

Karzai faces army test

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Dec. 28: Hamid Karzai, the interim head of the Afghan Transitional Authority, has managed to hold together a tattered country after surviving two attempts on his life and the loss of his vice-president.

His real test, both as an able administrator and accomplished diplomat, however, will come in the days ahead. One of Karzai's biggest challenges is developing an Afghan National Army.

He also has to redefine Kabul's role in the provinces and put in place a Constitution, which will fend for and accommodate the aspirations of all ethnic groups.

In a way, all these problems are interconnected. An effective solution for one may well help him in overcoming the others.

On the downside, if the rot sets in in one of the three, it may spread to the others and consequently weaken the ATA and Karzai's rule. It would also aggravate the situation in Afghanistan, a country trying hard to join the international mainstream after years of war.

Karzai's biggest weakness is

the lack of an army. Even his personal security is taken care of by the US. According to proposals, the Afghan National Army will be a small and effective force, not exceeding 70,000 soldiers, officials and bureaucrats.

The US and its western allies want the proposed army to be loyal to Karzai.

This raises questions about the fate of current defence minister Mohammad Fahim and his band of loyal soldiers put together from the days of the Northern Alliance.

To build the army, Karzai will have to demobilise various militias commanded by independent warlords such as Abdul Rashid Dostum, Ismael Khan, Gul Agha Sherzai, Atta Khan and others.

These militias would have to be integrated into the national army and be persuaded to surrender their arsenal of AK-47 assault rifles, tanks, armoured personnel carriers, artillery, field guns, multiple rocket launchers and towed-air defence weapons.



Hamid Karzai

Putting in place a federal structure will be another challenging task. At the moment, Karzai's writ does not run much beyond Kabul. The provinces are virtually run by independent warlords.

As some provinces share their borders with other countries, many warlords earn huge money in customs duty. Ismael is estimated to earn over \$20 million a year this way. But he gives only \$2 million from this booty to Kabul. Dostum and the leaders of other regions, too, are reportedly doing the same.

A new Loya Jirga, scheduled for next year, will decide on the future Constitution of the country and on a presidential government or a parliamentary democracy.

The Loya Jirga will also have to decide on the relationship between the state and Islam, and any likely need for Shia jurisprudence if the country decides on Islamic law. Shias are a sizeable minority in Afghanistan. One of

their holy shrines is located in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Though Karzai and other Afghan leaders would have to ponder over these crucial issues, for the moment, the focus is on ways to expedite the reconstruction in the war-ravaged country.

Of the \$4.5 billion pledged by the international community, nearly \$1.8 million — as promised — has already been released in the first year. But most of this money is routed through NGOs and not the interim government.

There is a realisation that a large portion of the funds is being siphoned off to pay for the personnel and administrative costs of NGOs. So not only will the donors have to be persuaded to channel the funds through the government in Kabul, Karzai will also want projects to come up in the country that will not only rebuild infrastructure but help generate jobs for millions of his people.

All these factors are crucial for Afghanistan's stability. If Karzai manages to meet these challenges effectively, it may perhaps usher in peace and normality in the country and help it in rejoining the international mainstream.

29 DEC 2002

Karzai risks all and confronts the warlords

KABUL, DEC. 24. A troubled year after taking office, the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, insists he is finally taking the risky but necessary steps to confront the warlords in Afghanistan's provinces to allow much-needed reconstruction to begin in the spring.

Mr. Karzai told *The Daily Telegraph*: "The warlords know that they cannot survive without the Centre (Central Government) and they are not strong enough to challenge the Centre — there may be acts of defiance but no challenge."

"We call the shots, they [the warlords] don't call the shots but there is a huge disconnect between the Central Government authority and the lack of an administration — we need to fill that gap very quickly and I need good, trained people."

An assassin tried to kill Mr. Karzai in Kandahar last Septem-

ber. Recently several Arab and Afghan Al-Qaeda suicide bombers, with explosive belts strapped to their waists, were arrested in Kabul.

Now heavily-armed U.S. and Afghan bodyguards protect him round the clock. In the next few weeks he is going to need more of them, as he pushes through plans to start demobilising warlords' armies.

So far this month, Mr. Karzai has dismissed 29 corrupt officials in the provinces. He has also passed a decree that forces warlords to have either a political or military role in the provinces — not both — while another decree orders that disarming and demobilising the warlords' armies should be completed by June 2003.

So far the results have been mixed. Some 10 officials have refused to resign. In the northern province of Kunduz, Gen.

Mohammed Daud has already collected 6,000 weapons but in the south the powerful warlord, General Ismail Khan, has refused to disarm his troops. Some warlords have accepted Mr. Karzai's order to give up either a political or military role. Others pretend not to have heard about the decree.

He said: "The bottom line is that nobody has the power to reject government orders, but some work according to Afghan time."

After he was elected President of the Afghan transitional government in June by the *loya jirga*, Mr. Karzai was criticised for declining to use his newly-established legitimacy to act decisively against the warlords, but now he is responding to popular demand.

He said: "Politically speaking, the people are way ahead of us. People are looking at the Centre



MIXED RESULTS: The Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, speaks to children at the first anniversary celebrations of the transitional government in Kabul on Tuesday. — AP

to give them a change for the better. They are not looking at the warlords." Mr. Karzai has also done some blunt talking to the Americans, insisting that

The key to dealing with the warlords will be in building the new army.

The problem so far has been the other power centre in Kabul — the Ministry of Defence — run by the Tajik faction from the Panjshir valley north of Kabul led by Gen. Mohammed Fahim.

Gen. Fahim has procrastinated over how to build a new Afghan National Army in which the U.S. has the lead role, and over demobilising his own army, the largest in the country. Without these steps other warlords will refuse to disarm. He now insists that he is working with Mr. Karzai.

Mr. Karzai said that by March the rebuilding of 3840 km of roads will start and £200 million will be pumped into aid programmes for rural areas, which will put added pressure on the warlords. — *©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2, 2002*

Kabul to ink no-war pact

Associated Press

KABUL, Dec. 22. — Representatives from Afghanistan's six neighbours were in the capital today to sign a non-aggression pact that the government hopes will bring an end to years of foreign interference that has contributed to bitter fighting in the battered nation. Representatives from India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the European Union and the United Nations are attending the conference.

The expected agreement would come exactly one year after President Hamid Karzai came to power as head of an interim government created at a conference in Bonn, Germany, on December 22 last year. Mr Karzai was appointed President in June.

The foreign ministry said the "Kabul Declaration" would be signed to "emphasize constructive

and amicable relations, respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to refrain from actions that may jeopardize peace and stability in the region". China, Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are expected to sign the pact.

"A secure, peaceful, friendly Afghanistan is a key to our collective success," Mr Karzai said in a speech at the conference. "We need to strengthen our bonds of brotherhood and friendship and work for a region free of terror, extremism and backwardness." A once-peaceful Afghanistan became engulfed in war when the former USSR invaded in December 1979 to prop up an embattled pro-Moscow regime in Kabul. The United States sent arms and millions of dollars to Afghan Islamic guerrillas, who staged their anti-communist insurgency from bases in Pakistan.

In 1992, the US-backed Islamic insurgents took power but quickly turned their guns on each other, devastating the capital and giving rise to the repressive Taliban regime. The Taliban took control of most of the country in 1996 and ruled until 2001 with help from their key ally, Pakistan, which switched sides to support American forces to overthrow the Taliban last year.

"I hope that we have all learned from our past mistakes and will follow the right course from now on," Mr Karzai said. "Afghanistan, for its part, will not allow its territory or bilateral relations with other nations to harm another country, and we expect the same."

The UN special envoy to Afghanistan, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi, said he hoped the agreement would help bring an end to "an era of conflict."

THE STATESMAN

23 DEC 2002

Ethnic rival forces clash near key air base in Herat

Herat (Afghanistan): Fierce clashes between rival commanders close to a key air base in western Afghanistan resumed on Monday, the leader of one



Hamid Karzai

faction said, a day after a US B-52 bombed one of the sides. As rival forces battled in the west, three people were killed and five wounded in a gun battle between police and fighters of a military commander in the southern city of Kandahar.

The clashes near Herat on Sunday coincided with President Hamid Karzai's departure for an international conference in Germany to assess the progress made by his government and the international community a year after the Taliban's ouster. Karzai sent an urgent plea to both sides to stop the fighting. Lack of security is one of the country's major problems after more than two decades of conflict.

Faction commander Amanullah Khan told the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) agency that rival Ismail Khan, the powerful governor of Herat province just north of the battle zone, had initiated the latest wave of fighting.

Both sides blamed each other for triggering Sunday's battle, which ended when a US B-52 bomber attacked one

of the factions that had opened fire on a patrol of US special forces.

A commander for Amanullah told Reuters that 13 people had been killed and dozens wounded in Sunday's fighting. It was believed to be the first time a heavy B-52 bomber had been engaged in Afghan combat for several months.

Amanullah told the AIP that fighting had died down overnight but Ismail Khan's forces launched a powerful attack between early morning on Monday using tanks, artillery and infantry.

"We have repulsed the attack and at least one dead body of Ismail Khan's soldier is lying on the battlefield," he said. It was unclear which of the factions the US bomber had attacked. US military spokesman in Afghanistan Colonel Roger King told reporters at Bagram air base, north of Kabul, that he was not sure which side the B-52 bomber was targeted against.

Herat's security chief Sayed Nasir Alawi said the US bomber attacked Amanullah's positions after they opened fire on the US troops. Amanullah told AIP Ismail Khan's forces were hit. Ethnic Pashtun Amanullah and ethnic Tajik leader Ismail Khan are old foes. Their forces have clashed several times this year, as have other rival factions in northern and eastern Afghanistan where central control remains weak. Reuters

Arabs fear unilateral U.S. action

By Atul Aneja

DAMASCUS, NOV. 15. While being guardedly optimistic that the United Nations Security Council may not sanction collective use of force against Iraq, key Arab countries are now focusing their attention on discouraging the United States from attacking Baghdad unilaterally.

Syria, the lone Arab member of the Security Council has strongly opposed the possible use of unilateral force against Iraq. Addressing a press conference here, the Syrian Foreign Minister, Farouk al Shara, said that Damascus will "not at all be a party to any military action against Iraq, that might be taken outside the framework of the U.N., even if it was by an international coalition or alliance."

The Syrian Foreign Minister acknowledged that Syria, during internal debates within the Se-

curity Council, has been trying to block the formation of an international coalition against Iraq that is "outside the framework of international legitimacy and U.N." Most Arab countries, which are desperate to avoid a war, are pinning their hopes on France and Russia to checkmate the possible U.S. intent to get a U.N. endorsement for military action against Iraq.

The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441 that was passed recently does not allow the automatic use of force against Iraq, in case it is perceived that it is obstructing efforts to disarm it. Under the new resolution aimed at eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, any allegations of Iraqi non-compliance will be referred back to the Security Council for further debate. Analysts point out that Arab countries are hoping, that it is at this stage, France

and Russia — two veto holding Security Council members — will step in and block endorsement for a collective attack.

Not surprisingly, the Syrian President, Bashar-al-Assad, and the French President, Jacques Chirac, discussed the U.N. Security Council Resolution on Iraq over telephone on Wednesday. Observers here point out that the Syria and France could be developing special relations and both the French Foreign Minister and Mr. Chirac have recently visited Damascus in order to add greater momentum to the relationship. Keen to deny the U.S. the opportunity to use the inspections in Iraq as a pretext to encourage the use of force, Arab leaders are seeking assurances for impartial U.N. probe to disarm Iraq. These countries are seeking the presence of Arab experts in the team of inspectors that is set to visit Iraq.

1 5 NOV 2002

THE HINDU

Arising
HO-1
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Saddam ready to accept U.N. resolution: Arab League

CAIRO, NOV. 10. Despite official Iraqi silence, Arab Ministers indicated today that the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, was ready to accept a United Nations resolution to disarm, with Syria's Foreign Minister assuring Arab Governments that the document would not be interpreted as authorisation for American military force.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister, Najji Sabri, said on Saturday that "no decision has been taken", but other Arab diplomats at a late night meeting of the Arab League here said that in effect Iraq had already accepted the resolution. As he entered today's meeting, Mr. Sabri said the Arab Governments were firm in rejecting the use of force by the U.S. However, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Ahmed Maher, said earlier this morning, "I think we can expect a positive position by the Iraqis."

The Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, indicated that Iraq would accept the resolution that dictated the return of arms inspectors. "They (Arab Ministers) welcomed Iraq's approval of this resolution with the confirmation Syria received that there would be no automatic military action," he said.

Syria, whose agreement to the U.N. Security Council resolution allowed for the 15-0 passage on Friday, defended its vote. "We have struggled and shouldered a lot of difficulties to bring about the resolution," the Syrian Foreign Minister, Farouk al-Sharaa, said.

Mr. Al-Sharaa said he had received a letter from the U.S.

Secretary of State, Colin Powell "in which he stressed that there is nothing in the resolution to allow it to be used as a pretext to launch a war on Iraq and that if the U.S. administration had any intention of resorting to military action, this resolution wouldn't have taken seven weeks."

The Lebanese Foreign Minister, Mahmoud Hammoud, said Arabs should "use Syria's voting in favour of the U.N. Security Council resolution on Iraq as a solid evidence to affirm our collective desire to free the region from the weapons of mass destruction". In Washington, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, said the resolution "presents

the Iraqi regime with a test, a final test". Iraq, he said, must now cooperate with U.N. inspectors and dismantle its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons capabilities. The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, was quoted by Russian news agencies as saying the resolution "does not contain a mechanism for the use of force".

In Baghdad, Mr. Hussein called an emergency Parliament session to debate the U.N. resolution, the state television reported today. It would debate the position to be taken and would submit its conclusions to the ruling Revolution Command Council. — AP, AFP

U.S. HAS LITTLE PATIENCE

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, NOV. 10. Senior Bush administration officials have warned Iraq that the United States has little to no patience this time over any "games" with weapons inspections. "We do not need to waste the world's time with another game of cat and mouse," the President's National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, said here today.

The officials have been stressing over the last two days that the latest U.N. resolution would "test" the intentions of Iraq; and that the U.S. had the right to militarily go after Iraq if weapons inspections failed or if Baghdad started to question the provisions of Resolution 1441. "We have to have a zero tolerance view of the Iraqi regime this time. This is a regime with a very long history now of deception and deceit," Dr. Rice said in an interview this morning.

In the meantime, the Government is proceeding with its military plans just in case the situation arises of a military showdown with Saddam Hussein. Military planners are said to have sent to the President, George W. Bush, details of how the Iraqi operation could be carried out — by land, air and sea. One scenario is that of the U.S. unleashing its awesome air power in the first days of the operation which will be backed, if necessary, by as many as 200,000 to 250,000 troops.

1 1 NOV 2002

THE HINDU

'Guantanamo was an ordeal'

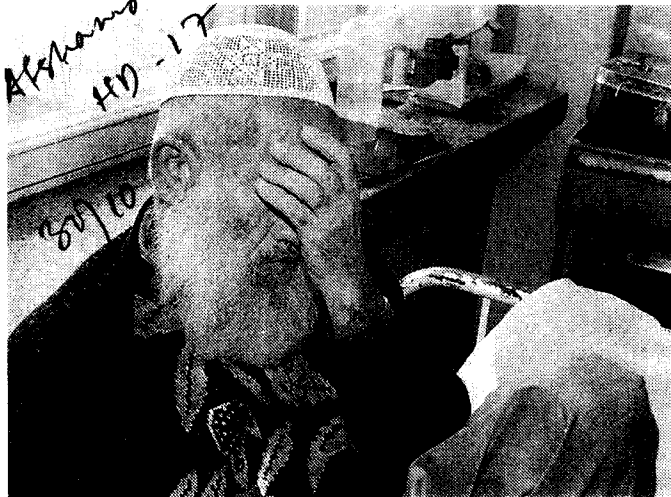
KABUL, OCT. 29. Three Afghans released after months of captivity at a U.S. military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, said on Tuesday they were each chained up during frequent interrogations but generally treated well by their American captors.

The men — two of whom appeared to be in their late 70s — are the first former detainees to speak about their arrest and detention. They spoke to media-persons at a military hospital in Kabul where they are convalescing, still under the watch of Afghan security guards.

The men were flown to Afghanistan on Sunday, and on Tuesday were handed over to Interior Ministry officials. It was not clear when they would be allowed to return home.

A Pakistani man, Mohammed Saghir (60), was also released from Guantanamo and returned to his country. He was being questioned by Pakistani authorities in Islamabad.

The group of four were the first prisoners released by the Americans. The Afghan prisoners, looking frail and tired but in good spirits, said they had had no contact with their families since being taken away by the Americans from various places in Afghanistan. They said they were chained up during frequent interrogations by Americans, but that they were not mistreated and were allowed to practise their religion while in detention. "They interrogated us for hours at a time. They



AGONY: Haji Mohammad Sidiq talks of his "wrongful" incarceration at a U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, in Kabul on Tuesday. — AFP

wanted to know, 'Where are you from? Are you a member of the Taliban? Did you support the Taliban? Were your relatives Taliban? Did the Taliban give you weapons?'" said an elderly former prisoner, Mohammed Haji Fiz.

Human rights groups have criticised the United States for its treatment of the prisoners, saying they were initially kept in outdoor cages and held indefinitely without access to lawyers.

Another former prisoner, Jan Mohammed (35), said he was forced to fight with the Taliban and was captured in the northern city of Kunduz last year by Afghan forces and handed over

to the Americans. As he spoke on Tuesday, Afghan soldiers stood guard inside a small room at the hospital. "I wasn't Taliban, but the Taliban made me fight with them," Mr. Mohammed said. "I'm innocent. I'm a farmer." Mr. Fiz said he was arrested by American forces eight months ago while he was in a clinic in the central province of Uruzgan. A frail older man, Mr. Fiz said he was tied up and blindfolded, then flown by helicopter to Kandahar and later by plane to Guantanamo.

"I don't know why the Americans arrested me. I told them I was innocent. I'm just an old man," he said. — AP

Al Qaida remnants pose challenge to Karzai govt

By Jal Taraporevala
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

HD-12
W. M. 10

Mumbai: President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan has called for more effective action to tackle the continuing challenge posed by the remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaida network. Mr Karzai's statement should partly be interpreted in terms of his concern at the strong showing of the Islamist grouping, MMA, in the elections in Pakistan, especially in Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province which border Afghanistan.

Besides, Mr Karzai is seeking to underscore the point that those opposed to his regime could try and take advantage of the current American preoccupation with the question of Iraq and the consequent reduction of international attention on events in Afghanistan.

In addition, given the criticism which the leadership in Kabul has faced for not doing enough to check instability in parts of Afghanistan, Mr Karzai's comments are a signal of the government's intent to address the issue of law and order more vigorously.

But how far the government succeeds in ensuring stability in the country is debatable. Mr Karzai can continue to count on the

active support of the US Special Forces in the campaign against Taliban and the Al Qaida fighters.

However, the task of the government has been made more complicated by the fact that a part of the law and order problem in the country in the last few months has been created by other factors such, as ethnic rivalries and warlordism, which will not be easy to contain.

For instance, the area around the northern town of Mazar-i-Sharif has witnessed periodic squabbling between Uzbek leader Rashid Dostum and Tajik commander Mohammad, both of whom are members of the Northern Alliance.

The authority of the government has also been somewhat undermined by the increasing clout of Ismail Khan in the western region of Herat, the infighting in the eastern provinces of Khost and Pakhtiar and signs of restiveness around the southern city of Kandahar.

The government has found it difficult to tackle these challenges in view of the legacy of the bitter ethnic divide in the country, the lack of an effective command and communications network in vast areas of the countryside, the political constraints dictated by the goal of holding a diverse ruling coalition together and the reluctance of the UN to expand its peace-keeping operations in Afghanistan beyond the Kabul region.

**NEWS
ANALYSIS**

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2 / OCT 2002

Karzai to seek Arab aid for reconstruction

By Atul Aneja

Afghanistan
MANAMA (BAHRAIN), SEPT. 27. The Afghanistan President, Hamid Karzai, has begun a visit to key Persian Gulf countries where he is likely to seek economic support for his war-torn nation and discuss extradition of a large number of Arabs that are now in Afghan custody.

Several Arabs, mainly from Saudi Arabia, who were once sheltered by the Taliban regime, are now in Afghanistan jails.

Their extradition is likely to be one of the main issues of discussion during Mr. Karzai's stay in Saudi Arabia.

Apart from Riyadh, Mr. Karzai will also visit Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Qatar is yet to reopen its embassy in Kabul, while the UAE will play a key role in galvanising trade between Afghanistan

28/9 and the rest of the region. Saudi Arabia was one among three nations that had recognised the Taliban regime.

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It had subsequently distanced itself from it but dozens of people from the Kingdom who had joined Al-Qaeda are in captivity in Afghanistan.

Saudi Arabia is now one of the major donors of aid to the post-Taliban dispensation in Afghanistan and Saudi foundations have been sending truckloads of humanitarian supplies to that country.

Riyadh has also committed \$50 millions to fund a \$250-million highway construction project in Afghanistan.

Prior to his departure for the Kingdom, Afghan officials reportedly said that Mr. Karzai's Government was willing to extradite Saudi and other foreign nationals.

7 0 SEP 2002

THE HINDU

ATTACKS / PRESSURE ON BAGHDAD

Riyadh hints at cooperation

HD-14
1379

UNITED NATIONS, SEPT 16 Saudi Arabia has turned up the pressure on Baghdad, hinting that it might offer its desert installations as a jump-off base for any U.S. military campaign against Iraq as long as such an attack had U.N. sanction.

But the Saudi foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, also said the rest of the world clearly wanted the Iraq crisis resolved without "the firing of a single shot".

Prince Saud's statement was issued yesterday in New York as the U.N. General Assembly wrapped up the fourth day of its opening general debate, a day on which other Arab leaders also addressed the explosive impasse over Iraq.

The Syrian Foreign Minister said "blind bias" was focusing global attention on Iraq rather than Israel. Jordan urged Iraq to comply with U.N. resolutions and avert "direct consequences" for its people.

Some 5,000 U.S. military personnel are stationed in Saudi Arabia, most at the remote Prince Sultan Air Base. In the 1991 Gulf War Saudi Arabia was the main base for a half-million-strong, U.S.-led military force that drove the Iraqi army from Kuwait. But since then the Sau-

dis have periodically prohibited the use of their soil for strikes against Iraq and, most recently, for the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan.

The Saudi Foreign Minister first commented yesterday in an interview with CNN. Asked whether Saudi bases would be available to Washington, Prince Saud replied that if the Security Council adopts a resolution authorising force against Iraq, "Everybody is obliged to follow through."

Meanwhile, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, is resuming talks on Iraq with U.N. Security Council members as administration officials with the U.S. President, George W Bush, press for swift action from both Congress and the United Nations to show resolve against Saddam Hussein.

Members of the Congress, however, are split on whether it is wise to act within Mr. Powell's timetable of four weeks on an as-yet undefined resolution on Iraq. There were signs of a possible stalemate before November's congressional elections. "We don't know what this administration wants to do," said the Senate Majority Leader, Tom Daschle, today on ABC's television "This Week."— AP

17 SEP 2001

THE HINDS

Afghanistan
5-13
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Little hope for peace

Will history repeat itself in Afghanistan? Ten years ago, in April 1992, after Mohammad Najibullah was overthrown, an interim administration, representing a Pushtun-Tajik alliance, assumed power in Kabul. Its president was a Pushtun *jihadi* leader with a limited support base — Sibghatullah Mujadedi. His major qualification for the job was his ethnicity — no one but a Pushtun had ruled Afghanistan for the better part of 250 years.

His defence minister was Ahmed Shah Masood, a Tajik. Northern Afghanistan was left to the devices of Abdul Rashid Dostum who ruled from Mazar-e-Sharif. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence wanted to install Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in Kabul. He pounded the capital with rocket attacks until he was designated prime minister. However, he could never enter Kabul. His antics and that of the other jihadi factions eventually paved the way for the Taliban.

Ten years on, it is another Pushtun — Hamid Karzai — with no support base who heads the government in Kabul. He too is there because of the need to give a Pushtun face to the interim administration. His defence minister is again a Tajik, Mohammad Qasim Fahim, a deputy of the late Masood. The distrust between the Pushtuns and the Tajiks continues and Karzai has been provided American bodyguards.

Hekmatyar is again on the periphery of Kabul — in Kunar or in Loghar — and has declared *jihad* against the Karzai government. The latest series of bomb explosions in Kabul, including the car bomb that killed 26 people on September 5, is believed to be his handiwork. There is speculation that Pakistan is fuelling instability in Afghanistan using Hekmatyar, the remnants of the Taliban and the al Qaida.

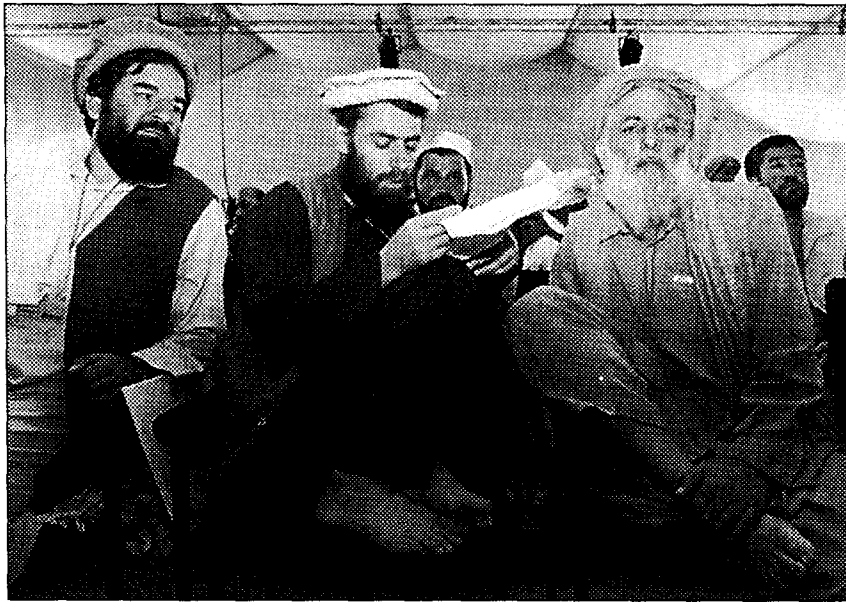
The writ of the Kabul government is limited. The governors of the regions — particularly Ismael Khan in Herat, Dostum in Balkh and Jousjan, Gul Agha Sherzai in Kandahar, Hazarat Ali in Jalalabad and Din Mohammad in Nangarhar — are power centres in their own right.

Yet there are some differences between the Afghanistan of 1992 and that of 2002. For one, the commitment of the international community to ensure an independent, stable and democratic Afghanistan is deeper today than ever before. For another, unlike in 1992, Tajik control over Kabul today is near total.

However, there are four imponderables that will determine the future of Afghanistan. One, the staying power of

TWENTY-TWENTY

BHARAT BHUSHAN



Members of the loya jirga: so many claims

the Americans and the international community. Two, the extent of accommodation between the various ethnic factions. Three, the pace of reconstruction activity. And, four, the interference from across the borders in Pakistan.

As of now it seems that the United States of America will stay the course as it would not want Afghanistan to lapse into chaos once again. But with what seriousness it would continue to pursue its objectives is a matter of speculation. While welcoming the US presence, many in Afghanistan feel that the problem with the US approach is that it sees the whole issue as a "project" — having "done" Kosovo, they now want to "do" Afghanistan. Such an approach seeks to impose structures from above, hoping that everything else would automatically fit in. Institutions, however, have to develop from within a society for them to be suitable and durable.

What this means is not another one-off *loya jirga* but a sustained and credible dialogue between the different ethnic groups and communities of Afghanistan. As of now, there is only an understanding that everyone should get a share in governance — but what share and within what system is unclear.

The accommodation among the various ethnic factions is tricky. Nobody knows, for example, who can speak on

behalf of the Pushtuns. It is certainly not Karzai — especially after the attempt to assassinate him in his home town of Kandahar in the Pushtun heartland. The southern regions of the country — predominantly Pushtun — feel that they do not have their fair share of power in the Karzai government. The Tajik political leadership is also amorphous. Fahim is there because of his military strength and not because of his political vision, if he has one.

Dostum, for example, believes that only a broad federal structure can allow proper power-sharing and keep Afghanistan together. His federalism means a separate flag, defence policy, currency and an independent school curriculum. Even now he prints his own currency called "Jumbishi", as opposed to the Afghani, which is accepted in the other parts of Afghanistan but at a slightly devalued rate.

If the Afghan ethnic groups are keeping quiet for the time being, it is because they all expect some amount of rebuilding and reconstruction to take place under the aegis of the US. The moment donor fatigue sets in and aid-flow stops, their differences are likely to surface again. As of now, however, international aid is only a trickle. Not even ten percent of the aid promised has been realized in the 10 months following the beginning of

the aid process.

There are also no arrangements to absorb foreign aid. The banking system has collapsed. There is a central bank with a president and a building but it does precious little. Nobody knows who prints the Afghani. Many believe that there is more than one actor or country behind it. When the government announced its intention to revalue the Afghani, the market was suddenly flooded with brand new notes which came in containers and the exchange rate went up from 45,000 to 56,000 Afghani to a dollar. No one seems to know how and why the Afghan moneychangers are able to deal in almost any currency with the latest exchange rate being only a phone call away. The speculation is that it is the drug trade which makes this possible.

The most important factor which has kept Afghanistan destabilized is, of course, foreign interference. The needle of suspicion is already pointing towards Pakistan. It is more than willing to help the Pushtuns — Pakistani newspapers are full of stories about the marginalization of the largest community of Afghans in the new power structure. Some analysts believe that the assassination of the governor of Nangarhar, Haji Qadeer, in the Afghan capital in July was aimed at showing that Pushtuns are not safe in Tajik-controlled Kabul. The attempt on Karzai's life was also aimed at plunging the country into chaos once again. The expectation in Kabul is that any day now an aid-worker or a foreign diplomat may be assassinated.

Having lost its so-called "strategic depth" in Afghanistan, Pakistan can be expected to do everything to spread disruption and disorganization to discredit the Afghan transitional government. However, nobody knows at what level the current Pakistani involvement is — at the level of Pakistani militant groups supporting the remnants of the Taliban, rogue elements of the ISI and its retired officers or the government itself? If Pakistan is fully in the picture, then the question is — how can General Pervez Musharraf afford to fight his own jihadis while encouraging similar forces in Afghanistan?

What is clear, however, is that there are regional forces or countries which resent the US presence in Afghanistan and, therefore, seek to destabilize the present arrangement in Kabul. They know that this is a medieval political situation. A single carefully planned assassination can change the board on which the game is being played.

Narrow escape

109 Afghanistan hangs on by a thread 57-8

The attempted assassination of President Hamid Karzai, simultaneous with a bomb blast in Kabul killing at least 15 people and close on the heels of the assassination of one of Afghanistan's four Vice-Presidents, indicates that the hold of the Western-backed government on the country is fragile indeed, and that the international community is not on the ball as far as helping Afghanistan recover from its past is concerned. A telltale sign of lack of will is the refusal to expand the presence of international peacekeepers beyond Kabul. Significantly, the assassination attempt took place just when the President had left Kabul and arrived in Kandahar. In the event American bodyguards saved his life, but the Americans could do more in terms of helping him consolidate a pluralist, democratic regime that would rebuild the country, restore law and order and incorporate disaffected elements. A relapse into the anarchy and warlordism of the nineties would not just be catastrophic for Afghans, it would resuscitate the conditions in which the Al Qaeda thrived.

Afghan authorities have blamed the attack on Al Qaeda, a strong possibility. Besides the fact that it took place in Kandahar, the erstwhile headquarters of the Taliban, the timing could be significant — close to the first anniversary of the assassination of Ahmad Shah Masood, the legendary military commander of the Northern Alliance, as also of 11 September. Given murky Afghan politics, however, there is an even more sinister possibility. Mohammed Fahim holds the powerful post of defence minister in Karzai's cabinet, but he may think he should be in Karzai's place himself, having commanded the victorious Northern Alliance. There was a good deal of frustration at the Loya Jirga which confirmed the current Cabinet — the Panjshiri faction led by Fahim was able to freeze out other ethnic groups. King Zahir Shah, who could have stabilised the country, was left out in the cold. If this process continues a Pushtun rebellion, aided and abetted by Islamabad, is likely. Former prime minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has just issued a call for *jihad* to drive out Westerners from Afghanistan, and must be counted as another suspect.

Arab nations pressure Baghdad

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), SEPT. 8. Sensing that the U.S. will not hesitate to use force in Iraq, key Arab States who are desperate to avoid a war in their region are now exhorting Baghdad to allow U.N. weapon inspectors unconditional access on its soil. The clearest indication that the Arab countries are inclined to turn the heat on Iraq in order to circumvent a war has come from Bahrain, the home of the U.S. fifth fleet and the hub of the movement of American warships in the Persian Gulf area.

In an interview to the daily *Al Wassat*, the King of Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa indicated that time was running out for the Iraqi regime. "We don't think that any Arab or international party can stop a (U.S.) strike if it has been decided. Iraq must not be mistaken in this regard", he said in an interview.

King Hamad advised the Iraqi leadership to seize the initiative and accept the return of U.N. weapon inspectors. Iraq, he added should comply with the U.N. Security Council resolutions and "spare the Iraqi people from such a strike, spare the dangers of a military confrontation and succeed in having the sanctions lifted." He has

also spoken to the U.S. President, George Bush, over telephone recently and has met Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. In a related development indicating that the Arab focus was now on the resumption of inspections, the head of the Arab League, Amr Mousa said on Saturday in Italy that war with Baghdad may not be inevitable as there is a strong possibility that Iraq will allow U.N. inspectors to have unlimited access to "whatever sites" they want. Analysts point out that Arab countries, in their self-interest are keen to avoid a war.

Jordan under King Abdullah strongly opposes a war with Iraq. Jordan could find an attack on Iraq extremely destabilising. With a large population of highly politicised Palestinians on its soil, a U.S. attack on Iraq could generate violent anti-U.S. street demonstrations that Jordan could find hard to control. King Abdullah's concerns have been raised on yet another count.

Reports in the Israeli media suggest that the U.S. is contemplating the emergence of a democratic Iraq as an integral part of a larger Hashemite Kingdom.

That could benefit Jordan's Prince Hassan and his followers, who, unlike King Abdullah have been advocates of regime change in Iraq.

Karzai calms security fears

Agence France Presse

KABUL, Sept. 6. — President Hamid Karzai moved to calm fears over security in Afghanistan today after narrowly escaping an assassination attempt just hours after a car bomb in Kabul killed at least 26 people.

Mr Karzai flew back to the Afghan capital from the southern city of Kandahar on a US C-130 plane in the early hours and will go ahead with a planned meeting with visiting Russian defence minister Mr Sergei Ivanov, presidential spokesman, Mr Fazel Akbar said.

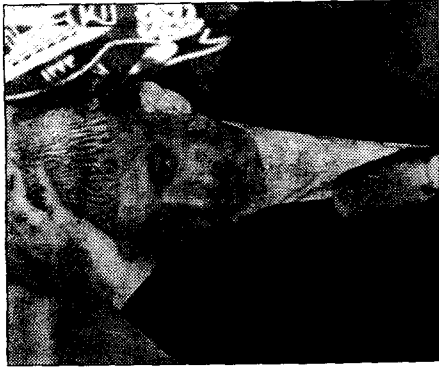
The President demonstrated his calm resolve in the immediate aftermath of the foiled assassination attempt, saying that he was prepared for such events. "I am fine. I expect things like that to come across the way," he told a BBC journalist travel-

ling with him. It was not known if Mr Karzai would visit the victims or scene of the blast in downtown Kabul yesterday, which also left around 150 people injured.

As an investigation began into Afghanistan's darkest day since the fall of the Taliban regime in December last year, the finger of blame was already being pointed at Al-Qaida extremists and their allies.

World leaders led by President George W Bush expressed relief that President Karzai emerged unhurt, and condemned the explosion in Kabul. The attacks come just days before the 9 September anniversary of Northern Alliance commander Ahmed Shah Masood's assassination and the anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the USA.

Eighteen held: Eighteen people have been arrested today in connection



A CLOSE SHAVE: Mr Hamid Karzai at a press conference in Kabul on Friday. — AFP

with bid on Mr Karzai, which was believed to be the work of the former Taliban regime, a spokesman for

Kandahar governor, Mr Gul Agha, said. "We think it is the work of the Taliban. We cannot say any more since a criminal investigation is on," spokesman Mr Khalid Pashtun said. He said that among the 18 taken into custody was commander Sayed Rasoul, who had been in charge of security at Mr Agha's former headquarters. "Rasoul with 17 of his men have been arrested and are in jail right now."

Finger points at Al-Qaida, Taliban and ex-PM: The Al-Qaida, the ousted Taliban and allied extremists, including followers of former prime minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, figure among those suspected of the attempt on President Karzai's life and the devastating car-bomb attack in Kabul.

"It's difficult to speculate but I rather think (this is the work of) terrorist groups," the foreign minister,

Mr Abdullah Abdullah, told reporters here late yesterday.

"One could say Al-Qaida, associates of Al-Qaida or remnants of the Taliban." Speculation in Afghanistan has also centered on Hekmatyar, the Islamic fundamentalist leader of the Hezb-e-Islami party, who has issued a fatwa against coalition forces operating in Afghanistan.

Hekmatyar's followers were named last month by the commander of the International Security Assistance Force as likely perpetrators of a chain of blasts in Kabul in recent weeks.

"Taliban and Al-Qaida are looking for chances to commit acts of terrorism to destabilise the situation and prove that they are still active," Isaf, Turkish commander, Major-General Akin Zorlu, said as he warned the renegade groups were trying to engender fear in the capital.

Relief in USA as Karzai escapes assassin's bullet

Foland Watson, The Times, London

WASHINGTON, Sept. 6. — The would-be assassin of Mr Hamid Karzai yesterday came within a hair's breadth of devastating American foreign policy as well as depriving Afghanistan of its leader.

As the gunman was preparing to open fire a senior US official explaining how progress in Afghanistan was a vital litmus test for America's ties with the Muslim world. Mr Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy defence secretary, highlighted street-level security as a key issue at a speech yesterday in the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based think-tank before adding that the USA had a "huge stake" in Afghanistan's success, a stake that would have been wiped away had the attempt on President Karzai's life succeeded.

President Bush expressed relief that his opposite number had escaped unhurt, a word

which greatly underplayed the sentiment around Washington. However, the assassination attempt on President Karzai is as much a challenge to US authority in the region as an attempt to depose the Afghan leader. Even before the shooting, Mr Wolfowitz suggested that America understood the need to increase the number of international peacekeepers, and expand their presence beyond Kabul. Softening previous American resistance, he said the USA saw benefits in giving the International Security Assistance Force a role in running patrols outside the capital and training the Afghan Army, police and border guards around the country.

He said other countries would have to provide the necessary men and money, but that may change after yesterday's shooting, and the implications for the Bush Administration. The ability of President Karzai's government to take root, and of the international community to help it to improve the lot of Afghans, is a

pressing issue for Washington, especially as war with Iraq looms.

US officials believe that the success of ousting the Taliban is the most potent symbol Washington has to offer to those in the Muslim world who argue that President Bush's War on Terror is anti-Islam. As Mr Wolfowitz said yesterday, shortly before President Karzai was ambushed, there was a "dangerous gap" opening between the West and the Muslim world that the USA "must bridge, and we must begin to do so now". He added: "The arena where we will most readily be judged in how we narrow the gap in Afghanistan, and that is one of the reasons why it is so important that we succeed there."

Proponents of toppling Saddam Hussein have used the model of Afghanistan to argue that it is possible to foster a secular democracy in a Muslim state with a recent totalitarian history. Mr Wolfowitz said yesterday that the USA would not desert Kabul. "We remember

the steep price that we had to pay when Afghanistan was a failed state. Having come this far and done so much, we must not walk away."

But such assertions are at odds with influential voices in other parts of the Pentagon. Commanders of special forces troops have recently said their men should be withdrawn from the hunt for Osama bin Laden because they believe he is dead. The forces are wasting their time searching mountains and caves for him, according to the commanders.

Their insistence that the threat of Osama bin Laden has been removed from Afghanistan, seemed to wear thin yesterday with the bomb attack in Kabul and the attempted assassination of Mohammed Karzai. American intelligence officials have asserted for months that Al-Qaida would try to reassert itself in Afghanistan first, as a demonstration to the rest of the world that the might of the US bombing campaign had failed to defeat them.

NATION BUILDING AND ANTI-TERRORISM

719
HO-10
THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT on Afghanistan's President, Hamid Karzai, and the tremors that it set off globally have once again drawn attention to the extreme fragility of the current dispensation in that war-ravaged country. This bold attack, which was carried out in defiance of the U. S.-manned security ring around Mr. Karzai and on his home turf of Kandahar, shows that those prepared to use violence to achieve their objectives still feel free to operate. While the identity of the would-be assassin, who was killed before he could do serious damage, has not been fully established the fact that the attempt took place just before the first anniversary of the Al-Qaeda inspired attack on targets in the U. S. suggests that the remnants of this terror outfit are still active in the field. If the attempt had been successful it could have led to an unravelling of the coalition Government in Kabul which would in turn have been the prelude to another period of chaos in Afghanistan. The return to such conditions, in a situation where the Al-Qaeda/Taliban is apparently still active in the field, could once again have placed the world in serious peril.

At the same time the international response to the violent incidents that took place in Afghanistan on Thursday is symptomatic of certain fundamental shortcomings in the concerted approach that the global community has taken in respect of that country. An attempt to assassinate a political leader, and an unsuccessful attempt at that, was taken as a matter of greater concern than the deaths of over a dozen civilians and injuries to a score more caused by a bomb explosion in Kabul. One fundamental shortcoming of the blue-print of those currently engaged in the nation-building exercise in Afghanistan is that the fragility or strength of the Kabul dispensation has been made to be dependent on the life or death of one person. It

Alsharbat
is difficult to refute the argument that Mr. Karzai is the one political figure around whom the clutch of warlords and faction-heads (each of whom has at best a limited territorial or ethnic base) can rally. Yet the attempt on Mr. Karzai's life brings out the urgent need to build an intra-Afghan dispensation that is not so centralised on one personality, or so dependent on the support of the United States.

The slow progress towards the building of a dispensation that is not so Karzai-centric is also probably attributable to other flaws in the current global approach to Afghanistan one of which is that the much needed nation-building exercise is given a very distinctively lower priority than second place to the hunt against the Taliban/Al-Qaeda network. Such nation-building exercises as are taking place also appear to place excessive emphasis on the military-related aspects. Yesterday's attack took place just as the idea of spreading the presence of international security forces outside the Afghan capital — at least to the extent of covering some of the other major centres such as Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif — was gaining momentum and this might now become the new thrust of the global coalition's policy. The International Security Assistance Force personnel have played a very useful role as buffers between war-like factions and as advisers on security matters but it should not be forgotten that most of the more powerful factions that are represented in the Kabul coalition are able to maintain a semblance of law and order (in their own fashion) in the regions under their control. The greater need does not appear to be so much for additional military forces but for real assistance for other aspects of nation-building so that Afghans can have a real chance to fulfil their own developmental aspirations and to build a forward-looking nation, drawing upon its own economic potential.

Karzai calms fears over security

Kabul: Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Friday moved to calm fears over security in Afghanistan after narrowly escaping an assassination attempt just hours after a car bomb in Kabul killed at least 26 people.



Hamid Karzai

Two bullets were fired on Thurs-

day at Mr Karzai's car in the southern city of Kandahar by a uniformed man just as the President was leaving the house of governor Gul Agha Sherzai. Mr Karzai flew back to the Afghan capital from the southern city of Kandahar on a US C-130 plane in the early hours and will go ahead with a planned meeting with visiting Russian defence minister Sergei Ivanov, presidential spokesman Fazel Akbar said.

The President demonstrated his calm resolve in the immediate aftermath of the foiled assassination attempt, saying that he was prepared for such events. "I am fine. I expect things like that to come across the way," he told a BBC journalist travelling with him. It was not known if Mr Karzai would visit the victims or scene of the blast in downtown Kabul on Thursday, which also left around 150 people injured.

As an investigation began into Afghanistan's darkest day since the fall of the Taliban regime in December last year, the finger of blame was already being pointed at Al Qaida extremists and their allies.

Meanwhile, 18 people were held in connection with the assassination bid. A government spokesman said that among the 18 was Sayed Rasoul, who had been in charge of security at Agha's former headquarters. AFP

IRAQ / SADDAM ASKED TO ALLOW U.N. INSPECTION

Arab states warn U.S. against attack

CAIRO, SEPT. 5. In a twin message to Iraq and the United States, Arabs called today for the resumption of negotiations to allow U.N. weapons inspectors back in Iraq and warned of unrest across the region if Washington used force to oust Saddam Hussein.

In Baghdad, Mr. Hussein vowed Iraq would put up a good fight if attacked.

"We shall fight in a way that pleases you and makes the enemy angry," he told participants

at a meeting of Arab parliamentarians convened in the Iraqi capital.

"We shall not let you down if we have to fight a war," the Iraqi leader told the parliamentarians at a reception.

In Cairo, Foreign Ministers from the 22-member Arab League opened a two-day meeting today to discuss Iraq and other issues.

"The critical challenge that's facing us now is the threat directed at Iraq ... this constitutes

a danger for the stability of the entire region," the Arab League Secretary-General, Amr Moussa, told the Ministers.

Mr. Moussa urged Iraq to work with the United Nations to resolve problems, starting with the return of the weapons inspectors and moving from there to Iraq's demands that U.N. sanctions be lifted and its territorial integrity be guaranteed.

Iraq on Wednesday said it was ready to discuss a return of the inspectors, but only in a broader context of ending the sanctions imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The United Nations has said the return of inspectors must be the priority.

Speaking to reporters at the meeting, the Sudanese Foreign Minister, Mustafa Osman Ismail, said delegates had almost finished drawing up a resolution to conclude their two days of discussions.

"Unanimously, the resolution is saying that all Arab states are against any attack — whether against Iraq or any Arab state".

The Syrian Foreign Minister, Farouk al-Sharaa, confirmed the unanimity on this point.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister, Naji Sabri, applauded the resolution, telling reporters that all the Arab Governments had expressed their "total rejection of

the aggressive intentions of the United States."

The looming possibility of an attack on Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict headed the agenda, with Mr. Moussa telling the opening session on Wednesday that such a strike posed a "critical challenge" and "a danger for the stability of the entire region."

Mr. Ismail, emerging from a closed session, was asked about the prospects for Arab allies of the United States giving logistic support to an attack on Iraq.

"Since there is a consensus to reject an attack, that means implicitly that no Arab country will cooperate in the execution of this strike," he said.

Senior Iraqi officials have been touring Arab capitals to mobilise support in the face of increasing speculation the United States, with British support, will invade Iraq on grounds it is illegally amassing weapons of mass destruction.

A leading Iraqi newspaper owned by Mr. Saddam Hussein's son urged the League on Thursday to adopt a clear stand against the U.S.

In a front-page editorial, *Babil* warned the Foreign Ministers that the U.S. was "attempting to target Iraq as a first step toward controlling the whole Middle East region." — AP



SHOW OF SOLIDARITY: The Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein (right), receives a gift from delegates of the Arab Parliamentary Union at the end of a two-day meeting they held in Baghdad on Thursday. — AFP

Bush seeks Saudi nod for Saddam ouster plan

Washington: US President George W. Bush has asked Saudi Arabia to lessen its opposition to the proposed military action to oust Saddam Hussein, saying that "the world would be safer and better off without the Iraqi President".

US vice president Dick Cheney's remarks on a pre-emptive attack a day earlier caused fresh alarm among Washington's Arab allies, with the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak warning that any such attack would plunge West Asia into chaos. During a meeting with the visiting Saudi Arabian ambassador Prince Bandar Bin Sultan, Mr Bush said he had not yet taken any decision on the course of action to depose Saddam although "he was a threat to world peace".

Presidential press secretary Ari Fleischer said the talks, which were held here on Tuesday in the presence of national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, revolved around a variety of topics, including the war against terrorism, situation in West Asia and the issue of child custody cases in Saudi Arabia, particularly those related to American citizens.

"The President stressed that he will continue to engage in consultations with Saudi Arabia and other nations about steps in West Asia," Fleischer added.

The President also told Prince Bandar that he believes the Iraqi leader is a menace to



George Bush

world peace but has made no decision on the best course of action to achieve Washington's policy of ousting him, said Fleischer. Asked whether the Saudis shared common views about Mr Saddam Hussein, Fleischer claimed, "Saudi Arabia's position has been, if you have listened to Adel Al Jubir (the crown prince's foreign policy adviser), for example, that Saddam Hussein is a threat."

Meanwhile, renewed U.S. talk of war to topple Saddam drew defiance from Baghdad on Tuesday and a warning from Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak that any such attack could plunge West Asia into chaos.

U.S. warplanes attacked a radar site in northern Iraq and an air defence command facility in the south after what the US military called hostile acts against US and British jets patrolling two no-fly zones in Iraqi airspace.

"We could not care less about the threats that are out there. Iraq has a long history with these threats and such despotism," Iraqi vice-president Taha Yassin Ramadan told reporters in Syria after meeting President Bashar al-Assad. Agencies

LANDMINES IN AFGHANISTAN

Indian Initiative Can Help Restore Old Faith

By JAGAT S MEHTA

The interim government of Afghanistan has announced its decision to sign the 1997 international convention banning landmines: it has gone on to invite the international community to help in clearing anti-personnel explosive devices in the country. Jody Williams, the zealous crusader for their abolition, has been to Kabul and so has Olaru Ottanu, the Ugandan under secretary-general at the UN responsible for protecting children from involvement in wars.

With 10 million unexploded devices, Afghanistan, along with Kampuchea and Angola, is the most heavily mined country in the world. While most of the damage was caused by bombing or artillery bombardments, landmines aggravated the destruction and the human tragedy. The result was that at one time, half the population of Afghanistan were displaced; about three million were refugees in camps in Pakistan and one million in Iran and others homeless.

Killing field

The mine action centre of the UN estimates that on an average 300 or more will be killed or maimed every month and at least 80 per cent will be women and children. Since the landmines were randomly scattered by the Soviets, no cautionary warnings are feasible. There is thus no shortcut except to sweep the whole country and that is a formidable task. As of now Afghanistan looks like an unmatched killing field of the 21st century.

In an article published in *The Statesman* (26 October 1997), I had suggested that as a humanitarian gesture, India jointly with Pakistan, should take the initiative to offer to the Afghan authorities to deploy teams of sappers to clear landmines. Alas, the suggestion evoked no interest. It was unfortunate that India refrained from subscribing to the international convention banning landmines. Exceptionalism whenever adopted and rationalised has always eroded our international standing. With the active pleas of Norway, Austria and Belgium, the convention was opened for signature in Ottawa in December 1997 and by now 127 nations have committed not to make or deploy anti-personnel weapons. In the view of many military cognoscentes, the security bonus from anti-personnel weapons is minimal and is far outweighed by the humanitarian peril to fellow citizens and even our own soldiers.

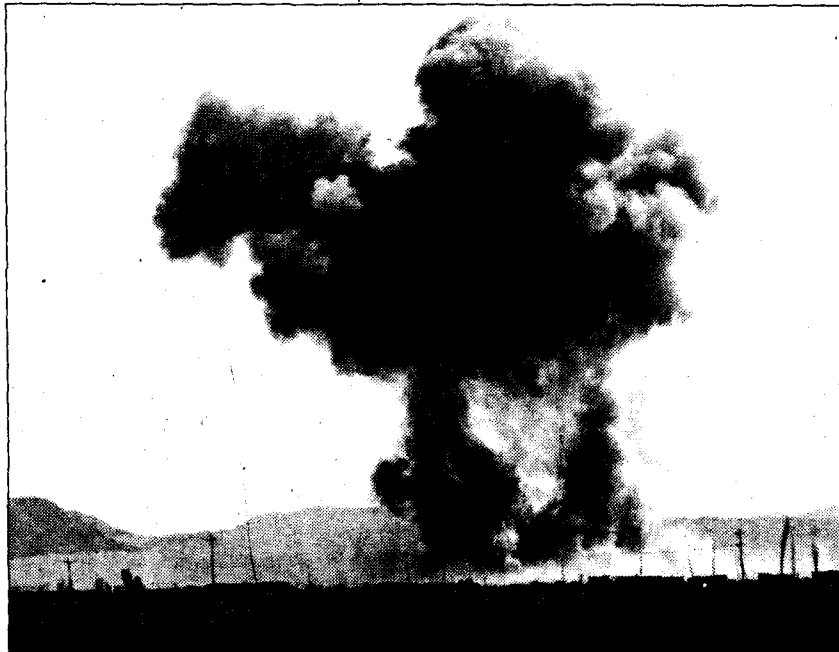
In not adhering to the convention, we are, of course, in the company of the mighty — the USA, Russia, China and, apart from a few others, our paranoiac twin Pakistan. My own original plea was not so much to sign the convention but to take an initiative for Afghanistan as a

The author is former foreign secretary of the Government of India.

demonstration of the stakes for both India and Pakistan to minimise the future hazards to the innocent in Afghanistan. The government of Karzai has now declared that removing landmines is critical to national development and second only to nutrition as a priority for the Afghan people.

There are even stronger reasons now for India to offer to provide teams to

nally scattered by them. Pakistan first rejoiced in US military munificence and then, following the vacuum created by superpowers' withdrawal, was driven by its own ambitions and tutored the Taliban conquest of the country. Pakistan now has to walk a tight-rope between remaining a credible partner in the "war" against terror on the left and not abandoning the support to "freedom fighters"



assist in minesweeping operations in Afghanistan. For over two decades I have felt that the destruction of Afghanistan was an avoidable tragedy traceable to mindsets conditioned by the old Cold War between the USA and Russia, which in turn, had hypnotised Pakistan and India. All these countries must now at least privately regret the false fears and the misconceived impetuosity of their original judgments. Afghan nationalism prevailed once again as it had in the Great Game but only after the suffering ending in figurative self-immolation. India remained marginalised from 1980 onwards as we betrayed the traditional support for non-aligned Afghanistan. Gorbachov recognised Brezhnev's folly and, without waiting for a victory, ordered withdrawal of the Soviet forces in 1989.

Taliban

The USA and Pakistan had to effect painful U-turns in their policies. The US which had originally fuelled the conflict with arms and inducting militant jihadis, made a summary withdrawal in tandem with the Soviets and in doing so abandoned Afghanistan to chaos and bloodletting but returned after 11 September to search for Osama-bin-Laden, Al-Qaeda and the other dragon seeds origi-

in Kashmir on the right. India too suffered a blowback from the jihadis when we found there were Afghans, Arabs and not just Pakistanis on the heights of Kargil.

Fortunately India at least is not party to the on-going military operations and so we are in a better position to try to repair our relations with the Afghan people. A mission under a senior special envoy was launched after the Bonn conference, which constituted the interim government in Kabul. Formal diplomatic relations between New Delhi and Kabul have now been restored and we have made beginnings of a benign programme of assistance towards relief and reconstruction of Afghanistan. India has promised food aid, training facilities, infrastructural support like buses and other concessions for the economic resurrection of Afghanistan. Though our aid is minuscule in comparison with the needs or with that of American and international pledges, our gestures will go some way to help the government but such support will largely reach the urban populace only.

For India to regain credibility with the bulk of the Afghan people — notably the displaced, the maimed and the alienated — and to correct the impression that

India was supportive of Soviet intervention and pro-Soviet leaders like Babrak Karmal or Najibullah: we would have to win back the hearts and minds of the ordinary Afghan. For this we would require a more imaginative initiative. Rising above factional allegiance, the offer to sweep the millions of landmines may be a way of demonstrating our abiding non-ulterior goodwill towards the poor in the outlying areas of the country. We must aim to reach not only the Pushtuns, but also the Tajiks, the Uzbeks, the Hazaras and not shy from the domains of the warlords. An Indian non-discriminatory response to the Afghan appeal may be the surest method to regain the lost respect for India.

Relief

Such operations will of course not be free of dangers but our trained sappers have skills to clear mines and probably do so for our own operations. The Afghans are not only too familiar with the hazards from accidental landmine explosion: they will readily give credit to any country volunteering such operations for the relief of the Afghan people. In any case as a precondition, the Afghan government must guarantee active cooperation and reasonable protection for our teams. Every method, local and national, must advertise the operation as a non-political humanitarian mission, distinct from other military operations. Our teams should of course be sensitised to respect the Islamic faith and their fierce tribal or factional loyalty. If India is seen as engaged in life-saving operations: particularly in reducing dangers to the women and children, we could make amends for the past and restore some of the old faith.

The proposed unilateral Indian initiative is to show our deep concern and commitment to the Afghan people: it must not adopt the character of scoring brownie points against Pakistan. Indeed if Indo-Pakistani relations should improve and Pakistan convincingly restrains its support for terror and threats to Indian democracy, my original suggestion of joint teams to more speedily eliminate the menace of unexploded landmines all over the country could be revived. The overall goal is that Afghanistan must be purged as quickly and as effectively as possible of the most serious legacy from a quarter century of mindless and misconceived civil strife.

We have to demonstrate that, whatever may have been the ups and downs during 45 years of the Cold War, Afghanistan is part of Asian history and belongs to the South Asian region as much as to Central Asia. It is in the common interest that the country should return to its traditional independence with all possible economic viability, including optimal regional trade and development.

5/11 28/8

Saudis withdraw assets from U.S.

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), AUG. 22. The growing rift between the United States and Saudi Arabia has acquired a prominent economic dimension with Saudi investors pulling out nearly \$200 billions from American financial bodies.

The Saudi daily, *Arab News* quoting a high ranking official of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, confirmed that Saudi Arabian businessmen had withdrawn \$200 billions from the United States. *The Financial Times* had earlier reported about the flight of Saudi capital and said that it had been fuelled by demands from some U.S. hardliners that Saudi assets in the U.S. should be frozen.

The exit of Saudi funds from the U.S. could gather momentum in response to the lawsuit filed by relatives of those killed in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The lawsuit seeks \$1 trillion to \$3 trillion as damages from 99 Saudi individuals and organisations for allegedly funding the Al-

Qaeda network covertly. The accused in the lawsuit draws in its ambit, three members of the Saudi royal family, including the present Defence Minister and the former intelligence chief.

Saudi investments in the United States are estimated at around \$700 billions, while Arabs in general may have pitched nearly \$1.3 trillions outside the Arab world.

According to analysts, the outflow of Saudi assets from the United States could benefit European banks and financial institutions the most.

The downturn in the Saudi Arabian-U.S. relations has already affected trade and travel. U.S. exports to Saudi Arabia decreased by 43 per cent in the first quarter of this year, compared to 2001.

The number of Saudis travelling to the United States in the first four months this year also declined by nearly 46 per cent. Saudi Arabia's exports consisting mainly of oil to the U.S., which amounted to \$13.2 billions last year, have, however, remained steady this year as well. But

the equation on the energy front may change in the future in case a regime change in Iraq — that has the second largest deposits of oil in the Gulf — is accomplished.

Meanwhile, in a related development, a group of Saudis plan to sue the U.S. Government, alleging financial and psychological harm they have encountered on account of the Sept. 11 investigations.

An agency report quoting the Saudi lawyer, Katib-al-Shamri, says that several Saudis plan to file lawsuits against the U.S. Government, as well as civil and media organisations. Mr. Shamri is also a member of the international legal committee that has been set up to defend detainees at the Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

He is seeking U.S. permission for a visit by the families of the nearly 100 Saudi nationals held at that base. The U.S. has named 15 Saudis among the 19 hijackers involved in the Sept. 11 attacks and has questioned hundreds of Saudis during the investigation.

24 AUG 2002

'Afghan stability vital for Iran'

Kabul: Visiting Iranian President Mohammad Khatami said on Tuesday that stability was needed above all else in Afghanistan and urged international donors to help rebuild the war-ravaged country.

He also denied charges by the US that Iran was trying to destabilise Afghanistan's government led by President Hamid Karzai who came to power with the help of the US military after overthrowing the Taliban regime last year.

"Today, more than anything else, Afghanistan requires stability and security. Any sincere country or government or nation should strive for the speedy reconstruction of Afghanistan and assist the central Afghan government," Mr Khatami said.

After several hours of talks with his Afghan counterpart, Mr Khatami said the international community had forgotten Afghanistan

for too long, and now must pay the price by helping to rebuild it.

He criticised Afghan occupations first by the Soviets in the 1980s and by the Taliban during the latter part of the 1990s. "The presence of any country and any power here can be only justified if it is helping the Afghan nation and the government in the direction of progress."

Mr Khatami also said that stability in Afghanistan was essential to Iran and the region, and predicted a further strengthening of relations between the two countries.

"Afghanistan's stability and security is our stability and security," he said, sitting next to Mr Karzai.

Mr Khatami denied charges by Washington that Iran was trying to destabilise the Karzai government. "We have no intention of interfering in the work of this nation and the government," he told reporters. Reuters



Afghan President Hamid Karzai (left) guides his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Khatami as they arrive at the presidential palace in Kabul on Tuesday. Mr Khatami was in the capital for a one-day visit.

14 JUL 2002

ADVISING THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE

THE VISIT TO Kabul over the weekend by the Minister for External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha, followed shortly by the visit of Iran's President, Syed Mohammed Khatami, provided opportunities for two of Afghanistan's closest friends to try and heal the growing rifts in the war-ravaged country's ruling dispensation. India and Iran have vital stakes in Afghanistan and both have invested heavily over the years in sustaining the Northern Alliance which is now such a key component of the Government in Kabul. The Northern Alliance, as represented by the Defence Minister, Mohammed Fahim, who is the first among the triumvirate that leads this group, has locked itself into a power struggle with Afghanistan's President, Hamid Karzai. This premature struggle for dominance is, foremost of all, extremely dangerous for Afghanistan itself given the delicate state of every single institution in that country. It also has the potential to unravel the very fragile ties that hold together the disparate international coalition which is based on the sole common interest in ensuring that Afghanistan does not slip back into a state of chaos and thus create a sanctuary for extremist outfits like Al-Qaeda.

While the U.S. administration has identified Mr. Karzai as the fulcrum of its Afghan policy, it has thus far, and purely in begrudging acknowledgement of the realities on the ground, tolerated the various factions and armed groups that have gathered under his presidential umbrella. But there can be no doubt whatsoever that Washington's interests in Afghanistan extend way beyond the immediate goals of restoring stability or of creating conditions conducive to the provision of humanitarian assistance. Given Washington's long-term and substantive interests in Central and South West Asia, there will come a time — which might not be so far away — when the

U.S. will find it necessary or expedient to turn decisively against Afghan factions that are perceived as impediments to the advancement of those interests. The ties between the Northern Alliance and Iran are problematic in a context in which Washington has written off any hopes it may have had vis-a-vis Mr. Khatami and has begun to look on the Iranian President as no different from the rest of a theocratic regime that the U.S. views with undiluted hostility. Mr. Khatami could advise the Northern Alliance leadership to moderate its ambitions, if for no other reason than to rehabilitate himself with the dominant trend in global politics. But it is not at all certain that he will do so.

India, however, has a vital stake in ensuring that a stable order extends its sway over the whole of Afghanistan and it has sufficient influence with the Northern Alliance to persuade Mr. Fahim and his associates not to rock the boat at this juncture. While the linkages between India and the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance have been beneficial to both, New Delhi cannot ignore the opportunities that are now available to revive the centuries-old relations with the Pashtuns. India's access to the Pashtun segment of Afghanistan's ethno-political spectrum had been much circumscribed so long as a Soviet-style regime ruled Kabul and had been almost non-existent during the Taliban period. What India can do at this juncture is remind the Northern Alliance that by its own tradition, or the tradition of the Mujahideen force that constitutes its core, the military wing is subordinate to the political. Therefore, it should judiciously ponder the appropriateness of applying that principle to the political dispensation that is being sought to be set up in regard to the country as a whole. Mr. Fahim and associates cannot take it amiss if a proven friend were to point out to them where their own interests lay.

14 APR 2002

THE HINDU

13 killed in Kabul army base attack

Kabul, August 7

UNIDENTIFIED ATTACKERS struck an Afghan army base south of Kabul today, and a resulting firefight killed 11 guerrillas, one soldier and a civilian, a local police commander said. The hour-long clash was the most serious battle near the Afghan capital in months.

The attack began at about 7 am when the guerrillas, armed with automatic rifles, rushed the army's Kabul garrison in the Bagram district, about six miles south of the center of the capital, said police Col Haji Rashid.

Soldiers fought back mainly with rocket-propelled grenades, he said, and afterward bodies were strewn about the ground in front of the base.

Rashid said three other people were wounded — a soldier, a civilian from a nearby village and one of the guerrillas. He said 20 soldiers and 20 police were involved in the clash.

A wounded civilian died en route to a hospital, said Maj Angela Herbert, a spokeswoman for the International Security Assistance Force.

Rashid said it could not be determined immediately whether the attackers were Afghans, and he did not know how many may have escaped. "We have yet to complete our investigation," he said.

"They came from the south of Kabul, from the direction of the mountains and villages," he said.

The International Security Assistance Force, the multinational force that patrols Kabul, said it had no immediate information on the clash.

Eight months after a US-led military campaign ousted the Taliban government and scattered the al-Qaida terrorist net-



Afghan refugee, Nuruddin, (centre) returned to a transit centre in Pul-i-Charkhi on Wednesday.

AP PHOTO

work, the multinational force patrols have generally maintained peace in Kabul.

But fighting has flared in outlying provinces between armed factions vying for power, and the central government has remained on guard against possible attacks by resurgent Taliban or al-Qaida units.

Last week, Afghan authorities reported intercepting a would-be car bomber in the heart of Kabul, before he could set off his half-ton of explosives. He was said to have come from the region south of Kabul.

A senior US official today ac-

cused the European Union of failing to shoulder its share of the burden for returning Afghan refugees, warning that shortfalls in funding could jeopardise the whole repatriation programme.

Assistant secretary of state Arthur Dewey told reporters here that "the US has done more than its fair share in supporting the multilateral system of the return of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPS)."

The US was now "providing nearly 100 per cent of the food that is now coming into

Afghanistan through the world food programme" as other countries were failing to support the UN agency and instead channelling their money through NGOs.

"It's been somewhat disappointing for US to see some of the other donors. Almost playing the role of the United Nations themselves by giving their money directly to NGOs and trying to implement programmes directly on behalf of refugees which are mandated" to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Agencies

American fire kills 6 Afghans

Islamabad, August 7

UNITED STATES troops shot dead six Afghan civilians in the eastern province of Kunar on Tuesday, the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said today.

The AIP report said four of the six were killed on Tuesday evening when American troops opened fire on a vehicle near Asadabad, the Kunar provincial capital, after its driver apparently failed to stop when signaled.

The report quoted unnamed Afghan Government sources as saying that those killed were relatives of a prominent local commander, named as Matiullah.

AIP said that two more Afghans were killed by US firing in a separate unrelated incident in the province on the same day.

It gave no further details of this incident.

Hundreds of US troops are stationed in Kunar province, which borders Pakistan, helping the Afghan authorities in its campaign to recover weapons from civilians, the report said.

Hundreds of Afghan civilians have been reported killed by US fire since Washington launched a military campaign against Afghanistan's former Taliban Government and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, which is blamed for the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

Reuters

8 AUG 2002

USA tried to cover up airstrike: UN report

Dumeetha Luthra & Roland Watson
The Times, London

KABUL/LONDON, July 29. — US forces breached human rights and then sought to conceal the evidence after the so-called “wedding party” airstrike that killed more than 50 Afghan civilians this month, according to a draft UN report.

A preliminary UN investigation found no corroboration of American claims that its aircraft were fired on from the ground, and that there were discrepancies in US accounts of what happened that night. If these damning findings are upheld by a second, more detailed UN investigation, they will cause huge embarrassment to the Pentagon, which has conceded little to date and insisted it will take weeks before a true picture of what happened can be established. UN sources said the findings pointed to an American cover-up, and suggested US investigators were dragging their feet in the hope that the issue would fade away.

The attack took place on the night of 1 July as American forces hunted down pockets of Taliban and Al-Qaida resistance. An American helicopter gunship fired on targets around the village of Kakarak, and the casualties included 25 members of a single family attending a wedding party.

207 573 Afghanistan
A UN source said the report was produced by a team of “experienced and reputable UN people, who have been in the region a while and know it well”. It states there was clear “evidence that human rights violations had taken place”. The compound where the wedding was taking place was anti-Taliban and the family were allies of Mr Hamid Karzai. It said that coalition forces had arrived on the scene very quickly after the airstrikes and “cleaned the area”, removing evidence of “shrapnel, bullets and traces of blood”. Women on the scene had their hands tied behind their backs.

It said investigators had found no weapons, “no corroboration” on the ground that the US had been fired upon, and that there were “discrepancies” between the various American accounts of what happened.

In a statement yesterday, a UN spokesman in Afghanistan said the report contained “judgments that were not sufficiently substantiated”, and that “a comprehensive report is being finalised that will provide a more detailed and accurate picture”.

However, the statement went on to say that “the findings on the ground bear out the paramount necessity that such incidents do not recur, both from a humanitarian and political perspective”.

The wedding party raid was not the first time US airstrikes have killed Afghan civilians. It angered and embarrassed President Mr Karzai and has fuelled anti-American sentiment in the country. A joint US-Afghan team is investigating the wedding party raids. So far nothing has been disclosed and no timescale has been given as to when the findings will be made public. As one UN official put it: “The more it drags on, the harder it is to prove and probably the people investigating want it go slowly and die away.”

Pentagon officials have said that cameras fixed to the gun turrets of the AC-130 showed gunfire coming from the ground around the village. But the Pentagon has not released the film, as it has done on some previous occasions, preventing independent analysis of whether the gunfire is anti-aircraft artillery, as the pilots believed, or celebratory rifle fire. US defence officials have suggested repeatedly that the accident may be the result of misinformation or mischief from rival Afghan tribes. At successive media briefings in the days after the accident, officials said it was common for Al-Qaida and Taliban to place their weapons close to or surrounded by civilians, and that information coming from Afghan sources was not always to be trusted at face value.

30 JUL 2002

THE NEW YORK TIMES

KABUL / MOST MINED COUNTRY

Afghanistan to sign landmine treaty

KABUL, JULY 28. Afghanistan, the world's most mined country, today said it would sign an international treaty banning their use as soon as possible and called on the international community for help in clearing millions of anti-personnel devices.

"I would like to declare that the lawful Government of Afghanistan, having considered the above mentioned convention and pending our cabinet approval in the days to come, is ready to be a signatory to the treaty," the Foreign Minister, Dr Abdullah Abdullah, told a conference on landmines in the capital, Kabul. "We also urge countries that have any information or documentation on the use of landmines in Afghanistan to help us and the landmine clearance community with this humanitarian endeavour," he said.

After 23 years of occupation and conflict, Afghanistan is littered with untold numbers of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. The Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan estimates that up to 300 persons are killed or wounded by the devices every month. Latest figures from the International Committee of the Red Cross show it alone has treated more than 50,000 mine casualties since 1988 — including nearly 800 in the first six months of this year. Nearly 80 per cent of those treated were civilians and over ten per cent children aged below 14. Casualties have been mounting too since the overthrow of the Tali-

ban in December and the return to Afghanistan of more than 1.2 million refugees.

"Anti-personnel mines are the main obstacle to our country's peace and development and this conference will help galvanise national and international support to end this scourge," said Fazel Karuim Fazel, head of the Afghan Campaign to Ban Landmines.

The Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdullah told a news conference that the cabinet, in the absence of any parliament, would probably ratify the treaty in the next few days, making Afghanistan the 126th country to do so since it was first launched in 1997. But some of the countries with the world's biggest armies — including the United States, Russia, India, Pakistan, China and Israel — remain outside the treaty.

Some military experts say the definitions contained in the treaty are so loose as to make it almost useless. "Many people think of a landmine only as something you put in the ground and which detonates when you stand on it or drive over it," an ordnance expert with the International Security and Assistance Force for Afghanistan said.

"But what is to stop someone using a grenade with a trip wire attached to the pin to cause the same effect. Is that a mine or a grenade?" Afghanistan's mines are largely a legacy of a decade-long Soviet occupation after 1979. — Reuters

29 JUL 2000

'Not safe for Afghan refugees to return'

NEW YORK, JULY 25. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) should reverse its newly-announced policy of promoting voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan, Human Rights Watch said.

The UNHCR issued a statement last week advising governments hosting Afghan refugees to offer incentives and assistance to all those who wish to repatriate, and to resume processing the applications of Afghans with pending asylum claims.

"By advocating for repatriation, UNHCR is sending the message to governments that conditions in Afghanistan are sufficiently stable for a large-scale return," said Rachael Reilly, refugee policy director at Human Rights Watch.

"This is misleading and is contradicted by conditions on the ground."

Human Rights Watch investigations in recent months have found that conditions inside Afghanistan are still extremely unstable and that risk of persecution exists for certain groups.

Continuing factional rivalry between Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum's Junbish forces and Gen. Atta Mohammad's Jamiat troops has created a security vacuum in northern Afghanistan, leading to a rise in attacks on humanitarian aid agencies and Afghan civilians.

Armed conflict between the



Two Afghan brothers wait on board a bus with their mother as they return to Afghanistan after spending nearly two years as refugees in Pakistan on Wednesday. — AP

two factions has increased over a wider area of the north in recent weeks, affecting at least four different districts during the week of July 8.

At the same time, ethnic Pashtuns, a minority in the north, continue to flee targeted violence, rapes of women and children, seizure of farmland and demands of money by local commanders in Farah and Faryab provinces.

Human Rights Watch has also documented ongoing lawlessness and abuses by warlord forces in the south and west of the country.

In recent statements, the UNHCR has cautioned governments not to rush repatriation before conditions are stabilised in Afghanistan — in direct con-

trast to its most recent position. On July 2, the UNHCR announced that it was suspending assisted returns from Herat to Faryab and Samangan provinces and to parts of Balkh province in northern Afghanistan, because of continued insecurity.

In May 2002, the UNHCR spokesperson in Kabul, Yusuf Hassan, called on governments not to put undue pressure on Afghanistan by prematurely promoting repatriation. "UNHCR has itself admitted that conditions are unsafe in parts of Afghanistan.

So why advocate for refugees to return now," said Ms. Reilly. The UNHCR has suggested that if Afghans with pending asylum claims are encouraged to volun-

tarily repatriate, it would relieve the pressure on asylum systems.

But Human Rights Watch said this argument played into the hands of governments such as Australia and the United Kingdom that are already putting pressure on Afghan refugees to return.

Australia, for example, has begun making unqualified statements that Afghan refugees, recognised under the Refugee Convention but only given temporary protection visas, will have to go home when those visas expire or may even face cancellation of their visas.

The Australian Government is currently offering Afghan detainees 28 days to accept financial incentives to return while threatening that they will have to go back without the money if their asylum claims are rejected.

In addition to the security problems facing returnees, many were not in fact returning to their homes but merely becoming internally displaced in urban centres like Kabul and Herat, contributing to the existing strain on infrastructure and resources, Human Rights Watch said.

"There are serious doubts about the absorption capacity of Afghanistan and whether humanitarian agencies have the funding and resources to cope with the large-scale returns that UNHCR is promoting," said Ms. Reilly.

Minister forms party to challenge Karzai

Kabul, July 18

YUNUS QANOONI wants to accomplish something no one has in recent Afghan history: Come to power without war.

Qanooni, the disenchanted Afghan Education Minister and former commander in the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, is forming a political party that plans to challenge President Hamid Karzai in elections scheduled for 2004.

Qanooni's National Party claims to have support from followers of legendary Tajik commander Ahmed Shah Massood, who was mortally wounded by a suicide bomber shortly before September 11.

"The movement behind Massood, who defeated both the communists and the terrorists, must emerge victorious in peace," party secretary Sayed Nabi told members in downtown Kabul villa that serves as the group's makeshift headquarters.

Qanooni has refused to comment about the party until it

US bombing

A US jet dropped a bomb as a show of force on Thursday after Afghan troops swooped into an area of Afghanistan in a raid that left a warlord's brother dead. A US military spokeswoman said US forces observed the firefight between two Afghan groups but did not get involved. As "a show of force," however, an A-10 bomber dropped a bomb near the fighting site. One Afghan died and six were wounded in the clash but none of the casualties was due to the US bomb, she said.

AP, Kabul

formally starts its campaign. However, Nabi said it is based on "pan-Afghan democracy with national flavour" that sees no borders between different

ethnic groups. It is also staunchly against the restoration of the former king, Mohammed Zaher Shah, who returned to the country from exile in Italy after the Taliban fell.

The party will seek to capitalise on the personality cult of Massood, which Tajiks from the Panjshir Valley have promoted since they overran Kabul after the Taliban abandoned the capital in November after massive US airstrikes.

Massood, known as "the Lion of Panjshir," fought against the Soviets in the 1980s, against his former allies in the 1990s and finally against the Taliban after they seized Kabul in 1996.

"Massood's name is above all current politicians in Afghanistan," Nabi said. "With his ideology behind us, we'll be above all of them" in the 2004 elections, the first popular vote in the country's history.

That strategy may not work so well outside of Kabul, especially in ethnic Pashtun areas in the south.

AP

12 held for Qadir murder

Kabul, July 8 (Reuters): Afghan police have arrested 12 people in connection with the assassination of one of the country's vice-presidents, but are no nearer to finding a motive for the attack, an interior ministry official said today.

The 12 include 10 guards at the public works ministry where Vice-President and Public Works Minister Haji Abdul Qadir was shot dead in broad daylight on Saturday after his first morning in his new job.

"So far we have not found any concrete evidence to show who was responsible," the official, who asked not to be identified, said. "None of the 12 has confessed to anything."

The guards were held soon after the killing on the grounds that they had stood by and done nothing while 36 bullets were fired at Qadir's car just metres away.

President Hamid Karzai said yesterday the shooting would be fully investigated and he would call on experts from abroad to help if needed.

Qadir, a former anti-Soviet Mujahideen leader in eastern Afghanistan, was given a state funeral in Kabul and buried in his power base of Jalalabad yesterday. The only thing that was clear in the investigation was that Qadir, like many Afghan warlords, could not have risen to power without making a lot of enemies — especially within the lucrative drugs trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Qadir was one of the few Pashtoons in the Northern Alliance that swept the Taliban from power last year, backed by US airpower, prompting speculation also that this might have been a Taliban hit.

His younger brother, Mujahideen commander Abdul Haq, was executed by the Taliban shortly after the United States launched air strikes on Afghanistan last year.

The assassination illustrates the problems facing Karzai just days after forming his ostensibly broad-based cabinet in a bid to lead the country from the centre and eliminate warlordism.

9 III 2002

KABUL / KARZAI CALLS EMERGENCY MEET

Qadir killing, a blow to Afghan Govt.

AKA 11A 04x

KABUL, JULY 6. Two gunmen firing Kalashnikovs assassinated the Afghan Vice-President, Abdul Qadir, today as he was being driven from a government ministry, officials said. His driver was also killed but the gunmen escaped.

The attack took place about 12:40 p.m. (local time) as Mr. Qadir was leaving by car from the Ministry of Public Works, which he also headed, according to the Interior Minister, Taj Mohammed Wardak. The gunmen, who had been hiding in the bushes, escaped in a car which sped up moments after the shooting. Abdul Raouf Dad, a police official said. After the bursts of gunfire, Mr. Qadir's vehicle went out of control and smashed into a brick wall. All 10 uniformed security guards who were on duty at the ministry were arrested because they failed to react properly, according to the Kabul police chief, Din Mohammed Jurat.

"Our family is in shock," said Mr. Qadir's younger brother, Nasarullah Baryalai. "Our family has given so many sacrifices for Afghanistan. We can't even think now who is behind this." Mr. Baryalai said the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, had already called to express his sympathy and to promise a full investigation. "He has assured us of a thorough investigation," he said. "We expect that the real killers will be found and punished."

Mr. Karzai, who went to the 400-bed



A German soldier of the International Security Assistance Force inspects the bullet-riddled and blood-stained car of the Afghan Vice-President, Haji Abdul Qadir, in Kabul on Saturday. —AFP

Military Hospital where Mr. Qadir's body was taken, also called an emergency meeting of his Cabinet. The Interior Ministry moved quickly to set up checkpoints throughout the capital searching for vehicles for the killers who fled in a white

command refused to comment before it received an official statement from the Government.

"This is a terrorist attack," the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Omar Samad, said. "But it won't stop us from making this country a safer place. The killers have to be found."

Mr. Qadir was the brother of the legendary rebel commander, Abdul Haq, who was captured and hanged by the Taliban last year after slipping into the country to organize resistance to the Islamic militia. "We have lost two brothers," said Mr. Qadir's younger brother. "Afghanistan has lost two very important figures in just one year."

Mr. Qadir, a former Mujahideen leader who fought Soviet forces in Afghanistan, was one of the most influential figures in war-ravaged Afghanistan. He left his eastern power base of Jalalabad when the Taliban swept Afghanistan after emerging on the Afghan scene in late 1994. He is believed to be about 55 years of age.

Mr. Qadir took refuge in Pakistan in 1996, but soon ran into trouble with the authorities because of his anti-Taliban stand and had to leave the country. An ethnic Pashtun, he left for Germany where he lived till his return to Afghanistan to join the Northern Alliance in fighting the fundamentalist militia.

— AP, AFP

Taliban leaders were hiding in village: US

DENISE DUCLAUX &
JOANNE ALLEN
BAGRAM AIR BASE, JULY 4

AS AMERICAN and Afghan investigators on Thursday probed accounts of the killing of 40 civilians by United States warplanes, US officials said senior Taliban leaders had been sheltering in the village.

A US Special Forces team had surveyed the area four times in the past two weeks, and each time planes had been fired on by anti-aircraft guns, US Major Gary Tallman of the investigating team said.

US forces on the ground had

reliable information from sources that senior Taliban leaders sheltered in the tiny village where the wedding party was attacked, Tallman told a pool reporter from US forces magazine *Stars and Stripes*.

On Sunday night, US troops were positioning to surround and search the village for fugitive Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar when they saw more anti-aircraft fire, Tallman said, adding he had spoken to the senior special forces officer who had planned the operation. He said spotters on the ground had directed AC-130 gunships to attack the anti-aircraft sites, which he said were often placed near

homes to discourage attacks.

Afghan officials and locals maintain the villagers were merely firing in the air to celebrate the wedding of the son and daughter of two tribal elders.

The bride and groom were thought to have died in the raid, but the groom showed up on Wednesday and said he and his fiancée, due to be married the following day, had been in a different village when the planes struck.

Survivors told of the carnage as their party was shattered by at least two gunships. One woman described it as "like an abattoir". "A piece of iron sliced the woman's neck in front of me," said



British marines at Kabul military airport on Thursday. Reuters

Naseema, a 15-year-old girl.

Dozens of Afghan women staged an unprecedented protest on Thursday against the attack. Analysts said mounting anger about the civilian casualties could undermine the Western-backed government of Hamid Karzai.

US Army spokesman Colonel Roger King said he understood the village was not a planned target, and had no information on anyone who might have been there. He has previously said a ground patrol called in air support after feeling threatened by automatic weapons fire, and that the firing on the AC-130 gunships was sustained and hostile. — Reuters

U.S. mission to probe civilian deaths in Afghanistan

KD-1A
367

WASHINGTON, JULY 2. The U.S. command in charge of the war in Afghanistan has said it is sending a fact-finding team to investigate what could be one of the war's deadliest attacks on civilians. From its headquarters in Tampa, Florida, the Central Command issued a brief statement that said officials from the U.S. military, the Afghan government and the U.S. Embassy in Kabul would conduct an on-site assessment of the U.S. bombing. It said news reporters would accompany the team.

Afghans said people in the village of Kakarak were firing weapons in the air to celebrate a wedding, as is common in rural Afghanistan, when U.S. planes



Mallka (7), receives treatment for wounds she received after U.S. jets attacked a house where a wedding was under way in Kakarak, Afghanistan, on Tuesday. — AP

attacked in the early hours Monday. Estimates of the number killed ranged from dozens to more than 100. They included women and children.

Early reports from Afghanistan suggested the U.S. attackers may have mistaken the celebratory fire for hostile fire, but U.S. military officials at the Pentagon said they had not seen any information to support the idea that American planes had attacked a wedding party.

A Pentagon spokesman said at least three explanations for the casualties appeared possible:

An Air Force B-52 bomber that attacked a cave complex in the same general area of Uruzgan province reported that one of its bombs went astray. Officials said they could not immediately determine where the errant bomb landed. It was a 900-kg satellite-guided bomb called a GBU-31. Lt. Davis said it was one of seven GBU-31

bombs the B-52 fired at cave and bunker complexes.

An Air Force AC-130 gunship attacked anti-aircraft artillery emplacements in the same general area. A forward air controller on the ground called for the AC-130 support after reporting fire from the anti-aircraft artillery.

Some of the anti-aircraft artillery could have fallen back to the ground and caused the casualties, he said.

While providing scant details, the Central Command in its official statement ac-

knowledged that attacks by B-52 and AC-130 aircraft north of the city

of Kandahar "may have resulted in civilian casualties".

It said four injured Afghan children, ranging in age from eight months to five years, were treated at a U.S. medical facility at Kandahar airport. He said the U.S. military had no firsthand knowledge of civilian deaths.

What had not been immediately reported by the U.S. military was that the B-52 was engaged in an attack on what the Pentagon called known al-Qaeda and Taliban cave and bunker complexes in Uruzgan province.

During that operation, which also involved an undisclosed number of regular and special operations forces on the ground, the U.S. aircraft came under fire from anti-aircraft artillery, it said.

In response, the air controller called for close-air support and the AC-130 opened fire, he said.

— AP

3 JUL 2002

THE HINDI

The long road to stability in Afghanistan

This peace is fragile



J.N. DIXIT

WHEN the loya jirga, or the grand national assembly of Afghanistan, concluded its deliberations in Kabul in the third week of June, it arrived at a host of decisions in extremely difficult circumstances. It confirmed Hamid Karzai as the executive president of the interim government. It designated former King Zahir Shah as Baba-e-Millat (Father of the Nation)—a compromise given that the king's supporters were keen on assigning a role to him as head of state and chief of interim government.

Pushtun (Pathan) members asserted that the initial cabinet constituted in 2001 was ethnically and politically asymmetrical and unbalanced with non-Pushtuns dominating the show. Ultimately, the Tajik Home Minister Yunus Qanuni reluctantly gave up his portfolio and accepted the post of education minister with the additional responsibility of being adviser on national security to Karzai. The Northern Alliance, however, refused to relinquish the portfolios of defence and external affairs. Decisions were not easily reached in the loya jirga but they are a remarkable achievement given the context of the ground realities in which the political situation in Afghanistan is still evolving.

The writ of the Karzai government still does not run all over Afghanistan. Local Pushtun warlords, with their own militias, still dominate most of southern and eastern Afghanistan, including the important urban centres of Kandahar, Ghazni and Jalalabad. In the

north, General Dostum (an Uzbek) and the successors of Ahmed Shah Masood (Tadjik) still retain military clout and a fair amount of territorial jurisdiction. The Shias of northern Afghanistan are similarly endowed and not yet fully reconciled to trusting the new political structures. These political trends have been finding expression in military skirmishes and the refusal to implement political directives issued from Kabul. That the loya jirga was successfully convened is an achievement in itself.

Deputy Defence Minister Dostum had laid claim to higher responsibilities and a more prominent role in the new government. So had leaders of the Masood faction. There was high controversy about the designation/election of the new mem-

till the end of the formal discussions of the loya jirga.

Older political leaders involved in the anti-Soviet campaign between 1979 and 1990 are still active and ambitious. They are opposed by the younger political and military leaders as well as leading ethnic and tribal figures more active in the struggle against the Taliban since 1996 and particularly since October 2001. Karzai still has to create a unified Afghan army, establish a national administrative system and re-start the process of economic reconstruction, apart from the macro-level institutional tasks of establishing and energising a new parliament and appointing a cabinet.

International involvement in Afghanistan to eradicate the

of the US anti-terrorist campaign has shifted to Pakistan. Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and from Pakistan remains active in fomenting trouble. Segments of the Pakistan government continue covert support to the disruptive activities of Taliban and Al-Qaeda cadres.

Three recent developments signal the shape of things to come. Karzai has announced that his government will act to eliminate the role of the warlords and regional military groups who question the authority of the Karzai government. Yunus Qanuni has announced plans for organising a new political party in Afghanistan called Mehez-e-Milli, the Afghan National Party. Indications are that this political party would try to organise mostly non-Pushtun ethnic groups into a political force. And there are unconfirmed reports about General Dostum remaining disaffected because of not getting a prominent portfolio in the cabinet. The coming 18 months will be marked by complex political activities and competition for spaces in the emerging power structure of Afghanistan.

The discussions at the loya jirga can at best be considered a tentative beginning of the political stabilisation in Afghanistan. President Karzai has a difficult and complex task ahead, in which he needs international support. India has been active in assisting Afghanistan in its programme of economic revival, reconstruction, infrastructural improvement and in providing training facilities for its administration. It is for the people of Afghanistan to decide how to resolve their contradictions. But it is important that India joins in any effort that will prevent external involvement or intrigues aimed at disrupting the gradual stabilisation of the country after a gap of nearly 29 years.

The coming 18 months will be marked by complex political activities and competition for spaces in the emerging power structure of Afghanistan

bers of the 111-member parliament. The 1,500 or so members of the loya jirga were supposed to elect these 111 members. There were not only debates but even physical disturbances on the question of the basis of representation in parliament. It is not only the major ethnic communities—the Pushtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks—who demanded representation as collectivities. There were claims and demands for representation from sub-groups of these major ethnic groups on the principles of tribal representation as well as sub-regional representations from the 29 different provinces of Afghanistan. There was a major controversy about the representation of women in parliament. The problem was not fully solved

remnants of terrorism, to provide security to the new government and to participate in the economic reconstruction is also facing problems. While the top leaders of the interim authority led by Hamid Karzai support the presence of the anti-terrorist military units led by the US and the coalition troops led by the UK, tasked with providing security for the new government, a major segment of the loya jirga wanted these troops to move out in conformity with traditional Afghan opposition to foreign forces.

While international aid agencies have increased, they are functioning in difficult political circumstances. There have been clashes between Afghan military groups and the foreign security forces led by the UK. The focus

1 JUL 2002

Turkish troops to play key role in Afghanistan

By Jal Taraporevala
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

12-13
17

Mumbai: Hamid Karzai, the head of state of Afghanistan, has stated that the recent changes in the composition and leadership of the International Security Assistance Force or ISAF (the UN peace-keeping contingent in Kabul) will not alter its functioning in any way. With Turkey having taken over the command of ISAF from Britain, the number of Turkish troops in the force will rise sharply in the coming weeks as the size of the British contingent declines substantially.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The leading role which Turkey will play in ISAF should be partly interpreted as a move by the Security Council and the United States to provide a significant Islamic content to UN peace-keeping operations in Afghanistan. This is intended to make it easier to sustain broadbased support, both within the international community and in Afghanistan, for the work of ISAF.

The change in the command and composition of ISAF at this juncture has been facilitated by two factors. First, the step fits into

the British government's plans to scale down its overall international peace-keeping operations. London will also considerably reduce the size of its peace monitoring force in the Balkans early next year. Second, politico-strategic considerations and the objective of advancing its case for joining the European Union have prompted Turkey to assume a larger international peace-keeping role.

The growing involvement of Ankara in ISAF will be broadly welcomed by most of the ethnic groups in Afghanistan. The Tajiks, however, are likely to remain unenthusiastic because they have long been suspicious of Turkey for its support of the rival Uzbek faction in the Northern Alliance. The Tajiks, who are mainly grouped together in the Jamiyat-e-Islami, hold a number of vital posts in the current transitional government in Afghanistan.

But this will not hamper the work of ISAF. After all, the operational mandate of ISAF extends up to nearly 50 km around Kabul. Although this is a crucial area strategically, it is not very difficult to monitor since it is relatively small in size and does not have the same problem of warlordism as many other parts of Afghanistan.

Qanooni aboard new Afghan Cabinet

KABUL, JUNE 25. Afghanistan's new transitional Cabinet has been sworn in at the presidential palace in Kabul with the former Interior Minister, Yunus Qanooni, finally agreeing to re-join the Government as Education Minister.

Mr. Qanooni had been stalling over the post which was first offered to him last Wednesday on the final day of the *loya jirga* and said as recently as Monday that he was considering a period out of Government and joining a multi-ethnic political movement.

But an offer by the President, Hamid Karzai, to make him presidential advisor on national security finally won the senior Northern Alliance figure over by alleviating any feeling that he was being sidelined from the centre of power.

Mr. Karzai, however, has still been unable to appoint a minister for women's affairs in succession to Sima Samar.

Ms Samar has been barred from office by the Chief Justice, Mawalawi Fazel Hadi Shinwari, for making a statement "against the interests of the Afghan Muslim nation", says state media.



Afghanistan's Interim President, Hamid Karzai, swears in his Cabinet in Kabul on Monday. — AP

Mr. Karzai revealed that he had offered the post to the former Kabul University law professor, Mahboba Hoqooqmal, but she had yet to accept the job.

The Ministers, many of whom were members of the previous interim administration, repeated the oath of office after it was first read out by Mr. Karzai in the presidential pal-

ace. Senior regional leaders including the ethnic Uzbek warlord, Abdul Rashid Dostam, who was not given a Cabinet post and a number of diplomats also attended the ceremony.

Mr. Qanooni's decision to join the Government will be a major relief to Mr. Karzai.

Mr. Qanooni is considered a possible rival to Mr. Karzai at Afghanistan's first general elec-

tion in 2004 when the transitional Government is due to step down.

Support for Mr. Qanooni was illustrated when staff at the Interior Ministry sealed off roads leading to the building last week in protest at his apparent demotion. They lifted the blockade only when Mr. Karzai told them they must respect their new ministerial boss, Taj Mohammad Wardak.

Mr. Karzai has been attempting to make his new Cabinet more representative of Afghanistan's ethnic mix after the interim administration was dominated mainly by Tajik Northern Alliance which ousted the Taliban last November with the help of the U.S.

The conventional wisdom was that the Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah, would be most vulnerable. But Mr. Abdullah and the Defence Minister, Mohammad Qasim Fahim, both kept their posts, leaving Mr. Qanooni as the major loser.

Mr. Abdullah said after the ceremony that the swearing-in of a new Government was a major stepping stone in the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. — AFP

THE HINDU

26 JUN 12

AFGHANISTAN / DISCONTENT OVER MINISTERIAL POST

Qanooni may form party

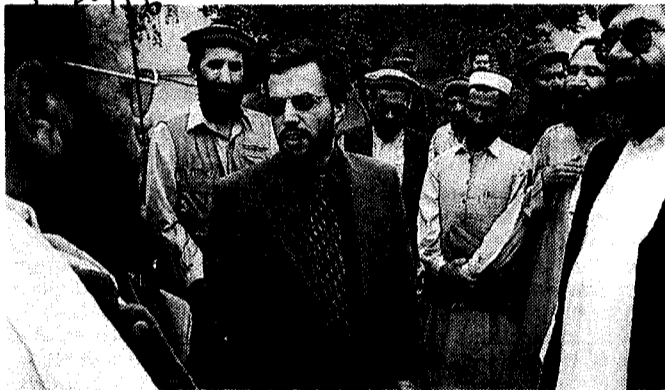
KABUL, JUNE 23. Afghanistan's former Interior Minister, Yunis Qanooni, said on Sunday he has not accepted any new post in the Government and questioned the legitimacy of the President, Hamid Karzai's transitional administration.

Mr. Qanooni spoke to reporters after Government television announced he had been appointed Education Minister and the President's National Security Adviser.

However, Mr. Qanooni said he had not met Mr. Karzai since the announcement and had not decided whether to accept either appointment. He said he was considering instead forming a new opposition party. He also expressed discontent over the way the whole process had been handled during last week's Afghan grand council, or *loya jirga*.

"Hamid Karzai, as head of state, enjoys full legitimacy but part of the Cabinet does not have the confirmation of the *loya jirga* and so is not legitimate. The legitimacy of the Cabinet is dependent on the formation of a Parliament and its decisions."

Mr. Qanooni resigned from his job as Interior Minister — one of the most powerful Government posts — during the *loya jirga*, which elected Mr. Karzai President and approved about half his Cabinet.



The former Afghan Interior Minister, Yunis Qanooni (centre), meets warlords in Kabul on Sunday. — Reuters

Mr. Qanooni is an ethnic Tajik and the interior post went to a Pashtun, Taj Mohammed Wardak, in an effort to bring ethnic balance to the new lineup.

At the time Mr. Qanooni said his resignation was an attempt to broaden representation in the Government. However, it is widely believed he expected to get another, equally significant post. Instead, he was offered education. He refused.

"I am critical of the *loya jirga*, which ended in an incomplete manner," Mr. Qanooni said. He said the *loya jirga* failed to complete two of its three tasks — determining a government structure and appointing a Parliament.

Mr. Qanooni said he did not

question Mr. Karzai's legitimacy nor that of the 13 Cabinet members approved by the *loya jirga*. But 16 other Cabinet posts were announced on Saturday night after the *loya jirga* had concluded. "I have not decided whether to accept the appointment and work within the Government or to establish a political party and work outside the Government," Mr. Qanooni said.

If he refuses to join the Government Mr. Qanooni will be the first significant leader, who also has a small army loyal to him, to break with the administration.

During their previous attempt at ruling Afghanistan in 1992, many of the men currently wielding power, fought bitterly flattening entire neighbourhoods of Kabul. — AP

Karzai names Cabinet

KABUL, June 22. — Afghanistan's new President Mr Hamid Karzai named all but one of his 29 members of Cabinet today, leaving the women's affairs ministry vacant, his spokesman Ahmed Yusuf Nuristani said.

The previous women's affairs minister Ms Seema Samar is an outspoken woman who was critical of religious extremists, championed women's rights and ran an aid organisation devoted to education and health care for women.

Ms Samar had reportedly received threats from religious extremists during the Loya Jirga. But no official explanation was given for why the women's affairs ministry was not filled. — AP

THE STATESMAN

23 JUN 2002

Karzai, Loya Jirga tussle over final say on Cabinet

REUTERS

KABUL, JUNE 18

AFGHANISTAN's Loya Jirga grand Assembly adjourned on Tuesday after a rowdy morning session in which plans and counter-plans were proposed for a new Parliament, an issue that has occupied the Assembly for days.

President Hamid Karzai will later on Tuesday present key Cabinet ministers for approval to the traditional Assembly, which has been clamouring for a say in forming a government to take the country to elections in 18 months.

Loya Jirga chief Ismail Qasimyar also said Karzai would also present a plan for forming a Parliament but delegates shouted their opposition to the proposal, and then to a second plan that Qasimyar presented. Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah said on Monday that under the UN-sponsored Bonn accord, the top posts would be presented to the Loya Jirga for approval.

US Envoy Zalmi Khalilzad said the Loya Jirga must have the final say on Karzai's key Cabinet posts. "Based on the Bonn agreement, the government person-

nel have to be proposed by the President and approved by the Loya Jirga," Khalilzad said.

"Whoever said the approval of the Loya Jirga is not needed has spoken mistakenly. On that, we are perfectly clear," he said. "We are involved in it and we will insist on it." The choice of Cabinet members has been a bone of contention between Karzai and the Loya Jirga.

Some delegates have said they thought the Cabinet decisions might be imposed on them. Some have also said the United States and the United Nations are pulling all the strings behind the scenes.

INDIAN EXPRESS

19 JUN 2002

It's all talk, no action at Loya Jirga

REUTERS
KABUL, JUNE 17

SCORES of delegates to Afghanistan's Loya Jirga walked out of the grand Assembly on Monday, angry about "boring speeches" they say are deliberate delaying tactics aimed at avoiding key issues.

One delegate said that fresh fighting could erupt if the Assembly failed to agree on a new government.

"There is no point hanging around listening to boring speeches so we're leaving," one of the delegates, Sayed Ni-

matullah, said.
"(New President Hamid) Karzai should be here discussing important issues like the new Parliament. This is interference by foreign countries and a violation of the Bonn agreement."

The Assembly, which began last Tuesday, has become bogged down over the make-up of a new Parliament and the issue of forming a new Cabinet appears to have been put on the backburner. Karzai is to address the Assembly at 2100 IST.

The gathering, which appears to be making up the rules as it goes along, is ex-

pected to end on Tuesday. Another delegate who joined the walkout from the grand tent where the meeting is being held said fighting could restart in the strife-torn country if the debating chamber failed in its task of creating a new government.

"I am really disappointed with the Loya Jirga," delegate Mullah Abdul Karim told reporters.

"Governors and officials are telling people what to say in their speeches. I myself have been threatened into supporting Karzai and my first candidate was the former king (Mohammad Zahir Shah). This is

just a Loya Jirga in name only. "The main issues have not been discussed so far. If it goes on like this, fighting could restart because Karzai does not have the support of the majority of the people," he said.

The Afghan Foreign Ministry said there had been no walkout from the Assembly. "There has not been any walkout today by dissatisfied or satisfied delegates," spokesman Omar Samad said.

"The only people going in and out of the tent are delegates and guests who need water, fresh air or need to use the restroom." — Reuters



Discord bogs down Loya Jirga

Kabul: Days of bickering, the occasional scuffle and hundreds of speeches have paralysed Afghanistan's Loya Jirga with the grand assembly seemingly no closer to choosing a new legislature and cabinet.



Hamid Karzai

A row erupted among delegates over the composition of the parliament, delegates and eyewitnesses said, describing the heated argument as the most serious incident since the start of the Loya Jirga last Tuesday.

Hundreds of delegates have risen from their chairs in protest against the procedure for electing members of the new 111-member parliament that will sit during the transitional government. "There is disagreement as to who should be a parliament member. Everyone wants to be there. It is a chaotic situation," one delegate said.

The 1,500 delegates — from Afghan-Americans in business suits to mullahs in turbans — have agreed on one thing so far: that Hamid Karzai is the best man to lead the country from 23 years of

conflict to peace and stability.

Since the assembly voted on Thursday to elect Mr Karzai the leader for the next 18 months before the general elections, the assembly's debate under a big, white tent in Kabul has bogged down into endless speeches on mostly parochial concerns.

The assembly — a rare convocation of community leaders from throughout the 32 provinces along with overseas representatives — is now scheduled to end a day late on Monday. On Saturday, the assembly was ruffled after the United Nations complained to Mr Karzai about the "alarming level of violence" in the north of the country, including armed attacks, robberies and the gang rape of an international aid worker.

The breakdown of law and order in northern Mazar-i-Sharif — a key crossroads city that warlords Abdul Rashid Dostum and Mohammad Atta have been competing to control — comes at a time when Mr Karzai has repeatedly appealed to foreign aid donors to fulfil \$4.5 billion in aid pledges.

On Friday, a US aid vehicle was fired upon while overseeing bread distribution wounding an Afghan worker, US spokesman Manoel De Almeida Silva

told reporters. Another aid worker was raped by a gang of gunmen last week, he said. Many aid workers "are considering reducing or discontinuing work there", he added.

While security has been restored to the capital Kabul, with the help of an international peacekeeping force, areas of the north and elsewhere in the country remain lawless since the fall of the Taliban last year.

A number of Afghans have called for peacekeepers to be deployed elsewhere in the country, especially in Mazar. Washington has in the past been reluctant to agree to that, fearing it could interfere with the operations of the 13,000-strong US-led force hunting for Taliban and Al Qaida fighters in the unforgiving, mountainous countryside.

Mr Karzai has been under pressure from fellow Pashtuns to dump some leaders from the Northern Alliance, a coalition of Mujahideen forces that drove the Taliban out of power last year with US air support. But Mr Karzai has developed a good working relationship with the present ministers over the past six months and still relies on the Northern Alliance in his efforts to establish law and order. Reuters

THE TIMES OF INDIA

17 JUN 2002

HD-1A

AFGHANISTAN / FOCUS SHIFTS TO GOVT. FORMATION

15/6

Karzai elected in landslide vote

KABUL, JUNE 14. Hamid Karzai won Afghanistan's presidential election in a landslide vote among delegates at a historic grand assembly, the *loya jirga* Commission has said.

In the first free presidential election in Afghan history, Mr Karzai won with 1,295 votes out of more than 1,500 who cast ballots, the commission said.

Masoodeh Jalal, a woman doctor with the World Food Programme, won 121 votes, and the third candidate, a government official, Mir Mohammad Mahfouz Nedaeei, won 89.

Asked how she felt, Ms Jalal said: "He won, that's democracy."

Mr. Karzai turned his attention on Friday to reassembling a land brimming with factional strife — and helping the grand council build the rest of the new Government.

"My first priority is to continue to have peace, to have security for Afghanistan and to provide for the Afghan people prosperity," Mr. Karzai said on Friday morning. "This was a very, very good show of democracy," he said in an interview.



HARD TASK AHEAD: The leader of the Afghanistan interim administration, Hamid Karzai, attends the *loya jirga* at which he was elected President of the country, in Kabul on Friday. — AP

"And I said myself: It should be a secret vote, because I didn't want any criticism after — that there was no one that was unable to vote their conscience."

Speaking before the delegates on Friday, Mr. Karzai said he would "follow the fundamentals of Islam." One religious leader went further, saying Islamic law, or Sharia, should be implemented. "As long as the President works within Islam, it is accept-

able. But if he strays outside Islam, people must complain," Abdul Rasul Sayyaf told delegates. The balance between Islamic and secular principles is a key point of contention as the new Government is formed.

Mr. Karzai's selection — somewhere between an appointment and an election by the grand council — marked the midpoint of a U.N.-brokered process to rebuild a country

wracked by 23 years of war, ethnic conflict and destruction.

The *loya jirga* is based on an Afghan tradition whose purpose is to bring far-flung countrymen — and sometimes women — together for important decisions in times of need. And while this *loya jirga* faced complaints of intimidation, harassment and the shunting aside of certain groups, many agree the process that led to Mr. Karzai's election has been better than anything Afghans have had in years.

"I think everyone is happier," said Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. special envoy for Afghanistan. "It's not going to provide food or houses, but it's a start."

Some worry Mr. Karzai lacks the strength to build national authority by wresting power from regional warlords who control fiefdoms, often with their own militaries. Delegates have pointed to the presence of some warlords as proof the old ways have not changed. Though Mr. Karzai is well-liked internationally, his appeal within Afghanistan is intertwined with hopes for the nation's reconstruction. — AP

THE HINDU

15 JUN 2004

Karzai's Burden

Hamid Karzai's election as Afghanistan's interim president was a foregone conclusion. However, the candid deliberations in the loya jirga — and the fact that a woman doctor contested the election for the head of state, though unsuccessfully — are new experiences for the Afghans. Delegates did not hesitate to demand an end to 'warlordism'. The Americans and Europeans orchestrated developments from the wings: The renunciation of political ambitions by the ex-king; former president Rabbani, Marshal Faheem and other contenders opting out of the presidential race; and the Tadjik leaders of the Northern Alliance agreeing to give up the disproportionate power they wrested in the wake of the military victory over the Taliban. In all this, the role of US ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad — an Afghan expatriate, now an American citizen — was crucial. In his six months of office, Mr Karzai has proven his credentials as a sober and moderate leader who could unite the different ethnic groups of his war-torn country. He has promised to raise a national Afghan army and police force, and end the tribal warlordism which has been the bane of Afghanistan. He will need substantive international help, and to that end has cultivated contacts with western leaders and secured their pledge to build the supra-tribal national army to prevent the emergence of powerful warlords.

After two years of the interim administration, Afghanistan will — for the first time — hold national elections and hopefully have its first democratic government. The success of the experiment will hinge on genuinely democratic political activity preceding the elections. Though the loya jirga passed off peacefully, ancient tribal rivalries are simmering below the surface. Tribal warlords get most of their arms from neighbouring countries; peace in the region requires that Afghanistan's neighbours keep out of its internal affairs. Till it is able to develop an army capable of thwarting adverse external intervention, Kabul needs an international security force to protect its interests. Pakistan — which generated the Taliban and the jihadi culture — particularly needs to be watched. A stable Afghanistan is crucial for all: A democratic regime in Kabul is essential if the neighbouring Central Asian countries — which contribute significantly in meeting the world's energy needs — are not to be subverted by extremism. In this context, Mr Karzai bears a heavy load indeed.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

15 JUN 2002

Karzai nominated for top post

*HD-4
19/6*

KABUL, JUNE 13. Afghanistan's interim leader, Hamid Karzai, widely praised for his reconciliation efforts during six months in power, was formally nominated on Thursday as a candidate for Afghan head of state by a grand council meeting to choose a transitional government.

Mr. Karzai's candidacy was backed by a former mujahideen fighter, Mohammed Asef Mohsoni, who submitted a list with 1,050 names — seven times the number required to confirm the nomination and well over half of the 1,650 delegates.

"I'm very happy," Mr. Karzai told the delegates in a speech accepting his nomination. "After 25 years, all the Afghans are gathering under one tent. The refugees are coming back. It is a proud moment for me." Also nominated were Masooda Jalal, a female employee of the World Food programme; Glam Fareq Majidi and Mir Mohammed Mahfoz Nadai. No details were immediately available about Nadai and Majidi, whose candidacy was declared invalid because he garnered only 101 signatures of support.

Ms. Jalal addressed the delegates, calling herself a simple Afghan woman who was not involved in any armed group. "I thank God that after so many difficulties, the sun is rising over our country," she said. Though not expected to win, Ms. Jalal's candidacy reflects the demands of women for a voice in public affairs after years of discrimination by the Taliban.

The vote for head of state had been pushed back by at least a day after delegates argued on Wednesday over the presence of warlords at the council, or



An Afghan soldier carries a portrait of the interim Prime Minister, Hamid Karzai, in Kandahar on Wednesday.

loya jirga. It was to be held by secret ballot — with black-and-white photos of the candidates adjacent to their names — at the request of delegates and Mr. Karzai. The process was expected to take four to five hours with results by the end of the day.

Mr. Karzai, considered certain to win, underscored the massive challenges ahead. "We need security, we need peace, we need stability, we need an administration in control of all of Afghanistan," Mr. Karzai said, speaking in both Pashto and Dari, the country's two main languages.

Mr. Karzai also made another pitch for reconciliation — even with at least some of the former ruling Taliban.

"I know many Taliban," he said. "And they were taken over, hijacked by the foreign people."
— AP

THE HINDU

14 JUN 2002

Afghan delegates walk out over vote

By Carlotta Gail

Kabul: As Afghanistan turned a page in its history, with the former king convening a traditional assembly that will vote on Wednesday to choose a new government, dozens of delegates walked out of the meeting, saying they were not being consulted.



H. Karzai

But with the withdrawal on Tuesday of a chief challenger for the leadership, it made it increasingly likely that Hamid Karzai, the current interim leader, would remain in power.

Some 60 to 70 delegates, frustrated over what they said was the lack of a free vote, left the meeting on the second day of an event that has drawn about 1,500 people from ethnic groups across Afghanistan.

In another sign of tension, German peacekeepers, Afghan police officials and private guards were involved in a brief brawl today as delegates arrived for the assembly.

Witnesses and the police told Reuters that the German troops, from the International Security As-

sistance Force, first fought with the bodyguards of a delegate after they refused to be disarmed.

The Afghan police and security officials stepped in, surrounding some German troops, pointing their guns at them and engaging in hand-to-hand fighting. No shots were fired but some of the bodyguards sustained minor injuries.

Mr Karzai's rival, Burhanuddin Rabbani, a former president who is the political leader of the Northern Alliance, threw his support behind Mr Karzai, as did the country's former king, Mohammad Zahir Shah.

Sitting on a dais in a vast closed tent erected on the grounds of Kabul Polytechnic Institute, Zahir exhorted the assembly's delegates to "think about peace for their country," and asserted, "I never came to be king, just to serve Afghanistan and the nation, and to bring peace to the country, national unity and reconciliation."

The former king's endorsement gives Mr Karzai a huge lift in the leadership election, because many of Zahir's supporters will follow his choice. The resignation of one of the three powerful Tajik ministers from Mr Karzai's interim cabinet improved his chances still further, as it

will allow Mr Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun, to promise delegates a more balanced, broad-based government.

The minister, Yunus Qanooni, bowed to heavy pressure from other Afghan factions, and from American and United Nations officials. "Not only the people of Afghanistan but the world wants us to make a sacrifice for peace," he said in conceding. "To convince the different ethnic peoples of Afghanistan, I will voluntarily give up the interior ministry, so Mr Karzai can appoint any man capable."

The official opening on Tuesday of the council, loya jirga, came after a 24-hour delay caused by last-minute power brokering. But after the tense negotiations of Monday, the talk and actions seemed to foster compromise, auguring well for the outcome.

Tuesday's two-hour session was purely ceremonial, because continuing problems with delegate registration forced officials to postpone voting for a day. One international observer said more than 100 people who had access as observers had been incorrectly given voting cards and would have to be screened again.

But the applause for Zahir, and for his choice of Mr Karzai, led officials

and delegates to predict victory for him once voting sessions begin today. "All the people of the loya jirga accepted and appreciated that," Ismail Qasimyar, chairman of the organizing commission, said.

It remains unclear whether there will be any challengers at all to Mr Karzai. One woman, Massouda Jalal, intends to offer herself as a candidate, government officials said, and others may come forward if they can muster 150 supporters among the delegates to back their candidacies.

The assembly convened under emergency measures to choose a transitional two-year administration cannot make decisions on constitutional matters like the restoration of the monarchy. Voting will be by secret ballot or by show of hands or cards, depending on the decision of the delegates.

Today delegates are to approve a chairman and officials to run the council, and are then expected to honor the former king with the title "father of the nation." Mr Karzai, in suggesting the title to applause, said the former king would return to live in the royal palace where he grew up and lived until 1973. He then went into exile in Rome. N.Y.T. News Service

AFGHANISTAN / ZAHIR SHAH BOWS OUT OF RACE

Karzai sole candidate in fray

KABUL, JUNE 11. Afghanistan's *loya jirga* traditional assembly, which is charged with selecting a new government for the war-torn nation, opened here today after a one-day postponement.

"I would like to welcome you to this historic and destiny-making *loya jirga*," said the head of the *loya jirga* organising committee, Isamael Qasimyar.

"The message of the *loya jirga* is a message of national unity, a message of peace and reconstruction. It is a manifestation of the free will of the Afghan people," he said. "The people of Afghanistan have suffered for more than two decades. They have suffered tragedies. Now they have a chance for happiness." Mr. Qasimyar apologised for the delay of the opening of the tribal gathering, which was postponed for

24 hours amid a wrangle over the role of the nation's former king, Mohammed Zahir Shah.

Mr. Shah bowed out of the race for head of state shortly before the opening of the grand council on Tuesday, removing the last major challenger to the interim leader, Hamid Karzai. The *loya jirga* convened on Tuesday afternoon in a huge, carpeted and air-conditioned tent, where the 1,550 delegates are to choose a new government to lead the nation from the devastation of war.

Hours before the council convened, Burhanuddin Rabbani, President of post-communist Afghan governments, said he was withdrawing his candidacy for head of state and throwing his support behind Mr. Karzai. His step came a day after Afghanistan's former king

endorsed Mr. Karzai. "I am proposing Chairman Karzai as the sole candidate before the *loya jirga*," Mr. Rabbani told reporters.

On Monday, Mr. Shah renounced any role in the new government and backed Mr. Karzai, dashing hopes of some delegates that he would stand for head of state.

The ethnic Tajik clique that dominates the current administration opposed any role for the king, and their objections to his possible candidacy forced a one-day delay in the start of the *loya jirga*.

Mr. Rabbani is an ethnic Tajik. It appeared that deals had been cut for him and Mr. Shah, an ethnic Pashtun, to step aside, possibly in exchange for posts for their allies in the new government. — AP

THE HINDI

12 JUN 2002

KING AND KINGMAKERS

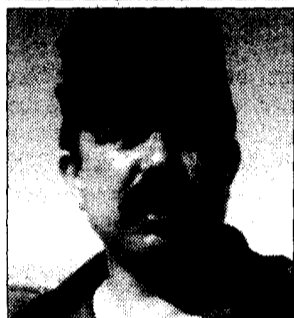
ABDULLAH ABDULLAH



The most recognised face of the Northern Alliance leadership thanks to his fluent English. Abdullah (42), a Panjsheri of mixed Tajik and Pashtun origin, graduated from Kabul University in 1983. He was with Masood as head of the health department. He served as spokesman for Rabbani's government from 1992. He represented the government for three years at the UN and was appointed deputy foreign minister in 1999.

Ethnic Uzbek warlord deputy Defence Minister General Abdul Rashid Dostum (47) is unlikely ever to emerge as a serious candidate to run Afghanistan, but he commands a force who could influence who does. He has seen decades of war in Afghanistan, rising through the ranks of the Afghan Army after the Soviet Union invaded in 1979, but has changed allegiance almost as many times as the country has changed government.

RASHID DOSTUM



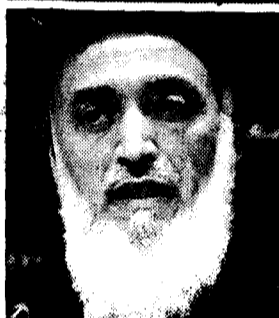
HAMID KARZAI



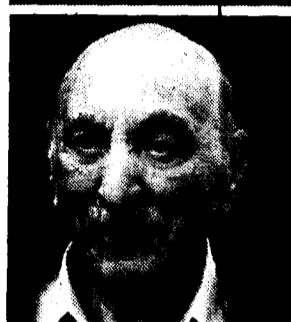
The leader of the large Popalzai tribe, he is likely to stay on. During the 1980s Soviet war, Karzai (44) helped fund and arm fighters from his tribe in southern Afghanistan and was deputy foreign minister from 1992 to 1994 after the mujahideen defeated the communists. He took over leadership of the tribe in 1999 after Taliban assassinated his father in Pakistan. Born in Kandahar, he went to school in Kabul before to India to study political science.

A former President, this professor of Islamic law has held and lost power several times in his career. Rabbani (62) is linked to the bloody period of rule by the Mujahideen factions that drove out Soviet forces in 1989 and in 1992 toppled the communist government they left behind. He has headed his fundamentalist Jamiat-I-Islami party since 1972. Rabbani has withdrawn from the race for the top job in favour of Hamid Karzai.

BURHANUDDIN RABBANI



MD ZAHIR SHAH



The king reigned until 1973 when he was overthrown in a palace coup while he was on holiday in Italy. Fearing a bloodbath, Shah decided to go into exile. Supporters hope his symbolic grandfather-of-the-nation status will help to unite rival ethnic groups under a single national banner. Partly educated in France, Zahir Shah was propelled into power in 1933 when a deranged student shot his father. Shah has also withdrawn in support of Karzai.

Sandstorm adds gloom to start of Loya Jirga

SAYED SALAHUDDIN

KABUL, JUNE 11

PERHAPS it was an omen of things to come. As frustrated and tired-looking delegates to a traditional Afghan tribal Assembly gathered on Tuesday, a sandstorm rolled across the hills into Kabul on Tuesday, adding to the gloom of delegates angered that the outcome of the week-long convocation had already been decided.

The swirling dust briefly reduced visibility to almost nothing at the college compound in the capital where Afghanistan was attempting to make history by choosing leaders by consensual democracy instead of at gunpoint.

Earlier, a delegate said former President Rabbani had formally withdrawn his candidacy for the top job in the new transitional government. "Everyone in the Northern Alliance is for Hamid Karzai," said Rahdin, a delegate from Kabul. Many delegates complained the Loya Jirga, the first to be called after nearly a quarter-century of conflict, was off to as transparent a start as the weather outside.

"We are very angry, not because of the king, but because the wishes of the people which is represented here by the delegates are not respected,"

said Hamayoon Shih Asifi, a supporter of the former king and a delegate representing Afghans from Europe. "Visibly, it is an imposed settlement..."

Sharp divisions have emerged between supporters of former king Mohammad Zahir Shah, seen by many as the father of the war-torn nation, and those of the interim administration of western-educated Hamid Karzai.

The US is banking on the Assembly to bring peace to the country, but many supporters of the former king see a US hand in Zahir Shah's decision not to run for President. The ex-king

said he supported Karzai. Mohammad Gulab Mangal, a delegate from eastern Paktia province said delegates were angered the decision "was taken outside the tent", referring to the giant German beer festival tent imported especially for the occasion.

"I am optimistic for the Loya Jirga," said one delegate, a university professor who did not want to be identified. "But if it cannot restore national unity, then it's completely useless."

The lead up to the start of the gathering has exposed the deep ethnic divisions in Afghanistan between those who back the ex-king and those who don't.

—Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS

12 JUN 2002

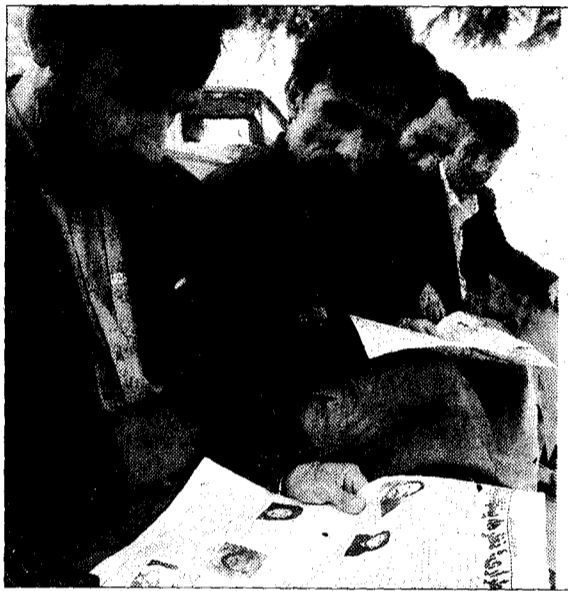
Squabbles delay Loya Jirga by another day

SAYED SALAHUDDIN, NICK MACFIE
KABUL, JUNE 10

AFGHANISTAN'S grand Assembly of tribal elders, charged with forming a government after 23 years of conflict, has been delayed until Tuesday, the interim government's foreign ministry spokesman. Spokesman Omar Asamad quoted the head of the Loya Jirga Commission as saying the start of the Loya Jirga had been delayed for 24 hours, but no reason was given.

Afghan and foreign sources said General Arif, the intelligence chief in the interim government headed by Hamid Karzai, had sent armed men into the German beer hall tent, imported especially for the Loya Jirga, where 1,501 delegates had gathered for the inauguration.

But the sources said that was not the reason for the delay. The Loya Jirga, an Afghan decision-making institution that has been around for 1,000 years, had already been delayed several hours by disagreements



Afghan men look at a newspaper report on the Loya Jirga assembly in Kabul on Monday. Reuters photo

between the Northern Alliance faction in the government and supporters of former king Mo-

hammad Zahir Shah.

Afghan and foreign sources said an apparent deal reached late on Sunday between the two groups had collapsed by Monday morning. They said under the deal, the Northern Alliance would give up the interior and foreign ministry portfolios in Karzai's interim administration if Zahir Shah agreed to eschew any role in the next government.

The differences reflect a historical North-South divide in the country between the mostly ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks and other minorities in the North and the dominant Pashtuns of the South.

For weeks, Afghan communities throughout the country have been choosing delegates to the Loya Jirga, while faction leaders involved in nearly a quarter-century of internal conflict have been feverishly trying to make backroom deals with each other.

Zahir Shah told the BBC he would accept a role in the transitional government if that is what the delegates wanted. —Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS

11 JUN 2002

Afghanistan
11/8

AFGHANISTAN / LOYA JIRGA DELAYED

110-121

Leaders dispute Zahir role

KABUL, JUNE 10. The opening session of the grand council called to organise a new Afghan government was delayed on Monday because of a dispute within the Afghan leadership over the role of the former king, diplomatic and Afghan officials said.

Aides to the interim Prime Minister, Hamid Karzai, said a one-day delay was likely. Diplomatic sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said an official announcement of the postponement was expected to be issued.

Leaders of the Northern Alliance, who dominate the interim regime, strongly oppose any

role for the former monarch, Mohammad Zahir Shah, in the government to be chosen by the council, or *loya jirga*. Mr. Zahir Shah is to convene the council.

However, many of the 1,550 delegates want the former king to have a formal role in the next government. Support for him is especially strong among the country's major ethnic group, the Pashtuns. The Northern Alliance is dominated by ethnic Tajiks.

Late on Sunday, the country's intelligence chief and key Northern Alliance leader, Mohammed Arif, sent armed men into the tightly guarded com-

pound where the *loya jirga* is to meet in what diplomats said appeared to be a show of strength by the Tajik-dominated alliance.

The delegates, among them 200 women, had been expected to begin the task of selecting a head of state, deciding the framework of the transitional government and naming ministers to key posts. The new government will lead for 18 months pending elections.

Mr. Zahir Shah, who returned to his homeland in April after 29 years in exile, has been touted as the man who can unify Afghanistan. — AP

THE HINDU

11 JUN 2002

HD-15
10/6

Warlords trying to dominate *loya jirga*

Afghanistan

Mazar-e-Sharif (AFGHANISTAN), JUNE 9. Warlords in southern Afghanistan are subverting the *loya jirga* process to claim both legitimacy and power, Human Rights Watch said in a new briefing paper released last week. In several provinces, the warlords are associated with the Taliban and the extremist Islamist movement led by the former Afghan Prime Minister, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Human Rights Watch, which has monitored conditions in Afghanistan throughout the military conflict, said the warlords were stepping into a power vacuum created when the U.S.-led military coalition failed to support the extension of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) outside of Kabul.

The mounting repression and lawlessness facing Afghan civilians are dashing hopes that the June 10-16 meeting of the *loya jirga* will have credibility in selecting the next government.

"Warlords are making a power grab by brazenly manipulating the *loya jirga* selection process. If they succeed, Afghans will again be denied the ability to choose their own leaders and build civil society," said Sam Zia-Zarifi, a senior researcher with Human Rights Watch. "This is a make-or-break time for Afghanistan's future."

The Briefing Paper, "Afghanistan: Return of the Warlords," reports on a Human Rights Watch mission to southern Afghanistan in late May. The group's researchers gathered information about the *loya jirga* process and general security conditions in five southern provinces: Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Oruzgan, and Zabul. In every province, the group recorded instances of violence, intimidation, and general insecurity undermining the fairness of the first stage of the *loya jirga* selection process.

In several cases, Human Rights Watch said it documented independent candidates being detained or beaten by local commanders intent on sending their own delegates to the *loya jirga*. More often, warlords simply drew up their own lists of delegates and insisted that the local populace approved them.

In Zabul province, where warlords in the ascendancy are associated with the Taliban and the extremist movement led by Mr. Hekmatyar,

provincial authorities seem to operate mostly outside the authority of the Afghan interim administration and to be openly hostile to the Bonn Agreement's blueprint for a post-Taliban Afghanistan.

The United Nations and the Special Independent Commission for the emergency *loya jirga* are responsible for overseeing the voting process. They were generally successful in limiting violence during the actual voting for the *loya jirga*.

But Human Rights Watch found that these institutions often did not have the resources to adequately monitor and enforce the selection criteria for the *loya jirga*, which were supposed to exclude delegates who had engaged in human rights abuses, criminal activity, or the drug trade.

"Without proper international security support, the monitors could not be expected to prevent the warlords from subverting the process," Mr. Zia-Zarifi said.

"The U.N. and the Special Commission now have one week to exclude delegates with abusive pasts and to select other delegates who are committed to the rule of law in Afghanistan." Human Rights Watch called for the following urgent steps to be taken: 1. The United States should immediately halt its apparent policy of relying on local warlords to provide security and troops to its war effort without apparent regard for their human rights record; 2. The United Nations Security Council should extend international security forces throughout Afghanistan both during and after the *loya jirga*; 3. The Special Commission for the *loya jirga* should challenge all delegates who do not meet the eligibility requirements set out in the special procedures for the *loya jirga*, particularly those concerning a history of abuse or criminality; 4. The special commission for the *loya jirga* should use its appointment power to ensure that the *loya jirga* is not dominated by delegates representing warlords hostile to the Bonn Agreement; and 5. The new Afghan government should implement mechanisms envisioned in the Bonn Agreement, such as the Human Rights Commission and the Civil Service Commission, to begin building a system of accountability for those involved in serious violation of human rights.

10 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

KABUL / PASHTUNS SEEK MORE SAY IN COUNCIL

Defence Minister backs Karzai

KABUL, JUNE 8. Afghanistan's Defence Minister threw his support on Saturday behind the interim leader, Hamid Karzai, to be head of a new government to be chosen by the upcoming *loya jirga*, or grand council.

Mohammed Fahim, an ethnic Tajik and a controversial figure among Afghanistan's majority Pashtuns, also said his "preference" would be to remain as Defence Minister following the *loya jirga*, which begins on Monday.

Mr. Fahim praised the current Cabinet as a good blueprint for the new government despite bitter complaints from Afghanistan's Pashtuns that they have been marginalised because of their identification with the Taliban.

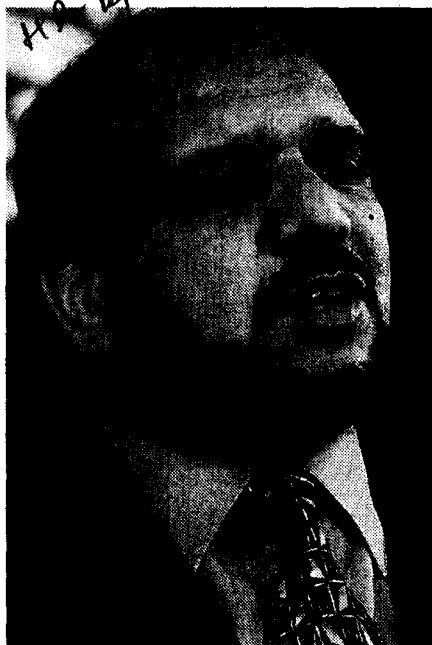
"The current composition of the interim administration is good," Mr. Fahim told reporters. "It is young, energetic and has moderate views."

Ethnic Pashtuns have been deeply critical of the Cabinet saying it puts the power in the hands of minority Tajiks, specifically men from the Panjshir Valley, the former stronghold of the slain commander, Ahmed Shah Masood.

The three posts of defence, interior and foreign ministry all are run by men from the Panjshir Valley.

Pashtuns say they are being punished because the deposed Taliban, the hardline militia that was removed by the U.S.-led coalition last year, were ethnic Pashtuns. The United Nations has also complained of discrimination against Pashtuns since the collapse of the Taliban.

In Afghanistan's south and east where Pashtuns dominate, ordinary Afghans fear



Afghanistan's Defence Minister, Qasim Fahim, addresses a press conference in Kabul on Saturday. — AFP

that the return of Mr. Fahim to the Defence Ministry could start renewed fighting. Pashtuns routinely complain that Mr. Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun, has no power because Mr. Fahim controls the army and even his presidential guard who are mostly ethnic Tajiks. Most of the military men also are ethnic Tajiks.

However, Mr. Fahim is spearheading the new national army, which is supposed to be multi-ethnic and trained by the United States. But in Afghanistan's Pashtun dominated areas, ordinary Afghans say the *loya jirga* and the future government have to bring Pashtuns into the fold.

To alienate them, they warn, is to ensure fresh fighting and will aid any attempt by those sympathetic to the Taliban to return. Hamidullah Tokhi, Governor of Zabul province, where there is still a lot of sympathy for the Taliban, is a strong supporter of Mr. Karzai. But he was sharply critical of the Defence Ministry.

Mr. Tokhi said men from Zabul who have gone to join the national army have returned because "they were treated like servants. We were beaten by the Taliban, and we go to Kabul now and we are beaten by the northern alliance. We don't understand, but we won't accept it."

Mr. Fahim, as well as Ministers of the key Interior and Foreign Ministries, were members of the Northern Alliance, which took power last year after the U.S.-led coalition drove the Taliban out of Kabul after a month-long bombing campaign.

Even shopkeepers warned of insecurity if there were not major changes in the new government following the *loya jirga*.

Most wanted new leaders, with the exception of Mr. Karzai who was widely accepted. Without mentioning the Pashtuns, Mr. Fahim said a more even handed distribution of ministries could be done "fairly to all ethnic groups when it will not damage the peace, secure and stability of Afghanistan." — AP

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THE HINDI

AFGHANISTAN / LOYA JIRGA TO DECIDE ON GOVT.

Zahir, warlords back Karzai

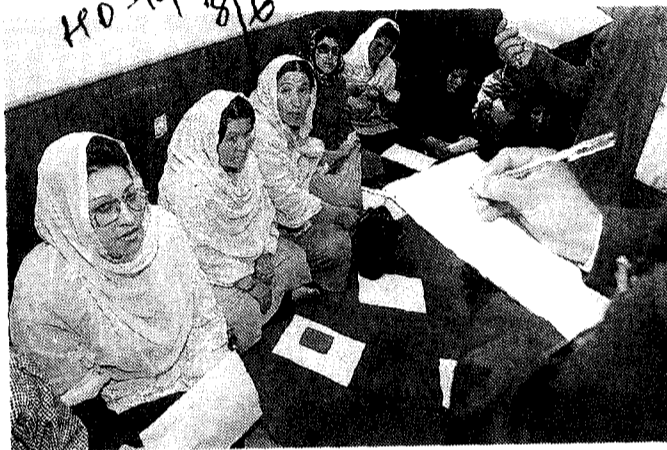
KABUL, JUNE 2. Afghan warlords, Cabinet Ministers and the former King Mohammad Zahir Shah, are all backing Afghanistan's interim leader, Hamid Karzai, to head the war-torn country's next administration, the Foreign Ministry's spokesman, Omar Samad, said.

A consensus has been reached after several rounds of meetings in Kabul over the past few days among Mr. Karzai's Cabinet and regional commanders — including the powerful Governor of Herat province. A grand assembly of some 1,500 delegates will gather in Kabul from June 10-16 to choose a new transitional Government to replace Mr. Karzai's six-month interim administration, under last year's Bonn accords following the collapse of the Taliban.

The assembly, known as a *loya jirga*, will debate the type of government that will rule the fractious country for the next two years ahead of general elections — and who will lead it.

"It is a big achievement and development (the support for Karzai's Government)," Mr. Samad said. "Fortunately, there is this general understanding about the continuation of the current political system, as Mr. Karzai has showed success during his rule," he added.

The Northern Alliance led by ethnic Tajiks from the Panjsher Valley and which holds the De-



MARCHING TOWARDS DEMOCRACY: An official writes the names of candidates for the second phase of the Loya Jirga proposed by women candidates elected in the first phase in a mosque in Kabul on Friday. — AFP

fence, Foreign, Interior and Intelligence portfolios in Mr. Karzai's administration — also supports the 44-year-old, urbane leader, Mr. Samad said.

But other Afghan Mujahiddin leaders, such as the former president, Burhanuddin Rabbani, and Professor Abdur Rab Rasul Sayaf, have yet to line up behind the well-educated and Westernised Mr. Karzai.

Loya jirga polls

Elections to select delegates to the *loya jirga* were held in Kandahar today, with many candidates declaring they would back Zahir Shah and Mr. Karzai at the traditional as-

sembly. Mr. Karzai should be appointed Prime Minister with Zahir Shah named head of state at the assembly, they said.

"We want the *loya jirga* to bring security and to determine the destiny of the country. We will elect somebody who is well known and who has proved they will serve the country," said a candidate.

"Zahir Shah is acceptable for the country. Zahir Shah should be the leader and Karzai should be the Prime Minister," he said. "We believe in Zahir Shah because he ruled Afghanistan for 40 years of peace." — Reuters, AP

03 JUN 2002

THE HINDI

ISI moles in Karzai administration

Shirley Chouhury
in New Delhi

April 30. — Intelligence agencies have warned the Centre about top Afghan government officials having links with the ISI.

Government sources said according to recent intelligence reports, there could be as many as

four to five ISI "moles" in the Afghan interim administration. The revelation is a source of concern for India as Pakistan could easily be aware of the confidential Indo-Afghan issues.

The same applies to the Afghan-American relations, including shared information regarding the ongoing search for Taliban and Al-Qaida operatives.

Pakistan had a strong influence (about 7,000 soldiers, serving and retired, and other operatives) in Afghanistan during the Taliban era. A Pakistani officer, Major-Gen (Retd) Qamar Zaman, headed the Afghan operations.

All this assumes significance as only few thousands of the 80,000 Taliban and 10,000 Al-Qaida members in Afghanistan

have been killed or captured. Most of the surviving operatives have merged with the local population in North-West Frontier Province and PoK, officials said.

With the Taliban not entirely wiped out, India is forging stronger ties with Tajikistan, one of Afghanistan's neighbours, partly to "outflank" Pakistan.

Turn to page 6

The recent Indo-Tajik defence protocol signed during Mr George Fernandes' visit to Dushanbe last week, allows for about two dozen seats for Tajik officers in Indian defence establishments. Army and Air Force officers will teach Tajik forces English.

An intelligence-sharing pact between the two countries is on the cards. The Centre has already provided Tajikistan with two helicopters to help "seal" its border with Afghanistan, currently manned by the 201st Russian Motorised Division.

India is likely to give the Tajiks all the military equipment and help they need. The protocol, the first between India and a Central Asian country, is based on

the convergence of views the two countries share on Afghanistan and Pakistan. **KARZAI:** (Continued from page 1) A military hospital that treated Northern Alliance soldiers during the Taliban years will still continue, officials said.

India will help the Tajiks with infrastructure in the form of transport and computers. There will also be joint ventures in the civilian sector, especially in spheres like food processing and textiles. India, Tajikistan, Iran and Russia were part of the anti-Taliban forces helping the Northern Alliance during the Afghan war. With the Indo-Tajik agreement, the power vacuum in this part of Central Asia could be filled up to India's interests.

MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2002

NEW ANTI-TERROR INITIATIVES

Afghanistan

THE POLITICAL SYMBOLISM of the return to Kabul by the former king of Afghanistan, Mohammad Zahir Shah, and a powerful pledge by the U.S. President, George W. Bush, to stay engaged in that southwest Asian country, which borders Pakistan, may signal new initiatives in the ongoing global "campaign" against terrorism. Viewed in a matter-of-fact perspective, it appears somewhat strange that Zahir Shah, a deposed monarch who has now returned home after nearly 30 years in exile, has been asked by the international community to play a role in the anti-terror "campaign". The frail 87-year-old former king seems determined, though, to extend a helping hand to the present interim Afghan administration in its herculean efforts to unify his fractious country, which remains a prime focal point of the ongoing multilateral efforts to address the globalised phenomenon of political terrorism. Zahir Shah's modernising agenda — his forgotten legacy of a bygone era — is now being increasingly recalled by the Afghans themselves despite the historical reality that he was overthrown in the early 1970s. Relevant to the present situation is Afghanistan's plight as a failed state — a condition traceable to a series of internal feuds and external interventions since Zahir Shah's fall from power nearly three decades ago. His current home-coming, planned and encouraged by the international community as a political dynamic that could catalyse a positive Afghan resurgence, acquires importance in this very broad context.

A virtual maxim of the present international political discourse is that the battle against globalised terror can be won only if Afghanistan ceases to be hospitable to religious radicalism and the related creed of venomous violence. Although this marks only one aspect of the apparent global "campaign" against terror, the importance of the international community's Afghan mission cannot be exaggerated, given the political logic of

America's military response to the September 11 terrorist outrage and the chain of related events on the international stage. It is in this context that Zahir Shah is being seen as a leader who might be able to rally the ethnically diverse Afghan population for civilised matters of state with no place for tactical or strategic politics of terror at home or abroad. His perceived moral authority is the basis for the role that a recent international conference on Afghanistan had reserved for him. He is expected to convene a *Loya Jirga* or a traditional pan-Afghan conclave to choose a transitional Government that might in a stipulated time lead the country to democracy. An apparent choice before the *Loya Jirga* will be to confirm the present interim administration which was assembled on the drawing board of the recent international conference.

The U.S. President has now made a commitment to help Afghanistan find its feet economically, and he invokes the spirit of the Marshall Plan that was implemented so as to stabilise the world in a crucial way favourable to Washington's interests in the wake of World War II. In a sense, it is a welcome sign that Mr. Bush should want to inject some economic vitality into an impoverished Afghanistan as he seeks to decimate all traces of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda terrorist mafia in that country. At a political level, it appears that Mr. Bush wants to insulate Afghanistan from terrorism in much the same way as the Marshall Plan had been executed with a sub-text of anti-communism as a primary motive force. However, Mr. Bush's aid-Afghan call cannot match the economic magnitude of the Marshall Plan, and Washington seems very keen, too, at this time on sharing the costs with other major powers. Overall, the new sense of urgency on Mr. Bush's part is linked directly to Washington's frustrations over prolonged uncertainties about the fate of an elusive leadership of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda terrorist cartel.

22 APR 2002 THE HINDU

511 19/4 Afghanistan

Kabuli wah-wah as ex-king comes home

KABUL: Former king Mohammed Zahir Shah set foot on Afghan soil on Thursday after 29 years in exile, marking a watershed in the country's post-Taliban reconstruction.

Mr Shah, 87, stepped down from an Italian military plane followed by interim cabinet chairman Hamid Karzai and was greeted by senior tribal elders and ministers at Kabul's bomb-scarred international airport. Honour guards standing on either side of the red carpet saluted and dignitaries applauded as Mr Shah hugged people and shook hands before boarding a black Mercedes-Benz en route to his new home—a two-storey house on a quiet Kabul street. Most had never seen the king in person before.

Dancers in white tunics swirled to drums. Men in turbans sang and waved Afghan flags and women stood by windows inside their homes, all hoping to catch a glimpse of the former king.

As he set foot on Afghan soil after nearly three decades of exile in Rome, thousands of Kabul took to the streets in an outpouring of emotion seldom seen in this devastated, poverty-stricken nation.

His return from Italy for the first time since he was ousted in a coup in 1973 is seen as highly symbolic of Afghanistan's return to stability after more than two decades of war. Mr Shah said he was not interested in resuming the throne and has been called upon only to inaugurate a loya jirga, or grand assembly of tribal chiefs, in June to select a transitional government.

Security was extremely tight at the airport after the discovery last month of an alleged plot to sabotage the interim government and assassinate its leaders, including Mr Karzai and Mr Shah.

About two dozen international peace-keepers kept a close watch from the control tower at Kabul airport. Well-armed peace-keepers and Afghan troops lined the road to the airport, while tanks and other armoured vehicles stood by. Jeeps mounted with machine guns zipped back and forth on the runway before the plane touched down.

Peace-keepers with dogs patrolled the area, and even those accredited to witness the king's arrival had to pass through five checkpoints where clothes and bags were carefully inspected. (AFP)

Afghan king returns home

Kabul, April 18

AFGHANISTAN'S EX-KING, Mohammad Zahir Shah, stepped onto the soil of his homeland on Thursday after 29 years' exile in Italy, carrying on his frail shoulders hopes for a sea change in the nation's warring politics.

The historic return of the 87-year-old Zahir Shah, as an ordinary citizen who will not take back the throne, placed the ailing former monarch into a possibly significant political role.

As he stepped onto a red carpet at Kabul airport, about 200 people, including some feuding warlords attending as a symbol of their loyalty, cheered and applauded the ex-king's arrival.

The king, wearing a brown leather jacket and still a regal figure, was the first person out of the aircraft. Afghan interim leader Hamid Karzai, a distant cousin of the king, and like him a majority Pashtun, walked on one side of Zahir Shah. Abdul Rashid Dostum, the powerful Uzbek warlord from the north, walked on the other side.

Young children presented flowers to a monarch described as an ascetic who ruled Afghanistan as a moderniser for 40 years until deposed by a cousin while on holiday in Italy in 1973. During his three-decade absence, the land of 23 million people, once a safe and popular stop on the Asian hippie trail, descended into a hell hole of death and devastation.

The United Nations estimates 1.5 million Afghans have died, two million have been



REUTERS PHOTO
An Afghan soldier sweeps the red carpet at Kabul airport before the arrival of ex-king Mohammad Zahir Shah on Thursday.

wounded and five million made refugees in fighting that started in 1979 with the Soviet invasion.

From 1992, when the Soviets

withdrew, until 1996, rival warlords fought a civil war. In 1996 the Taliban took over until they were driven out last December

by US-led forces pursuing Osama bin Laden.

In a sign of the sensitivity of the king's return, there was no announcement on radio or television. Only at the airport were there flags and banners of welcome. They, as well as crowds, were absent from Kabul streets. The king stepped onto home soil on a day of tragedy and violence for Afghans and international troops pursuing Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida fighters and ousted Taliban leader Mullah Omar, who gave him sanctuary.

"The last few years of my life, I'd like to dedicate that to the people of Afghanistan and to my country," Zahir Shah told CNN in an interview hours before he left Rome. The plane carrying the former king, Afghan ministers, security personnel, a personal doctor and family members left Rome shortly after midnight.

The ex-king's reign was marked by women getting the vote and establishment of the first modern university. The king, fluent in French, English and Farsi, studied in France and is portrayed as an ascetic steeped in arts, Persian poetry and world history.

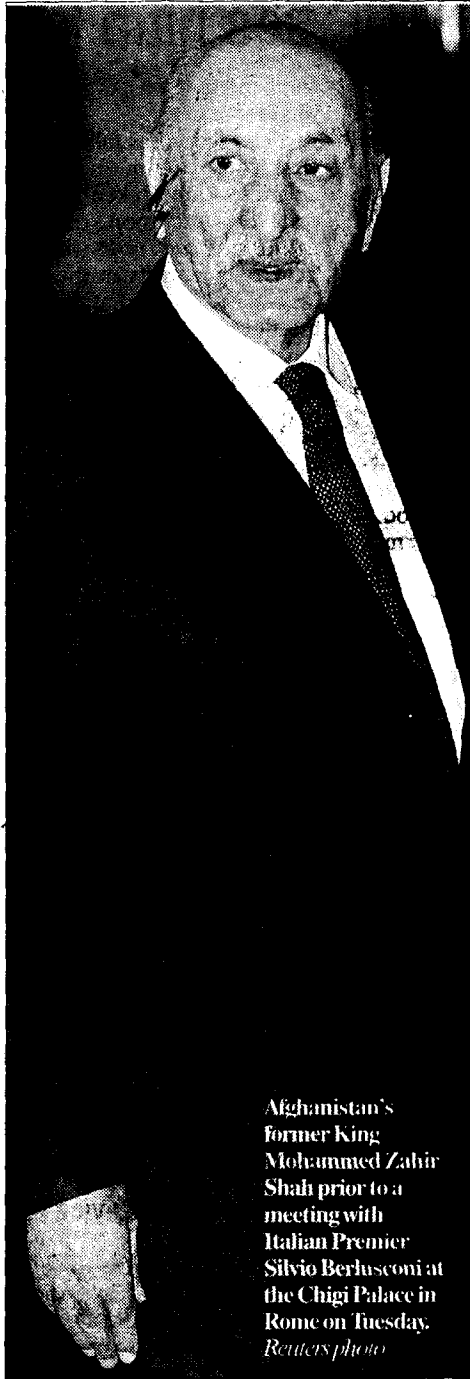
But opponents dismiss Zahir Shah as an ineffectual ruler who was off hunting and fishing while the storm clouds that led to Afghanistan's decades of war were gathering. He is also derided for sitting out the wars in Rome and rarely trying to influence developments in his battered nation.

Reuters

19 APR 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

No red carpets for Afghan king's return



Afghanistan's former King Mohammed Zahir Shah prior to a meeting with Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi at the Chigi Palace in Rome on Tuesday. Reuters photo

SAYED SALAHUDDIN
KABUL, APRIL 17

AFGHANISTAN showed no signs on Wednesday of mounting a grand homecoming for its former king Mohammad Zahir Shah.

The event caused barely a ripple in Kabul, which international peacekeepers declared safe for the former king's return on Thursday morning after a 29-year exile in Rome.

There were no flags or welcoming banners. The only noticeable sign of stepped up security was at the suburban house set aside for him and with only hours until his arrival, official radio and television had made no announcement of the homecoming.

"He is just another Afghan coming home. He is not special. Why should we put up flags," said an Afghan soldier at Kabul's civilian airport where he is scheduled to arrive at 10 am (0530 GMT) on Thursday.

The former king's long-expected return was put back from last month following security threats, but Italy has said it is confident all appropriate security measures are now in place for the journey.

A spokesman for international peacekeepers responsible for overall security in Kabul told reporters on Wednesday the city was a safe place compared with the time before the nearly 5,000-strong force from 18 nations arrived last December.

"We don't expect any problem," said Turkish Captain Can Oz, spokesman for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

Violence had been growing in and around Kabul ahead of the return of Zahir Shah, who is due to preside in June over the opening session of a Loya Jirga, or grand council of Afghan leaders.

The Loya Jirga will decide whether interim leader Hamid Karzai, who went with several ministers to Rome to escort the ex-king home, stays in office or is replaced by another government to steer

After warning, acid attack on woman teacher

■ CHAMAN: An unidentified man threw acid on an Afghan woman teacher in Kandahar soon after threatening pamphlets appeared in the former Taliban stronghold, a city official said on Wednesday.

The man sprinkled acid on the teacher on Tuesday as she went home from school, then tried to flee. Commander Dost Mohammad told Reuters in the Pakistan border town of Chaman.

"But the people caught him and handed over to the authorities," he said.

The hand-written pamphlets in Kandahar, from which Taliban Chief Mullah Mohammad Omar ran the ultra-Islamic movement, warned men not to send their daughters to schools or their women to work.

Mohammad said he did not know how badly hurt the woman was, but said the Kandahar authorities had arrested 37 people named by the detained man and found more acid.

"Five of them were wearing the Afghan military uniform," he said.



Mohammad said all detainees were being questioned at Kandahar airport where US troops are holding more than 200 members of the Taliban and their allies in Al Qaeda.

Khalid Pashtoon, a spokesman for Kandahar governor Gul Agha, told Reuters some threatening pamphlets attributed to Jaish-e-Islami, or Army of Islam, an unknown Islamic

group, had been found in Kandahar.

"It may be Jaish-e-Mohammad," he said, referring to a Pakistan-based militant group fighting Indian rule in disputed Kashmir region which Islamabad banned in January.

Similar hand-written leaflets were found last week in and around Spinboldak, just across the border from Chaman, warning people of reprisals if they helped track down Taliban or Al Qaeda militants.

"The American forces will leave the country sooner or later, but you will remain here," one of the leaflets read. "People helping Afghan security forces are being marked." — Agencies

Afghanistan towards general elections.

Italy will protect the former king for some three months after he returns home to a two-storey house surrounded by barbed wire in Kabul's most exclusive suburb.

"The king will return to Afghanistan with an Italian plane and Italian security forces, who will stay in Afghanistan to protect the king from possible attacks and train the security detail," Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi said on Tuesday. He said the Italians would train some 50 Afghan soldiers to protect Zahir Shah, who has lived in Italy since being ousted in a bloodless coup in 1973. ISAF troops

will also help protect him.

Karzai said on his arrival in Rome the former king's return to Afghanistan would be a momentous event. "It is a new Afghanistan that welcomes all its sons, including the former king of Afghanistan — a fatherly figure, a symbol of unity," he said.

Several Afghan and Italian government ministers will travel with Karzai and Zahir Shah on his return flight. Zahir Shah will be accompanied by about 20 family members, including his son Mir Wais and grandson Mustafa. The former king has said he will never leave Afghanistan once he returns. — Reuters

Judgement error let Osama slip away from Tora Bora: Intelligence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, APRIL 17

IN A grave error of judgement, the US may have narrowly missed capturing Osama Bin Laden from his mountain hideout in Tora Bora during last year's battle by deciding not to deploy its own ground troops, relying instead on Afghan fighters, a media report said today.

Intelligence officials have assembled what they believe to be decisive evidence, from contemporary and subsequent interrogations and intercepted communications, that bin Laden began the battle of Tora Bora inside the cave complex, the *Washington Post* reported today.

Though there remains a remote chance that he died there, the intelligence community is persuaded that bin Laden slipped away in the first 10 days of December.

Army General Thomas Frank, Commander-in-Chief of the command and operational commander, misjudged the interests of Afghan allies and let pass the best chance to capture or kill the terror suspect.

After-action reviews, conducted privately inside and outside the military chain of command, describe the episode as a significant defeat for the US.

In the fight for Tora Bora, said the *Post*, corrupt local militias did not live up to promises to seal off the mountain redoubt, and some colluded in the escape of fleeing Al Qaeda fighters.

Gen Franks did not perceive the setbacks soon enough, some officials said, because he ran the war from Florida with no commander on the scene above the rank of lieutenant colonel. The first Americans did not arrive until three days into the fighting. "No one had the big picture," a Defence official said.

The Afghan contradictions

By M.K. Bhadrakumar

The single most important contradiction in the Afghan situation is the inability to evolve a credible vehicle for Pashtun aspirations.

10-10 1674
THE LONG-AWAITED return of the Afghan king, Zahir Shah, to Kabul after 29 years in exile in Rome has been put off. The Bonn Agreement envisages the ex-king presiding over the traditional assembly or *Loya Jirga* expected to be held by end-June which would elect a Transitional Government with the mandate to advance the country towards drawing up a constitution and eventually forming a broad-based Government.

The ex-king's aides imply that the arrangements made by the Interim Government for his personal security do not seem convincing — a loaded insinuation insofar as the Ministries concerned are under Tajik commanders of the Jamiat-i-Islami which remains lukewarm about Zahir Shah's claim to political authority in Kabul. Italian security personnel could escort him back to Kabul, but for an Afghan king that will not be an elegant sight in a Kandahar or Jalalabad bazaar. All this while the ex-king himself remains a popular figure.

The impasse underscores the Afghan contradictions touching a new level of criticality, which lay submerged hitherto under vivid images of the U.S.-led military campaign post-September 11, which saturated the senses and muffled most musings. Impatient questions are appearing in the U.S. itself: does Washington have an 'exit strategy'?

The single most important contradiction in the Afghan situation is the inability to evolve a credible vehicle for Pashtun aspirations even though there is the recognition that without their lead role political stability will remain elusive. Last available records of Soviet-era census figures show the Pashtuns as constituting around 65 per cent of the population, followed by Tajiks (14 per cent), Hazaras (8 per cent) and Uzbeks (4 per cent). Yet, the calculus of power in Kabul put in place by the Americans following the overthrow of the Taliban Government has the non-Pashtuns in the driving seat. Pashtun regions in the south and the east are in turmoil with the leadership hopelessly

atomised. Resentment is growing that the Pashtuns have been cut out of the deal in Kabul. Reports are surfacing that the million-strong Pashtun communities in northern Afghanistan are being subjected to horrific violence and persecution. A breeding ground for pro-Taliban sentiments is becoming available. Western powers engaged in Afghanistan see the need to resolve this contradiction. But, will the non-Pashtun forces which gained dominance post-September 11 abdicate the heights? The signs are, possibly not.

The non-Pashtun groups are utilising the interregnum available, even as the war against terror progresses, to firm up their grip on power and to consolidate their local autonomy. They are busy weaving webs of alliances of convenience with the protagonists within (and beyond) Afghanistan with whom they perceive a congruence of interests at this point of time. The Tajik leader who is supreme in western Afghanistan, Ismail Khan, is reaching out to the Jamiat-i-Islami figurehead, Burhanuddin Rabbani, to counterbalance the Panjshiri faction (Tajiks belonging to the Jamiat) which has risen to prominence in the interim administration. Rashid Dostum is looking northward beyond Amu Darya at traditional sources of help whilst at the same time resuming dalliances with sundry Pashtun commanders. Hazara Shias are networking so that they will not again be subjected to ignominies.

Panjshiri elements in Kabul have, arguably, the most complicated game to play. They share the hesitancy of other ethnic groups regarding the Pashtun leadership. But, they are exclusionists themselves, unwilling to share power with other non-Pashtuns. They are hoping that if the war against terror continues, their militia will remain much in demand

as foot soldiers, which in turn would provide them with political space to capitalise on Western goodwill and to prolong their dominance, even while building up their prowess in anticipation of a showdown that may be forced on them for power-sharing in Kabul. They are quietly filling up Ministries and Government agencies, specially security organs, with cadres while ostensibly partaking of the processes leading to the *Loya Jirga* and national reconciliation.

The situation in the Pashtun provinces of the south and the east also displays contradictory tendencies. Taliban functionaries, before vanishing into the dark in the fateful months of December and January, handed over power to a motley group of Sardars, local commanders or tribal councils. It is difficult to tell with the passage of time who is a Taliban and who is not. In the recent campaign at Paktia, U.S. forces could not trust any Pashtun group, so they got over the Tajik militia. In Paktia, Khost or Wardak provinces — even Kandahar — time-servers are having a field day. Pashtun field commanders consider the present time to be a twilight zone when new alignments are taking shape. They are hedging. They have noted that Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has returned to Afghanistan, that the Pakistani policy is on the comeback trail.

Thus, the vexed debate among the international community on the future of the International Security Assistance Force deployed in Kabul is symptomatic of the deep contradictions in today's Afghanistan. Arguably, the ISAF's deployment in Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif or Kunduz would go a long way toward strengthening Kabul's authority and may even be a prerequisite for holding a *Loya Jirga*. But what if the ISAF finds itself pitted against local leaders of the erstwhile Northern Alliance who, with all their

million flaws of character, still form an anti-Taliban constituency? Such an entanglement can be messy. Influential opinion makers in the U.S., at the same time, are saying that the time has come to put the non-Pashtun groups in their place, without which co-option of Pashtuns into power structures will not be possible and enduring stability cannot be reached. Curiously, these opinion makers, weaned on the ideology of the 1980s, view the Afghan paradigm largely through the prism of Russia's (and Iran's) influence in the region. They have suggested that NATO should take over charge of the ISAF.

The building up of an Afghan army which would incrementally take over the security responsibility on a national footing figures as an alternative postulate. But creation of a national army will be a long haul; sharp ethnic divides come in the way of formation of national-level superstructures; local groups which have known power will be averse to disbanding and becoming subservient to an overarching central authority in Kabul which they perceive today as merely yet another faction in a fragmented polity. Mutual suspicions will remain strong; bankrolling by the international community will become necessary and there are not many takers. Also, it is debatable whether the ISAF's expansion to other cities on the one hand and the painstaking programme to create a national army on the other can be debated as variants. Arguably, they ought to complement each other, the ISAF's expansion could even be regarded as an essential first step in the long journey toward the creation of a national army for Afghanistan.

This brings to the fore the gnawing question: where lies the borderline between the so-called campaign against terror in the Afghan context and nation-building? Paradoxically, this is of a piece with all other Afghan contradictions.

(The writer is an IFS officer who has served in Islamabad, Kabul, Tashkent and Moscow.)

10-10 2002

THE HINDI

Violence mounts ahead of Zahir Shah's return

Asheem
10/19

KABUL, APRIL 14. Rockets were fired at an eastern Afghan airport used by U.S. forces today and rival commanders dug in west of Kabul as violence mounted ahead of the scheduled return from exile of the former king, Zahir Shah next week.

News also emerged of rocket attacks on the Governor's office in the southern city of Kandahar, the bastion of the ultra-Islamic Taliban until they were ousted late last year. The private Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted Mohammad Ebrahim, Governor of the eastern province of Khost, as saying Sunday's rockets were fired at the airport in the provincial capital of the same name, but missed.

AIP said residents reported U.S. planes roaring overhead after the attack, but no bombing was heard in an area where U.S.-led forces are hunting remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, which is blamed for the September 11 attacks on the United States. AIP did not mention whether there were any casualties in the early morning

rocket attack, but quoted Mr. Ebrahim as saying tribal rivalries could be behind it. It said Mr. Ebrahim did not rule out the involvement of Al-Qaeda or Taliban fighters in the rugged mountains of eastern Afghanistan and that an investigation was underway.

Travellers from Kandahar arriving at the Pakistani border

town of Chaman said a rocket attack on the Governor's office in the southern city killed three persons and wounded nine. "Five rockets hit the Governor's house on Friday night," said one traveller from the city, whose airport is being used by U.S. forces holding scores of Taliban and Al-Qaeda prisoners.

— Reuters



A SECURITY RING: The International Security Assistance Force set up fences in a Kabul street, Afghanistan, on Sunday near the new home of the exiled former king, Mohammad Zahir Shah, who is expected in Kabul this week. — AP

15 APR 2002

Al-Qaida claims Afghan leader's assassination bid

Dubai, April 11

OSAMA BIN Laden's al-Qaida network has claimed responsibility for an attempt to kill Afghan Defence Minister Mohammad Qassim Fahim in a telephone call to *al-Hayat* newspaper, the Arabic daily said today.

The Saudi-owned paper said an al-Qaida spokesman called its Islamabad bureau.

"The mujahideen carried out this operation," the spokesman reportedly said and promised further attacks against foreign forces in Afghanistan and

Afghans who cooperate with them. At least four people were believed to have been killed and some 50 injured in the attack on Monday in the eastern city of Jalalabad when an explosive device went off seconds before a convoy carrying the minister passed by.

Afghan police have made a series of arrests, but no charges have been filed and responsibility for the blast had remained unclear. *Al-Hayat* said on Tuesday that suspected terrorist mastermind bin Laden was alive and well and planning new attacks.

The London-based paper said

it had received a statement from al-Qaida, dated March 26, claiming that 18 US troops had been killed after being taken prisoner by forces of the ousted Taliban regime during fierce fighting in eastern Afghanistan.

"Osama bin Laden is safe and in good health and preparing the next steps of his battle," the statement said.

US President George W Bush admitted in a television interview on Friday that he had "no idea" if bin Laden, the world's most sought-after terror suspect, was dead or alive.

AFP

12 APR 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Four killed in bid on Afghan Minister's life

HO-14 9/1/1
KABUL, APRIL 8. At least four persons were today killed and 18 injured in an apparent assassination attempt on the Afghan Defence Minister, Mohammad Qasim Fahim, in the eastern city of Jalalabad, officials said.



The attack comes after some 260 people were arrested last week over an alleged bomb plot against the interim administration, with the Government claiming that explosive equipment was found during a series of raids. The victims of today's explosion, including a child, had gathered on the street near the centre of town to greet the Minister when the device went off in a roadside stall seconds before the arrival of his convoy.

"Four people, including a child were killed. Eighteen others were injured," the Minister's secretary said. — AFP

THE HINDU

Karzai losing the ground beneath his feet

To know, look beyond Kabul towards its lawless interiors, says ex-US diplomat EDMUND MCWILLIAMS

MY recent return to Afghanistan, after a 14-year absence, underscored the fragility of the international community's victory there. A week of private travel revealed a still insecure countryside, growing ethnic tensions and a potentially destabilising political struggle over the national congress, known as the Loya Jirgah, which will meet in June and could lead to open conflict among the factions comprising the current interim government.

There was broad popular support for the US military action that ended Taliban rule. That appreciation, however, was mixed with Afghan concern, also voiced by international observers, that the US and international commitment might be temporary and ultimately insufficient. The unwillingness to extend the duration and deployment outside Kabul of the International Security Assistance Force and the inexcusably slow flow of pledged financial support was frequently compared to the US and international community's abandonment of Afghanistan following the withdrawal of Soviet forces over a decade ago.

Accounts from travellers un-

dered the consensus that while Taliban and al Qaeda forces may have been dispersed they have been neither disarmed nor defeated. Moreover, general lawlessness is common outside Kabul. In my own travels I encountered frequent checkpoints at which armed men sought to shakedown travellers.

The political challenges are equally daunting. With the crucial convening of the Loya Jirgah less than three months off, an increasingly bitter contest is developing that is pitting Northern Al-

liance elements against larger but loosely organised groups supportive of the former King Zahir Shah. Also in the mix are fundamentalist mujahideen parties, supported by elements in Pakistan and Iran.

The Northern Alliance's Pan-shiris, in particular Interior Minister Muhammad Yunus Qanooni, are amassing power in Kabul through the seizure of property and assets belonging to minorities, and are particularly targeting the Hazara group. The formation of a security force by

the interior ministry and its unprecedented development of an intelligence capacity have raised fears that Qanooni may become a regime strongman rivaling Hamid Karzai. The US and international community have taken no visible action to curb the human-rights abuses committed by what Kabul contacts describe as a Panshiri 'mafia.'

Still more alarming, in the north, Northern Alliance forces and their Uzbek and Hazara warlord allies are carrying out a pogrom against Pashtuns. The program has generated growing cries for revenge among Pashtuns elsewhere, and unless the interim government or the US act to arrest the perpetrators, Pashtun support for the central government will be weakened.

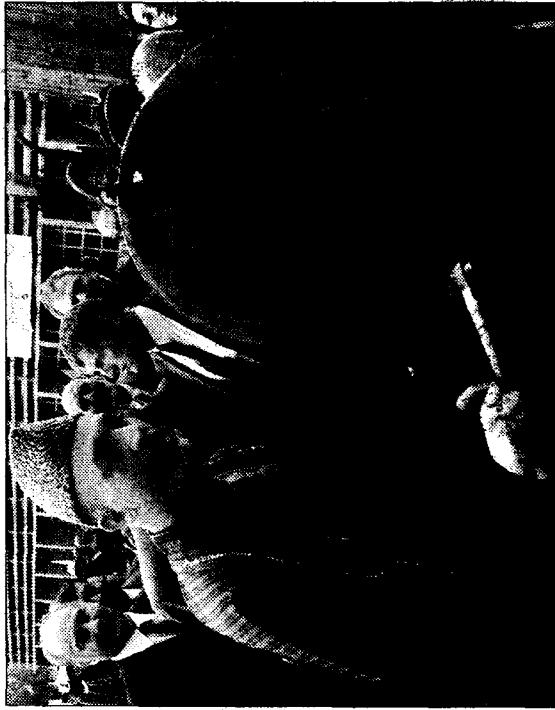
Elsewhere, the mistreatment of detained Pashtuns in the south and far more serious mistreatment by Northern Alliance forces and their local allies of Taliban personnel detained in

normal life to a devastated Afghanistan. The problems are inextricably intertwined as poor security impedes the resumption of commercial activity, the launching of development projects and even the provision of humanitarian assistance. The urgent task of decommissioning of arms is also in abeyance.

Karzai is hamstrung. With international security force operations limited to Kabul, the formation of a professional Afghan army and police force at least 18 months off, Northern Alliance forces participating in ethnic vendettas and US forces increasingly tied down in what is becoming a guerrilla war, he has no means of addressing growing security problems outside the capital. Moreover, with the promised \$4 billion in international aid only trickling into the interim government and UN coffers, Karzai's ability to respond to humanitarian needs and pressing developments is limited.

US policy makers have failed to recognise that the key challenges are no longer simply military, but instead political. Failure to develop an independent political strategy — and insensitivity to human rights — are strongly reminiscent of the mistakes US policy makers made in the crucial 1988-92 period.

(McWilliams was Washington's first special envoy to Afghanistan from 1988-89. From *The Wall Street Journal*.)



Hamid Karzai risks being dismissed as a marginal figure, unable to deliver on ensuring security and the timely flow of international assistance

First troops of Afghan army graduate

KABUL, APRIL 3. After a six-week crash course in crowd control, patrolling and emergency first aid, the first 600 troops of the new Afghan army strutted their stuff today in front of the interim Prime Minister, Hamid Karzai, and other dignitaries.

The men — who were drawn from every province and ethnic group in Afghanistan — are to be the vanguard of a much larger force that's goal will be to keep the peace and prevent rival warlords from plunging the country back into civil war. "Today, after many long years,

we have our own national army in Afghanistan. The task before this army is to defend its country, its people, and its religion," Mr. Karzai told the troops assembled in a dusty field in eastern Kabul. "I assure the people of Afghanistan, that this national army will work in defence of their rights and their security."

The troops, dressed in smart green camouflage uniforms and green berets and armed with machine guns, performed a demonstration roadblock and a patrol in which they responded to an enemy attack with a long

burst of machine gun fire and smoke grenades, finally apprehending the bad guys hiding in a ditch.

The troops were trained by French, German, Dutch, Italian, Turkish and British instructors, and the equipment donated by the 18 nations in the International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF. American instructors are to take a lead role in training subsequent battalions, said Flight Lt. Tony Marshall, a British spokesman for the peacekeepers.

The 600 soldiers, trained

from scratch by international peacekeepers, put on a spectacular display of military moves at their graduation ceremony.

Mr. Karzai said the ceremony — which marked the rebirth of a formal Afghan army for the first time since the country descended into civil war 10 years ago after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union — was one of the proudest moments of his five months in power. "I feel like a volcano, of emotion," he told a news conference.

The 30 officers commanding the 600 troops of the First Battalion were selected from each of the country's 30 provinces.

With Afghanistan's long history of local warlords running their own fiefdoms, including security in them, there has been fears an effective army could never be formed.

But Mr. Karzai said after decades of wars, the Afghan people were ready for a strong central army. "We will not allow groups of armed people or gangs to call themselves armies," Mr. Karzai said. "In other words, no warlordism."

The first soldiers will be used initially as part of Mr. Karzai's presidential guard.

In 1992, Afghanistan slumped into civil war with the withdrawal of the Soviets, and in 1996 the hardline Taliban took over using their own guerrilla-type forces, including many foreigners such as members of Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network. They were driven from power last December by U.S.-led forces. — Reuters

THE HINDU

'Brothers' bury their differences

FROM BRIAN WILLIAMS

Kabul, April 2 (Reuters): Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and Afghan leader Hamid Karzai, describing themselves as brothers, today buried any lingering differences between them over Islamabad's past support for the ousted Taliban.

Musharraf, on his first visit to Kabul, pledged full support for Karzai and said Pakistan's sole aim now was to assist Afghanistan and join with it in stamping out terrorism.

Pakistan was one of the few nations to support Afghanistan's former Taliban rulers, but withdrew its backing after the September 11 attacks on the US, when the Taliban were blamed for sheltering chief suspect Osama bin Laden.

"I have made it absolutely clear to my brother here that Pakistan has only one aim — to assist Afghanistan and to assist my brother sitting here and his government in doing whatever he wants to do in Afghanistan," Musharraf said.

"Our plan is his plan. We will assist him all the way on whatever he wants to do here."



Hamid Karzai holds the \$10 million cheque that he received from President Pervez Musharraf in Kabul. (Reuters)

Both Musharraf and Karzai said they did not know the whereabouts of bin Laden and could only guess if he was alive or dead.

"He may be dead or alive, I don't know," Musharraf said, "But if you ask my view, maybe he's dead."

"Well I don't really know

where bin Laden is," Karzai said. Musharraf and Karzai were completely at ease with each other during the hour-long news conference, often deferring to each other and joking at questions. Karzai described Pakistan as a "good neighbour" and Musharraf as a "very nice man" and a "gentleman."

Since the ouster of the fundamentalist Taliban, Musharraf has thrown his weight behind the US-led war on terror and built close ties with Karzai's government. Musharraf said Pakistan had arrested a man believed to be Abu Zubaydah, a top lieutenant of al Qaeda leader bin Laden, and handed him over to the US.

Musharraf said although he believed the man handed over was Abu Zubaydah, an al Qaeda recruiter and a member of bin Laden's inner circle, he could not be "one hundred per cent sure."

"But whoever it was taken in, the al Qaeda members have been handed over," Musharraf said. Zubaydah would be the highest ranking al Qaeda member in US custody in the war on terror President George W. Bush declared after the devastating September 11 attacks, and one US official said: "We are virtually certain it is him".

The two leaders dismissed talk of lingering distrust between their countries, with Karzai saying his government, formed from the opposition to the ultra-Islamic Taliban, was united in welcoming Musharraf.

Osama aide arrest blow to al Qaida

Washington, April 2 (Reuters): The White House said today it was confident the US had in custody a top-ranked Osama bin Laden lieutenant and celebrated his arrest as "a serious blow" to the al Qaeda network.

Spokesman Ari Fleischer said the evidence was "overwhelmingly strong" that the suspect was Abu Zubaydah, a "key terrorist recruiter and operational planner" in al Qaeda and a member of bin Laden's inner circle.

The capture of Zubaydah, said to be the Saudi-born militant's new right-hand man, by Pakistani authorities on March 28 during targeted raids in the town of Faisalabad represented an intelligence and public relations coup for the Bush administration in its six-month anti-terror campaign.

160 women invited to June *loya jirga* sitting

Kabul, March 31

A GRAND council or *loya jirga*, convening on June 10-16 to instal a new Afghan Government, will count at least 160 women among its nearly 1,500 delegates, the organising commission announced today. Only six seats are guaranteed for Islamic scholars.

The commission chairman also said Afghanistan's former king, Mohammad Zahir Shah, will return from exile on April 16 to call the Assembly into session.

The former monarch's homecoming, after 29 years in Italian exile, had been postponed because of security concerns.

After two months' intensive work, the 21-member organising commission for the *loya jirga* announced procedures for the indirect election or selection of members of the Assembly, and the guaranteed allocation of some seats among special groups — including women, Afghan refugees and academic and other institutions.

"Especially significant is the number of women who will be represented," chairman Ismail Qasimiyar told a news conference. "You see for the first time in our national life, our modern history, a *loya jirga* that has and enjoys the most and broadest legitimacy," said Qasimiyar, a specialist in constitutional law.

The *loya jirga*, literally "Grand Assembly", was envisioned under the agreement negotiated among Afghan factions in Bonn, Germany, last December that established an Interim Government to succeed the Taliban who were toppled from power



HAMID KARZAI

er in a US-led war last year.

The commission, which has been touring Afghanistan for weeks to publicise its work and consider possible *loya jirga* members, said there would be 1,450 delegates — 1,051 of them elected.

All 21 members of the commission have voted themselves into the *loya jirga*. The *loya jirga* is a centuries-old system for reaching important decisions in Afghanistan's tribal society. They are often colourful affairs with delegates in turbans, lamb-swool hats or embroidered quilt coats debating for days or weeks.

The commission's job is a delicate one, and crucial to Afghanistan's chances of recovering from 23 years of war under a new government acceptable to

all its tribes and ethnic groups.

The current interim authority of Hamid Karzai is dominated by Tajiks from the Panjshir valley. They formed the backbone of the Northern Alliance forces which, with US help, drove the Taliban from power last year, and now hold key ministries.

But around the country, various warlords and faction leaders are already jockeying for power, and those rivalries are expected to be sharpened in the countdown to the *loya jirga*.

To qualify for the *loya jirga*, potential candidates have to meet an exhaustive list of requirements.

The members must be at least 22 years old, have no link with terror organisations, nor can they have been involved in spreading or smuggling narcotics, abuse of human rights, war crimes, looting of public property and smuggling of cultural and archaeological heritage, in the eyes of the people, not to have been involved indirectly or directly in the killing of innocent people, among other requirements.

Those candidates will then be submitted for approval at a public meeting, when people can either accept or reject their elders' choices.

UK troops fired at: British peacekeepers patrolling in western Kabul were fired on as their convoy travelled to an observation post in the second shooting incident in as many days, a spokesman for the security force said on Sunday.

Agencies

1 APR 2002

THE HINDIISTAN TIMES

Riyadh offers olive branch to Israel

BEIRUT, MARCH 27. Crown Prince Abdullah broadened his land-for-peace proposal to Israel on Wednesday, offering normal relations and security in exchange for full withdrawal from Arab land, establishment of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital and a return of Palestinian refugees.

Crown Prince Abdullah proposed to the Arab League summit a collective Arab plan be forwarded to the U.N. Security Council based on "normal relations and the security of Israel in exchange

for a full Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab lands, recognition of an independent Palestinian State with noble Jerusalem as its capital and the return of the refugees."

In an apparent attempt to please Arab camps from moderate to hard-line, the Crown Prince offered an olive branch to Israel that came with a warning that the Jewish State will be "exceedingly mistaken" if it thinks it can use force to impose an unjust peace on Arabs. The 10-minute speech was greeted with applause, but the Crown Prince's audience lacked three key leaders: President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, whose nation was the first Arab State to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979; King Abdullah II of Jordan, the only other to conclude a peace treaty with Israel; and the

Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. Without their personal



The Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar (centre), the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan (right), and the European Union foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, at the opening of the Arab Summit in Beirut, Lebanon, on Wednesday. — AP

endorsement at the summit, the Saudi proposal could carry less weight in the eyes of the rest of the world.

In a speech broadcast by the Arab satellite station, Al Jazeera, Mr. Arafat said Prince Abdullah's offer was "courageous." Mr. Arafat spoke from the Palestinian territories after Israeli threatened to prevent him from returning to the West Bank after the summit. Mr. Arafat had been expected to address the summit via a video hookup. A senior Palestinian official in Beirut told The Associated Press that angry Palestinian delegates walked out of the meeting room in protest against a Lebanese decision not to allow Mr. Arafat to make a live, direct address. A

Lebanese Government official said Lebanon insisted on a taped speech, fearing the Israelis could manipulate the satellite link and

Mr. Sharon could appear instead and try to address the summit. The Lebanese official acknowledged the Palestinians were angry. In a newspaper interview last month in which Prince Abdullah first outlined his ideas, he had referred to "full normalisation of relations" with Israel. Though the wording on Wednesday differed, he generally stuck by an offer seen as meaning Arabs would treat Israel warmly as an ordinary neighbour. Hard-line Arabs including Syria, protesting it is too soon to offer Israel so much,

had pressed Prince Abdullah to drop references to normalisation in favour of the vaguer phrase "comprehensive peace." The Syrian President, Bashar Assad, endorsing the Saudi plan with reservations, said if the summit adopted the initiative, "it should be fortified and we will propose several points." Raanan Gissin, an adviser to the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, told The Associated Press in Jerusalem that a speech calling for peace by the Saudi Crown Prince is welcome, but Israel wanted to hear directly from the Saudis what they mean by normal relations and an end to the conflict. Addressing the Israeli people directly, Prince Abdullah said violence over the past 50 years had only produced destruction. He said Israeli society remained far from security and peace despite its military superiority and attempts to suppress the Palestinians. Underlining the importance the world had placed on the Beirut summit, the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan and the Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar, who currently holds the European Union's rotating presidency, attended the opening session. No reason was given for the Jordanian king's absence. Mr. Mubarak sent his Prime Minister, Atef Obeid, and told reporters in Egypt he stayed away in solidarity with Mr. Arafat, whom he said Israel was humiliating by restricting his movement. —AP

Afghan quake kills 2,000

Reuters

KABUL, March 26. — Two thousand people were killed, more than 3,000 injured and 30,000 displaced after a series of earthquakes measuring up to 6.0 on the Richter Scale flattened a district capital 160 km north of Kabul and villages in northern Afghanistan late last night and early this morning.

Aftershocks continued till this afternoon; hampering rescue efforts in the devastated town of Nahrin — a district capital of mainly mud-brick buildings near the Hindukush mountains — and surrounding villages. Nahrin was destroyed and 20,000 homes crumbled.

The US Geological Survey in Colorado said the first shock, measuring 6.0 on the Richter Scale, was felt at 7.26 p.m. (8.26 p.m. IST) last night. The epicentre was very close to Nahrin. Another quake at 2.15 a.m. (3.15 a.m. IST) today measured 5.0 on the Richter scale.

In Geneva, the UN Organisation for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said it had received unconfirmed reports from Mr Karzai's office of 4,800 deaths, but officials put the toll at 2,000.

2913
"The bodies of 1,800 have been pulled out of the rubble, but many more are still buried," interior minister Mr Yunus Qanuni said. "It is beyond the interim government to deal with this tragedy. We

Japanese isles rocked

TOKYO, March 26. — An earthquake measuring 6.9 on Richter hit Japan's Okinawa islands in the East China Sea this afternoon. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The epicentre of the tremor, which occurred at 0346 GMT, was located 150 km south of Ishigakijima island, 10 km below the sea-bed. The met agency warned residents of a tidal wave measuring 2-m due to hit Miyako and Yaeyama islands. — Agencies

ask all international agencies and foreign countries to help us in this emergency," he said at Kabul airport before flying to the disaster zone. "We have been asked to send ISAF reconnaissance teams to see how we can help," Col Neal Peckham of the International

Security Assistance Force said here.

The US envoy to Afghanistan said his government would provide help "in dealing with this tragedy."

Afghan interim leader Mr Hamid Karzai cancelled his trip to Turkey scheduled for Wednesday and called an emergency cabinet meeting to assess the situation. "We are sending rescue teams, but aftershocks make relief efforts dangerous," a defence ministry spokesman said.

"Around 90 per cent of houses in old and new Nahrin town have been destroyed," said Mr Ehsan A Zahin of the French aid agency Acted.

There were reports that other remote areas were also hit, but it was not immediately possible to reach there, Mr Zahin said. "Many villages have been razed to the ground ... roads are bad and access to Nahrin difficult." A team from the UN, aid agencies and the Red Cross had already headed to Nahrin.

It was the second major earthquake to hit north Afghanistan this month. Over 100 people were buried by a landslide in Samangan province on 3 March. In 1998, two quakes killed 8,500 people in Takhar and Badakhshan provinces.

THE STATESMAN

27 MAR 2002

Hundreds of Taliban prisoners freed

SHIBARGHAN, AFGHANISTAN),
MARCH 23. Hundreds of former Taliban fighters were freed in a goodwill gesture in this northern Afghan town today, but thousands were still held in appalling conditions in one of Afghanistan's harshest prisons.

Heavy prison gates were flung open and most of the 258 released captives poured out in a chaotic and jubilant mass from the prison of Shibarghan where they had been kept for four months.

Groups of relatives, tears in their eyes, rushed to hug their emaciated but happy kinsmen, some of whom could not walk on their own and were supported or carried by their fellows.

Minutes earlier the inmates, soaked by rain and huddled in the muddy prison yard, had heard the Deputy Defence Minister, Abdul Rashid Dostum, say that the Afghan interim leader, Hamid Karzai, had ordered their release in a sign of reconciliation marking the spring holiday of Nauroz.

Mr. Karzai said at Thursday's Nauroz festivities that a total of 300 Shibarghan captives would be freed to mark the holiday, which celebrates the spring equinox and the New Afghan year, revived after being banned for years by the purist Taliban movement.

"Today is the happiest day in my life," 18-year old Muhammaddin told Reuters before leaving the prison.

"I will now return to my home and will serve only my mother and father," said the pale and weary peasant dressed in tatters. Like most of the more than 3,000 prisoners held in this town some 130 km west from the regional capital of Mazar-i-Sharif, Muhammaddin was captured after laying down his arms following fighting in nearby Konduz province in the U.S.-led "war on terror".

And like the other lucky ones he clutched a yellow temporary identity card and one million Afghanis (\$15) provided by the Red Cross. — Reuters

Afghan biological arms lab found

Vijay Dutt
London, March 23

US TROOPS battling remnants of the al-Qaida network in southeast Afghanistan uncovered a biological weapons laboratory during recent mountain operations, a British government source said on Friday.

But a US defence official, who asked not to be identified, told in Washington that he was not aware of any discovery of a biological arms laboratory in "Operation Anaconda."

Although Defence Secre-

tary Donald Rumsfeld has said there is ample evidence that al-Qaida wants weapons of mass destruction, US defense officials said earlier this week that no evidence of any biological arms had been found to date in about 60 al-Qaida and Taliban compounds and other sites searched by US troops in Afghanistan.

But the British source, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, said the evidence of biological weapons was a major factor behind Britain's sudden decision this week to send up to 1,700

elite mountain troops to reinforce the US-led coalition waging the "war on terror."

"They found a biological weapons laboratory during Operation Anaconda," he said, giving no further details. "One of the reasons for sending the marines out was to keep them (al-Qaida) on the run," he added. "It made the need for troops more urgent."

British Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said gave few details of their mission but said they were going to mop up the remnants of the al-Qaida and Taliban fighters

and would stay in Afghanistan until "the job was done."

The British Government source said the al-Qaida network appeared "quite well advanced in biological weapons and chemical weapons technology."

He said he was frankly amazed there had been no major incidents since the September 11 kamikaze attacks in New York and Washington, which gave even greater urgency to the operations against Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

THE HINDUSTAN FREE

Schools open in Kabul

FROM MEHRDAD BALALI

Kabul, March 23 (Reuters): Afghanistan's interim leader Hamid Karzai wept today at the reopening of his country's schools which determinedly left behind the radical Islamic dogma of the Taliban for everyday subjects like math and science.

Boys — and girls — ran, skipped and dawdled back to classrooms at the start of a new school year that marked the return of women teachers. During the six years that the Taliban were in power, girls over the age of nine were not allowed in schools.

In a symbolic break with Afghanistan's war-scarred past, primary and secondary school children opened new textbooks rushed to the country in recent days after they were written by Afghan scholars at US universities. There are even pictures of people — images banned by the Taliban who ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until blasted out of power in December by US-led forces for harbouring Osama bin Laden, blamed for the September 11 attacks on the United States.

"Today, our nation is shedding tears, not out of misery but joy," Karzai said at a ceremony at a central Kabul school.

"Our children are one of the smartest and best-dressed chil-



A girl smiles in Kabul during the official ceremony marking the opening of schools. (AFP)

dren in the world. They are the best in the world," he said with tears in his eyes to loud applause.

King's return delayed

The return home of the ex-king of Afghanistan, originally scheduled for Monday, has been put back until some time in April, a source at the Italian foreign ministry said today. The source said she did not know the reason for the delay, but an official said earlier this week there were concerns about the security of his flight to Kabul.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

24/3

The U.S.' Operation Anaconda

By T. Sreedhar

THE MUCH-AWAITED retaliation by the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine appears to have started in earnest on February 28/ March 1 in southern and eastern Afghanistan. By March 6 reports started appearing in the media to suggest that the combine's war has begun on all fronts in Paktia and Khost provinces with the U.S. installations coming under attack from small bands of fighters. In the first round, say March 1-5, the U.S. itself accepted that seven of its soldiers were killed and 40 wounded. On March 4, an U.S. helicopter, the first in the five-month-old war, was shot down in Zarmat, a second was destroyed between Sata Kundao and Mata Chana (Khost), while two more helicopters were reported to have been destroyed during a raid on Khost airport. The combine claimed that about 160 U.S., Afghan and allied soldiers have been killed in these incidents. The Taliban-Al-Qaeda casualties are believed to run into hundreds.

Fierce fighting has also erupted in Logar province adjacent to Kabul with different groups. These include fighters from Pakistan, the Taliban, Hizb-i-Islam and other factions, who came together after October 7, 2001, and took control of many areas. According to *Asian Times*, "the U.S.-led grand alliance forces came to the rescue of the pro-Karzai administration in Logar but the million dollar question is where to drop bombs as it is impossible to tell who is a friend and who is foe". There are also reports that the Taliban-Al-Qaeda have taken positions in Orguzan and Himand provinces in the south. The Karzai Government's administration is reluctant to take action against them because once the fighting begins in earnest in southern Afghanistan, pockets of resistance are likely to arise all over and can create havoc. The combine's next target, according to initial reports coming from Pakistan, is Wardaz province, from where they will try to take control of Kunhar

province. Before analysing the U.S. response to this new offensive, three developments must be noted. First, was it the locals or the Pakistanis who provided the intelligence for the U.S. attacks on southern Afghanistan in November 2001 — it was not complete. The fierce tribal loyalties worked, and Gilzai tribes on both sides of Durand Line (Pakistan-Afghanistan border) smuggled fighters from the war zone and provided them safe havens. The area from Shah Kot to Zarmat in Paktia prov-

U.S.). One of them was quoted by the Afghan Islamic press agency as having said that the "fight against America for the supremacy of Islam and defence of our country will continue until our last breath". If this appeal spread in the entire Islamic World, a repeat of the 1980s, volunteers from various countries may start coming to Afghanistan to fight against the U.S.

The U.S. response on the war front, Operation Anaconda, named after the snake that wraps itself

In a situation like the one emerging in southern Afghanistan, America's present strategy is highly unlikely to succeed.

ince is riddled with hundred of caves and tunnels in the mountains and movement of people cannot be easily detected. In fact, after five months in the area, the U.S. does not have a clue about the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar.

Second, the Taliban-Al-Qaeda cleverly withdrew into these mountains with all their arms and ammunition. This was projected as a hasty retreat. Now, it is clear that the people who masterminded September 11 anticipated the U.S. response and made a tactical withdrawal. After the initial U.S. fury was over, they seem to have decided on hit-and-run tactics to demoralise a technically far superior enemy. The Taliban-Al-Qaeda appear to have drawn correct lessons from Operation Desert Storm of 1991, the U.S. war against Iraq. It is going to be a prolonged guerrilla war, with both the sides testing each other's resilience.

Lastly, any prolonged war of this nature is going to unleash a totally new set of socio-economic forces. The reports coming from Peshawar and Quetta indicate that the Taliban-Al-Qaeda leaders are going round to various mosques in Pakistan and Afghanistan asking people to join them in their fight against infidels (the

around its prey and crushes it, is based the assumption that all the escape routes of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda can be sealed first and then the U.S. Air Force allowed to do the rest of the job. The American assessment is that it will be able to complete the campaign in three to four weeks and achieve the objectives of Operation Anaconda.

In a situation like the one emerging in southern Afghanistan, America's present strategy is highly unlikely to succeed. The 50,000-odd Al-Qaeda-Taliban fighters are scattered all over Afghanistan, and who is loyal to whom is not known. If such fighters move around in bands of 40 to 50 and open multiple fronts, the U.S. can do very little. Even in Paktia, people familiar with the terrain feel that other than carpet-bombing of the entire mountain ranges, which include parts of Pakistan, the U.S. cannot eliminate resistance groups in any other way. Can the U.S. undertake such an action without inviting serious problems for the rulers in Islamabad? U.S. intelligence, by this time, must have realised that the Al-Qaeda-Taliban top leaders and their families first moved to Pakistan, and from there to some safe havens. They hesitated to take any punitive action

at that stage as it might have had an adverse impact on the rulers in Islamabad. Has the situation changed in any way now? In the next few days, a definitive U.S. strategy has to emerge, otherwise the interim Karzai Government's authority will be increasingly questioned by the local warlords and Taliban-Al-Qaeda fighters. Any U.S. carpet-bombing is bound to result in high civilian casualties. The question that arises is what will be the Al-Qaeda-Taliban's response to any U.S. bombing of Paktia province and its bordering areas in Pakistan.

In spite of all the available evidence showing that the Taliban-Al-Qaeda have not acquired any nuclear weapons, they can easily acquire chemical, biological and probably some radiation weapons. It is useless to search for them in the Afghan mountains. They must have been smuggled out of the region and preserved carefully with some sleeper agent. The Taliban-Al-Qaeda cannot be underestimated. Equally important, Taliban-Al-Qaeda in their fight against "infidels" can withstand any amount of casualties. Their leadership has successfully motivated them over the years. In addition, Taliban-Al-Qaeda have the patronage of the rich and influential across the Islamic world. These factors cannot be ignored at this stage of the war on terrorism.

Meanwhile, the *Loya jirga* that is going to meet after the return of King, Zahir Shah to Kabul on March 21 in all probability will extend the Karzai Government's term to begin with by another six months. But how to make it survive? Even the enlarged international peace keeping force sought by Hamid Karzai it appears will be drawn from the Islamic world. How many professional armies are there in the Islamic world, other than Pakistan, Jordan, Iran and Iraq?

(The writer is Senior Research Associate, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.)

THE HINDU

17 MARCH 2002

Afghan war takes on new fury

Washington, March 5

AFTER A bloody day of combat for American forces in Afghanistan, with seven killed and 11 wounded, Pentagon officials said a US-led force of about 2,000 would continue fighting dug-in al-Qaida and Taliban fighters until the enemy were either dead or captured.

The latest American casualties in the five-month-old war came on Monday during intense fighting at the al-Qaida's snowy eastern Afghanistan mountain hide-out as two twin-rotor troop-carrying helicopters came under attack. Military officials said the opposition force used machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades.

President Bush said the deaths made him more determined to wipe out al-Qaida. "We send our prayers and tears to those whose families have lost life," the President told students and educators at Eden Prairie High School near Minneapolis.

The US assault, code-named Operation Anaconda, began on Friday in the rugged mountains near the Afghan city of Gardez. Instead of letting local Afghan forces take the lead, US Army soldiers were the vanguard force,

pursuing fighters of the al-Qaida terror network and former ruling Taliban militia to heavily fortified caves and other hide-outs.

"We intend to continue the operation until those al-Qaida and Taliban, who remain, either surrender or are killed. The choice is theirs," Defence Secretary Donald H Rumsfeld told a Pentagon news conference.

Troops and pilots were fighting at elevations from 8,000 feet to 11,000 feet. Temperatures have dipped to about 15 degrees at night in the snowy peaks. Army officials said Apache attack helicopters had been hit with extraordinary amounts of small arms fire but continued their assaults. French attack jets and US bombers and Air Force AC-130 gunships, armed with howitzers and 40mm cannon, served as the ground troops' airborne artillery.

A Central Command spokesman, Marine Major Ralph Mills, said an MH-47 Chinook helicopter was flying low on a reconnaissance mission when it was hit with a rocket-propelled grenade that knocked a soldier out of the aircraft and caused a hydraulic problem. The first helicopter landed about a half-mile away, Mills said.

A second MH-47 Chinook heli-



AP PHOTO

Afghan fighters repair a machinegun in Paktia on Tuesday.

copter was flying in tandem with the first and rescued the downed crew, then returned to the area where the soldier fell out. The second helicopter dropped troops in that area, and six were killed in a firefight, Mills said.

Several officials said the details of the battle might change as more information becomes available. "The fog of war will persist" until more of the soldiers involved are brought back and debriefed, Army Gen Tom-

my Franks, commander of the Central Command, told a news conference in Tampa, Fla., where he is based.

Gen Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, disputed suggestions that the US force, which numbered 800 to 900 men and included Army special forces soldiers and members of the 101st Airborne and 10th Mountain divisions, had underestimated al-Qaida resistance.

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

6 MAR 2002

Growing chaos

Minister's assassination in Afghanistan

One doesn't know what to make out of this anymore. Immediately after Afghanistan's aviation and tourism minister Abdul Rehman was assassinated on 14 February, the news was that he had been lynched by an irate mob of Haj pilgrims who had waited for two nights in the freezing cold outside Kabul airport to board their flights to Saudi Arabia. This looked like a plausible explanation, until Hamid Karzai, interim leader, suggested Rehman was killed by some top intelligence and defence officials in a personal quarrel. It was known that Rehman was part of the Northern Alliance and had shifted his allegiance to Zahir Shah, while the people accused of killing him were important figures of the Alliance. Although Karzai said there were no political motives, his statement, read in context, hinted at some kind of internal power struggle. Now, foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah says, no, Rehman was killed by a lynch mob, which further confirms suspicions that there is some amount of tension, within the Karzai regime, between the Northern Alliance which has all the key cabinet posts — defence, foreign and interior — and the others.

The other question that Rehman's assassination raised was that of security. There were obviously not enough troops or policemen either to manage the crowd of pilgrims or to ensure the minister's security. Karzai may have wanted to cover this up. There have been other incidents, such as the scuffle between the international force and a crowd at the Kabul football stadium. Warlordism is rampant. The Taliban is said to be regrouping in refugee camps across the Pakistani border and are sure to have pockets of sympathy not only within Afghanistan, but also among the warlords. In such an environment, the assassination of Rehman is bound to increase the sense of deja vu of a people who have known only insecurity and mayhem in the last two decades.

THE STATESMAN

27 FEB 2002

Whodunnit in Kabul

Kabul 2/27 Karzai faces his first major test 519

Hamid Karzai's interim government faces its first major test with the assassination of Abdul Rahman, the tourism and civil aviation minister. The murder at Kabul airport where the minister was reportedly flung from the plane he had boarded to travel to New Delhi, epitomizes the problems the new government is up against. There are two versions of what happened. Eyewitnesses report that Haj pilgrims, exasperated with repeated delays in the flight carried out the murder. But Karzai blamed senior security officials belonging to a particular faction within his government. Perhaps the versions are compatible; the delay in airlifting pilgrims may have been a cover for other motives. Whatever it may be, a lot hinges on how Karzai handles the case, particularly if insiders in his government are at loggerheads. Most of those accused belong to Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami party, and Rabbani was one of the *mujahideen* leaders responsible for mayhem in Afghanistan following Russian withdrawal. He has been hostile to an international presence while Karzai is supported by the Americans — the murder may point to tensions between the two.

A good sign, though, is that Rabbani was present among the mourners at Rahman's funeral where he lauded the latter's role in the fight against Soviet occupation. And Karzai's government is moving speedily — it has arrested five people in the case, and seeks extradition from Saudi Arabia of three senior government officials, thought to be involved in the murder. In a sign of the new international environment favouring cooperation against terrorism and stability in Afghanistan the Saudis have promptly agreed to extradite the suspects, perhaps with Washington providing the requisite nudge. A credible trial and conviction of those responsible for the murder will go a long way towards establishing the authority of the new government. Troops of the international security force (ISAF) in Kabul have already come under fire, and Karzai has underscored his determination to call for more international troops if law and order deteriorates or fighting between Afghan factions breaks out. He has also done a good job of securing billions of dollars of international aid for rebuilding his shattered country. Given Afghanistan's experience of anarchy over the past decade, one can only keep one's fingers crossed.

THE STATESMAN

22 FEB 2002

War among tribal chiefs still haunts Afghanistan, says CIA

By MICHAEL R. GORDON

WASHINGTON: The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has warned in a classified report that Afghanistan could once again fall into violent chaos if steps are not taken to restrain the competition for power among rival warlords and to control ethnic tensions, senior American officials said on Wednesday.

The report comes as the Bush administration is sharply divided over how to maintain peace in Afghanistan in coming months. There is broad agreement that Afghanistan's security can be assured by setting up an Afghan army, a national police force and an effective legal system while clamping down on heavily armed and squabbling militias.

But American officials say it could take many months before an Afghan military is put in place. Efforts to develop a police force have also made little headway. The slow pace of the efforts has been of particular concern because the difficulties the interim Afghan leader, Hamid Karzai, has had in trying to assert his control over the country, much of which remains in the hands of warlords. "If it takes six months or even more than a year to create a single army, what do we do in the meantime to deter war among the warlords?" a senior official said.

As a stopgap measure now, the state department is urging that the nearly 4,000-strong international peacekeeping force in Kabul be enlarged so that it could also

serve in other Afghan cities.

No Americans would serve as peacekeepers. But the United States would fly the other nations' troops to Afghanistan, provide intelligence and offer a commitment that it would whisk the foreign peacekeepers to safety if they were endangered, measures that Washington already provides for the Kabul-based international security force. "What the state department

Defence officials have argued in private meetings that the expansion of the force is unnecessary and would divert resources from the broader American campaign against terrorism.

On Wednesday, Pentagon went public with its objections. It was a rare window into an administration that prides itself on keeping its internal disputes under wraps.

"The question is, do you want to put your time and effort and money into the International Security Assistance Force — go take it from, say, 5,000 to 20,000 people?" Mr Rumsfeld said during a visit to Nellis Air Force base in Nevada, alluding to the state department approach. "There's one school of thought that thinks that's a desirable thing to do".

"Another school of thought, which is where my brain is, is that why put all the time and money and effort in that?" Mr Rumsfeld added. "Why not put it into helping them develop a national army so that they can look out for themselves over time?" While defence department civilians and state department officials are at odds, Gen Tommy R.

Franks, the head of the U.S. central command, has not taken a firm stand on the issue, a military official said.

The worries over stability and security in Afghanistan have been fuelled by the recent killing of the Afghan aviation minister in Kabul, a melee at the Kabul football stadium, skirmishes between rival militia in the Khost and meddling by Iran in western and northern Afghanistan. (NYT News Service)



Afghanistan's fledgling army gathers at the Olympic Stadium in Kabul recently to go through drills.

is suggesting is that there are a few other places outside of Kabul where the international force could assist the Afghans in providing security", a state department official said. "As a result the Afghans would do a better job and would be less likely to fall into conflict with each other in doing so".

Defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his civilian deputies at the Pentagon, however, have challenged this approach.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

22 FEB 2002

Afghanistan

A 'COLLATERAL' CRISIS IN KABUL

19/12 110-70

THE BIZARRE MURDER of a prominent Minister in the post-Taliban interim administration of Afghanistan is a grim reminder of the persistent challenges of war and peace in that hapless southwest Asian country that borders Pakistan. In a tragic irony, a contingent of an international security assistance force was camping close to the Kabul airport where the assailants took the life of the Aviation and Tourism Minister, Abdul Rahman, who was a one-time associate of Ahmad Shah Masood — a near-legendary Afghan strategist for nearly two decades until he himself was assassinated last September. If the unit of the British-led international security force did not try to intervene and save Rahman, the reason is said to lie in the limits to the mandate of that outfit. The multilateral security squad in question was reported to have been detailed for duties at an Afghan military facility near Kabul and not at its airport itself. In any case, the transnational force has never been mandated to play a proactive role of providing a credible security cover for the Afghan capital where the outfit operates at present. Its vaguely defined functions are, of course, derived from the overall concerns of the United Nations about creating a secure environment across Afghanistan in the context of the barbaric Taliban's recent downfall. Britain has now engaged the new Afghan Government, the first of two planned transitional and democracy-promotive administrations, on the issue whether the jurisdiction of the existing international peace brigade should be enlarged to help the Afghan authorities maintain security over the entire country. The nationalist sensitivities of the multi-ethnic Afghan society are also to be addressed in this regard. Some international security personnel have also come under attack.

Differing accounts of how and why Rahman was killed do not diminish the urgency of the challenges before the present Afghan leader, Ha-

mid Karzai, who and his team of Ministers including the slain functionary were chosen at a post-Taliban international conference. With the U.S. having demonstrated its state-of-the-art offensive technological prowess in deposing the Taliban, a ragtag military entity, Washington played no mean part in the subsequent installation of the present interim regime in Kabul. However, the U.S. is unsure still about the fate of the leaders of terror, Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden. This aspect of America's unfinished business may account for its lack of interest in the security-related helplessness of the current Afghan administration. Yet, America's moral responsibility to enhance Afghanistan's law and order situation at this juncture cannot be exaggerated. There is no justification for a collateral crisis of security in a country where the U.S. military forces are still on the offensive.

An old political feud is suspected to be the cause for Rahman's murder. This has something to do with Afghanistan's divisions over the continuing political-moral relevance of its long-deposed king, who is expected to oversee the convening of a traditional *loya jirga* that might in due course put another transitional Government in the place of the present one. Rahman had switched loyalties from Masood to the former King, Zahir Shah, during the Taliban's anarchical 'rule'. It is in this context that Mr. Karzai is now trying to track down the anti-royalist elements who are suspected to have fled to Saudi Arabia after engineering Rahman's murder. Overall, the persistent sway of provincial warlords, who operate outside Mr. Karzai's limited writ, is compounded by the grief of Afghan civilians over America's misdirected raids in quest of the elusive Osama and Omar. The U.N., which seeks funds for a massive Afghan reconstruction, should take the lead for a secure environment which the project itself needs.

110-70

19 FEB 2000

Afghanistan Karzai vows to HO-11 ensure security 1872

KABUL, FEB. 17. Afghanistan's interim leader, Hamid Karzai, said today he would do everything necessary to ensure security after last week's assassination of the Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister and an attack on British security forces.

Mr. Karzai vowed stern punishment for the killers of Abdul Rahman at Kabul airport on Thursday night, and said he would seek more help from the international community if security deteriorated.

He also dismissed fears that the minister's murder, allegedly by members of a powerful faction of the Northern Alliance, which makes up the core of the interim administration, could split his Government.

"The people that committed the crime will be dealt with very, very sternly," Mr. Karzai told a news conference at the presidential palace. "There will not be any lenient hand."

"They have committed a murder, let the courts decide on that," he said.

Mr. Karzai said five people were being held in Kabul in connection with Rahman's killing, which was initially blamed on Haj pilgrims enraged by delays in flights to Saudi Arabia.

Two other suspects were being hunted in Afghanistan and Mr. Karzai said he was confident three other suspects, who fled to Saudi Arabia on a pilgrim flight, would be sent back to Afghanistan. He said he was meeting the Saudi ambassador and expected to discuss the case with him. — Reuters

Telegraph reports:

The pilot of the plane from which the minister was dragged out before he was killed, had pleaded for help on his radio for more than two hours as an angry mob gathered around the aircraft, according to reports.

Aman Ullah Khan, who is leading the Government inquiry

in the killing, said that the airliner's "black box" held evidence to indict Ministry of Interior officials who spoke to the pilot. He said that it was unlikely that nearby British and French U.N. forces did not hear or understand the pleas being made.

The revelations lend credence to claims that Abdul Rahman was assassinated by political rivals.

Ullah Khan, who is also a Minister, said that five to six men stormed the plane by breaking through a cockpit window "with the intention of killing the minister".

THE HINDU

18 FEB 2002

Ministers in lynching plot: Karzai

AGENCIES
KABUL, FEBRUARY 16

AFGHANISTAN'S Interim Prime Minister Hamid Karzai accused high-ranking government officials of masterminding the brutal slaying of Afghanistan's Air Transportation and Tourism Minister Abdul Rahman, who was killed during a riot at Kabul's airport a day earlier.

Karzai charged that the alleged killers were motivated by a long-standing feud over political allegiances with Abdul Rahman. He identified the missing suspects as the Head of Political Affairs of the National Security (Intelligence) Department, General Abdullah

Jan Tawhidi, Deputy Defence Minister for Technical Affairs, General Qalandar Beg, and an attorney called Halim. A senior aide to Karzai said on Friday night that the three accused of conspiring to kill Rahman had fled on a plane to Saudi Arabia late Thursday night and that Afghanistan has requested their extradition to face charges. He said four other men had been arrested, but they were not identified. "This assassination took place because of personal hostility and hatred, and it was carried out by a group of

people," Karzai said.

"This tragic incident was the result of a personal vendetta and private hostilities of a group of people. It has no political roots," Information Minister Raheem Makhdoom said.

Hundreds of mourners gathered at Rahman's family home on Saturday as his coffin, draped in a black and gold cloth, arrived from a military hospital. Karzai and other senior government figures were expected to attend the funeral amid tight security. Karzai said he was taking a firm line and said for the

first time in Afghanistan, top officials would be held accountable.

Karzai also said that the killing appeared motivated by resentment that Rahman had belonged to a different Northern Alliance group than the suspects during the alliance's war against the former Taliban leadership.

He played down the risks of such in-fighting for the leadership saying Afghanistan was generally in a much better situation now than it was in the last 20 years.

On the streets, Afghan people hopeful that a new peace in the capital would hold, said they were shocked by the killing. Two senior security officers at Kabul airport were sacked for negligence and the head of national security in the Interior Ministry was suspended from duty.

Saudi will return 3 suspects

■ **KABUL:** Saudi Arabia has assured Afghanistan it will return three Afghan officials named as suspects in the assassination of an Afghan minister as the dead man's family prepared for his funeral on Saturday. — Reuters

Generals killed minister: Karzai

Kabul, February 15

AVIATION AND Tourism Minister Abdul Rahman wasn't lynched by a mob of pilgrims — he was assassinated by senior security officials of the Afghan Interim Administration, Hamid Karzai said late tonight.

In a statement read out on his behalf by Culture Minister Sayed Raheem, the head of the Interim Afghan Government said four persons including two military generals have been arrested. Three others have escaped to Saudi Arabia with Afghans making their annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The Saudi authorities have been asked to repatriate the fugitives.

Karzai said the killing had been carried out "for personal reasons".

Speaking after the statement had been read, Karzai told reporters the case against those arrested was based on "absolute, multiple eyewitness accounts". The killings "had nothing to do with the Hajis," Karzai said.

Gulbuddin, the secretary to Defence Minister Mohammad Qasim Fahim, earlier said that the Interim Government had obtained a video of the scene filmed by a journalist.

Karzai's statement refutes the earlier official version that Rahman was beaten to death by furious Muslim pilgrims who had waited more than two days for a flight to Mecca after paying \$1,500 — a fortune for the poor Afghans — for the trip.

Rahman had boarded the State-owned Ariana Airlines' lone aircraft, bound for New Del-

hi on a trip with his family, when he was dragged down and killed.

The earlier versions said a rumour had spread through the Kabul airport that Rahman had cancelled a Haj flight and hijacked the plane for his Indian tour, and this had prompted the lynching by the furious pilgrims.

The Interim Government met late last night and described the killing as a "criminal tragedy", Foreign Ministry spokesman Omar Samad said. A commission of five ministers has been set up to investigate the killing.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the multinational force helping to maintain security in the capital, is deployed in the military section of Kabul airport but Afghan security forces guard the civilian side.

Agencies

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

16 FEB 2002

Afghan minister 'assassinated'



A file photograph of the Afghan minister for aviation and transport, Abdul Rahman, on board the first Kabul-New Delhi Ariana Airlines flight on 24 January. — AP/PTI

Agencies *ST 1172*

KABUL, Feb. 15. — International troops started patrolling Kabul airport in armoured vehicles today after Afghanistan's aviation and tourism minister Abdul Rahman was killed yesterday.

The interim leader, Mr Hamid Karzai, said the killing was the result of a personal vendetta carried out by senior Afghan security officials. "As you are aware, we had a very tragic incident yesterday in which Abdul Rahman...was assassinated," Mr Karzai said.

The Afghan information minister, Mr Raheen Makhdoom, said the incident "has no political roots."

Mr Makhdoom said three people had been detained in connection with the killing. "It has been found that the head of political affairs of national security (intelligence) department, General Abdullah Jan Tawhidi, General Qalandar Beg, deputy defence minister for technical affairs, and an attorney, Halim, were involved in the incident."

The three officials flew to Saudi Arabia late yesterday and Afghanistan had requested that they be arrested and returned, Mr Makhdoom said. Two other persons were also involved in the case, he said.

Mr Karzai said the cabinet had convened an emergency session immediately after the killing to launch an investigation. It set up a five-minister commission.

Earlier reports had said that Rahman was lynched by furious Haj pilgrims, who had been waiting for days for a flight to Mecca.

The minister was about to leave for New Delhi on a plane owned by Ariana Airlines.

British foreign secretary, Mr Jack Straw, arrived to visit the ISAF headquarters in Kabul. He met his Afghan counterpart Mr Abdullah Abdullah and discussed Britain's role in the future of ISAF after April.

Karzai to seek India's help on reconstruction, page 6
Standoff with foreign troops mars Kabul soccer, page 2

THE STATESMAN

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE STATESMAN

Taliban leaders regrouping, says Afghan minister

Kabul, February 10

AFGHAN AUTHORITIES warned on Saturday that the vanquished Taliban movement was regrouping outside the country, while hailing the surrender of a senior Taliban figure as a breakthrough in tracking down other fugitive leaders.

Afghan interim Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah said some former leaders of the hard-line Islamic Taliban, overthrown as Afghanistan's rulers by the US-led military campaign, were forming new organisations to oppose the Government in Kabul.

"The Taliban leaders are apparently running new outfits," Abdullah told reporters in Kabul.

"There are two organisations outside Afghanistan," he said. "We do not have details of their structure but on the whole it is not acceptable that the Taliban be able to act either outside or inside Afghanistan in any capacity."

Most Taliban leaders who fled Afghanistan are thought to be in Pakistan, which had previously backed the Taliban rule. Abdullah said he received assurances from Pakistani officials on a visit to Islamabad on Friday with Afghan interim leader Hamid Karzai that Pakistan would take measures to prevent such activities.

But distrust has lingered between Pakistan and Afghanistan's Northern Alliance group of military factions, which dominates Karzai's Government.



Abdullah Abdullah

Khalid Pashtoon, spokesman for Kandahar Governor Gul Agha, on Saturday said Muttawakil could provide valuable intelligence on the whereabouts of other senior Taliban — including supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar. "Of course he will have important information. He was the foreign minister," said Pashtoon.

Muttawakil was considered Mullah Omar's right-hand man, and Abdullah, the current Afghan foreign minister, said he had been living in the Pakistani city of Quetta with other leaders who had fled Afghanistan. Abdullah was unaware of the circumstances leading to his reappearance, but speculated that Pakistani authorities may have had a hand.

Pakistani authorities in Quetta denied any knowledge of Muttawakil's surrender or handover to US forces, and a senior Kandahar political source, who said Muttawakil was a moderate, thought he may have made a deal in return for his safety.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 FEB 2002

WAR ON TERROR / MUTTAWAKIL BEING QUIZZED

A war criminal: Kabul

*HPD 10
102*

KABUL, FEB. 9. The Afghan Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah, on Saturday branded the former Taliban Foreign Minister, Mullah Abdul Wakil Muttawakil, who handed himself over to U.S. officials on Friday, as a war criminal who should be brought to trial.

"Taliban leaders have committed crimes against humanity in Afghanistan," Abdullah told a media conference. "There is no political role for such war criminals."

Earlier, Pentagon officials said Mr. Muttawakil turned himself in to Afghan officials in Kandahar on Friday. The Afghans transferred him to the U.S. military base at the city's airport, where he was held on Friday night. The U.S. authorities were questioning Mr. Muttawakil, looking to gain valuable information, the officials said. Omar Samad, a spokesman for the Afghan Foreign Ministry, said he could not confirm the surrender, but said the interim Afghan Government had been expecting Taliban officials to give themselves up. "We have been expecting some important Taliban leaders who are on the run to either turn themselves in or to be caught and to be brought to justice," he said.

Commenting on the fact Mr. Muttawakil was in the hands of the U.S. military, Mr. Abdullah said the Afghan authorities, in conjunction with coalition forces, were hunting for all Taliban leaders, whether they are hiding inside or outside Afghanistan. "If we get information, I hope that with the help of our neighbouring countries we will



HOLDING KEY TO MANY SECRETS?: Mr. Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil, former Taliban Foreign Minister, is seen in Islamabad in this file photo.

be able to get them ... wherever they are."

"Our stand with regard to the Taliban leaders is very clear," Mr. Abdullah said. "They were a part of the problem. They created misery for our people. Our people suffered because of their reign of terror. The world has suffered because of what they did. They harboured terrorism and committed crimes against humanity against the people of Afghanistan".

During the Taliban years, Mr. Muttawakil was a walking contradiction. As Foreign Minister, and the Islamic militia's main link to the wider world, he was careful to publicly hew to a hard line _ defying the U.S. as airstrikes rained down on Afghanistan, defending the harsh Taliban subjugation of women. But the quiet young cleric _ better educated, more worldly and more moderate than others in

Afghanistan

the Taliban inner circle _ confided to associates that he felt fearful and trapped as the movement became more isolated, more radical and more deeply intertwined with Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network.

Now, as the highest-ranking Taliban official in U.S. custody, Mr. Muttawakil may be able to shed some light on the crucial weeks and months leading up to the Sept. 11 terror attacks, and Osama's role in them. American officials say he is in being held by U.S. forces in Afghanistan, but thus far have provided no details about exactly how he wound up in their custody.

As the Taliban tightened their grip on the country, Mr. Muttawakil witnessed firsthand the growing closeness of Omar and Osama, and began to fear the consequences but dared not speak out, said a former fellow Taliban official, interviewed on condition of anonymity. "He was afraid of Omar, and more afraid of Osama," the associate said.

The Pakistani journalist, Ahmed Rashid, an expert on Afghanistan, has written that Mr. Muttawakil was "Omar's ears and eyes and...also his doorkeeper". Anybody who wanted access to Mullah Omar had to go through Wakil.

But security sources in Kandahar say Mr. Muttawakil, considered one of the Taliban's more moderate members, broke with Mullah Omar in late 2001 because of disagreement on the Taliban's refusal to hand over Osama — AP, Reuters

THE END

10 FEB 2002

Karzai wants Pak. to forge a new bond

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 8. The Chairman of the Afghan Interim Administration, Hamid Karzai, today categorically ruled out early withdrawal of the U.S.-led forces from Afghanistan on the plea that the war against terrorism was far from over.

In his maiden and brief visit to Pakistan, Mr. Karzai went out of his way to allay any apprehensions about the attitude of the new regime towards its neighbour and made a passionate appeal to the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, to bury the past and forge a new bond between the two countries.

In his opening statement, Mr. Karzai said that he looked forward to having a "tremendously good future ahead of us."

Islamabad, on its part, tried to make it a significant event. In a goodwill gesture, Mr. Musharraf drove down to the Chakalala military airbase to receive Mr. Karzai and his entourage, including the Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah. Eight other Ministers and one of the Gov-

ernors of the Afghan provinces were part of the delegation. The sudden and unexpected visit of Mr. Karzai was more symbolic than substantive.

This was evident when Mr. Karzai himself announced at the joint news conference he addressed along with Mr. Musharraf that he wanted to visit Islamabad despite the inclement weather and the fact that Mr. Musharraf was leaving for Boston later tonight.

"I got to know that Gen. Musharraf was leaving for the U.S. only on Thursday afternoon. Despite the time constraint I wanted to make the visit. Today our departure was delayed due to heavy snow in Kabul. We were so keen on the visit that we took the risk of flying out in snow," he said.

Mr. Karzai, who left for Kabul after spending just a few hours in Islamabad, conceded that the hurried trip had left little scope for detailed discussions on matters of interest between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

He did not duck even some of the inconvenient questions on

the "anti-Pakistan" statements by some of his senior Ministers in recent weeks. "The issue did come up for discussions in my meeting with Gen. Musharraf. Yes there have been misperceptions. But we have agreed to look at the long-term aspects of the ties between the two countries and forget the short-term misunderstandings".

Mr. Karzai said the two senior Ministers in his Cabinet, Yunus Qanooni and Fahim, wanted to be part of the delegation but could not make it for domestic reasons. Pakistan has grievances against these two for their perceived anti-Pakistan statements and pro-India stand. To a specific question about the continuing presence of the U.S.-led forces in the region and the threat perceived by some countries, he said that but for the help from the U.S.-led coalition, it would not have been possible to drive away the terrorists from Kabul.

"The people of Afghanistan were not only in favour of continuation of the International Security Assistance Forces

(ISAF) but also want the forces to be expanded to other provinces in the country."

He was all praise for Mr. Musharraf for his "courageous" stand to support the international coalition against terrorism and his January 12 address to the people of Pakistan. On the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden and the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, he said that efforts were on to trace them.

Immediately on his arrival, Mr. Karzai was closeted in a meeting with Gen. Musharraf who later announced that they held "in-depth and fruitful discussions on all subjects concerning bilateral relationship, the situation in the region and all other important issues concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan."

Mr. Musharraf said both the countries agreed unanimously, without any reservations, on working together to develop strong brotherly cooperation and relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, in all spheres of activity.

THE HINDU

55-9

77 Holding on

Afghanistan's unity in danger

The expression being used in Washington is "quiet dismay" to describe reactions to reports that warlordism is back in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's deputy defence minister, Rashid Dostum, fought briefly with a rival in the north, while in Gardez, the Ahmadzai Pashtuns refused to accept the authority of the governor of Paktia appointed by Kabul. No one knows exactly what to do with Gul Agha, ensconced in Kandahar with his men or with the self-proclaimed governor of Herat, except for the fact that they are relatively quiet. Afghans have no army of their own, all fighting forces owe allegiance to one faction leader or the other. Dostum has been to India asking for help in the matter, but India can only provide facilities and material, not the political basis for the constitution of an army. Meanwhile, the old Afghan flag has been unfurled and the 1964 constitution and king Zaheer Shah restored.

Karzai belongs to the king's clan, the Popalzais, and is said to be close to the Rome group, but it is not clear whether there is any consensus on Zaheer Shah who ran a modernising regime, pretty much like his neighbour Reza Pahlavi, whereas the mujahideen are all Islamists in varying degrees. Nevertheless, having a constitution means that there is a well-established set of rules for the government by which disputes over authority, over rights and jurisdiction can be settled, even though an administration to enforce the constitution is almost entirely missing. The task of reconstruction is yet to begin in earnest, precisely because of the absence of political unity. If money, which is coming in gradually, is to be properly distributed then local authorities answerable to Kabul must exist. However, Karzai is only an interim leader, his mandate expires in May. He may get an extension, but his perspective remains short. His job is to ensure that his authority, precarious as it is, holds.

12 HD-12
AFGHANISTAN / 43 KILLED IN FACTIONAL FIGHTING

Warlords threaten fragile peace

GARDEZ (AFGHANISTAN), JAN. 31. Heavy explosions, mortar and machine gun fire rocked an eastern Afghan town, killing at least 43 persons and wounding dozens more, in heavy factional fighting on Thursday that highlighted the fragility of Afghanistan's newfound peace.

U.S. planes circled overhead but did not intervene in the battle that sent up plumes of smoke over Gardez, capital of the strategically important province of Paktia. The fighting threatened to complicate U.S.-led efforts to destroy pockets of Al-Qaeda resistance hiding in Paktia's mountains. The fighting pitted troops loyal to Bacha Khan, a local warlord aligned to Afghanistan's interim administration and working with U.S. special forces, against troops for the town's government council or shura.

Mortar fire shook walls at Gardez's hospital. Dr. Najib, the chief surgeon who like many Afghans uses just one name, said they treated 28 persons in the 24 hours since fighting erupted on Wednesday, and that nine of them had died. "The patients are afraid. We are close to the front lines, and they are hearing artillery and mortar fire," he said. A blood-stained hospital corridor served as a makeshift morgue, with eight bodies covered in blankets. At least 15 shura soldiers and about 18 civilians were killed, said Haji Saifullah, an elderly and powerful tribesman who heads the council. He said Gardez would never allow Khan to take over. "No, no, no, we will never accept



Soldiers loyal to military commander Padsha Khan watch smoke clouds of shelling at the provincial capital Gardez in Paktia province, southeastern Afghanistan, on Thursday. — AFP

him. He is a smuggler and a tyrant and a killer," Saifullah said, speaking at his headquarters on Gardez's northern edge. Ten of Mr. Khan's fighters were killed and 25 injured, said one of his spokesmen, Jilani.

The Associated Press saw a half dozen of them in the hospital, some badly wounded. Khan, a Pashtun tribal leader, is trying to install himself as Governor of Paktia despite strong local opposition. — Mr. Khan's ap-

pointment as Paktia's Governor was confirmed by the interim administration last week. The fighting represents a challenge to Mr. Karzai's attempts to restore stability to the war-torn country. In Kabul, the Afghan capital 100 km to the north, a spokesman for the Defence Ministry said its forces would not interfere in the fighting. A spokesman described the battle as an internal matter between the opposing factions. — AP

SECRET

1 FEB 2002

USA turns blind eye to Karzai's flaws

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Bronwen Maddox
The Times, London

WASHINGTON, Jan. 29. — The USA is determined to make the best of its imperfect victory in Afghanistan, and the suave but imperfect new leader that it has helped to install.

Mr Hamid Karzai, the new Prime Minister of Afghanistan and the first to visit the USA in 39 years, mentioned at the end of his first speech that he might well support amputation of limbs as a punishment. Provided the criminals were prosperous enough to know better, he added, in an odd and opaque gesture at the theology of such things.

Mr Karzai, who met Mr George W Bush yesterday, is set to be a guest of honour at the President's State of the Union speech later tonight.

Dressed in his now trademark green and blue shawl and cylindrical Afghan hat, he'll undoubtedly get a rousing ovation. But some of his remarks, together with military setbacks on the ground, show that the State of the War is far from ideal — and far from the resounding success that seemed within reach in November, when Mr Karzai was chosen. He is already instantly recognised, the only man about town in a robe. Yesterday, he raised the black, red and green Afghan flag to a cheering crowd outside the embassy. On Sunday, he addressed a crowd of the Afghan diaspora in Georgetown University.

Most of his remarks, delivered in fluent English with an American-Afghan accent, supported his reputation as America's man in Kabul. He called on Afghans in the USA to make lots of money — and bring it back home to invest.

But his other remarks, barely picked up by the American press, fit less well with his image. In answer to a question about whether he would im-



plement amputation and other punishments of sharia law, he suggested he would, asserting that "the punishment is not for the poor. It is for a prosperous person breaking the law. There can be no punishment without prosperity."

The Bush administration is deliberately overlooking those ways in which Mr Karzai might depart from its ideal.

Bush, Karzai sign joint pact, page 6

THE STATESMAN

30 JAN 2002

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Afghanistan +19-12

Stress on security, stability

WASHINGTON, JAN. 29. The U.S. and Afghanistan have signed a joint statement underlining the "new partnership" between the two countries and asserted that both Kabul and Washington "stand united in determination that Afghanistan will never again become a training ground for global terror."

"We are equally determined," said the joint statement signed by the U.S. President, George W Bush and the Prime Minister of the interim Afghan Government, Hamid Karzai, "that Afghanistan's tragic experience, where terrorists were allowed to hold an entire nation hostage, will not be repeated or replicated anywhere in the world."

The two leaders expressed their commitment to build "a lasting partnership for the 21st century", and said they were "determined to fight terrorism and ensure security, stability and reconstruction for Afghanistan, and foster a representative and accountable government for all Afghan men and women." They pledged their respect for the culture and traditions of the different peoples of Afghanistan, and for the great religion of Islam, which was tragically distorted and misused by the Taliban.

The statement also reaffirmed the leaders' commitment to continue to work together to crush the remnants of the Taliban and Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network. The United States and Afghanistan shared the belief that a secure, stable Afghanistan, at peace with



FRIENDSHIP IS THE GOAL: A foreign trooper from the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, tries to score against Afghan soccer players at the Kabul Stadium in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Tuesday. The stadium was the site of public executions during the Taliban rule. The chair at left serves as one of the goal posts. — AP

its neighbours, was critical to achieving their shared goals, the statement said.

Among other things, the joint statement envisages the printing and distribution of 10 million textbooks in Dari and Pashtu, focussed on maths, reading and science, in time for the official start of the Afghan school year in March. Basic training will be provided to 4,000 teachers, at least half of whom will be women. Recalling that the Taliban destroyed several of Afghanistan's great historic statues and cultural sites, the two countries also agreed to work together to help restore and preserve the country's heritage.

Meanwhile, the United States has pledged another \$50 million towards reconstruction of the war-ravaged country and assured that Washington will help Kabul develop its own military as quickly as possible.

"The United States will continue to be a friend to the Afghan people," Mr. Bush said yesterday after meeting Mr. Karzai. The U.S. has already pledged \$297 million to Afghanistan. "Afghanistan must as quickly as possible develop her own military and we will help train it and General Tommy Franks (Commander-in-Chief, Central Command) is fully committed to this idea," Mr. Bush said. — PTI

THE HINDU

30 JAN 2002

Bush offers training to Afghan forces

Washington, January 29

PRESIDENT BUSH offered on Tuesday to provide training for police and military forces in Afghanistan. But he ruled out a proposal by the interim Afghan leader Hamid Karzai that the United States send troops to take part in the international peacekeeping force in Afghanistan.

"The United States is committed to building a lasting partnership with Afghanistan," Bush said, standing next to Karzai after they met for talks in the Oval Office.

"We will help the new Afghan Government provide the security that is the foundation for peace."

Bush plans to use his State of the Union address to cast Afghanistan as the first front in a long-term war on terrorism. But he drew the line at joining peacekeeping efforts in the war-torn nation.

"The United States will continue to work closely with these forces and provide support for their mission," said Bush, who offered to "bail out" the international force if it runs into trouble.

"Better yet than peacekeepers, which will be there for a while with our help, let Afghanistan have her own military," Bush said. Karzai thanked Bush and the US for ending Taliban rule in Afghanistan, and he vowed to stand against terrorism.

"This joint struggle against terrorism should go to the absolute end," Karzai said. "We must finish them."

Before arriving at the White

House, Karzai said he would like to see the US troops join the British-led international peacekeeping force now in Afghanistan. He also said he would like to see that mission expand its role beyond Kabul, where it now operates.

Bush's decision on peacekeeping is likely to be met with little opposition on Capitol Hill. But some warned that the president's position might make it more difficult to get other nations to take part in the international force.

"If there are sufficient international peacekeepers that it makes it unnecessary for the United States to send its troops, that's a great solution. But it would be a mistake for the peacekeeping operation to fail because we refused to commit troops," said Norm Kurz, communications director for Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Joseph Biden, D-Del. "If we don't lead, it's possible no one else will."

In addition to helping rebuild the Afghan military, Bush pledged \$50 million in loans to help attract U.S. business investment in Afghanistan, and \$3 million from the Labor Department to create jobs.

Promising consistent help to Afghanistan, President Bush said, "The United States will continue to be a friend to the Afghan people." The US has already pledged \$ 297 million to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan must as quickly as possible develop her own military "and we will help train it and Gen Tommy Franks (commander-in-chief, central com-

mand) is fully committed to this idea," Bush said.

Karzai, said, "Afghanistan knows the suffering of the people of America as they went through the horror of twin towers incident. The Afghans have suffered exactly the same way. Afghanistan is a good partner. It will stay a good partner," Karzai said. The US, which is not part of the UN sanctioned peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan, however, has said it will help the multilateral forces if they face any trouble.

Captives not PoWs: Bush

President George Bush has said that the captured members of al-Qaida and Taliban would not be treated as prisoners of war, putting to rest the differences among top administration officials concerning their status.

On whether the Taliban and al-Qaida captives should be treated as prisoners of war under the Geneva conventions, Bush told reporters that "these are killers and terrorists and they are being treated humanely".

"We are not going to call them prisoners of war as al-Qaida is not a known military. They know no countries. If a country is weakened, they will occupy it like a parasite," Bush said.

He, however, added that he would examine the legal issues concerning the detainees. Bush said there were 179 detainees in Guantanamo Bay and "there are more in Pakistan and Afghanistan".

Agencies

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 JAN 2002

6 al-Qaida men killed in hospital attack

Kandahar, January 28

ALL SIX fighters loyal to Osama bin Laden have been killed in southern Kandahar after Afghan forces and US advisers stormed a hospital where the rebels were holed up, an Afghan official said.

Police initially said three of the Arab al-Qaida fighters were killed, two wounded and one missing after troops stormed the building, but an official later said all six had been killed.

"Six Arabs are dead. We gave them an ultimatum. They would not talk, they would not negotiate. They were fighting to the last moment," said Khalid Pashtoon, spokesman for Kandahar governor Gul Agha Sherzai.

"The operation is over," he said, adding five Afghan security force personnel had been wounded, one seriously.

US special forces and their Afghan allies launched an assault on the hospital in the early hours of Monday.

Smoke drifted from windows of the hospital wing where the armed and wounded Arab and foreign fighters of the al-Qaida network had taken refuge with grenades tied to their bodies.

The men, who have threatened to blow themselves up if anyone but a doctor enters their ward, were among a 19-strong group brought to Kandahar's Chinese Hospital just before the city fell to opposition forces on December 7. Most have since escaped.

At around 3 am Afghan time, gunfire erupted at the Chinese Hospital in the centre of the southern city, former powerbase of the vanquished Taliban, and two grenade blasts were heard after US forces surrounded the building, witnesses said.

"The fighters were given an

ultimatum this morning of four hours to surrender," Afghan police guard Hayat Mohammad said in the late morning. "Now that deadline has been extended to 2 pm."

US marksmen had taken up positions on roofs of buildings around the hospital walls and small arms fire and muffled explosions were heard in the early hours in the latest operation to flush out fighters of bin Laden, prime suspect in the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

The six besieged Arabs had barricaded the windows of their ward with beds and mattresses and there only two entrances to the room — a staircase from the ground floor in the control of Afghan guards and another through the ward itself, doctors said.

"No casualties have been reported," said Nasratullah, an aide to Kandahar intelligence chief Haji Gullalai.

Special force soldiers patrolled the perimeter and Afghan troops blocked off side streets. The fire brigade had been called but could not reach the hospital. Doctors and nurses had been moved back about 300 yards.

The last six fighters barricaded themselves into their ward late last month, a day after shooting broke out when their Afghan opponents tried to flush them out of the hospital.

Two were arrested by US forces after they were tricked into leaving. Six remained and have refused to surrender, guards said.

One wounded fighter who tried to escape from the hospital blew himself up earlier this month when he was spotted by a Muslim cleric on his way to the

hospital mosque for dawn prayers.

US soldiers have been visiting the hospital several times a day, the guards said. Afghan soldiers have been trying to persuade the fighters to surrender, using videotapes showing two of the foreign fighters' companions already taken prisoner by US forces in Kandahar to encourage them to come out. Security guards had since tried to get them to surrender but they threatened to blow themselves up with their own grenades.

Karzai in US

Afghan interim leader Hamid Karzai will have a landmark meeting with US President George W Bush in Washington today. Karzai is the first Afghan leader visiting United States in 39 years. Accompanying Karzai are Afghanistan's ministers of construction, women affairs, public works and education and health.

Karzai not only wants to appease the international community in its anti-terror campaign but pacify Afghans who are increasingly concerned at the number of civilians being killed by US bombs.

He is also expected to ask America to help the interim government stand on its feet beyond the estimated \$300 million that Washington has already offered to help rebuild Afghanistan.

Later this week, he is scheduled to address the World Economic Forum in New York. The last Afghan leader to visit the US was the former king Zahir Shah, who was invited in September 1963 by President John F Kennedy.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 JAN 2002

Karzai for more foreign troops

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, Jan. 27. — Afghanistan wants neighbours not to interfere in the country, expand the international troop presence to restore law and order in addition to shrinking the power of the warlords.

Afghanistan's interim government Prime Minister, Mr Hamid Karzai, who is arriving here today for talks with President Mr George W Bush and foreign minister Mr Abdullah Abdullah, who is already here in advance of the visit, said this to *The Washington Post* in interviews.

Mr Karzai told UN secretary general Mr Kofi Annan on Friday that Afghanistan needs help from abroad to neutralise provincial warlords and armed gangs.

Some of Mr Annan's envoys have recommended an international force of 30,000 soldiers for Afghanistan, against the 2,500 members of a British-led peace-keeping force now operating in Kabul.

Mr Bernd McConnell of the US Agency for International Development, underlining the need for such a force, said that now Afghanistan "is the Wild West. It is dangerous and in some ways it is getting more dangerous. There has to be a secure

environment to allow a rebirth of the Health Department, a rebirth of the school system." Mr Abdullah said Mr Karzai will press his case for "a prolonged partnership".

Mr Karzai, who is due to meet

Mr Bush on Tuesday, said when asked about his vision for Afghanistan: "What any man would have for his country: to have a prosperous, stable and peaceful Afghanistan. To be sure that people get some real security and have schools functioning. To start providing health care and to get roads built. Most of all, I want to be in time

World Bank, IMF teams in Kabul

KABUL, Jan. 27.— An 18-member delegation from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank arrived here today for three days of talks aimed at helping restart the economy.

The delegates held talks at the presidential palace with finance minister Mr Hedayat Amin Arsala and central bank acting governor Mr Abdul Qadir Fitrat, officials said.

The financiers are due to meet the ministers of planning, mines and industry and commerce as well as officials of the department of statistics tomorrow and on Tuesday, officials said. — AFP

in convening the Afghan loya jirga, the traditional council of Afghanistan, five months from now."

Mr Karzai said that he believes that warlordism is over in Afghanistan. All the people that he has received since the inauguration of the interim administration have been strongly asking him to put the print of the central government all over Afghanistan to strengthen the national authority in Afghanistan. The common man is eager for a good Afghanistan — one that returns to the rule of law and dignity.

THE STATESMAN

28 JAN 2002

UN team formed to decide on Afghan govt

FROM SAYED SALAHUDDIN
AND JONATHAN LYONS

Kabul/Washington, Jan. 25 (Reuters): Afghanistan announced today the line-up of a team that will take the first steps to forming a government while a clash between US forces and remnant Taliban served as a reminder of the dangers still lurking.

UN secretary general Kofi Annan visited Afghanistan to assess its needs and oversee the announcement of the team charged with organising the first full Loya Jirga, or tribal grand council, since 1964 and

which marks the next stage in Afghanistan's long return to peace.

In the US, John Walker Lindh, the American charged with trying to kill his countrymen as a fighter for Osama bin Laden's al Qaida, was ordered held without bond after appearing in a federal court.

Afghan interim leader Hamid Karzai, the man who has taken over the land from which bin Laden is believed to have planned the September 11 attacks, said the UN had completed a list of 21 people to organise the Loya Jirga that will decide Afghanistan's next government.



Hamid Karzai and Kofi Annan at a press conference in Kabul. (AFP)

Karzai read out a list of 21 names at a joint news conference with Annan and took pains to stress that the list was a result of decisions by the UN without meddling by Afghans.

The tribal leader, who took office on December 22 at the head of a UN-backed administration, said he recognised only four of the names.

"This shows this is a really nice commission, a real impartial commission and I hope that they, together with the UN, will be successful in their work and give Afghanistan a good, representative, fair Loya Jirga," he said. The commission's task will be to form a Loya Jirga that will decide the government that will rule Afghanistan for 18 months.

THE TELEGRAPH

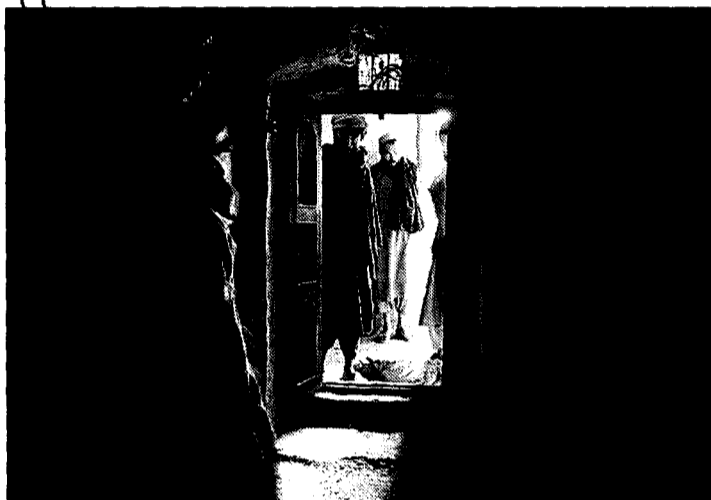
26 JAN 2002

Kabul may revert to Taliban justice

HERAT (AFGHANISTAN), JAN. 25. Criminals in Afghanistan will face Taliban-style punishments including amputations and stonings as part of the interim Government's drive to keep down crime, the Chief Justice, Fazul Hadi Shinwari, said on Thursday.

The remarks will raise concerns among Western donors who have made the restoration of the rule of law a priority in the shattered country's reconstruction. The Chief Justice, Fazul Hadi Shinwari, said he wanted adulterers whipped or stoned to death, the hands of robbers amputated and murderers publicly executed. Proselytising Christians may face the death penalty and Muslims who drink alcohol could be given 80 lashes. Mr Shinwari criticised the Taliban for "turning Islam into a monster", but said: "God says that some people need to be present to witness the punishment as a lesson."

The Taliban regularly held executions and amputations at sports grounds, often interrupting football matches so they would be guaranteed an audience. Offenders and political opponents were hanged from the goalposts. Unlike the Taliban system, Mr. Shinwari promised that criminals would be fairly investigated and



DARK DEEDS: Guards peer into a former Taliban detention and interrogation centre on the outskirts of Kandahar, Afghanistan, in this Jan. 9 file photo. The windowless cells generally housed men accused of petty crimes, such as trimming of beards and failure to pray regularly. — AP

tried. "The charges and the punishment will be dropped if we don't have witnesses and reliable proof," he said.

Crime has increased since the defeat of the Taliban and a functioning legal system has yet to be re-installed. There have been 80 shootings in Kabul during the past six or seven weeks. Old scores frozen during the Taliban

era have been settled and criminal gangs have started to reclaim their territories. In the capital and other cities armed groups which opposed the Taliban and had a reputation for lawlessness have returned. Many of their heavily armed members are blamed for robberies, extortion and murder.

Supreme Court officials said a number of criminals _ suspected

murderers and robbers among them _ had been arrested already and would be publicly punished once legal procedures were completed. "The main issue here is that infidels or Westerners protest against a hand being chopped for theft," said Mr Shinwari. "But since the robber has committed a crime then he has to be punished for obvious and justified reasons _ ridding society of crime."

He also warned foreigners against trying to convert Afghans from Islam. "The Islamic Government, according to *sharia*, is bound to punish those who get involved in anti-Islamic activities," he said. "We can punish them for propagating other religions _ such as threaten them, expel them and, as a last resort, execute them, but only with evidence."

It remains to be seen whether the 67-year-old Chief Justice's wishes will be put into practice. There is likely to be a struggle between radical Islamists in the new Government and more liberal figures such as its leader, Hamid Karzai, who would favour a more Western-style legal system while preserving the country's Islamic integrity and culture.

— ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2002

THE HINDU

26 JAN 2002

Affghanistan
1-10-12

Council formed to decide new Kabul Govt. 371

KABUL, JAN. 24. A special commission to organise a "*loya jirga*" council to decide the future government of Afghanistan will be named in Kabul tomorrow by the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, an official said.

"It has been formed and it will be announced tomorrow," Francesc Vendrell, U.N. deputy special representative to Afghanistan, said today. "There will be women on this council," he told AFP. "In my view it will be ethnically balanced and composed of people who are independent of the various military and political forces."

The 21-member council must determine procedures and the number of people who will participate in the *loya jirga*, or traditional council of tribal elders. The formation of the council and the calling of the *loya jirga* are part of the provisions of the Bonn accord, which paved the way for the formation of the six-month power-sharing interim administration that took office in Kabul on December 22.

The *loya jirga* has to appoint a transitional authority that will rule the war-ravaged country in the lead-up to democratic elections, which must be held within two years. Meanwhile, Hamid Karzai, head of the interim administration in Afghanistan, is expected to address an open meeting of the Security Council on January 30, the United Nations said today. Mr. Karzai is visiting Washington for talks with the U.S. President, George W Bush and is later visiting New York. — AFP, PTI



NEW HOPES TAKE WINGS: A Boeing 727 passenger plane owned by Ariana Airlines, Afghanistan's flag-carrier, takes off for New Delhi as a helicopter of the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, sits on the tarmac on Thursday at Kabul Airport in Afghanistan. The plane took off for the first time on its commercial flight in nearly 2 1/2 years with 25 people on board, including 12 crewmen. — AP

A NEW FOUNDATION OF GOODWILL

Afghanistan

IMAGINE A SCENE far worse than that portrayed by Afghanistan's chief interim administrator, Hamid Karzai. The purpose, as he himself hinted at during an international conference of donors in Tokyo, is not to scare the potential benefactors. Instead, Afghanistan, weary of exporting terrorism and witnessing war in all forms and manifestations, is seeking international assistance by drawing attention to the grim misery of its people. In the event, Mr. Karzai must be quite pleased with the responses to his appeal. The meeting, hosted this week by Japan and guided by the United States and the United Nations in various ways, produced aid commitments totalling about \$4.5 billion. In a somewhat technical sense, this amount falls short of the U.N.'s estimates of Afghan requirements, placed at about \$10 billion over a five-year period and at \$15 billion over a longer timeframe. On a different level, Afghanistan's interim leadership is acutely conscious, too, that the inevitable factor of donor-fatigue may soon begin to affect the prospects of further international pledges of help. The Afghan tragedy is in prime international focus at this juncture, if only for the bizarre reason of the global outreach of the Taliban-Osama axis of terror. However, the U.S. is also beginning now to count on the possibility that the leviathan of terror, meticulously fabricated by the Taliban-Osama combine, may have been dismantled within the Afghan territory itself. As a result, Afghanistan may soon find itself outside the range of the political-diplomatic sensors of the major powers. While this may in itself be a plus for that hapless southwest Asian country, which borders Pakistan, Afghanistan's interim administration is also worried that the abject economic plight of the ordinary Afghan people may soon be of no specific concern to the global community as a whole. Viewed in this perspective, Afghanistan will require considerable persuasive skills to invite the donor-nations to go well beyond their present

40-8 25/1

commitments in line with the U.N.'s graph in this regard. It is this aspect that may have disappointed the interim leaders of Afghanistan in Tokyo without dampening their spirit itself.

The tale of the Afghan tragedy is very complex indeed. The internal feuds and external interventions apart, historically unmatched was the diabolical success of the Taliban-Osama mafia in converting that country into a global epicentre of terrorism in all forms. Irrespective also of the question whether the Taliban-Osama network could have flourished without external support, the singular factor of utmost importance to Afghanistan today is that of international goodwill for its people in the latest context of America's proclaimed success in breaking the back of that evil cartel. The task before the interim authorities in Kabul is to capitalise on this goodwill.

Political transparency and absolute integrity over money matters will be the critical aspects of "talent" expected of the current Afghan leaders, who were picked at an international conference prior to the Tokyo meeting. With present-day Afghanistan being a virtual wasteland as an economy in any modern sense of the term, it will be easy to define the many requirements. However, the international community must stay fully engaged with the people and 'Government' of Afghanistan in order to help them build a reasonably modern economic edifice on the shambles of their own Ground Zero. All major and emerging powers, including India as a historical friend of Afghanistan until the advent of the Taliban-Osama mafia, can and must play a part in this new venture. The international security assistance force has its job cut out, while the Afghans, known for their sense of independence, will seek a definitive role. It is a good sign, therefore, that New Delhi will not be distracted by the reported Pakistani insinuations against the quality of India's genuine aid to Afghanistan.

THE

25 JAN 2002

For a united Afghanistan

By Pran Chopra

What Afghanistan needs most for preserving its independence and unity is time to discover its own balance between federal decentralisation and centralisation for unity.

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29/11

IN COMPARISON with all its immediate neighbours — Iran in the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the north, China to the east, and Pakistan to the east and the south — Afghanistan is most in need of a federal system. But, paradoxically, it also has reasons to be the most wary of it, and left to its present misgivings it may well opt for a unitary system although the spirit of the federal alternative is more akin to its historical experience.

In all of its neighbours, the powers of the Government are tightly centralised in their respective capitals. But not so in Afghanistan, because centralisation of authority is unsuited to its geography, demography and polity. Geographically, Afghanistan has some distinctly different regions, each with its own external orientation. Demographically, it is divided into distinct ethnic and tribal groups, and most of them are also quite distinct territorially.

Because of this combination of ethnic with territorial identity, each of these regions has also developed its own political identity and all have exercised autonomy in varying degrees. It is quite remarkable that in spite of these internal cleavages Afghanistan has developed quite a hardy Afghan identity.

On the face of it, this makes a federal structure ideal for the country, in which a national identity and governing authority seated in the national capital coexists with a power sharing system which leaves sufficient autonomy for regional identities. It demarcates one region's domain of power from that of the other regions and of all regions from that of the national Government. But such is the power of the Afghan paradox that it makes the country worry whether it can afford the latitudes which the national capital normally concedes to the regions in a federal system.

The worry has its reasons. History has left overlaps between each of the main regions of Afghanistan and one or another country on the other side of the border. The overlap may be ethnic, religious,

cultural, or geographical but in each case is something of a bridgehead which one or other neighbour has inside Afghanistan. In every such case, the neighbour is stronger than the corresponding Afghan region or, in some cases, stronger than even Afghanistan as a whole. Stronger militarily, or economically or in its size or its population, and has a more deep rooted cultural or historical identity.

Thus a large north-south strip of western Afghanistan, not very broad but running along almost the whole length of Afghanistan, has such an overlap with Iran, which is perhaps the strongest country west of India and east of Turkey. Iran also has pockets of an overlap deeper inside Afghanistan. Turkmenistan has a very narrow but very long strip of a bridgehead in the northwest. Uzbekistan has a much broader one much deeper inside Afghanistan.

Most of mountainous northern region of Afghanistan, home of the victorious Northern Alliance which routed the Taliban in the recent conflict in Afghanistan, is an extension of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The overlap with China is minute but the one with Pakistan is the largest, broadest, deepest throughout the east and the south. Much bigger in size and population than any other, this overlap has the same Pashtun population as has a large part of north-western and western Pakistan.

Therefore Kabul, the weakest of national capitals in the whole region of southern central Asia, has reasons to wonder in which direction will the pull work between one of its regions and the corresponding neighbour if Kabul remained weak because of the natural logic of a federal system. This dilemma is not unique to Afghanistan. Most countries, cultures, population conglomerates spill over their political borders into neighbouring territories. But certain features

peculiar to Afghanistan make Kabul's present worries more real.

Afghanistan has been at the crossroads of history. Armies have marched across it or around it, and Afghanistan has always hung more or less precariously between the territories — to its west, north-west and north — from which these armies started out and those territories — to its east and south-east — which they colonised or tried to. For example, Alexander from Greece, in the south-west; Nadir Shah from Persia, in the west; Babar from Uzbekistan in the north-west; the Soviets from the north; and in a deeper past the Indian ruler Kanishka from the east, who was in fact retracing the route his Scythian-Parthian ancestors had taken to come to India from areas to the west and north-west of Afghanistan.

Kanishka also started a cultural era, in the 1st century AD, which produced the world famous Buddha statues of Bamiyan, which the Taliban destroyed recently, harming itself more by this one single act than by any other in its short but terrible history.

But none of these causes of Kabul's worry is as vivid, troubling and fresh in the minds of the rulers of present-day Afghanistan as are the two latest, both inflicted by Pakistan: the first when Zia-ul-Haq first propounded the military doctrine that Pakistan could use Afghanistan as its own "strategic depth" and then operationalised it through the structures he set up in his army; and second, the Taliban barbarity which Zia began to inflict on Afghanistan as part of the American war on the Soviet Union, and which later military usurpers of political power in Pakistan perfected into a torture machine for the whole Afghan population.

An independent Afghanistan thus became a pawn in games played by America and Pakistan, and so it had remained

till yesterday. Nor has the danger ended yet, because Pakistan's capacity to throw another Pashtun collar around the neck of Afghanistan remains in tact.

Therefore looking at its map in the light of its current, recent and older history, Afghanistan may decide to be guided more by the realities of power equations than by the wisdom of political theories of governance, and so might opt for a strongly centralised political authority. But the irony is that were it to do so, Afghanistan would in fact end up destroying the very unity it may seek to protect behind the shield of a centralised polity.

Such unity would only deny its diversities and thus weaken the bonds among them and between them and Kabul. For countries as pluralistic and diverse as Afghanistan and India are, unity and diversity are two sides of the same coin, and they are best conjoined in Nehru's phrase, "unity in diversity", which is the best tribute to federalism than has been minted by anyone. His philosophy became the antidote for the threat of "linguistic nationalism" which India's linguistic diversity could have become to India's unity.

If this parallel with India is true, as I believe it is, what Afghanistan needs most for preserving its independence and unity is time to discover its own antidote, its own balance between federal decentralisation and centralisation for unity, before any neighbour can dare to encroach upon it again. What India can contribute most to this discovery is its own experience of the nuts and bolts of federalism, but time for Afghanistan to digest the experience must be found for it by a U.N.-backed guarantee against any violation of its frontiers and inner space by any neighbour for any reason whatever.

The world must forge the guarantee while it still feels responsible for the future of a country upon which it has only inflicted pain in the past. Otherwise, before Afghanistan can consolidate itself, it will be pried open with one excuse or another by one neighbour or other exploiting its bridgehead in this "round about of history".

THE HINDU

Aid tied to Bonn agreement *Afghanistan*

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TOKYO, JAN. 22. The disbursal of the \$4.5 billion pledged by international donors to Afghanistan will be contingent upon the full implementation of the Bonn agreement, which sets the benchmarks on the Afghan political process.

A summary of conclusions issued after the two-day international conference on Afghanistan here left no doubt in mind that Afghan unity was a must for disbursal of aid. Assistance will be conditional on all Afghan parties contributing positively to the process and goals agreed in Bonn with the aim of establishing peace, representative governance and stability in Afghanistan, and eliminating terrorism and narcotics production and trafficking, the document said. It said while the aid had been committed in the long-term, \$1.8 billion would be made available to Afghanistan in 2002. Clearly, the international donor community wants to send a message to the Afghan groups that unity is all important and the factions in the interim authority must at all costs work together in the interests of the people of the shattered country.

Addressing a joint press meet at the end of the conference, the Afghan Reconstruction Minister, Amin Farhan, said the *loya jirga* would be held on June 21 in Afghanistan with the former King Zahir Shah in attendance. The deputy chairman of the Afghan Interim Administration and Finance Minister, Hidayat Amin Arsala, thanked the donor community for the contribution that they had made to the people of Afghanistan. He said unless the Bonn process was implemented fully, all the development aid promised to rebuild Afghanistan would come to nought.

The Japanese co-chair of the conference, Sadako Ogata, said the meeting had concluded with "great success" with 61 countries and 21 donor agencies in attendance. For his part, the U.S. Treasury Secretary, Paul O'Neill, claimed that the reconstruction of Afghanistan was part and parcel of the war against terrorism. The document released by the four co-chairs sets out the following priority areas for reconstruction — enhancement of administrative capacity; education, especially for girls; health and sanitation; infrastructure; reconstruction of the economic system and agriculture and rural development. There was a recognition that the United Nations should continue to play a "pivotal role", the document stated.

Interestingly, however, there was no representative from the United Nations at the joint press conference. There was appreciation, however, for the role played by Lakhdar Brahimi, special representative of the U.N. Secretary-General. The document said existing mechanisms would be a primary vehicle for major donors in the task of reconstruction. In addition, a single trust fund will be established, administration of which will be entrusted to the World Bank. Decisions about allocation of expenditures will be the responsibility of the World Bank, UNDP, Asian Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank in co-operation with the Government of Afghanistan and in consultation with the special representative of the Secretary-General.

Asked why the issue of security was not included in the list of priorities that had been set out in the co-chairs' document, Ms. Ogata said there was considerable discussion on the issue of security.



Women employees of the Central Bank count money after receiving their salary following a move by the new Interim Government to grant salaries to civilian employees on Tuesday in Kabul, Afghanistan. Tens of thousands of civilian employees never received their salaries for months. — AP

Kabul promised \$4.5 billion

Agence France-Presse

TOKYO, Jan. 22. — World leaders today pledged \$4.5 billion to help Afghanistan rise out of the ruins of war, drawing praise from the month-old Afghan leadership working to end the misery of their people.

"We are happy with the result of the conference," interim leader Mr Hamid Karzai said. "I also hope the pledges are made true in the coming days so that we can take the process of reconstruction forward," he added.

Iran has pledged \$560 million for the cause. "All of this comes to us as a surprise," Mr Torek Faradi, an Afghan official said.

"We never thought so many countries would pledge such a figure. It's unprecedented."

The conference statement set out several priorities including improving governance in a country infamous for its lawlessness, and restoring education especially for women.

Repairing Afghanistan's decimated health services, agriculture, infrastructure and rehabilitating the economy with a working currency and financial institutions were also singled out.

On Pakistan pledging \$100 million, the Afghan charge d'affaires in Paris, Mr Mehrabuddin Mastan quipped: "It pays back for the destruction it has caused."

Karzai unhurt in Tokyo mishap

TOKYO, Jan. 22. — Afghan interim leader Mr Hamid Karzai escaped unhurt from a multiple-vehicle collision today on Tokyo's high-speed Shuto expressway system.

"He was in the second car among the five vehicles in the pile-up," police said. — AFP

'Statues not now'

TOKYO, Jan. 22. — Afghanistan Prime Minister Mr Hamid Karzai today said here the loss of two Bamiyan Buddhas destroyed last year by the Taliban was like that of a family member but reconstruction would have to wait. He hoped that Japan would help once it starts.

— Reuters.

REUTERS

World to Kabul's rescue

Agencies

TOKYO, Jan. 21. — The world came together today to pledge billions of dollars to rebuild Afghanistan, as its interim leader Mr Hamid Karzai told an international conference here that his country has known “nothing but disaster, war, brutality and deprivation.”

The USA, Japan and Europe promised about \$1.3 billion of \$3.9 billion in aid pledged by the conference participants amid reports of fresh factional fighting in Afghanistan. The total reconstruction effort is expected to cost more than \$15 billion over the next decade.

The news that former allies in the struggle against the Taliban may have fallen out came as Afghanistan's new leader warned Afghanistan could still slip back into anarchy. “In an environment of inadequate security, fragmented governance, the non-integration of Afghan returnees, Afghanistan could remain a source of instability to the world and the region.”

India's disinvestment minister Mr Arun Shourie here pledged a \$100 million Indian assistance but said the Taliban elements must have no part in governance and Afghanistan must be rid of terrorism. India will also offer one million tonnes of wheat for in-



Japan's Prime Minister Mr Junichiro Koizumi (left) greets Afghanistan's interim Prime Minister Mr Hamid Karzai. In Tokyo on Monday. — AP/PTI

ternally and externally displaced Afghans and \$1 million for meeting a part of the requirements of the interim administration in Afghanistan.

US secretary of state Gen. Colin Powell said after unveiling an US promise of \$296 million during the current fiscal year: “President Bush has made it clear the USA will not

abandon the people of Afghanistan.” Participants at today's conference, which brought together delegates from more than 80 countries and international organisations, emphasised their intention of following up their initial pledges with longer-term commitments.

European Commissioner Mr Chris Patten talked about the importance of keeping support coming “when Afghanistan is no longer the front-page news.” But it appeared that the money pledged in Tokyo would fall far short of the target set by UN secretary general Mr Kofi Annan, who said that \$10 billion would be needed over the next five years.

Japan will contribute up to \$500 million over the next two and a half years, \$250 million of which will be disbursed in the first year, Japanese PM Mr Junichiro Koizumi said.

The European Union announced that it will contribute about \$487 million this year. European contributions could total \$886 million through 2006, but how much is ultimately approved depends on the progress made during the early years. The aid will be administered through a special European representative office set up in Kabul. Saudi Arabia pumps in aid in the tune of \$220 million over the first three years and Pakistan and China \$100 million each.

THE STATESMAN

Kabul gets over \$1b. in aid

By Amit Baruah

TOKYO, JAN. 21. Aid worth over one billion dollars was pledged by the European Union, Japan, the United States and Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan for the next one year to keep the Hamid Karzai interim administration running and help in the reconstruction of the devastated nation.

The overall figure pledged by a host of national and institutional donors may well be over the three billion dollar figure. The pledges were made (Saudi Arabia committed to spending \$220 million in the next three years) at the opening session of the two-day International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, which began here this morning. Japan pledged \$250 million, the European Union \$550 million and the United States \$296 million immediately to Afghanistan, promising annual aid announcements for the coming years. The Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, the U.N.



The United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, speaks while (from left) the Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, the Afghan interim leader, Hamid Karzai, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and the U.S. Treasury Secretary, Paul O'Neill, listen during the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in Tokyo on Monday. — Reuters

Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and the Chairman of the Afghan interim administration, Hamid Karzai, were among those who addressed the meeting.

Mr. Koizumi said Japan would provide \$250 million in the com-

ing year and a total of \$500 million in the next two-and-a-half years to Afghanistan. "We also intend to assist de-mining itself, as well as to support victim assistance schemes," he said. "Japan will do its utmost to support the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Ja-

pan's assistance will focus on supporting the process towards peace and national reconciliation, as well as people-building," he said.

Mr. Powell said the American people were with Afghanistan for the long-term. He also announced that hundreds of million dollars in frozen assets under the Taliban would be returned to the Karzai interim administration. Mr. Powell said it was necessary that Afghanistan set up an army and police force. He said the U.S. had arrested a large number of Al-Qaeda terrorists and was pursuing others.

Mr. Karzai engaged in some gentle criticism of the international community while setting out the details of what Afghanistan needed. Comparing Afghanistan to a "wasteland", Mr. Karzai said the primary focus was to "revive and build the State apparatus, a system of democratic governance with active participation of the citizenry".

THE HINDU

22 JAN 2002

Musharraf seeks expansion of peacekeeping force in Afghanistan

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JAN. 20. The Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, said that the International Peacekeeping Force in Afghanistan should be significantly expanded. He wanted the U.S. air power to remain in Pakistan as long as it was necessary to support this effort and the international force should be spread out to at least five Afghan cities, not just confined to Kabul.

On reports that quoted him as saying that the Saudi fugitive, Osama bin Laden, was dead, he had no specific information and his comments were based solely on his own "judgment and perception" and influenced by a Pakistani intelligence report that Osama had ordered two kidney dialysis machines to

be sent to Afghanistan, one of which was for his personal use.

Gen. Musharraf stressed that the U.S. should not plan to keep its bases permanently in Pakistan. Yet a long-term presence could not be ruled out if Pakistanis were persuaded that the American troops were needed to support peace efforts in Afghanistan. He said the Pakistani people were convinced that the American commitment was enduring and that Washington would not repeat its past mistake.

"We were left high and dry and it started to settle in on people that we were ditched. The feeling has not gone. It still persists," he has been quoted.

Gen. Musharraf said he intended to remain in power for at least five years beyond the October election so that political stability could

be maintained and foreign investments could be encouraged.

'No war with India' 40-9

Gen. Musharraf said he did not believe tensions between his country and India will translate into a shooting war. "Let me assure you from a military point of view, from a diplomatic-political point of view, I do not think there can be war — unless there is some mad action, but that is always a possibility," he told *Newsweek* magazine in an interview.

He said India had downgraded the alert status of its Air Force and had refrained from deploying some ground forces "that would give them the full potential for an offensive".
— AFP

THE HINDU

20 JAN 2001

India prepared to restore telecom network: Shourie

By Amit Baruah ¹⁹⁻¹⁰

TOKYO, JAN. 20. Its time to put your money where your mouth is. As Ministers from some 50 nations begin a two-day 'International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan' tomorrow, the world will watch if the money needed to build the country from scratch will be forthcoming or not.

All the big boys of the donor community are already here. Japan, the U.S., the European Union and Saudi Arabia are co-chairs of the conference which will have the U.N., the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other institutions in attendance.

Speaking to reporters ahead of the conference, the head of the Indian delegation, the Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie, said that New Delhi was ready to assist Afghanistan in several ways. Reconstruction of the shattered infrastructure

— telecommunication, power and hospitals were some of the areas listed by Mr. Shourie. He also referred to a request that India should help start an institute for information technology.

To a question about the impact on Kashmir, Mr. Shourie was clear that an end to the "terrorist factory" in Afghanistan would help India a great deal. He told a group of Japanese and Indian re-

porters that as many as 61,000 persons had been killed by terrorists in the last 15 years in India.

A preliminary needs assessment prepared by the World Bank, UNDP and ADB suggests that about \$5 billion will be required in the first two-and-a-half years for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Speaking at a reception this evening, the Chairman of the Afghan interim administration, Hamid Karzai, said the international conference had given Afghans hope that "we will be all right as a people, as a nation".

Appreciating the concern shown by the international community, Mr. Karzai singled out the U.S., Pakistan and India as countries with whose representatives he had interacted. "I can say with certainty....that we need your help to begin a new life," Mr. Karzai said to the assembled gathering of foreign leaders.

In her opening remarks, the Japanese Foreign Minister, Makiko Tanaka, said she had heard that one person dies in Afghanistan every five minutes and one person was displaced every minute. "What we should never forget....is that we must maintain a long-term perspective to bring about stability and prosperity to this country....the challenges faced by Afghanistan concern not only the country itself, but also humanity

as a whole," Ms. Tanaka said. While referring to the need for ethnic groups to cooperate with each other, she hinted at the continuing dangers of external intervention in Afghanistan. "However, confrontation among ethnic groups can result from external factors such as political, military and economic causes," Ms. Tanaka stated.

The preliminary needs report prepared by the World Bank and others makes chilling reading. Life expectancy at birth in Afghanistan is 44, one in four children dies before the age of five, one in 12 women dies in childbirth, 23 per cent of the population has access to safe water, 12 per cent to sanitation, six per cent to electricity, only two in 1,000 people have telephones, the list is endless.

Clearly, the reconstruction of Afghanistan will test the will of the international community especially the U.S.-led Western alliance that has taken the war against terrorism to Afghanistan. Speaking in Washington earlier this week, the World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, put the issue in perspective: "This is not an issue of luxury, and it is not an issue of charity. It is an issue of self-interest. I cannot imagine we have spent billions of dollars on a war to allow it to recur two, three, four years down the track."

THE HINDU

21 JAN 2002

Karzai hopes to return with 'hands full'

Tokyo, January 20

HAMID KARZAI today appealed to the world for help in getting his devastated country back on its feet after two decades of strife and disaster that created a breeding ground for terrorism.

The appeal comes on the eve of a two-day conference in Tokyo, where representatives of over 60 Governments and international organisations are expected to promise funds for a reconstruction process that aid experts estimate will take \$15 billion over a decade, much of it in the initial stage.

"One thing I would like to say with certainty, with clarity, that is — we need your help," Karzai said. "We need your help to bring a new life for those millions of children and women and wounded and disabled victimised by years of trauma and terrorism."

"Help us begin a new life, help us stand again on our feet to make a country that will pursue its own values and traditions and will also contribute to a world community in terms of providing a better peace and work against terrorism," the leader of the interim government said.

"I'm hoping very much that I will go back to my country and my people with my hands full," Karzai said.

Participants agree that a significant show of financial support for Afghanistan will be key to ensuring that the country does not again breed radical movements such as the Taliban and al-Qaida.

Karzai, on his first international tour since he assumed office in December, needs assurances that the world won't turn its back on Afghanistan now that the war against the Taliban has been won.

"I hope and wish to see my country rebuilt before I die," said a 43-year-old Afghan doctor attending an NGO conference. "I have seen my country destroyed. I wish and I hope I can see my country rebuilt."

Donors, for their part, want proof that Kabul has a viable plan to establish a democracy, tackle the drug trade, and promote equality for women, harshly oppressed under the Taliban rule.

The UN, World Bank and Asian Development Bank have estimated reconstruction will require \$15 billion over a decade with \$5 billion needed in the critical first 30 months and \$10 billion in the first five years.

"I think we'll do pretty well on the first year number and against the two-and-a-half year and five year numbers, there will be some impressive commitments too," UN official Mark



Afghanistan's interim Government leader Hamid Karzai (centre) speaks to reporters as he arrives at the Tokyo International Airport on Sunday.

Malloch Brown said.

"The needs are staggering, enormous and urgent," UN special envoy for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi said.

Donors agree that rebuilding Afghanistan matters, but have been quibbling over time-frames for pledges and how to channel the aid. Japan is eying a pledge of \$500 million for the first two-

and-a-half years, while EU officials have spoken of spending \$500 million annually over a five-year span.

A Saudi newspaper quoted Karzai as saying that Saudi Arabia — a former ally of the toppled Taliban — had pledged \$20 million in urgent aid as a first installment.

Many in the US feel their coun-

try has already done its bit by fighting the war, and Washington may pledge only for the first year. Diplomats said the sum might be around \$300 million.

Big donors, seeking to ensure their taxpayers know where the money goes, want to give the money directly to pet projects. The World Bank has recommended that aid money be fun-

nelled through an umbrella trust fund for ease of coordination.

But Japan, the US and Saudi Arabia have said they would be providing aid through bilateral delivery channels, while the EU has said some of its money would be spent bilaterally and some would be turned over to a fund to be run by World Bank.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 JAN 2002

We will stand by you: Powell

FROM TOM HENEGHAN AND SAUL HUDSON

Kabul/Washington, Jan. 17 (Reuters): US secretary of state Colin Powell, on a landmark trip to Kabul today, said Washington would stand by Afghanistan and vowed to eradicate Islamic extremists in the country.

As US warplanes scoured the land for remnants of Osama bin Laden's al Qaida network and the former ruling Taliban, Powell told Afghanistan's new leaders his government planned a significant contribution to the country's reconstruction.

In the southern city of Kandahar, US Marines questioned a man who said he was a key financial backer of the Taliban, but there was still no word on the whereabouts of bin Laden and his protector, vanquished Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar.

And far away in the Philippines, the US opened a new front in its war on terrorism, setting up camp on a southern island where they will join operations against Muslim rebels suspected of links to bin Laden.

Powell, on an Asian tour dominated by confrontation between India and Pakistan, was the highest ranking US leader in

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the Central Asian country since then secretary of state Henry Kissinger stopped there in 1976.

"We will be with you in this current crisis and for the future," Powell told a joint news conference with Afghanistan's interim leader, Hamid Karzai.

"We are committed to doing everything we can to assist you in this time of transition to a new Afghanistan, an Afghanistan where people will be able to live in peace and security."

The World Bank estimates Afghanistan's reconstruction will cost \$15 billion over 10 years.

Karzai diplomatically reminded Powell that many Afghans wondered whether Washington would abandon them after full victory over the Taliban leadership, as it did after US-backed rebels drove Soviet troops out in 1989.

"In all our meetings with the Afghan people, they ask us — 'Is the United States committed? Will they stay with us?'," said Karzai, who wore his trademark bright green Uzbek robe and Persian lamb hat.

"Now I can tell them, 'Yes, the US will stay with us.'"

Powell arrived from Pakistan on a regional tour, flying into Kabul international airport by



US secretary of state Colin Powell (third from left) receives flowers from Afghan children as he visits the American embassy in Kabul on Thursday. (Reuters)

helicopter via the Soviet-built Bagram air base to the north of the city.

"The US presence here is still directed towards pulling up al Qaida and Taliban," he said. "We don't want to leave any contamination behind."

In Kandahar, a further 30 Taliban and al Qaida prisoners left overnight on Tuesday bound for

the US Naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, leaving a total of 320 prisoners behind in the southern Afghan city that was the Taliban powerbase.

Lt James Jarvis said anti-Taliban forces in the area were still recovering weapons and handing them over to US forces to be destroyed.

But the *New York Times* re-

ported that many Pashtoon tribal leaders in the east of the country have balked at cooperating with US forces in the hunt for al Qaida and Taliban fighters, weapons caches and intelligence. The leaders' reluctance has left American forces with few Afghan allies in one of the most dangerous regions of the country.

'We are back in business'

Kabul, Jan. 17 (Reuters): Announcing the upgrade of the US mission in Kabul to a full embassy, US secretary of state Colin Powell took the first opportunity in 25 years today to reward loyal Afghan staff.

"We are back in business, we are here to stay, we are committed to the future of this country," Powell said, announcing the decision by President George W. Bush to upgrade the liaison office that opened last month.

Powell, on an Asian tour dominated by confrontation between India and Pakistan, was the highest ranking US leader to visit Afghanistan since then secretary of state Henry Kissinger stopped in the capital, Kabul, in 1976.

Greeted by children waving US flags and flowers, and watched over by dozens of US troops, Powell presented awards to two local staff and toured a bunker where some local employees live and sleep.

In a reminder of the security problems in a city at war, a US military helicopter bristling with machine guns flew low over Kabul surveying areas where Powell's convoy would drive.

THE TELEGRAPH

18 JAN 2002

18 JAN 2002

Pak reopens embassy in Afghanistan

FROM TOM HENECHAN

Kabul, Jan. 14 (Reuters): Pakistan, the main foreign backer of Afghanistan's deposed Taliban regime, reopened its embassy in Kabul today amid diplomatic euphemisms and hopes of a brighter future.

Sultan Hayat Khan, director general of Islamabad's foreign ministry, hosted a short ceremony at the empty building — which was ransacked after anti-Taliban forces captured the city in November — was in the presence of UN special envoy for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi and Afghan protocol officials.

Standing by him was charge d'affaires Mohammad Ziad Khan, the same man who closed

the embassy soon after the September 11 attacks on the United States made Islamabad's close ties to the Taliban untenable.

Islamabad, which has yet to name a new ambassador, shut the embassy and withdrew all its diplomatic staff from Afghanistan in early October. Diplomatic ties with the Taliban were severed in November.

Officials of Afghanistan's new interim administration, whose core is the Northern Alliance that defeated the fundamentalist Taliban in November, have repeatedly said they want good relations with Pakistan.

But they often speak those words through gritted teeth, fully aware the country that backed them during their 1980s

war against the former Soviet Union was tightly linked to the Taliban they fought in the past five years.

"Maybe some excesses were committed, but that is the past," Hayat Khan said. "If we keep on repeating it, we will not progress." Ziad Khan thought it would be easier for him to work in Kabul now than it was during the last year of Taliban rule.

"Since I don't have a beard, I was stopped so many times," he laughed. The Taliban, who imposed their strict view of Islam on the whole society, forced men to wear beards and turbans and barred women from public life.

Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have long been strained, despite the

fact they share a common Islamic culture and Pashtoon tribes live on either side of their 2,500-km border.

In the 1980s, Pakistan was the base for most mujahideen groups fighting the Soviet Union and the Pakistani military funnelled huge amounts of weapons and funds from the US, Saudi Arabia, China and other states to them. But Islamabad turned against the mujahideen when they got mired in a civil war after taking power in Kabul in 1992.

By the mid-1990s, a law-and-order movement called the Taliban seemed a better bet to pacify the country and open trade routes through it to the newly independent Central Asian republics.

Although Islamabad steadfastly denies any involvement, eyewitness and documentary evidence shows Pakistan played a central role in supporting the Taliban during their five years of harsh rule.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were the only countries that recognised the Taliban diplomatically, all others staying with the deposed government of Burhanuddin Rabbani that finally returned to Kabul in November 2001.

Pakistani Muslim radicals were also strong supporters of the al Qaida network that Saudi-born militant Osama bin Laden ran from Afghanistan.

Even after military ruler

General Pervez Musharraf decided to break ties with Kabul, Pakistan tried to find a role in any new government for what it called "moderate Taliban".

US bombings continue

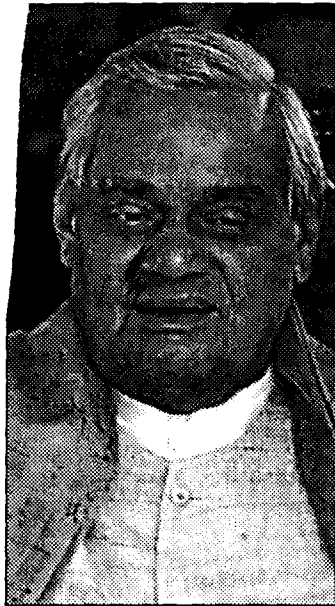
US warplanes pounded cave complexes in eastern Afghanistan today in a relentless campaign to bottle up and destroy al Qaida and Taliban forces and hunt down their fugitive leaders.

Thirty more al Qaida and Taliban captives were making the long journey to their new prison at a US naval base in Cuba as Afghanistan's new rulers focused on the key issues of aid for reconstruction and security in the war-shattered country.

15/1 Afghanistan

THE TELEGRAPH

15 JAN 2002



ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

Babri Masjid panel turns down Vajpayee

HT Correspondent
Lucknow, January 14

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee's much touted efforts to resolve the Ayodhya dispute through dialogue suffered a jolt today when the Babri Masjid Action Committee turned down an informal offer for talks.

The offer had been made on the Prime Minister's behalf by special envoy Shatrughan Singh, who heads the recently-constituted Ayodhya cell in the PMO.

A career bureaucrat, Singh earlier held charge as Faizabad Divisional Commissioner, in which capacity he also remained the official custodian of the disputed Babri Masjid area. Singh, who has made several trips to Ayodhya had invited key BMAC leaders Zafaryab Jilani, Abdul Mannan

and Mushtaq Mohammad Siddiqui for an "informal chat" on the issue.

"The invitation had been issued through journalist Shitla Singh, editor of Faizabad-based Hindi daily 'Jan Morcha' at whose Lucknow residence we met Shatrughan Singh over dinner on Saturday night," BMAC convenor Jilani said today.

He said, "We made it loud and clear to the PMO official that no talks could be held with an opposite party, which displayed no semblance of a conciliatory approach.

"Tell me, how can you think of entering into a dialogue with a party that proclaimed publicly that irrespective of what the judiciary decides, it would not budge from its resolve of building the temple on the disputed land?" Jilani asked.

"Let the Prime Minister first restrain his allies in the Vishwa Hindu Parishad,

Bajrang Dal and other groups from making repeated proclamations about going ahead with construction of the temple — come what may — from March 12," Jilani said.

He said, "After all, we have always maintained that we would abide by the decision of the court and if the verdict goes against us, we would relinquish our claim to the site and let the temple be built there."

Jilani ruled out the possibility of a bargain on the 2.77 acre 'undisputed' land on which a formal 'shilaniyas' (foundation laying) of the temple was performed way back in 1987. Since this area falls just on the periphery of the razed mosque, the ruling BJP was understood to be toying with the idea of striking a deal on that with a view to making a breakthrough.

Barely a fortnight ago, Prime Minister Vajpayee had reiterated his claim at a press

conference in Lucknow about an on-going dialogue for resolving the dispute.

"The talks are progressing in the right direction and I am hopeful of an amicable solution to come up well before the March 12 deadline set by the VHP for resuming their Ayodhya agitation," Vajpayee said.

Jilani said, "The question of 2.77 acre land had become meaningless once the Supreme Court had said that the land adjoining the disputed area would have to go to the party that wins the case pending before the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court."

He said: "As it stands today, the entire 67-acre land acquired by the Central Government in the aftermath of the demolition remains the subject matter of dispute before the court, so the question of dealing with any bit separately cannot arise."

Afghanistan's chances

None too bright

51-6 19/1
Nobody is contending that all is back to normal in Afghanistan, now that the Taliban have been beaten into the bush. The real question is what are Afghanistan's chances of recovering its sanity and making the transition to a peaceful, stable regime that makes life liveable for its citizens. To begin with there is a government in place in Kabul, a government manufactured abroad and not with the consent of Afghans. It will itself admit that it has no representative character and is only an interim arrangement, responsible for restoring order in the country, before the tribal council of elders is convened, five months down the line, which will decide on a more durable governing framework. Well and good. But can it deliver even on this limited obligation? The point is moot.

Kabul is being guarded by a contingent of British, German and Turkish troops, while, in the provinces, governors seem to be pretty much able to do what they like. They have been told to report to Kabul and take instructions from it, but Gul Agha, governor of Kandahar, unilaterally decided that the three Taliban ministers who surrendered to him and who include the former justice minister, will not be handed over to the United States, because "they are our brothers". He released them forthwith. This is a decision which, ordinarily, should have been taken by Hamid Karzai himself. Second, the only army the interim administration has at its disposal is the one headed by the former Northern Alliance which, itself, has gone back to its original divisions, the purpose of defeating the Taliban having been achieved. Rashid Dostum rules in Herat and Karim Khalili in Bamiyan. So also for Jalalabad, besides a host of minor fiefdoms carved out by petty tribal warlords.

Without a regular army, it will be difficult to impose Kabul's will on the country. A regular army, in turn, implies disarming everybody which, in turn, implies a regular force to do it. It is possible, of course, to absorb existing militias into such an army, but that can come about only with the consent of their respective chiefs who, Afghanistan being what it is, may demand their pound of flesh. Back to square one. It is clear that the regime in Afghanistan is a precarious one. What sustains it is the presence of American troops in the vicinity with whose purposes the warlords have yet to demur. There have, though, been protests over civilian casualties that keep on occurring from time to time. It is good that Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden remain at large, it will cause the Americans to be around.

The question that must be uppermost in the minds of Karzai as well as the warlords is: what happens when the Americans leave and there are no more B-52s or Marines crawling all over the place, keeping alive a mission that may become less and less national as time goes by? Who will protect Karzai or any administration that replaces his? Six months is a very short time and it is not certain that the tribal grand council will find a way out of Afghanistan's enduring folly.

THE NEWSPAPER

14 JUL 2002

Afghan Chief Justice for Omar's death sentence

Associated Press

DARA ADAM KHEIL (Pakistan), Jan. 13. — Afghanistan's newly appointed Chief Justice said today that he would give death sentence to Osama bin Laden and the Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, if they were brought to his Court.

"Mullah Omar and Osama are

responsible for the destruction of Afghanistan and tainting Islam." Mr Justice Fazal Hadi Shinwari said a day before he was to depart for Afghanistan to take up his post.

"They have created anarchy, chaos ... According to Islamic law, they deserve the death penalty," said the 70-year-old Shinwari, who has lived in Pakistan for most of the past three decades.

He said Bin Laden, a Saudi, and Arabs

who fought alongside the Taliban, had imposed their own agenda on Afghanistan.

"Osama was the leader of the Arabs and used Afghanistan against other countries," he said.

Mr Justice Shinwari said the Taliban militia's "rigid and extremist" interpretation of Islam resulted in misery for Afghans and had made Afghanistan the target of US-led forces.

The interim government will also punish those responsible for killings of Afghans, he said.

The Chief Justice told the Afghan Islamic Press yesterday, that under Islamic laws of Afghanistan, thieves will have their hands cut off and adulterers will be lashed or stoned to death.

"The murder cases will also be decided under the Islamic laws," the agency quoted him as saying.

THE STATESMAN

14 JAN 2002

Taliban prisoners shackled in Cuba

Afghanistan
14F-10
1/27/11

Guantanamo Bay, January 12

A GROUP of 20 al-Qaida and Taliban prisoners from Afghanistan, their hands manacled and unable to see through taped goggles, were led one-by one from a US Air Force transport plane under heavy guard to Camp X-Ray in this US base in Cuba.

"They represent the worst elements of al-Qaida and the Taliban," Marine Brigadier General Michael Lehnert, commander of the Joint Task Force running the prison operation, said before their arrival on Friday. A military spokesman said the operation went without any trouble.

The detainees were clad in two-piece orange jump suits and white footwear as they were led off the plane. They also wore knitted orange caps, surgical masks and goggles covered with

tape. All of them had their hands tied in front of them. Several were in leg shackles.

When the detainees were led off by the military, they were frisked then put onto the buses. The first limped, his left leg bandaged. Six appeared to resist and two were pushed to their knees then brought up again. However, a task force spokesman said it was possible they were merely disoriented after a journey across the globe. The detainees were wearing ear-muffs to protect them from the din inside the C-141 cargo plane. The goggles were masked for security reasons, the surgical masks for protection as some had tested positive for tuberculosis, and the knit hats for warmth against the cold inside the plane, Marine Major Steve Cox said.

There were no problems at

Camp X-Ray, Cox told reporters on Friday night. The detainees were checked by doctors, given showers and cleaned-up.

The cells of the detainees measure 6-foot by 8-foot, with open chain link walls, a concrete floor and wooden roof. They will spend most of their time separated, apart from meals, showers and a short daily recreation.

They will have three meals a day. They were also given accessory bags with granola bars and other items. Their "comfort kit" consisted of soap, shampoo, a washcloth, tooth brush and paste, and shower shoes. They were handed two towels, Cox said, "but no blanket." Gen Lehnert said the detainees would be allowed to follow their Islamic religious practice and be given Muslim food.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

HD-19
4/1

AFGHANISTAN / NEW TWIST TO EX-MINISTERS' SURRENDER

U.S. wants Taliban leaders turned over

KANDAHAR, JAN. 10. Seven high-ranking Taliban officials including the former Justice Minister surrendered to Afghan commanders but were set free by local officials, the Afghan Government said, even though the U.S. wants these leaders turned over.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman, Omar Samad, said the Government was determining whether the Taliban officials were "war criminals." They included Nooruddin Turabi, the one-eyed, one-legged former Justice Minister, who drew up the militia's repressive version of Islamic law — including restrictions on women — and created the religious police to enforce it.

Obaidullah, the former Taliban Defence Minister who had authority to approve Al-Qaeda's terrorist training camps, was originally reported to be among the officials, but it appeared the main question was Obaidullah, a front-line Taliban commander.

A U.S. State Department spokesman said senior Taliban officials should be in U.S. hands. "We would expect that to be the case with these individuals," Richard Boucher said in Washington. Negotiations on the surrender of former Taliban figures have recently frustrated the U.S.-led coalition as it pursues the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda terror network. The Taliban supreme leader, Mullah

Mohammad Omar, reportedly escaped during surrender negotiations after being surrounded in the mountains north of Kandahar.

Mr. Boucher said: "We have said before that we believe that senior Taliban officials should be taken into custody. We would expect that to be the case with these individuals. And I'm sure we'll be looking into this matter further. These people ought to be in custody ... on the basis of their support for Al-Qaeda and the terrorists that have operated in Afghanistan". Earlier, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Richard Myers, said, "Individuals of that stature in the Taliban leadership are of great interest to the United States, and we would expect that they would be turned over."

The interim administration in Kabul said it understood that seven former Taliban officials had surrendered to local authorities and been released after they handed over their weapons and vehicles. Washington has twice called for the former ministers to be taken into custody so they can be interrogated about the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda network.

"We don't have any sympathies for the Taliban," a spokesman for the Kandahar Governor, Khalid Pashtoon, said, adding local authorities had been trying to disarm former Taliban by offering an amnesty if they turned

in their weapons. "We are trying to correct them in this way," he said.

The surrender of the Taliban leaders took a confusing twist on Thursday as Mr. Pashtoon, who originally said they had surrendered, changed part of his story.

With Washington wondering what happened to the Taliban leaders, Mr. Pashtoon said only one minister had surrendered and he was now in Pakistan. The other two were cases of mistaken identity.

The confusion over the ministers and a possible local deal in releasing them raised questions over the control Kabul's interim administration exercises outside the capital and the role local warlords play in the hunt for leaders of the vanquished militia.

Mr. Pashtoon said Mr. Turabi was the only ex-minister to surrender. "Turabi came to us and then we released him," he said. "He is in Pakistan now. If we want, we can call him back or fetch him, and we are ready to hand him over to the United States."

Asked about his earlier statement that the former Defence Minister, Mullah Obaidullah, and the Mines and Industry Minister, Mullah Saadudin, had also given themselves up, he said: "I withdraw my statement." They were a case of mistaken identity, he added. — AP, Reuters

Trail for Osama, Omar grows cold

KANDAHAR, JAN. 5. The trail for the world's two most wanted men turned cold today after Afghan officials said Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, had fled a mountainous southern area and Osama bin Laden was on the run.

The Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Omar had been hiding out in the remote Baghran region in a northern corner of Helmand province since fleeing his powerbase in the southern city of Kandahar on December seven, but had now disappeared, officials said.

"There aren't any Taliban and al-Qaeda in Baghran now," said an official speaking for Kandahar intelligence chief, Haji Gullalai. "Mullah Omar is also not in Baghran." We know from our intelligence that Mullah Omar is not in Baghran, and not in Helmand province. He is somewhere else," said the official, who declined to be identified.

"I don't know where Mullah Omar is now," he said.

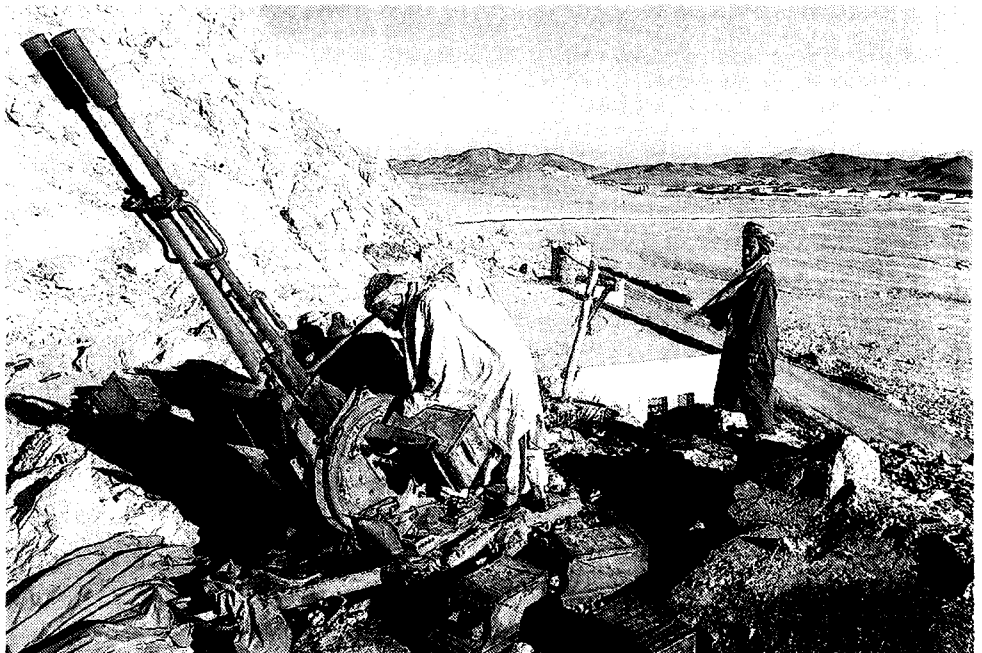
Tribal elders and U.S. forces had thought Mullah Omar had taken refuge in mountainous Baghran, a northern corner of southern Helmand province, after he surrendered Kandahar on December 7.

His disappearance, just days after U.S. officials said they had lost all trace of Osama, is embarrassing for the new interim administration in Kabul as well as for the United States, with special forces on the ground backed by jets and spy planes prowling the skies.

Washington holds the reclusive cleric responsible for providing Osama and his al-Qaeda network with a safe haven from which to carry out its operations against U.S. and other targets and has put a bounty on Mullah Omar's head.

Mullah Omar, who gave refuge to Osama after he arrived in Afghanistan in 1996, may still be in contact with the suspected mastermind of the September 11 attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center and sliced into the Pentagon, Afghan officials have said.

While some Taliban and opposition commanders in Baghran had surrendered, Osama



With Mullah Omar's compound in the background, two Mujahideen fighters check an anti-aircraft battery left by the Taliban forces in Kandahar recently. — AP

had disappeared into the inhospitable jagged mountains and steep-sided canyons of Afghanistan.

"There were some local commanders there and we talked to them," said the official in Kandahar.

"Some of them have surrendered and others are expected to surrender soon," he said.

But Mullah Omar appeared to have escaped the net — apparently in a convoy of motorcycles, the BBC reported.

"There is no fighting, we are talking," said the official, adding that no U.S. forces were now in Baghran.

A day earlier, new Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah, said in Kabul that the cleric who founded the fundamentalist Taliban was probably in Baghran and may be sent to an

international tribunal as a war criminal when caught.

But Amir Mohammad Akhonzada, chief-tain of the town of Kajaki and brother of Mullah Sher Mohammad Akhonzada, Governor of Helmand province, was adamant that he was not in the region.

"If Mullah Omar was here, if we knew he was here and we captured him we would kill him ourselves," he told Reuters yesterday.

The Taliban, a radical group that forced men to grow beards, confined women to home and banned music and television in its interpretation of Islam, swept to power in Afghanistan in 1996 and governed until Kabul fell in November. Through what locals say was their brutality, they made many enemies. — Reuters

Afghanistan endorses plan for peace force

KABUL, JAN. 5. Afghanistan's interim government on Friday formally endorsed an agreement that will pave the way for a 4,500-strong multinational peacekeeping force here.

The agreement, signed by Maj. Gen. John McColl of Britain and Afghanistan's Interior Minister, Yunus Qanooni, is a toughly worded document whose main intent is to give the British-led International Assistance Security Force the autonomy and authority to protect itself and its six-month mission.

The agreement was initialed by Gen. McColl and Mr. Qanooni on Monday, and reviewed and approved this week by the 17 nations that will contribute troops. Those nations sent reconnaissance missions to Afghanistan this week and will begin sending larger units soon. A substantial part of the force is expected to be in place by mid-January.

The agreement represents yet another move forward on the accord reached in Bonn last month by various Afghan factions on how to move their country from war to peace. Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. special representative to Afghanistan, who oversaw the Bonn negotiations, called it "one further step in Afghanistan for stability, peace and reconstruction." But by U.N. mandate, the peacekeepers will be confined to Kabul and its vicinity, which increasingly seems an island of security in a relatively lawless country. U.N. officials said on Friday night that they had ordered both their local and foreign staff members in Kandahar to remain



Afghanistan's interim Prime Minister, Hamid Karzai (left), looks on as Britain's Major General, John McColl (right), hands over a document to the United Nations special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi during the signing ceremony of the agreement on deployment of the International Security Force in Kabul on Friday. — Reuters

indoors and not report for work because of unsafe conditions in the city.

A U.N. spokeswoman, Stephanie Bunker, said there were both Taliban fighters and "Arab and other elements" in and around Kandahar and regular rocket and gunfire. Ms. Bunker also cited security problems around Ghazni, southwest of Kabul. In western Afghanistan, the situation south of Herat has become increasingly hazardous. U.N. personnel are not traveling south of Shindand, which is about 50 miles south of Herat, and gunmen have been disrupting seed distribution in Farah province, Ms. Bunker said.

Gen. McColl did not rule out extending the peacekeeping force

to other parts of the country, but said it would require a new U.N. mandate. Similarly, he said, the United Nations might extend the force's tenure beyond the authorized six months.

Also at the signing were Hamid Karzai, the chairman of the interim government; Abdullah Abdullah, the Foreign Minister; and Gen. Muhammad Fahim, the Defence Minister.

Mr. Karzai spoke briefly, saying, "We hope this will bring Afghanistan the stability and peace we've needed for so many years." But it was Mr. Qanooni, the Interior Minister, who negotiated and signed the agreement, a reflection of how central a role he is playing in the new government, and how

much power he has consolidated.

The agreement gives the security force full freedom of movement in the territory and airspace of Afghanistan. It also requires the interim government to provide the security force with any information related to the security and safety of its mission, personnel and locations. The force will be based at five bases in and around the city, including Kabul airport.

Security force members will have immunity from arrest or prosecution by the Afghan government, and the security force commander will be the final arbiter on interpreting the agreement.

Almost as an afterthought, the agreement adds that members of the security force "will respect the laws and culture of Afghanistan." Each side seems to have won some ground during the negotiations.

The British secured the right to patrol independently, while at first it seemed that all patrols would be conducted jointly with Afghan soldiers. The Afghans, meanwhile, won the right to keep troops quartered in Kabul, although the Bonn agreement had called for all armed units to be withdrawn from the city. Abdullah said on Friday night that there was no other place to accommodate them.

But under the agreement signed on Friday, Afghan troops may leave their barracks only with the approval of the interim government and the prior notification of Gen. McColl. — *New York Times*

Three former Taliban ministers surrender

FROM JEREMY PAGE

Kabul, Jan. 8 (Reuters): Three former ministers of Afghanistan's ousted Taliban government surrendered but the hunt for Osama bin Laden and Taliban chief Mullah Mohammad Omar entered its fourth month with the trail growing colder.

In a reminder that bin Laden and other leaders of the al Qaida network might never be taken alive, an al Qaida fighter holed up in a hospital in the southern city of Kandahar blew himself up today, an Afghan official said.

On the diplomatic front, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Washington's staunchest ally in its "war on terror", told the Afghan people the world would not abandon them now the Taliban had been defeated.

"We are always on the side of the Afghan people against the Taliban," Blair, the first Western

leader to visit the country since the headline Muslim militia were deposed, said yesterday. "And we remain on the side of the Afghan people today."

The first 70 German troops to join in the British-led international security force in Afghanistan left today for Kabul, first flying west to pick up Dutch soldiers.

A spokesman for Kandahar governor Gul Agha said the ousted ministers of defence, justice and mines and industry had given themselves up to authorities in Kandahar, the Taliban's former southern stronghold.

"Ministers of the Taliban and senior Taliban are coming one by one and surrendering and joining with us," he said.

"Among those who surrendered were former minister of defence Mullah Ubai Dullah, minister of justice Mullah Turabi and minister of mines and industry, Mullah Saadudin," he

said. Separately, an Afghan tribal commander said the head of the militia's information department and one of their senior spokesmen, Abdul Hayee Motmain, had been detained and handed over to US forces.

But the whereabouts of

Pak pursuit

Islamabad, Jan. 8 (AP): Pakistan today said that it needs no help pursuing al Qaida members fleeing into the country from their bombed hideouts in Afghanistan, a day after the top US military commander said that Pakistan had agreed to allow American troops to cross into Pakistan in pursuit of fleeing fighters.

"We have made all arrangements that those who sneak into Pakistan are arrested," a government spokesman said.

Saudi-born bin Laden and his ally Mullah Omar remained a mystery. Washington started bombing Afghanistan on October 7, vowing to hunt down bin Laden, whom it accuses of masterminding the September 11 attacks on US cities that killed more than 3,000 people.

As the third month passed, US officials were showing growing signs of frustration that their efforts to capture bin Laden and Mullah Omar had so far proved fruitless.

A military spokesman said yesterday US forces were going to stop "chasing the shadows" of bin Laden and Omar, and focus on eradicating remaining pockets of al Qaida resistance.

"We're going... to focus more on the entire picture of the country, where these pockets of resistance are... so that we can develop a better intelligence picture," Navy Rear Admiral John Stuffeleem told a Pentagon

briefing. US officials had raised hopes that Omar might be captured over the weekend as anti-Taliban forces negotiated with tribal chiefs in Baghlan, northwest of Kandahar, for the surrender of fighters thought to be protecting him.

But later there were only conflicting reports he had either fled or had never been in Baghlan. Stuffeleem said US officials had probably "assumed a little too much" in believing negotiations were about Mullah Omar.

The body of an al Qaida fighter was found in a garden outside the ward in a Kandahar hospital where he and several other wounded fighters, mostly Arabs, had been holed up with weapons since early December.

It was unclear exactly how many of the fighters were left barricaded in the ward. "Nobody can get near them," the official said.



Prime Minister Tony Blair points to a camera with troops from the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan at the Bagram airbase. (AFP)

HD-19

Military campaign in 811 Afghanistan to continue: Blair

By B.Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 7. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has said that the military campaign by the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan will continue till all its objectives are attained.

Mr. Blair, who worked relentlessly in the post-September 11 phase to cobble together the international coalition in the war against Osama bin Laden and the Taliban, told a news conference here today the campaign in Afghanistan was far from over.

Mr. Blair claimed that proving the prophets of doom wrong, the coalition had notched up impressive gains in its campaign in Afghanistan. He said the fears of a military, political and humanitarian disaster had been averted.

Such was his enthusiasm for the U.S.-led coalition campaign in Afghanistan that his first engagement in Islamabad on arrival from New Delhi was to visit the Information Coalition Centre and hold a news conference about the progress in the Afghan campaign.

He was all praise for the Musharraf Government for the support to the coalition in the campaign in Afghanistan and said the military campaign had been a success. Mr. Blair said that though the Taliban regime was no more and the Al-Qaeda network and terrorist training camps had been busted, the coalition was yet to achieve some of its objectives. "Our mission is not yet complete," he said.

Afghanistan had been a failed State for many years because the international community left it unattended after the withdrawal of the erstwhile Soviet Union. This time round, the international community was determined to help in the task of reconstructing Afghanistan.

Mr. Blair said Afghanistan had the prospect of becoming a stable State with a proper political regime

for the future. But, the international community would have to fulfil its commitments.

The Human Rights Organisation of Pakistan (HRCP) has termed the decision of the Government to deport the former Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Zaeef, to Afghanistan as illegal.

Mullah Zaeef, who was deported last week on charges of overstaying in the country after the Taliban embassy was shut down, was taken into custody by the U.S.-led coalition forces the moment he crossed over to Afghanistan. More than the decision of the U.S.-led coalition to detain Mullah Zaeef, it was the action of the Pakistan Government to deport the former Taliban envoy against his wish that has caused outrage in various circles here.

Media reports suggest that the U.S. has taken Mullah Zaeef to an undisclosed destination and the coalition is hopeful of gathering valuable information from him on the hideouts of Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar. "Although there is no Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Mullah Zaeef is one of the prominent and recognised personality and he is against the present Afghan Government. We have law about deporting any one from Pakistan, which is called foreign Act. Pakistani courts can make decision in this regard," the HRCP chief, Afrasaid Khattak, said.

He was of the view that the Government had not followed the procedure prescribed under the relevant law. It was the violation of Pakistani law.

"The Government took illegal action and violated its law and international laws too. The UNCHR should do something and give attention to it. The international coalition against terrorism should respect law and not violate laws," he said.

The chief of the Human Rights Organisation of Pakistan said that the organisation would inquire into the incident.

THE HINDU

5 JAN 2002

Hunt for Omar continues, Zaeef quizzed

KABUL: The Afghan authorities on Sunday said they had located Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar's new hiding place, as U.S. forces questioned a top envoy in the defeated regime for information on Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida network. 11-12-21

Omar slipped away from his refuge in southern Helmand province, evading a 5,000-strong Afghan force poised to flush him out, while tribal elders spent days negotiating his surrender, intelligence officials said on Saturday. But foreign ministry spokesman Omar Samad said the spiritual leader of the Islamic fundamentalist regime would not be on the run for long, warning he would be "captured dead or alive".

Intelligence authorities also said on Sunday that they knew where Omar and his small band of supporters had gone after fleeing Baghran district on motorcycle. "We know where he is but I cannot tell you anything more than this," Afghan intelligence official Nasratullah Nasrat said from neighbouring Kandahar province. The U.S. has put a \$10 million bounty on Omar's head for harbouring Bin Laden.

But despite the high stakes, Omar's narrow escape from Baghran district in Helmand is not the first time key Taliban and Al Qaida leaders have sneaked off amid surrender negotiations with Afghan tribal leaders.

Omar is believed to have slipped out of Kandahar last month with hundreds of his

^{Afghanistan} armed fighters after lengthy surrender negotiations with commanders of anti-Taliban forces besieging the southern city.

Al Qaida fighters, possibly including Bin Laden, also opened surrender talks after being cornered in the Tora Bora mountains in December, and then eluded the Afghan forces that had pinned them down.

The *Washington Post* said Sunday that U.S.

Al Qaida fighters, including Bin Laden, also opened surrender talks after being cornered in the Tora Bora mountains in December, and then eluded the Afghan forces that had pinned them down

military analysts were questioning the wisdom of relying on Afghan ground forces, a policy which had reduced U.S. military losses but proved to be less than efficient.

The U.S. is hoping former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Salam Zaeef, who was being interrogated on board a U.S. vessel in the Arabian sea, will provide valuable clues to Bin Laden's whereabouts. Possibly the most senior Taliban official in U.S. custody, he was the

regime's principal voice to the outside world at the start of the U.S.-led military campaign in Afghanistan.

"The U.S. military wanted Zaeef under custody to determine what he knows, what intelligence he might be able to provide — names, locations— any information he might have in his head that might be helpful in understanding the relationship between the Taliban and Al Qaida," a U.S. official said.

The official said Saturday that Zaeef was taken into custody by U.S. forces overnight, after Pakistan refused him permission to stay in Islamabad. Zaeef is being held on the same ship as John Walker, the American Al Qaida fighter taken prisoner in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif on December 2. The Pentagon says the U.S. now has 307 Taliban and Al Qaida fighters in custody.

Both U.S. and Afghan forces continued their campaign to flush out remnants of the two movements over the weekend. U.S. bombers pounded hills near the eastern city of Jalalabad overnight against suspected Al Qaida fighters held up there after fleeing the heavily bombed Tora Bora region, the Afghan Islamic Press reported on Sunday. Waves of U.S. bombers attacked the White Mountains area in the first bombardment of the vicinity this year, the Pakistan-based news agency said. (AFP)

Karzai vows to arrest Omar

Associated Press

KANDAHAR, Jan. 6. — The highest-ranking member of the Taliban under US custody was being held aboard a warship today and Afghanistan's interim Prime Minister vowed that fugitive Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar will be arrested eventually.

Visiting an orphanage in the Afghan capital, Kabul, Prime Minister Mr Hamid Karzai said that Omar, a one-eyed cleric who is America's most wanted man after Osama bin Laden, would be taken into custody. "We are looking for him, and we will arrest him," Mr Karzai said.

Afghan authorities today said they had located Omar's new hiding place. "We know where he is but I cannot tell you anything more than this," Afghan intelligence official Mr Nasratullah Nasrat said at Kandahar province.

The USA hopes a pair of high-profile

prisoners will provide valuable intelligence about Bin Laden's al-Qaida network, blamed for the 11 September attacks on New York and Washington and the radical Taliban movement that gave the organisation a base of operations.

Marine Lieutenant Mr James Jarvis told a news briefing that the Taliban's ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Salam Zaef, was in US custody on a naval ship in the Arabian Sea.

Ibn Al-Shayk al-Libi, who ran Al-Qaida terrorist training camps in Afghanistan, was transferred Saturday from anti-Taliban forces to US authorities at Kandahar airport, controlled by the US Marines.

"The big question, of course, is: Will they talk?" former Central Intelligence Agency terrorism analyst Mr Stan Beddington said in the USA. "If they are able to talk, I have no doubt whatsoever they will give a lot of information, particularly in the search for Bin Laden."

Mr Jarvis said 25 new prisoners arrived Saturday night in Kandahar from Pakistan, where they were intercepted trying to flee, bringing the total to 300. They were being interrogated for information on Al-Qaida in the area.

A British newspaper, *The Mail* on Sunday, reported that three men claiming to be British citizens were captured at Tora Bora. Two, identified as Shakir Abdul Rahim and Nabil Said, were reported to be under interrogation in Kabul. The third, unidentified as Mohammed Amin, was too badly wounded to be questioned. They are believed to be of Saudi, Indian and Pakistani extraction.

The Saudi newspaper *Okaz* quoted Pakistani interior affairs minister Mr Moin Haidar as saying Islamabad has recently detained 240 Saudis and will extradite to the USA any of them believed to be affiliated with Bin Laden.

They were said to have entered

Pakistan from Tora Bora and Afghan cities in recent weeks.

A suspected member of the Al-Qaida was arrested in a late-night raid on a hotel in the western German city of Moenchengladbach and police are looking for two other possible suspects, authorities said on Sunday.

Acting on a tip from a "foreign intelligence service", that three suspected Al-Qaida members were in the Dorint hotel, about 100 officers raided the building at about 11 p.m. Saturday, said Mr Juergen Moeller, spokesman for the Moenchengladbach police.

The 40-year-old man was arrested in his room and charged with being member of a criminal organisation. No weapons were found on the man but police did recover a large amount of cash, Mr Moeller said.

Authorities are now investigating whether the man, who checked into the hotel earlier Saturday, was involved in purchasing or selling explosives.

PM's day out with orphans

Reuters

KABUL, Jan. 6. — Afghan interim Prime Minister, Mr Hamid Karzai, took some time off from the affairs of state today for a friendly chat with delighted children at one of Kabul's biggest orphanages.

He found their worries no less pressing than those of the state.

"We don't have warm rooms," complained one boy after Mr Karzai, who took on the task of rebuilding war-ravaged Afghanistan only two weeks ago, cheerfully urged them to tell him their problems.

"We don't have enough food," chimed another small voice from the boys and girls sitting in separate sections among teachers in headscarves and full-length *burqa*.

"Please give our teachers good salaries so they can teach us well," urged another child at the Allahuddin Orphanage, which with 870 children, is one of the two largest in the Afghan capital.

"We need better clothes," said a boy in a scruffy sweater.

Since being sworn in on 22 December, Mr Karzai (44), has been working overtime setting up his administration, consulting provincial and tribal leaders and meeting foreign envoys visiting this impoverished country.



Afghan interim Prime Minister Mr Hamid Karzai greets a girl at an orphanage in Kabul on Sunday. — AP/PTI

He sat casually on a table during the meeting and often opened his eyes wide and laughed at the children's comments, ended his short visit praying with his audience that killing was now ended in Afghanistan and that all Afghan

children would be well cared for.

"I'm very happy with this visit," orphanage director, Mr Abdul Habib Sameem said, as the Prime Minister left amid shouts of *Allahu Akbar* (God is great) from the children.

"He promised to provide

everything we need." "He's a good guy," said Mohammad Asef, a 12-year-old from the far North-east.

"Things are better now than under the Taliban, because we can play football, but he will make them even better."

THE STATESMAN

7 JAN 2002

Talks continue for Omar handover

Afghanistan *HD-14*
KABUL, JAN. 4. Talks were today continuing between a Taliban commander and tribal elders in Afghanistan's southern Helmand province over the fate of Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, an intelligence official said.

The matter was expected to be finalised by the weekend, said Nasratullah Nasrat, an official in Kandahar's provincial intelligence services.

"We can't wait longer than one or two days, otherwise of course we will attack them," he told AFP by telephone. Mr. Nasrat denied reports that Mullah Omar was expected to be captured imminently.

The Shura, or meeting of tribal elders, in Helmand province which began on Tuesday was still continuing today, Mr. Nasrat said.

He made it clear that while the Shura was still in session, no steps would be taken to apprehend Mullah Omar.

Taliban commander, Abdul Ahad, better known as Rayes Baghran — the chief of Baghran — has told the Shura he would hand over Mullah Omar and also surrender along with his force of up to 1,500 men if the U.S. bombing campaign was halted in southern Afghanistan.

Mr. Nasrat told AFP yesterday that Mr. Ahad's forces "are absolutely blockaded and besieged" in the mountains of Helmand.

Meanwhile, reports said Afghan fighters, backed by U.S. ground forces, staked out a village in southern Afghanistan today with officials in the area saying shadowy Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, may be hiding there.

With the United States highlighting terror suspects as the focus of the Afghan war it launched on October 7, an official in the former Taliban stronghold of Kandahar said U.S. forces were making house-to-house searches in the area of the village.

"We would know within half an hour if he is captured," Nasratullah, secretary to Kandahar intelligence chief, Haji Gullalai, told Reuters.

Mullah Omar, who imposed his own strict vision of Islam on Afghanistan, sheltered Saudi-born Osama bin Laden in the face of U.S. demands he be handed over for masterminding the September 11 suicide hijackings that killed nearly 3,300 in the United States.

Afghan Minister for Reconstruction, Amin Farhang, told German television yesterday he had heard Omar had been arrested.

The Pentagon, which is orchestrating the hunt for Osama, said it had nothing to support the report. "We have nothing on that at all," spokeswoman, Victoria Clark, said.

The U.S. Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, told a Pentagon briefing yesterday the focus of the Afghan war was now on pursuing those the Taliban harboured.

"The Taliban rule in Afghanistan has ended," he said as U.S. officials announced an air strike on a suspected leadership compound near the border with Pakistan.

"That is a good thing. It's a good thing for the people of Afghanistan, but it's also a good thing for the people of the world that that country is no longer harbouring terrorists. The real task is seeing that they are pursued." Washington wants Omar for providing a safe haven for Osama and his al-Qaeda network from which to carry out operations against U.S. and other targets.

Afghan Intelligence officials say the reclusive cleric who lost an eye fighting the 1979-89 Soviet occupation is holed up with 1,000 fighters in the mountains around Baghran in Helmand province, 160 Km northwest of Kandahar.

Kandahar was the spiritual home of the Taliban throughout their five-year rule, before sustained U.S. bombing drove them from power.

"I have heard that he was arrested, but more I do not know," Mr. Farhang told a late night ARD TV news programme.

Afghan officials in Kandahar, who are trying to negotiate the surrender of Omar, said yesterday their envoys had returned and they hoped the talks would lead to his capture without bloodshed.

After a lull of several days, U.S. Air Force General, Richard Myers, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, announced a fresh display of military might yesterday.

"This morning...We conducted strikes...In Afghanistan on a leadership compound, a fairly extensive compound," Mr. Myers said. "It had a base camp, training facilities and some caves...Fairly close to the Pakistani border."

The compound was in the Khost region south of Tora Bora, the area of caves and tunnels that had been a hiding place for Osama's al-Qaeda network.

The same area was targeted by U.S. Cruise missiles in response to 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press reported today at least two people were wounded when U.S. warjets struck Zhawar in Khost province, near Afghanistan's border with Pakistan.

But it was not clear if this was the leadership compound that Mr. Myers was talking about. — Reuters, AFP

Forces close in on Omar hide-out

KABUL, JAN. 2. U.S.-backed Afghan forces vying for the honour of capturing the fugitive Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, gathered in southern Afghanistan to march on a mountain village in Helmand province, where he was believed to be holed up.

The intelligence chief in Kandahar, Mr. Haji Gullalai, said he had asked Taliban fighters believed to be protecting Mullah Omar to hand over their leader or face attack. "We have told them to give us Omar, but no ultimatum has been issued," he added. He said Government forces were closing in on Mullah Omar and the Taliban fighters who may be protecting him. "We have two goals: to disarm irresponsible people and to get Omar, who is a criminal for the Afghan people and the whole world".

In the Afghan capital Kabul, a reconnaissance team from 12 nations contributing to an international security force that will work with the interim Government in the city arrived today to assess the needs on the ground.

U.S. troops are still searching for Osama, who is believed to be in eastern Afghanistan or across the border in Pakistan. They are also gathering intelligence information left behind by his Al-Qaeda network.

U.S. Marines on Tuesday scoured a compound in Helmand province, according to the U.S. Central Command, which said they were not directly taking part in the hunt for Omar. The Marines, who left their Kandahar base in a pre-dawn convoy with helicopter gunship support, searched buildings thought to have been used by Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters. Earlier reports suggested Marines may have

been preparing to support Afghan allies in an assault on the village near Baghran. Elsewhere, anger simmered in Afghanistan over U.S. bombing since the overthrow of the Taliban and the rout of Al-Qaeda. U.S. military officials said a weekend raid in the east destroyed a compound used by Al-Qaeda fighters and their Taliban allies. A tribal leader there said it had killed more than 100 civilians in a village.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of Afghanistan's interim Government, Mr. Hamid Karzai, said he wanted the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan to continue until all terrorist activity was rooted out, but also expressed concern about mounting civilian casualties.

"We want to finish terrorists in Afghanistan — we want to finish them completely," Mr. Karzai said. "But we must also make sure our civilians do not suffer," he said in an interview to the *New York Times* published on Wednesday. Asked when the civilian cost would become too high to justify the bombing campaign's continuation, Mr. Karzai said, "We must make sure there is no civilian cost at all". Mr. Karzai's comments came in the light of reports that upto 100 villagers had been killed in overnight strikes on Saturday. Mr. Karzai said he planned to take up the issue of civilian deaths with U.S. officials.

Since the U.S. began its bombing offensive in Afghanistan on October 7, there have been several reports of apparently mistaken strikes on civilians. Local Afghan leaders and the country's Interim Defence Minister, Mr. Mohammad Fahim, have called for an end to the U.S. bombing campaign.

U.S. officials and the Afghan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, have said the air campaign would continue for as long as it took to finish off the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Mr. Karzai said he was planning to discuss the weekend U.S. bombing with elders from the affected part of the country, and has sent a helicopter to bring them to Kabul. He said while he supported actions against Taliban leadership, low-level Taliban, or "common people" recruited by force, would be released from prisons. "The bad guys" and foreigners who fought with the Taliban would stay in jail, he added. He said the lawlessness on the country's highways made it hard to import goods and deliver aid. He has raised concerns about Northern Alliance behaviour toward Pashtun leaders on their way to Kabul, including the theft of cars.

Economic issues are paramount, and healing Afghanistan's shattered economy is "as important as security," Mr. Karzai said. The new Government is working to establish a customs system and a currency policy, and choose a central bank head, he said. "That is a priority area," he said.

The reconnaissance team from the international security force in Kabul arrived two days after the Afghan administration and Britain initialled an agreement on deployment of about 4,500 foreign peace-keeping troops. The party of 20 from Germany, France, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria, Greece, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Romania will spend two days in Kabul surveying conditions, a British forces spokesman said. — Reuters



A NEW ACT BEGINS: Afghan artistes perform a stage play in the first cultural show since the fall of the Taliban, at a destroyed theatre in Kabul on Wednesday. — Reuters

First French peacekeeping troops arrive in Afghanistan

KABUL, JAN. 2. The first French soldiers in the international peace-keeping force for Afghanistan arrived today at the Bagram air base, north of Kabul, a French military source said. The contingent, which will be based in Kabul, comprised mainly engineers who have come to prepare the way for the main deployment, the French official said.

A total of 21 French troops were expected to arrive in two batches from Dushanbe in Tajikistan. Later in the day they will travel to Kabul.

A second batch is to begin arriving from January 15 and by the end of the month, the total French deployment will comprise 550 personnel, including ground troops, helicopter pilots and staff attached to a mobile hospital. An advance guard of about 270 British troops is already in Kabul, patrolling the capital and providing visible support to the new interim administration sworn in on December 22.

— AFP

AP/15
119-15

Masood murder: Al-Qaeda hand 'confirmed'

2/1

LONDON, JAN. 1. Two computers apparently used by Osama bin Laden's top lieutenants have been recovered in Kabul, providing stunning evidence of the complexity and ambition of the Al-Qaeda group believed to be responsible for the September 11 attacks in the U.S.

According to reports here, a journalist bought the desktop and laptop computer that, among other things, confirmed that the Al-Qaeda group was responsible for the murder of Ahmad Shah Masood, the leader of the Northern Alliance, shortly before the September 11 attacks.

Masood was assassinated when two men posing as TV journalists detonated a bomb hidden in a camera while pretending to interview him. The computer hard drives, bought by the correspondent of *Wall Street Journal*, contain the original of a letter requesting the interview. Among hundreds of files recovered from the computer by the newspaper are detailed discussions of the development of chemical and biological weapons under the heading of operation Al-Zabadi, the Arabic word for curdled milk.

In one memo, apparently written by Ayman Zawahari, Osama's chief strategist, he says "the destructive power of these weapons is no less than that of nuclear weapons". But in a bitter irony for America it adds that "we only be-



Residents in Qalaye Niazi, 140 km south of Kabul, clean up debris after what they claim was an air raid by U.S. warplanes on Monday. — Reuters

came aware of them when the enemy drew our attention to them by repeatedly expressing concern that they can be produced simply."

Many of the documents refer to Al-Qaeda as "the corporation" and its chief officers as "the general management", a report in *Daily Telegraph* here said today. The journal said its reporter bought the computers from a shop that had bought them from a looter. He had apparently taken them from a building used by Al-Qaeda leaders in Kabul that was destroyed by American bombing.

According to the report, the hard drives contain large numbers of documents written to and by members of the network's cells in Europe, West Asia and elsewhere around the world. — PTI

Mission to nab Omar

AP reports from Kabul: Pushing to snatch the elusive leader of Afghanistan's deposed Taliban, Mullah Omar, American forces have launched a mission to capture him, probably from the mountains north-west of his Islamic movement's one-time stronghold, Afghanistan's interim Prime Minister said.

THE HINDU

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