Thai king praises

Iraq violence

country was worse than a civil war. Ten US troops were killed in Iraq over the weekend and three more are missing after a helicopter crashed in the restive west of the country, the US military said Monday

Insurgents killed nine US troops across Irag over the weekend, the military said Monday.

The military said the Marine Corps Sea Knight helicopter with 16 people on board crashed Sunday into a body of water in the western province of Al-Anbar.

Twelve people survived the crash while one marine was pulled out of the water but could not be

"Search and recovery efforts are ongoing for the remaining three unaccounted servicemembers who have been listed as Duty Status Unknown," the military said

The CH-46 Sea Knight entered service in the early 1960s and is one of the oldest models in use with the US military. The entire 218-strong fleet was briefly taken out of service in 2002 after faults were found.

Two soldiers were killed and two wounded by an explosion near their vehicle on Sunday during operations in northern Iraq. Earlier Sunday the military had

reported deaths of seven other servicemen across the war-torn country The US military death toll in Iraq -

which dipped last month after a high in October during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan -- has climbed back to an average of three per day in the first four days of December.

Annan's remark came a few hours after President Jalal Talabani became the second Iraqi leader after powerful Shia politician Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, to reject the UN chief's call for an international peace conference on Iraq.

Insurgents were back at work Sunday, when one wearing an explosive belt blew himself up next to a police station near the northern oil city of Kirkuk, killing three officers, Major General Torhan Yussef told AFP.

Farther south, at least 16 people were murdered in and around the restive town of Baguba, according to security and medical sources.

And Shia imam Taha Yassin close to radical cleric Mogtada al-Sadr, was shot dead after evening prayers near his home in the southern city of Najaf.

Elsewhere 10 people were killed. The US military reported the deaths of three more troops and confirmed that a pilot whose fighter plane crashed last week in northwestern Irag was killed

The fatalities took the military's losses since the March 2003 invasion to 2,888, according to an AFP count based on Pentagon figures.

On Sunday shell-shocked Iragis were also mourning the 60 victims from Saturday's triple car bombing when blasts tore through a crowded

shopping street at nightfall After more than three and a half years of mounting sectarian conflict, the attack, while vicious, was neither unexpected nor especially deadly -- more than 1,800 Iraqi civilians were slaughtered in November alone.

But each new massacre hammers a wedge deeper between Irag's Sunni and Shia communities and chips away at the credibility of the country's beleaguered unity government and the US-led coalition force propping it up.

On Sunday American soldiers killed six suspected insurgents, two women and a child when they called in an air strike to dislodge gunmen from a house west of Baghdad late Saturday, the military said.

As the carnage continued Annan called the sectarian bloodshed worse than civil war. In an interview with the BBC,

Annan said: "When we had the strife in Lebanon and other places, we called that a civil war -- this is much

Last week the world's top diplomat had called for an international conference on Iraq, an idea which was swiftly shot down by Talabani

"There's a political process ongoing in Irag and there's a parliament which is the best in the region, Talabani said in a statement

"We've become an independent sovereign state and it will be us who decides the future of our country."

Meanwhile, amid the bloodshed, there is a growing realisation in Washington that the current US strategy is failing and pressure is mounting for either a major change of course or a rapid pullout of the 138,000 US troops in Iraq.

Attention has focused on the Iraq Study Group -- a high-level bipartisan panel of experts headed by former secretary of state James Baker -- which is due to pass its recommendations to President George W Bush this week.

But on Sunday a leaked memo from former defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, written in his final few days in office before resigning last month, revealed the administration has long known of the need for a change in the Iraq plan.

Rumsfeld's rambling three-page memo cites a shopping list of possible tactical and strategic changes, some of them mutually exclusive. but admits: "In my view it is time for a ajor adjustment.

"Clearly, what US forces are currently doing in Iraq is not working well enough or fast enough." Rumsfeld wrote, in a document passed to the New York Times and later confirmed as genuine by the

In particular, Rumsfeld favours placing more US trainers directly with Iraqi units, withdrawing other American troops from combat into five large bases by July next year and sending commandos to hunt down al-Qaeda and Iranian agents.

He also implicitly criticised other US government departments, saying the Pentagon should "give up" asking them for help and hire retired soldiers to advise Iraqi

Instead of spending money rebuilding cities like Fallujah that rebelled and were recaptured by US forces -- "rewarding bad behaviour" -- Rumsfeld suggested paying off political and religious leaders "as ddam Hussein did"

US envoy in Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad largely appeared supportive of Rumsfeld's strategies.

"The political forces that want democratic order in Iraq that want to do the right thing, they need support, they need support from their own people, they need support from like-minded countries like the United States for them, because their enemies the extremists are getting resources from abroad.

"In order to level the playing field there is a need to provide help," he

Judging by leaks to the US media, Baker will also recommend increasing the number of US army trainers, while withdrawing troops from combat and by early 2008 leaving only 70,000 soldiers in Iraq in a support role.

The White House may well be receptive to this idea, but seems opposed to another: that of reaching out to US foes Iran and Syria to persuade them to use their influence to calm the unrest in Iraq.

EC meets urgently

that by announcing the election schedule, the EC has already limited the scope for further updating the voter list by deleting the names of fake voters and registering that of eligible ones not included in the present list.

Apart from the controversy over correctness of the updated list that contains a staggering 9.30 crore voters, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for International Affairs revealed on Saturday that 1.22 crore names on the updated voter list are either excess or dupli-

cates. The council of advisers at a meeting yesterday discussed the issue and proposed to the EC to make voter list credible to all. The EC secretary informed the council that they tried their best to make the

voter list credible, sources said. Sources in the EC Secretariat said it will be difficult to initiate extensive measures to update the voter list as the election schedule was already announced. The announcement of the schedule limited the jurisdiction of field level election officials to include or delete any names from the list.

As per electoral laws and rules. field level election officials are empowered to include or delete any names from the voter list on their own till the election schedule is announced. After this, only the EC holds such power.

Once the polls schedule is announced, field level election

send their recommendations to the EC in this regard for its consider-

People applying for registering names on the voter list will now have to submit receipts of municipal tax or house rent payment or payment to local security guards, and affidavits of age or attested copies of SSC certificates with their applications in

Also for deletion of names from the voter list, people will have to apply in prescribed forms to district or upazila election officers.

in both the cases, they will have to visit election offices at upazila and district headquarters.

The EC on November 26 urged the people to enlist or delete names from the voter list, and directed its field level officials to cooperate with them. But till yesterday, the EC did not get any application either for deletion or inclusion of names in the

The acting CEC on Sunday said none came to correct mistakes in

NDI clarifies

an NDI press release on Sunday.

"We assume that mistaken

listings were by accident not by design due to significant levels of internal migration. Only a very small number of names were completely unverifiable," the US based organisation further clarified.

Next election

FROM PAGE 16 extend her cooperation to holding a

free and neutral election." he added. Referring to 35 years of uninterrupted cooperation and assistance of his country for Bangladesh's development initiatives, the envoy said not only Japan but also all other

development partners of

Bangladesh are worried about its

future development He said the present political situation in Bangladesh is not conducive to its progress and prosper-

When asked if a free and fair poll is possible with the existing voter list having over 1 crore fake names, Inoue said, "It's not our outlook, the people of Bangladesh are the best udges to decide on this issue."

Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Personal Secretary Dr Awlad Hossain were also pres-

BNP plans

FROM PAGE 1 today at Hawa Bhaban.

Nomination seekers from Sylhet and Chittagong divisions will be interviewed by the party parliamentary board headed by party Chairperson Khaleda Zia on the first day. All members of the party Standing Committee

are members of the board. BNP sources said 1.870 aspirants from across the country collected party nomination forms for contesting the election but 1,544 submitted the forms. Khaleda Zia collected forms for five seats and her son Tarique Rahman for one seat.

Party sources said the parliamentary board will finalise the decision as to how many seats and which seats Khlaeda Zia and Tarique will contest

BNP's allies -- Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP-Naziur) and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ-Aminee) dates to BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan. All of them will bargain for their candidates at the fourparty meeting in this regard.

According to sources, Jamaat claimed 60 seats for their party men to fight the next election. They contested for 31 seats in the last election and won 17 seats BJP (Naziur) gave a list of 20 seats

and IOJ à list of 25 seats. Meanwhile, another BNP ally

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP-Matin)submitted a list of aspirant party candidates for 10 seats. Sources said BNP has more than

one aspirant for nomination in most of the constituencies, making it difficult for the high command to select party candidates A number of important leaders like

Khulna City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman might leave the party unless they get nomination for the next polls. Tayebur had earlier declared that he would think of an alternative' if the party did not nomi-

Man standing

FROM PAGE 16 Zia International Airport Saturday night and showed him arrested in connection with the murder case yesterday before taking him on a two-day remand.

A Jamaat leader had filed the murder case against 40 activists of the AL-led 14-party alliance on October 29 with the Paltan Police Station after six people were killed in Paltan area. One person was killed

under the Shahbagh Police Station. The case was later shifted to the Detective and Crime Intelligence unit of police.

The investigators claimed, based on circumstantial evidence, they are sure of Mohan's involvement in the clashes but he did not admit his involvement.

"It's true that we haven't found him fighting in any photographs or video footages; he was just standing there watching. But two other people near him were found fighting with a knife and a stick. Isn't it enough for us to be certain about his involvement in the clashes?" investigation officer (IO) Enamul Haque of Crime and Intelligence Unit of Police told The Daly Star yesterday.

He also confirmed that Mohan. who owns two barber shops at Kaula Bazar near the airport, was not seen carrying any arms in the video footages or in the photographs.

Police, after the filing of the case, had started collecting video footages telecast during television news and photographs published in newspapers and spotted Mohan wearing a grey full sleeve shirt.

Five plainclothes policemen picked up Mohan while he was having his tea in front of one of his shops around 10:30pm Saturday.

Meanwhile, Mohan's neighbours, employees and family members said he is not a "party activist" but a mere supporter of the AL and he hardly ever went to any party

Son of a 70-year-old widow, Mohan is a simple, timid and peaceloving person, said locals of Kaula where he lives with his mother, wife and two children. "After I lost my husband and my

other son went missing, he has been my only hope," said his mother Manabala Sheel claiming her son to be innocent. His wife Kaial said her husband

was not involved with any violent activities neither was he ever accused of any crime before. "Who would look after the family now," she



A video footage shows Roy Mohan Sheel, circled, arrested on Saturday for his alleged involvement in October 28 bloody clashes between 14-party combine and Jamaat-e-Islami in Baitul Mokarram area of the capital. (story on page-16)

Advisers decide

They will sit today again to review the developments following their

Acting CEC Justice Mahfuzur Rahman, who attended the advisers' meeting on special invitation, returned to the FC Secretariat late in the evening and sat with the election commissioners to discuss how to rearrange the polls schedule.

At the meeting, the EC decided to take steps to correct the voter list in line with the suggestions of the caretaker government. But the EC officials observed that it might be difficult to initiate extensive measures to that end as the commission has already announced the schedule meaning restriction of the field level election officers' authority that otherwise could have made a huge difference in the correction job.

Earlier, coming out of the advisers' meeting, Information Adviser Mahbubul Alam told the media that they hope the decisions will help create a congenial atmosphere before the election and life will return to normalcy soon.

About changes in the EC, he said. "We will request one or two election commissioners to take leave of absence like CEC MA Aziz. We hope they will act on our request."

On transfer of the secretaries of home, establishment and LGRD ministries, he said they have ordered for transfer of seven to eight high level secretaries. " We hope it will have some effect. You will know about it in detail once a gazette notification is published." he added.

About correction of the updated voter list. Mahbubul said they have requested the EC for a complete revision and correction of the list with a view to making it acceptable

He said the meeting also discussed the possibility of changing the polls timetable announced on November 27. But it noted that it rests with the EC to take any decision in this regard.

ADVISERS OPTIMISTIC The council of advisers expressed

high hopes that the decisions on

Blockade

FROM PAGE 1 alliance would enforce a sit-in demonstration around the Election Commission (FC) Secretariat today to realise their several demands including cancellation of the polls schedule and updating of the voter

She also threatened to resume the non-stop blockade if the interim government fails to implement the omised decision.

the voter list must have to be updated afresh and a fresh polls schedule will have to be announced. "I am hopeful that the advisers will take necessary steps to implement their decision to hold a free and fair election," Hasina said

ODI series

FROM PAGE 1 with another convincing six-wicket

victory on Sunday. Habibul Bashar's men provided evidence in the last two games why the 'favourites' tag looks appropriate for them to record their second home series triumph against the southern African opponents with two games in

Although there had been a lot of buzz about the dew factor ahead of the second match of the five-match series. the hosts have surely made it clear that nothing could be a barrier for a team on a good run.

The Bangladesh think-tank has the strong intention to field same combination for the third match in a row there was doubt over pace spearhead Mashrafee Bin Mortuza, who has been complaining a shoulder pain after the last game. According to sources, his chance

to play is 50-50 because the team

would not take any risk on him. The

fate of the new ball bowler will only be

decided before the match starts.

issues ranging from reconstitution of the EC to re-arrangement of the election schedule will break the deadlock. defence lawyers prayed for bail

They said they now hope the agitating political parties will withdraw the non-stop blockade, trusting in the initiative to end the stalemate prevailing since President lajuddin Ahmed took over as the chief adviser on October 29.

Another adviser Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury said the decisions were not taken under pressure from a particular political party. "At one point, we felt that things

getting stagnant and there was a

need for a major initiative and that's

when the president had invited them to sit," he added. This is not an extension of any other programme, rather a part of the package of proposals that we had offered earlier. The timing of the package decision was a coinci-

dence and had nothing to do with

the timing of their (14-party alliance)

programmes," added Mashhud. It is up to them (political parties) to interpret it in whatever way they want," he said adding, "We hope that any programme that hampers

public life will be stopped." The council of advisers at a meeting on Friday decided to hold dialogue with the top leaders of the two major political alliances to resolve the political crisis. Accordingly, the chief adviser and 10 advisers held talks with Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina on Saturday

Then on Sunday they held a marathon meeting and sent three advisers to the two top leaders with

the package of proposals. Yesterday's breakthrough followed the discussions with the

opposing alliances. Replying to a query, the information adviser said the council of advisers is also taking into account the political parties' suggestions regarding reconstitution of the EC.

Major changes

FROM PAGE 1

The officers promoted are from all batches of the BCS administration that include more than 600 deprived officials during the last tenure of the BNP-led 4-party alliance regime.

The newly promoted secretaries include Meer Shahabuddin Mohammad, vice chairman, Export Promotion Bureau, Mir Md Shakhawat Hossain, additional secretary, Parliament Secretariat, Shaheed Alam, acting secretary, Evaluation Division and Abul Kalam Azad, chairman **Bandladesh Forest Industries** Development Corporation.

The other five newly promoted secretaries are AFM Matiur Rahman, acting secretary, Rural Development and Cooperatives Division, SM Jafrullah, acting secretary, Housing and Public Works Ministry, Didarul Anwar, acting secretary, Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Ministry, Abdul Haq, acting secretary, Women and Children Affairs Ministry and Bhupendra Chandra Debnath. director general, BCS Administration Academy.

Establishment Secretary AFM Solaiman disclosed the SSB decision and said all officials including regular and deprived have been considered during the SSB meeting. The officials deprived during

marks and a few had departmental

proceedings against them.

both BNP and Awami League governments in the last ten years were also considered in the promotion process, he added. Chowdhury also said some deprived officials contending for promotion could not be promoted and public partnerships, and culture as they did not have sufficient pass

Mahfuz Anam FROM PAGE 16 On November 9, Abbas filed the

case against the editor, publisher and two reporters of the weekly magazine. Moving the bail petition, the

arguing that the magazine ran a

factual story and the case was filed as part of a conspiracy to harass Mahfuz Anam, the lawyers said. In his complaint, Mirza Abbas mentioned that the weekly had published a defamatory news item on August 25 that damaged his reputation, name and fame in the

society as well as in the political

Advocates Sved Ahmed Gazi. Abdul Baten, Mahbubul Hague Chaitanva Chandra Halder, Sabbir Ahmed, Prasanta Kumar Karmaker and barrister Abdul Halim appeared for the publisher.

Kidnapping

FROM PAGE 16

union parishad (UP) chairmen on the premises of Bonagram Primary School in Nandail upazila. The mob also looted quilts,

domestic animals, including cows

and goats, and other belongings

from the houses, alleged one of the house owners who were suspected to be involved in the incidents of kidnapping. Lutfur Rahman Mondal, police superintendent of Kishoregani, said four of the affected house owners have been identified as Sekander.

Kuddus, Taher and Mati of Tekpara village in Hossainpur upazila and they are accused in robbery cases. Police and locals said at least 20 people were abducted from the villages of two upazilas in the last

three months and five were abduc-

ted in a week. Locals alleged that the abductors killed the victims and dumped the bodies if their families failed to pay the ransom money as demanded. The said the people of 22 villages of the two upazilas have been passing sleepless nights for the last few months.

A memorandum was submitted to the deputy commissioner (DC) of Kishoreganj yesterday demanding immediate action against the abductors.

Rab member's

FROM PAGE 16 Commanding Officer of Coast Guard Mongla (west zone) Abu Taher said the rescue team also recovered arms and ammunition

carried by the three dead. According to Taher, the searching team recovered two unidentified dead bodies from the river Pashur though he was not sure whether these were of the pirates, who sustained bullet injuries during the encounter.

Commanding Officer of Rab-6 Lt Col Shams told The Daily Star that

they will continue the combing operation in the Sundarbans area.

Blind eye

FROM PAGE 16

that there is a global pattern of the wealthy people using their power to influence the political process and block pro-poor tax reforms. He urged for the implementation of propoor tax reforms which involves increasing the taxation rate with the corresponding rise of their income. Similarly, the wealthy use their

political influence to prevent public

spending on services that benefit the poor, such as education, Addison said. Peter Chaudhry of Oxfam, in another session, outlined how case studies in Vietnam suggested that the poor can and do use their income effectively when given the

chance and they themselves can make choices on their livelihood priorities. There were eight sessions at the conference yesterday discussing on the development activist's experiences with the landless poor, incorporation of technological advancements with development, private

and poverty. The Daily Star is a media partner of the conference.

post-coup govt

Hints at change within a year

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's enormously popular King Bhumibol Adulyadej has praised the country's post-coup government as 'wise and experienced", but hinted he expected to see a new premier within a

The king, who turns 79 on Tuesday, delivered his annual address to the nation live Monday in his first major speech since the September 19 coup that ousted twice-elected prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Prem Tinsulanonda, the head of the Privy Council -- the king's personal advisers -- is believed to have orchestrated the takeover. The military appointed another privy councillor, 63year-old former army chief Surayud Chulanont, as prime minister.

"This government is very old, but older is better, more experienced and wiser," the king said

"Older people who maintain their virtue have an advantage over younger people, if they use their experience. But if they refuse to exercise their knowledge and just think of themselves as old, then our nation will

crumble," he said. Wearing a pale grey suit and a vellow tie, he did not comment specifically on the coup, but praised Surayud.

"Surayud is a strong person and he does not act recklessly. Next year he will be relieved of this burden," the monarch said.

"He has no conflicts of interest. I

believe that if anyone in a key position

is working with good intentions and

nonesty, then our country will be saved

from danger. "I wish the government, as a team

of elders, success in its work," he said. The king, who with 60 years on the throne is the world's longest-serving monarch, has now seen 24 prime ministers, 18 coups and 17 constitutions. He spoke only briefly about politics, saying he was "bored" with it.

It's boring," he said. "Next year I will talk about other issues, but if I do so now, foreigners will say that the king is ordering around the prime minister," he added. The generals who toppled Thaksin

"I don't want to talk about politics.

have promised to draft a new constitution and hold elections by October

But the king gave relatively little ime to the affairs of the nation. He gave no indication when he might sign a decree lifting martial law across half the country for the first time

since the coup. The junta and the

government approved the measure last week, but it needs the monarch's signature to take effect.

Nor did he mention the worsening insurgency in Thailand's Muslimmajority south, where more than 1,700 people have been killed in nearly three

ears of unrest. The violence there has spiked in the last month, with a wave of arson and bombings at schools forcing the cancellation of classes in much of the

Most of his speech was devoted to water management, a passion of the monarch who has spent much of his reign looking for ways to minimize the effects of seasonal flooding. He also admitted that he had

become physically weak, and he delivered the speech while seated, in a voice barely above a whisper that weakened the longer he spoke. The speech -- actually unscripted remarks that he delivers off the cuff

addresses in previous years, when he would carry on for up to two hours on a variety of topics "I am not standing up, because although I am in good spirits, I am not physically strong because I have over-

every year -- was shorter than his

exerted myself. That's why I have to save my energy." he said. The king underwent a spinal operation in July that doctors said was successful, but he has rarely been

seen in public since then. His health is the subject of great concern in Thailand, where he is revered with an almost religious

2 Rab members

FROM PAGE 16 the criminals were planning to

commit some crimes Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the criminals threw bomb at them from the second floor of the building, leaving the two Rab members wounded. The Rab team then encircled the house, broke in and arrested the criminals with the firearms, ammunition and explo-

sives, the press release said. The arrestees are Liton, 24 Monir, 18, Rubel, 20, Jasim, 20,

Kiran Shikdar, 22, and Anwar, 18. Liton sustained injury to his legs during the raid and was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for treatment. Though Rab branded him as a member of the criminal group, Liton, however, claimed to be innocent and said that a bomb fell near him while he was

Chavez clinches

the US president.

FROM PAGE 16 late Sunday his landslide was a blow to US President George W Bush's administration, which portrays the leftist as an anti-

democratic menace. "Today we gave another lesson in dignity to the imperialists, it is another defeat for the empire of Mr. Danger," Chavez roared from a balcony above the crowds using

one of the insults he has tossed at

The former soldier's victory will

further rile the White House, which

worries about Chavez destabilising

Latin America neighbours and strengthening ties between the Opec heavyweight Venezuela and US foes Cuba and Iran. The National Electoral Council said Chavez won 61 percent of the vote while rival Manuel Rosales, a governor of an oil-producing prov-

ince who managed to unite the

fractured opposition, won 38 per-

Chavez supporters fired off thunderous fireworks in the capital and drove through Caracas chanting "Hey ho, Chavez will not go" to celebrate his securing six more vears in office

Chavez is the fourth leftist to win an election in Latin America in the

Ecuador's Rafael Correa, who

past five weeks.

calls himself an ally of the Venezuelan, won a run-off last week after promising sweeping political reforms. Leftists Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in Brazil and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua also have won recent presidential elections. Rosales, who for many opposition supporters was a bright hope to

beat Chavez, acknowledged defeat but promised to keep fighting. He was greeted by cries of "coward" by some upset supporters as he left his campaign headquarters. "We recognise they beat us today but we will continue the fight,"

said Rosales, 53, who drew his main

support from the middle and upper

classes in the polarized nation. The country's opposition movement struggled to challenge Chavez after he defeated a recall referendum in 2004. Many opposition supporters believe Chavez has an unfair advantage by controlling key institutions such as the election

But supporters applaud the man they fondly call "El Comandante" for spending the country's soaring oil wealth on free health and education programmes for the poor majority

who feel long-abandoned by previous governments. A retired army paratrooper who led a failed military rebellion before his 1998 election, Chavez has survived a brief coup, an oil strike and scores of demonstrations

during his seven years in the

has vowed to use a fresh mandate

Worrying his opponents, Chavez

Miraflores presidential palace.

to scrap presidential term limits and create a single-party that he expects to lead in power for decades. Having already taken on multinational oil giants to demand they hand more control to the state,

Chavez will likely press for more

share of Venezuela's vast oil and

mineral resources and increase

land distribution for the rural poor. 80 Taliban

FROM PAGE 16 Afghan authorities earlier said four

Taliban fighters were killed in fighting involving Isaf and Afghan security forces. It was not immediately clear if they were referring to the same battle. Musa Qala saw some of the worst Taliban battles with Afghan

and Nato-led troops this year until

September, when tribal chiefs

agreed to not allow the Taliban in their region. In return, British troops operating under Isaf pulled their troops from the area. Knittig said the fighting at the

weekend took place outside the troubled district. "Geographically this engagement took place between Nawzad

Taliban violence. This year has been the bloodiest since the fall of the Taliban in late 2001 after a US-led invasion, with more than 100 suicide bombings killing 230 Afghans and 17 foreign

and Musa Qala," he said, referring

to a neighbouring district also hit by

ing a majority of insurgents as well as about 1,000 civilians, plus Afghan soldiers and police -- have been killed this year, four times the toll for 2005, according to an official

troops, according to Isaf figures. More than 3,700 people -- includ-

cent after nearly 80 percent of the vote had been counted. Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry, He said the two probe commit-Badiur Rahman, acting secretary, tees, formed on Saturday, would The AL leader demanded that Implementation Monitoring and start investigation next Friday.