

International

# Taliban face fresh threat as its enemies form military alliance

KABUL, Oct 11: The fundamentalist Taliban militia that has seized control of most of Afghanistan faced a new threat today after its enemies united in a military alliance, reports Reuter.

In an apparent sign of nervousness at the strongest challenges yet to their conquests, the Taliban militia warned foreign journalists on Thursday of reprisals if they made "baseless" reports of its setbacks on the battlefield.

Already encountering the worst reverses in two years of fighting, the Taliban were hit by the alliance signed on Thursday between Uzbek chief Abdul Rashid Dostum, ousted government military head Ahmad Shah Masood and Karim Khalilullah of the Shia Muslim Hezbi-Wahadat.

The three agreed to fight the militia, born in religious

schools in refugee camps in Pakistan, together unless it stopped attacking Masood.

Whoever is not ceasing to fight against one of the signatories, the other signatories will jointly fight against them," Dostum spokesman Mohammad Yusuf told reporters.

Witnesses said they had seen scores of Taliban casualties being ferried away from a Masood counter-attack near the strategic Salang Pass which forced the Taliban to break off their bid to battle into his Panjsher valley stronghold to the east.

Travelers said Masood's men had staged two ambushes south of the front line on Thursday, killing several Taliban before melting away. The Taliban have barred reporters from the area.

"I would like to comment on news which has been broadcast

over the last two days, and I would like to point out that you should refrain from broadcasting these kinds of news," Taliban Information Minister Amir Khan Mutaqi told a news conference.

"The news that was broadcast by international media that heavy losses were inflicted on the Taliban and many of the Taliban died was completely baseless and whoever has broadcast these news has committed a moral crime," Mutaqi said.

"Therefore I advise you not to release any news that has not been confirmed by the concerned authorities of the Taliban."

He remained journalists of the expulsion from the town of Herat last year of a BBC journalist after reports that upset the local Taliban leaders.

There was no immediate reaction to the signing of the military counter-alliance from the Taliban, but the combined strengths of the three enemy groups could overwhelm the militia's black-turbaned warriors.

Dostum has probably the best equipped fighting force in Afghanistan and his Uzbeks, descendants of the Mongols of Genghis Khan, are feared as the toughest fighters in a land of tough fighters.

He also has a small air force and at his back are the nations of Central Asia, who, along with Russia, have expressed fears publicly of any push by the Taliban and their harsh Islamic Sharia law across their borders.

Dostum had already moved armour and men south of the Salang tunnel, the main choke point on the highway through

the mountains that divide north from south.

Masood, an ethnic Tajik, managed to keep most of his armour and men together in a hasty flight to the Panjsher Valley. Though he may have difficulty getting them out again after triggering landslides to seal its entrance, military analysts said.

AP adds, Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers searched house Thursday for anyone suspected of collaborating with the former regime, unleashing a wave of fear among ethnic minorities.

In Baghram, near the front line, a resident was dragged from his home and summarily executed by Taliban soldiers who claimed he collaborated with the former government and killed a rebel fighter, said travelers arriving in the capital.



Crew of Russian-made MI-24 helicopter gunship poses for journalists after an evening patrol over Bagram military airbase, 50 km north of Kabul, on Thursday. Bagram was firmly in control of the religious Taliban Thursday after coming under attack Wednesday night. — AFP/UNB photo

## BRIEFLY

### President of Ecuador launches musical career

GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador, Oct 11: Perhaps politics just didn't strike enough of a chord with President Abdala Bucaram, reports AP.

The country's top politician has launched a musical career, giving a concert to promote his album that went on sale Thursday.

Bucaram, who became president on August 10, sang with the Uruguayan group Los Incrucados on Wednesday night at the Coliseo Cubierto in Guayaquil, 170 miles (275 kms) southwest of the capital of Quito.

Bucaram, who won the presidency campaigning as "El Loco," Spanish for "The Crazy One," sang several songs from the album as he danced across the stage in a spectacle of lights and smoke.

The president finished out his set with a Spanish version of "Jailhouse Rock," backed up by the Ecuadorian group Cotel.

### Turkish troops kill 52 rebels

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey, Oct 11: The Turkish army, stepping-up its anti-guerrilla campaign before winter sets in, killed 52 rebels Friday, officials said, reports AP.

Thirty-two guerrillas were killed in a major operation against mountainous rebel hideouts near Diyarbakir, a statement from the regional governor's office said. Six others were killed in clashes in the southeastern provinces of Mardin, Elazig and Tunceli.

Pro-government village guards, meanwhile, killed 14 guerrillas near the eastern town of Van. The guards, armed and paid by the government, were set up to defend villages from rebel attacks. But recently they have taken part in offensives along with troops.

Friday's attack by some 200 guards was supported by military helicopters, the Anatolia news agency said.

Another 15 rebels who escaped the attack were being pursued.

### Scientists of Russia hold rally in Moscow

MOSCOW, Oct 11: Seven hundred Russian scientists rallied in the streets of Moscow Thursday to highlight the plight of their sector, while one of their colleagues continued a hunger strike, reports AP.

The scientists marched in the west of the Russian capital, shouting "wages of misery, death of Russian science" and "no future for Russia without science."

"Russian science is in agony, it had another year or year and a half to live," said Vladimir Strakhov, an academic at the Geophysical institute who has refused food for 11 days.

In an interview with AFP, Strakhov said that more and more scientific projects were no longer being financed, adding that 1996 was a year of "the toughest blows" against Russian science.

"Financing delays resumed just after the re-election of (Russian President) Boris Yeltsin," he said.

## New Kashmir CM orders to free all Hurriyat Confce leaders

SRINAGAR, India, Oct 11: The new chief of India's troubled Jammu and Kashmir state on Thursday ordered the release of leading separatist leaders arrested last month, reports Reuter.

The Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah has ordered that all leaders of Hurriyat Conference and Shabir Shah who were arrested during their anti-election campaign be released, a government statement said.

The All parties Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference, a 30-party umbrella organisation of separatist groups, had called for a boycott of recent state assembly elections in which Abdullah's National Conference

Party won a sweeping victory.

Abdullah was sworn in as the chief minister of the Himalayan region on Wednesday.

All senior leaders of the Hurriyat Conference, including Abdul Gani Bhat, Mohamad Yasin Malik, Abdul Gani Lone, Moulana Abbas Ansari, Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Javed Mir were arrested separately in the second and third week of September.

Dozens of separatist groups in Kashmir are fighting for independence or for closer ties with neighbouring Pakistan. They boycotted the polls calling it "a mockery of Kashmiri aspirations."

It was the first government

order by Abdullah since he took office, said K B Jandial, the state government's official spokesman.

Earlier report from Islamabad says, Pakistan on Thursday rejected the installation of a new state administration in the Indian-ruled part of the disputed Kashmir region as a puppet and said the solution lay in a UN-mandated plebiscite.

"As could be expected, the Indian authorities have installed a puppet government of Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah in the state summer capital Srinagar after holding sham state assembly elections in the Indian-held Kashmir," a Foreign Ministry spokesman told reporters.

## Israel eases closure of WB, Gaza

JERUSALEM, Oct 11: Israel eased its crippling closure of the West Bank and Gaza strip and a US peace mediator announced a change of venue for trouble talks on Israeli troop redeployment from the city of Hebron, reports Reuter.

Beginning this Sunday, about 35,000 workers from Judea, Samaria (the West Bank) and Gaza will be permitted to work in Israel and all internal closures in Judea and Samaria will be lifted, except for the city of Nabulus, said a spokesman for Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai on Thursday.

Some 60,000 Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza strip worked in Israel before Muslim suicide bombings in February and March

prompted Israel to stop most of them from coming in. The closure was then gradually eased.

About 19,500 Palestinians worked in Israel before last month's violence that killed 60 Arabs and 15 Jews and led to an Israeli blockade of the Gaza strip and West Bank cities.

The defence minister decided to ease significantly the closure on the territories in order to reduce the hardship of the Palestinian population... and the Palestinian economy," the spokesman said in a statement.

The announcement was made against the backdrop of us-brokered negotiations for a partial Israeli pullout in Hebron, home to 400 Jews and 100,000 Palestinians, which Palestinian President Yasser

Arafat said had achieved nothing.

US special Mideast coordinator Dennis Ross, mediating the talks, said Israel and the PLO had agreed to move the negotiations from Gaza to the Red Sea resorts of Eilat, in Israel, and Taba, in Egypt.

Another report says Israel will permit a long-unsung mosque in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa compound to be opened to worshippers despite charges that renovation of the seventh-century underground edifice was illegal, officials said Thursday.

"This government is going to show flexibility and allow the opening of the mosque in Solomon's stables," said internal security minister Avigdor Kahalani.

## SC asks police to find out secure site for Rao's hearing

NEW DELHI, Oct 11: India's Supreme Court today ordered a planned hearing into a criminal cheating case involving former prime minister PV Narasimha Rao moved from a crowded local court to a more secure location, reports Reuter.

A two-judge bench said Rao was exempted from having to appear in court in the case until a new venue was chosen. The court told Delhi police to indicate where the hearing, scheduled for next Wednesday, could be held to ensure Rao's safety.

Rao has been summoned to appear in court to face charges in the 13-year-old case of criminal conspiracy to cheat. He denies allegations that he helped a Hindu guru cheat an expatriate businessman of

100,000 dollar in 1983.

Last week, Delhi police asked the Supreme Court to order a hearing in the case shifted from the crowded Tis Hazari Court Complex to a more secure locations.

Police cited threats by extremists groups to attack Rao, who would have to give up his around the clock, special bodyguards once he entered the local courts.

The Supreme Court ordered police to tell the Delhi High Court by Monday where they would like to hold the cheating hearing. Court officials said the Supreme Court order might force the postponement of a hearing, set for Monday, into a separate case of criminal forgery involving Rao.

## Pakistan denies buying N-weapons related equipment from China

ISLAMABAD, Oct 11: Pakistan on Thursday denied that it had recently bought nuclear weapons related equipment from China and complained it had become a victim of inspired leaks in the United States, reports Reuter.

The Washington Times reported on Wednesday that China had made a new sale of nuclear weapons related equipment to Pakistan in a move which could increase pressure on the US government to

impose sanctions on Beijing.

"We deny that there was any nuclear weapons-related transfer to Pakistan," a Pakistan foreign ministry spokesman told reporters at a news briefing.

"I regret to say that we seem to be becoming the victims of a series of leaks, some of which are simply motivated or inspired by the electoral fever in the United States and by their own internal shadow-boxing amongst themselves," he said.

In this January 4 1996 file photo, Irene Saez, Mayor of the Chacao district of Caracas and former Miss Universe 1981, preys before being sworn in for a second term. Saez was reelected mayor with 93 per cent of the vote. Saez announced on Wednesday that she will run for the presidency of Venezuela in the 1998 election. — AFP/UNB photo

## Malaria claims 370 in Rajasthan:

A malaria epidemic sweeping across the northern Indian state of Rajasthan has left nearly 370 people dead a newspaper reported in New Delhi yesterday, AFP says from New Delhi.

At least 70 more deaths were reported in the east of the state, the Hindu Daily said adding around 600 tonnes of pesticides had been sent to the affected areas. The mosquito borne epidemic has been building up since the monsoon season. Began around two months ago.

## Perry to testify before Duma:

Defence Secretary William Perry leaves Tuesday for Moscow to testify before the State Duma, lower house of the Russian parliament, on the START II arms reduction treaty, AP reports from Washington.

Perry also will meet with Russian military officials and travel to Severodvinsk in northern Russia, where he will observe the dismantling of nuclear submarines, the Pentagon announced Thursday. He returns October 18 to Washington.

## Quake shakes Sumatra:

An earthquake measuring 6.0 on the Richter scale hit the western coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra, an official said in Jakarta yesterday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

The quake hit at 10:20 pm (1520 GMT) Thursday, with its epicentre 33 kilometres (21.5 miles) below the floor of the Indian Ocean, 67 kilometres west of Tapak Tuan, western Aceh province, said Sindu Nugroho, an official from the Jakarta Meteorology and Geophysics Department.

Reports of damage or injuries had not yet been received, Ngoroho said.

## UN warns of situation in E Zaire:

The security situation in eastern Zaire has become explosive after Zairian troops ordered some 200,000 people of Rwandan origin to leave the area in a week or face full-scale war, UN officials said Thursday, AP reports from United Nations.

In Stockholm, a Swedish missionary group said marauders swept through one of its hospitals in eastern Zaire last Sunday and massacred nearly 40 people, most of them patients who were shot or stabbed as they lay in their sickbeds.

## India vows to eliminate leprosy:

India has vowed to eliminate leprosy as a public health problem by the turn of the century, World Health Organisation (WHO) officials said on Thursday, Reuter reports from New Delhi.

Health ministers from at least 15 of 20 countries accounting for 93 per cent of the world's leprosy patients, are expected to participate in a three-day conference on the eradication of the disease beginning in Delhi they said.

## Volcano erupts in Guatemala:

Guatemala's Pataya volcano, in the south of the Central American country, erupted overnight from Thursday to Friday, officials said, AFP reports from Guatemala.

Authorities began evacuating residents in the region at 1 am (0700 GMT).

## Tremors shake Malaysia:

A series of tremors shook parts of western Peninsula of Malaysia, including the capital Kuala Lumpur late on Thursday, causing residents to flee their homes, the National Bernama News Agency reported, Reuter says from Kuala Lumpur.

There were no reports of damage or casualties from the tremors, which lasted several seconds, it said. Bernama quoted a police spokesman as saying that the quake caused power supply disruption to several areas.

## 25 Moroccans drown in Gibraltar:

At least 25 Moroccans drowned as they were trying to cross the Strait of Gibraltar to enter Spain illegally a Moroccan government official said Thursday, AP reports from Tangiers, Morocco.

They had left the Moroccan coast Saturday night, the official said on customary anonymity. The official did not specify how those who drowned were crossing the often stormy strait.



US President Bill Clinton (R) is followed by US Vice-President Al Gore as they greet the University of Tennessee Volunteers Marching Band on Thursday at Knoxville McGee Tyson Airport. The US leaders visited Tennessee on the campaign trail. — AFP/UNB photo

## Republicans condemn administration for letting Iranian arms into Bosnia

WASHINGTON, Oct 11: Key House Republicans said Thursday the Clinton administration recklessly endangered American lives and US interests in Bosnia by deciding not to object to the flow of Iranian arms into the war-torn country, reports AP.

The administrations tacit assent in April 1994 — despite its public support of a United Nations ban on arms shipments to Bosnia — let Iran expand its influence in Europe and undermined US relationships with its allies, said Rep. Henry Hyde, who chairs a House International Relations Committee panel that has been investigating the arms transfer.

The subcommittee's three Democrats blasted the findings of the panel's five Republicans, saying they were timed to inflict political damage on President Clinton weeks before the presidential election.

Hyde said the subcommittee's 200-page report support its

conclusions, but the report remains classified so it cannot be released. He accused the administration of keeping it secret to hide embarrassing information.

"The consequences of the present's decision has been far-reaching and pernicious. It was a terribly foolish error in judgment," Hyde said. "We will rue the day that President Clinton gave the green light to the Iranians to play the savior to the Bosnians because there is a significant Iranian influence remaining in Bosnia."

Hyde urged Clinton to declassify the report, saying, "The American people are entitled to the truth."

But the White House said it had received no requests for declassification.

Democrats who reviewed the findings differed sharply with the Republican view.

"We have looked at the facts. We have reviewed the evidence. It is our belief that no laws were

broken, no wrongdoing occurred, no covert actions took place, no false statements given, no US interests harmed," said a statement from Democratic Reps. Lee Hamilton, Howard Berman, and Alcee Hastings. "When the results of this investigation are released, it will be obvious that this was not a criminal matter, it was a dispute about policy."

They also said Clinton's Bosnia policy was a success.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns, meanwhile, also accused the Republicans of "grandstanding" by making an issue of it just before the election: "If these concerns were widely felt in the Congress, perhaps they better should have been made in October 1995 rather than October 1996."

Hyde said several senior administration officials gave contradictory testimony, and their comments are being sent to the Justice Department for

"further criminal investigation."

But the panel's Democrats said the discrepancies are minor.

Burns said the people undergoing "incredible scrutiny" by the panel "are honorable people, and they are honest people. And some members of Congress are questioning their honor and their honesty and their integrity, and it's wrong."

The subcommittee's Republicans also concluded that:

— Peter Galbraith, US Ambassador to Croatia, may have engaged in covert action without a required notification to Congress.

— The Clinton administration repeatedly deceived the public about its "green light" policy toward the Iranian arms shipments and hid the truth from Congress.

— The administration's "duplicitous" has seriously damaged US credibility with its allies.

## Off the Record

### Tying knot from death row

ST PETERSBURG, Florida: The wedding vows were exchanged over the telephone. The bride was in her kitchen. The groom was on death row, reports AP.

The romance between serial killer Oscar Ray Bolin Jr. and Rosalie Martinez had not exactly been traditional. The two fell in love as she worked on his defence team trying to save him from the electric chair.

"He gets the girl," she said. "The girl who stood by her man to prove his innocence."

The secret nuptials took place Saturday, four days before Bolin was sentenced to death — for the second time — following a retrial in the murder of a bank teller.

The bride, who left and 18-year marriage to a successful attorney to be with Bolin, wanted to keep word of the union quiet. Neither her parents, nor her four children knew of the ceremony.

Soon everyone will know. In addition to the part-time minister and guests who gathered at the bride's small Gainesville apartment for the ceremony was a crew from the ABC TV news-magazine "20/20".

Bolin, meanwhile, was about 35 miles (55 kilometres) away in Starke, where he has spent much of the past five years on death row at Florida State Prison.

Bolin faces two more retrials on murder cases in the Tampa area. The state Supreme Court overturned all three convictions on grounds of improper testimony.

### Escape from grave

CAIRO: A pregnant rape victim who was buried alive by male relatives to save the family honour escaped from her grave and was married to her assailant, a government newspaper reported Thursday, says AFP.

The 19-year-old, who was not identified, had been raped and impregnated two months ago by a farmer in her village in Fayum province, 100 kilometres (62 miles) south of Cairo.

When her brothers realised that she was pregnant they decided to "cleanse the family's honour" by punishing her.

With the help of male cousins, the women's brothers forced her to go to the Abu Gandir village cemetery at sunset, where one of them tried to strangle her. When she fainted, they opened a tomb and shoved her.

"When I woke up I found myself plunged in total darkness and I realised that they had thrown me in a tomb when I groped around with my hands and touched the remains of dead people," the girl was quoted as telling investigators.

"I forced myself to be brave and spent the night trying to break out of the tomb. Luckily I managed to get out because it was made of cob," she said. Cob is a mixture of clay, gravel and straw.

She was found by a woman who had gone to pay for the souls of dead relatives at dawn and taken to the local police station for questioning.

Her brothers, cousins and rapist were also detained for questioning and when the rapist learned what happened to his victim he decided to marry her.

The marriage contract was drawn up at the police station and the newlyweds walked away hand in hand.

### Quintuplets

JAKARTA: An Indonesia woman has given birth to quintuplets, two boys and three girls, at a private hospital in West Java a newspaper reported Tuesday, reports AFP.

The babies, delivered in an operation at 31 weeks gestation, weighed around 1,400 grams (49 ounces) and measured 37 to 38.5 centimetres (14.8 to 15.4 inches).

The seven doctors at the birth said the quintuplets were healthy. The Kompas newspaper said, adding that the birth at Boromeus hospital in Bandung was conducted under spinal anesthesia.

Twenty-six year Elydaway declined full anesthesia saying she wanted to experience the birth, the daily quoted one of the doctors as saying.

The babies are currently in the hospital's neo-natal intensive care unit.