-refugee and anti-immigrant.

"How can a person be determined as a refugee when they possibly pass 16 countries to get to Australia, pay more to get here than on a legal cruise ship, and destroy all forms of identification..." Ms. Hanson said in a recent statement. "The Howard Government decided to build more detention centres at an enormous cost to the Australian taxpayer, yet can't build or service existing hospitals or better roads for Australians..."

The agendas of the major parties on the immigrant-refugee question, clearly, are being preempted by Ms. Hanson. The Liberal/National coalition Government, for instance, rejected out of hand the recommendation of a Parliamentary Committee that refugees/immigrants be released after serving 14 weeks in detention.

There is little doubt that Australia's democratic credentials have not been served by the way in which the Government has been dealing with the issue of refugee-immigrants. Given the fact that a majority of refugees are coming from desperate countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq, one can only imagine what suffering these persons have undergone in their countries of origin and during their journey to Australia. And, very often, their claims are rejected and many are rotting in detention centres.

Labour may have an edge today in the opinion polls, but the Liberal/National coalition is going to fight it out to the last. The polls promise an interesting outcome.



**THE CONTENDERS: Mr. John Howard and Mr. Kim Beazley.**

Party coalition or the Labour Party.

However, given the fact that politicians are not the most popular bunch in most democracies (including India), Australian democracy has nothing much to be worried about.

The electorate is concerned about the imposition of an across-the-board GST by the John Howard Government and the consequent increase in prices; workers and unions are worried about the cutback in benefits and sections of the rich are concerned that parties do not have programmes they can support.

If you were in Sydney on June 19, you could travel free by the city's public transport system — on buses, trains and ferries. The police were not collecting fines from motorists — it was a free for all. The reason? Unions in New South Wales were protesting the

cutback in medical benefits and were so angry that they mounted a blockade of the State Parliament. As Australia integrates with the global economy, there are fears among ordinary Australians about the impact on them — particularly with regards to jobs and benefits. The Government, however, is actively promoting regional and global economic interaction and believes that this is the way forward.

For the upcoming elections, the picture appears to be mixed. The Liberal/National coalition, which was voted back to power in October 1998 holds 80 seats in the 148-member House of Representatives. The Australian Labour Party or ALP has 68. According to recent polls, the Government is said to be "well behind" in the run-up to the polls. That picture, however, can change and a Labour Party official told this correspondent that

spectrum; the Liberal Party (LP), nominally representing urban business-related groups, the National Party (NP), nominally representing rural interests; and the Australian Labour Party (ALP), nominally representing the trade unions and liberal groups."

"Although embracing some leftists, ALP traditionally has been moderately socialist in its policies and approaches to social issues. All political groups are tied by tradition to domestic welfare policies, mostly enacted in the 1980s, which have kept Australia in the forefront of societies offering extensive social welfare programmes. Australia's social welfare safety net has been reduced in recent years, however, in response to budgetary pressures and a changing political outlook..." the U.S. State Department added.

Other than the whittling down

# Australian move to dump Queen

Sydney

STILL SMARTING from defeat in Australia's 1999 constitutional referendum, Republicans here today unveiled new plans to kick-start their push to sack Britain's Queen Elizabeth as head of state.

The Australian Republican Movement (ARM), which represents the moderate mainstream of the anti-monarchist movement, is optimistic the debate will be resumed in the next term of parliament, whichever side wins upcoming elections.

Although opinion polls showed majority support for the switch to a republic, many voted for the monarchy rather than support the only republican option offered at the referendum — that a president would be appointed by a two-thirds majority in parliament.

Under the latest proposal, seen as the best compromise between those who favour direct presidential elections and those who maintain parliament should appoint the head of state, Australians would vote for an electoral college that would then choose a president. ARM president Greg Barns said it would maintain the principle of direct election under a Westminster system. "It's something we haven't had before and it would compromise the role of an independent head of state", he said.

Conservative Prime Minister John Howard, who led the monarchist campaign for the referendum, is currently trailing badly in the polls ahead of the next general elections and plans to retire soon after the election, whether he wins or not.

AFP



THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 JUN 2001

# NZ plane rescues sick Americans from Antarctic

By RAY LILLEY

Wellington (New Zealand), April 24: A New Zealand Air Force plane took off safely from an ice runway at a US Antarctic research station on Tuesday with four sick Americans being evacuated before winter closed in.

A C130 Hercules left Pegasus airfield at McMurdo station, just an hour after landing to retrieve four sick staffers and seven other Americans, a spokeswoman for Antarctica New Zealand said.

"Right now the count is eleven people coming out, for various reasons," the New Zealand manager for the US-based Raytheon Polar Services, John Sherve, said. "The primary purpose of the mission is emergency medical evacuation of one employee."

While he declined to comment on the patients' conditions, New Zealand Air Force sources said one man had a serious heart condition which required urgent hospital treatment. The plane spent just one hour on the ground at McMurdo to pick up the evacuees and refuel. Its engines were kept running throughout the stopover to prevent them freezing in the 30 °C temperatures, after the 8-hour flight from Christchurch, southern New Zealand.

With little cloud and no wind, weather conditions were near ideal for the rescue mission. Bad weather conditions on the Antarctic Coast had earlier delayed the rescue mission by 24 hours. A medical staff of five, including an anaesthetist, was on the evacuation mission. Others among the evacuees had "family

emergencies they need to go take care of," Mr Sherve said, describing the mass evacuation as "unprecedented." "Several of the evacuees will need medical treatment," he said. Mr Sherve declined to provide further information on their conditions.

All eleven are employees of Raytheon, which provides support services at the McMurdo base, 1,287 kilometres from the South Pole.

There are 211 Americans left at the base following the evacuation, where they will winter over until the next flights, scheduled in late August as Antarctica's spring begins. The evacuation flight carried fresh fruit and vegetables and personal mail to the ice-and-snow bound base staff. The McMurdo airlift came hours after blowing snow, high winds and low visibility prevented another emergency airlift taking off for the South Pole, where a sick American doctor is waiting for a flight out for urgent treatment.

Ronald S. Shemenski, a doctor at the Amundsen Scott-South Pole station is the only physician among 50 researchers working at that research station. He recently suffered a gall bladder attack and has been diagnosed with the potentially life-threatening condition known as pancreatitis.

An eight-seat, twin-engine plane fitted with skis for landing gear is now scheduled to fly as early as Wednesday from the Rothera research station on the Antarctic Peninsula and pick up the 59-year-old doctor. The plane arrived at Rothera last week after a flight from Punta Arenas, Chile, accompanied by a backup aircraft. (AP)



RESCUE MISSION: A Royal New Zealand Air Force Hercules aircraft departs Christchurch airport on Tuesday on a medical emergency evacuation flight to an Antarctic research base to pick up four Americans in urgent need of medical attention. (AP)

THE ASIAN AGE

25 APR 2001

# Boat people bring disease: Hanson

REUTERS  
SYDNEY, FEB 12

**POLITICAL** firebrand  
Pauline Hanson said on Monday her One Nation party's electoral comeback was in part a backlash at the Australian government's "soft" approach to boatpeople, who she accused of bringing diseases to Australia.

One Nation tapped a vein of voter discontent to help topple the state government in Western Australia on Saturday, but little was heard of its anti-immigration platform during the campaign. But on Monday, Hanson told local media: "At every meeting people asked me about what we are going to do about the illegal boatpeople".

"The general feeling is that people feel forgotten, that the government and the Opposition are more concerned about the illegal boatpeople arriving on our shores and that they actually provide more for them than our own people here," Hanson said.

"We don't know if they've got any criminal background. We don't know exactly where they're from, and another thing there's diseases that they're bringing into Australia," she said.

"It's a known fact that some of them have got typhoid. We're leaving our people wide open to catch-

ing these diseases."

Hanson's anti-immigration policies damaged Australia's reputation in Asia in 1996 when the former fish and chip shop owner first burst onto the scene.

Australia is trying to track down 18 Afghan boatpeople released by authorities who may be carrying typhoid fever after six cases of the illness were discovered in detention camps. The 18 asylum-seekers were released in January from two remote immigration processing centres, where six people who travelled to Australia on the same boats as the Afghans have since

been diagnosed with the life-threatening illness. Australia has expressed alarm at a surge in illegal arrivals, many of Middle Eastern origin. Three boats carrying nearly 300 illegal immigrants were intercepted in the first three weeks of 2001, while 50 boats carrying 3,080 people arrived in 2000.

One Nation won nearly 10 per cent of the vote in the Western Australia election, reflecting a voter backlash against Prime Minister John Howard's Liberal/National government and the Opposition Labor party.

"The clear message is, they don't want them here, they want the government to turn the boats around and say go back where they come from," Hanson said.

**BEYOND  
THE NEWS**

INDIAN EXPRESS

13 FEB 2001