

BRIEFLY

Heavy rains claim 56 in Brazil:

Fifty-six people were reported dead Saturday in the southern state of Minas Gerais in the wake of torrential rains that have pelted the region since the start of the new year, civil defence officials said. AFP reports from Rio de Janeiro.

The rains prompted landslides and cave-ins that blocked highways. Some 19,000 people are homeless and hundreds were injured.

2 executed in Iran for spying: Two Iranians convicted of spying for Israel and the United States have been executed in Tehran, a newspaper reported Saturday. AFP reports from Tehran.

Hedayatollah Zendei-del, a businessman who converted from Judaism to Islam, and Abol Chasem Majd-Abkahi, who was close to the court of the late Shah of Iran, were executed here on December 29, the newspaper Keyhan said. They were convicted by an Islamic court in July of fraud, subversion and espionage on behalf of Israel and the United States.

Top US general arrives in Cairo:

The United States' top general arrived in Cairo on Saturday for a three-day official visit aimed at strengthening Egyptian-US military ties, an Egyptian official said. AFP reports from Cairo.

General John Shalikashvili, chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, is due to hold talks with his Egyptian counterpart general Magdi Hatata "on several military issues of joint interest to strengthen bilateral relations in this area," the source said. The United States is Egypt's top arms supplier, with military aid of 1.2 billion dollars a year.

Blast kills 2 soldiers in Senegal:

Two soldiers were killed and five others wounded in Casamance province in southern Senegal, after mine exploded under their vehicle, an informed source said Saturday. AFP reports from Dakar.

The vehicle, returning from a mission on Friday, hit the mine at Badem, 18 kilometres (11 miles) from Ziguinchor, on a road that it has used several hours previously, the source said. With no one claiming responsibility, several observers suspected that the mine was deliberately planted by the separatist Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance.

Clinton invites Arafat to US:

President Bill Clinton has invited Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to visit the United States early in New Year, a PLO official said on Saturday. Reuters reports from Jerusalem.

Clinton issued a similar invitation, which also set no precise date for a visit to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this week against the backdrop of intensive US diplomatic efforts to clinch an Israeli-PLO deal on the West Bank town of Hebron.

1 sentenced to death in UAE: For the first time in the United Arab Emirates, a court has sentenced a man to death for drug trafficking, a newspaper reported Sunday. AP reports from Dubai.

The man, identified only as Mohammed AA, an Emirates national, was sentenced Saturday for using and possessing drugs, the Gulf Today newspaper said.



A girl checks her work while other contestants show off their creations during the 33rd calligraphy contest in Tokyo Sunday. Several thousand school children from all over the country participated in the annual New Year event. — AFP/UNB photo

'Israel plotting to triple number of settlers by 2000'

CAIRO, Jan 5: The Arab League accused Israel today of plotting to triple the number of Jewish settlers in occupied territories to half a million by 2000 with a budget of four billion dollars, reports AFP.

Ahmed Ibn Helli, adviser to the League's secretary general for Arab affairs, told reporters that the Pan-Arab organisation had obtained a report proving the existence of a "terrible Israeli plot" to dramatically increase the number of settlers.

The Israeli government has designated four billion dollars to this plot, Helli said.

He said the number of Jewish settlers on the Golan Heights, which Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 Middle East war, will increase from 13,000 to 25,000.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has refused to negotiate a return of the Golan in peace talks with Syria, which have been stalled since February.

Helli called on "Arab countries and the international community to give all support possible to Arab citizens on the Golan. West Bank and (Palestinian) autonomous territories against this dangerous settlement policy."

Reuters adds: A US peace mediator failed to clinch a deal on a troop pullout from the West Bank town of Hebron in talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Envoy Dennis Ross met Arafat for two hours on Saturday and later held talks for almost three hours with Netanyahu on implementing the long overdue Israeli army redeployment.

Tens of thousands of Belgrade demonstrators, standing ankle-deep in slush and under the watch of riot police, cheered the report of the mayor's resignation.

"Milosevic's Socialists are in a knock-down bout," Opposition leader Vuk Draskovic told the rally. "Even their prominent member Covic had enough honesty and dignity to admit our victory."

Milosevic's regime, however, remained defiant Saturday. Election officials in Nis, Serbia's second-largest city, ordered a repeat of the November 17 vote. Opposition leaders who assert they would boycott the election said they would boycott.

"There is no way that we'll take part in any new elections. We have won, and that's it," said Zoran Zivkovic, an opposition leader in Nis.

Zivkovic warned that unless Milosevic concedes by Tuesday,

International

Police on 'red alert' in Delhi amid string of bombings

NEW DELHI, Jan 5: Police in the Indian capital were on high alert today as a string of terrorist bombings in a week killed nearly 50 people across the country, reports AFP.

The nearly 40,000-strong police sounded a "red alert" in the city of 10 million after two bombs exploded in quick succession here overnight Saturday killing one man and injuring 11 others.

The first blast destroyed a state-run bus on its way from New Delhi to the neighbouring state of Haryana when a jar packed with explosives went off near the driver's seat.

Moments later, another home-made bomb ripped apart a nearby taxi. Both vehicles caught fire immediately.

"The bombs were made of low-quality explosives, with some kind of a timer device," said Deputy Commissioner of Police Prabhat Singh.

"It is very difficult to say who carried out the attack," he added. "We have not identified the group and no one has claimed responsibility so far."

Another officer said the police had anticipated "some trouble" ahead of the country's annual Republic Day celebrations on January 26 and that a "red alert" was now on in the city.

"It is the time when something or the other happens here," the officer said. "Any bombing (in New Delhi) gets instant international publicity. It's a good way to score a point."

The New Delhi bombings came two days after a powerful bomb in a parked scooter-taxi killed seven people in Kashmir and five days after 40 civilians died when a bomb ripped apart a train in the country's remote northeast.

The Kashmir attack was claimed by a pro-Pakistan Muslim separatist group. The train bombing was blamed on tribal separatist guerrillas.

"There is undoubtedly a spurt in terrorism," a New Delhi police officer said. "The police is understaffed, and it is absolutely impossible to keep a watch everywhere."

Newspapers said today that security had been beefed up for a leading Sikh politician in the northern state of Punjab following intelligence reports that a group of Sikh militants were planning to assassinate him.

On Saturday, a railway employee averted a train disaster in the far-eastern state of Assam when he detected that a portion of the tracks had been removed by suspected tribal militants.

The employee immediately flashed red light to stop an approaching passenger train. The incident occurred close to the spot where another train had been wrecked by the December 30 bombing.

The Times of India said the army planned a major offensive against tribal guerrillas in Assam, an oil-rich state bordering Bangladesh.

Bombings have become a favourite with militant groups in India. A massive car bomb killed 28 people in a crowded market in the Indian capital in May last year.

Few of the bombers are ever caught. The May bombing was blamed on Muslim guerrillas from Kashmir whose campaign to secede from India has claimed more than 15,000 lives in the Himalayan state since 1989.

Although Sikh separatism in Punjab has almost died down, Muslim separatists in Kashmir and several militant groups in the country's far-east remain active.

India accuses neighbouring Pakistan, with which it has fought three wars, of arming and training various militant groups including Kashmir.

Islamabad denies the charge.

Peruvian rebels demand ransom for Japanese hostages

TOKYO, Jan 5: Marxist rebels holding hostages at the Japanese ambassador's home in the Peruvian capital Lima originally demanded 100 million dollars in ransom from Japanese companies but are now seeking about 30 million dollar a Japanese newspaper reported today, says Reuters.

The Macinichi Shimbun said the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) had demanded the cash in exchange for freeing senior Japanese executives who were among the more than 400 people taken hostage on December 17.

Among the Japanese executive believed being held in the compound are the presidents of the Peruvian operations of Mitsui Mining and Smelting Co, Mitsubishi Corp and Toyota Motor Corp.

French troops move against rebel positions in Bangui

PARIS, Jan 5: French troops moved against rebel positions in the Central African Republic early this morning following a day of violence in the capital Bangui in which two French soldiers were shot dead, reports AFP.

The French Defence Ministry did not say whether all the estimated 2,000 French troops deployed in Bangui were taking part in the operation. But authoritative sources said the attack was a major operation against positions held by rebel soldiers who mutinied against President Ange Felix Patasse seven weeks ago.

The sources said French military reinforcements were en route for Bangui.

Israeli president concludes visit to India

NEW DELHI, Jan 5: Israeli President Ezer Weizman flew home today after a ground-breaking visit to India that drew protests from Libya and concern in neighbouring Pakistan, the United News of India (UNI) reported, says AFP.

Indian officials said Weizman, the first Israeli head of state to visit India, left Bombay Airport for Tel Aviv, UNI said.

During his week-long visit, the 73-year-old Israeli president who served here as a royal air force officer five decades ago, met Indian leaders and offered to sell his country's latest Kfir fighter jets to India.

He also called for greater co-operation between the air forces of India and Israel and closer military ties.

The two countries established diplomatic ties in January 1992 after four decades of hostility.

Jerusalem, Jan 5: With Israel and the Palestinians blaming each other for delays in reaching an accord on Hebron, US mediator Dennis Ross has been pushing hard to close the elusive deal, reports AP.

An agreement on the long overdue Israeli troop pullout from Hebron, the last West Bank City under Israeli control, appeared certain last week. But a new snag emerged after the Palestinians demanded that Israel commit to a timetable for further troop withdrawals from the West Bank.

Ross visited Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Gaza office for the sixth time in as

many days Saturday and later met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem.

"We are close but we're not there yet, until we can conclude all the details we don't have an agreement," Ross said in Gaza Saturday.

Ross has hinted he will return to Washington if the two sides don't budge soon, Israel radio reported Friday.

Under heavy pressure from hard-liners in his Cabinet, Netanyahu on Friday rejected the Palestinian demand to establish specific dates for Israel's promised withdrawal from most of the West Bank.

AP adds: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat met secretly early Sunday but failed to finalise a plan to withdraw most Israeli troops from Hebron, Israeli Radio and a Palestinian source said.

The two leaders met at 2:30 am at the Erez crossing linking Israel and the autonomous Gaza Strip and talked for 4-12 hours, a Palestinian source said on condition of anonymity.

Israel Radio said the two made progress toward an agreement but did not initial an accord, which has been held up over Palestinian demands for a strict timetable for further withdrawals in the West Bank after the Hebron pullback.

Clinton declares major disaster in California

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 5: President Bill Clinton declared a major disaster in California and Idaho on Saturday as the western United States reeled from storms and floods that have killed at least 20 people and forced 100,000 from their homes, reports Reuters.

Officials said more than 1,000 homes were under water in central California and 450 more north of Sacramento. Preliminary flood damage estimates from six northern and central California counties — just a small proportion of those affected — exceeded dollar 50 million, officials said.

"Our thoughts are prayers are with those who have lost loved ones or their homes and businesses in these terrible floods," Clinton said in a statement released during his vacation in the US Virgin Islands.

His disaster declaration makes federal aid available to flood victims and local governments in 13 Idaho counties and 37 California counties, Nevada, Oregon and Washington state have also been hard hit in the last 10 days by powerful storms that caused widespread floods, mudslides and power a failure.

The storms are estimated to have caused hundreds of millions of dollars of property damage and were blamed for the deaths of at least 20 people, most killed by drowning, by falling trees or in traffic accidents.

AP adds: The rain stayed away from flood-ravaged northern California for a second day, giving hope to tens of thousands of evacuees waiting to get back to their homes.

Anti-Taliban jets bomb Kabul: 4 killed

ISTANBUL, Jan 5: Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, supporters of different warring factions in Afghanistan, came together in a first-ever meeting Sunday to find a solution to the conflict, reports AP.

Iran supports the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, which was ousted from the capital, Kabul, in September by the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban militia. Pakistan is believed to have supported the militia. Turkey backs northern warlord Rashid Dostum, leader of a smaller but mighty Afghan faction.

Iran and Turkey, which have been critical of the Taliban, met in Iran last October to discuss the fighting. Pakistan, although invited, did not attend the meeting.

"We the three nations want this bloodshed pitting brother against brother to end as soon as possible," said Necmettin Erbakan, Turkey's prime minister at an opening speech.

Erbakan said the meeting would focus on five steps for achieving peace: — Declaring an immediate ceasefire. — Halting arms transfers to Afghanistan. — Uniting all factions in a dialogue. — Increasing humanitarian aid. — Setting up a government representing all factions.

Sunday's meeting follows a summit Saturday attended by eight Muslim nations here.



A war-like scene meets the eye in central Theux, near the town of Spa in Belgium, following a powerful gas explosion at a BBL bank branch building Saturday. Two firemen were killed, ten others injured in the incident. — AFP/UNB photo.

3 key nations meet to find solution to Afghan crisis

ISTANBUL, Jan 5: Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, supporters of different warring factions in Afghanistan, came together in a first-ever meeting Sunday to find a solution to the conflict, reports AP.

Iran supports the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, which was ousted from the capital, Kabul, in September by the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban militia. Pakistan is believed to have supported the militia. Turkey backs northern warlord Rashid Dostum, leader of a smaller but mighty Afghan faction.

Iran and Turkey, which have been critical of the Taliban, met in Iran last October to discuss the fighting. Pakistan, although invited, did not attend the meeting.

"We the three nations want this bloodshed pitting brother against brother to end as soon as possible," said Necmettin Erbakan, Turkey's prime minister at an opening speech.

Erbakan said the meeting would focus on five steps for achieving peace: — Declaring an immediate ceasefire. — Halting arms transfers to Afghanistan. — Uniting all factions in a dialogue. — Increasing humanitarian aid. — Setting up a government representing all factions.

Sunday's meeting follows a summit Saturday attended by eight Muslim nations here.

Meanwhile, enemy planes bombarded the shattered capital Sunday killing four people, including a small child.

Fifteen others were wounded, said officials and witnesses.

The planes belonging to rival northern warlord Rashid Dostum screamed in low over the city around noon (0630 GMT) dropping several bombs on the heavily populated residential district of Wazir Akbar Khan, once a posh neighborhood.

AP adds: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat met secretly early Sunday but failed to finalise a plan to withdraw most Israeli troops from Hebron, Israeli Radio and a Palestinian source said.

The two leaders met at 2:30 am at the Erez crossing linking Israel and the autonomous Gaza Strip and talked for 4-12 hours, a Palestinian source said on condition of anonymity.

Israel Radio said the two made progress toward an agreement but did not initial an accord, which has been held up over Palestinian demands for a strict timetable for further withdrawals in the West Bank after the Hebron pullback.

Clinton declares major disaster in California

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 5: President Bill Clinton declared a major disaster in California and Idaho on Saturday as the western United States reeled from storms and floods that have killed at least 20 people and forced 100,000 from their homes, reports Reuters.

Officials said more than 1,000 homes were under water in central California and 450 more north of Sacramento. Preliminary flood damage estimates from six northern and central California counties — just a small proportion of those affected — exceeded dollar 50 million, officials said.

"Our thoughts are prayers are with those who have lost loved ones or their homes and businesses in these terrible floods," Clinton said in a statement released during his vacation in the US Virgin Islands.

His disaster declaration makes federal aid available to flood victims and local governments in 13 Idaho counties and 37 California counties, Nevada, Oregon and Washington state have also been hard hit in the last 10 days by powerful storms that caused widespread floods, mudslides and power a failure.

The storms are estimated to have caused hundreds of millions of dollars of property damage and were blamed for the deaths of at least 20 people, most killed by drowning, by falling trees or in traffic accidents.

AP adds: The rain stayed away from flood-ravaged northern California for a second day, giving hope to tens of thousands of evacuees waiting to get back to their homes.

Anti-Taliban jets bomb Kabul: 4 killed

ISTANBUL, Jan 5: Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, supporters of different warring factions in Afghanistan, came together in a first-ever meeting Sunday to find a solution to the conflict, reports AP.

Iran supports the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, which was ousted from the capital, Kabul, in September by the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban militia. Pakistan is believed to have supported the militia. Turkey backs northern warlord Rashid Dostum, leader of a smaller but mighty Afghan faction.

Iran and Turkey, which have been critical of the Taliban, met in Iran last October to discuss the fighting. Pakistan, although invited, did not attend the meeting.

"We the three nations want this bloodshed pitting brother against brother to end as soon as possible," said Necmettin Erbakan, Turkey's prime minister at an opening speech.

Erbakan said the meeting would focus on five steps for achieving peace: — Declaring an immediate ceasefire. — Halting arms transfers to Afghanistan. — Uniting all factions in a dialogue. — Increasing humanitarian aid. — Setting up a government representing all factions.

Sunday's meeting follows a summit Saturday attended by eight Muslim nations here.

Meanwhile, enemy planes bombarded the shattered capital Sunday killing four people, including a small child.

Fifteen others were wounded, said officials and witnesses.

The planes belonging to rival northern warlord Rashid Dostum screamed in low over the city around noon (0630 GMT) dropping several bombs on the heavily populated residential district of Wazir Akbar Khan, once a posh neighborhood.

AP adds: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat met secretly early Sunday but failed to finalise a plan to withdraw most Israeli troops from Hebron, Israeli Radio and a Palestinian source said.

The two leaders met at 2:30 am at the Erez crossing linking Israel and the autonomous Gaza Strip and talked for 4-12 hours, a Palestinian source said on condition of anonymity.

Israel Radio said the two made progress toward an agreement but did not initial an accord, which has been held up over Palestinian demands for a strict timetable for further withdrawals in the West Bank after the Hebron pullback.

Clinton declares major disaster in California

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 5: President Bill Clinton declared a major disaster in California and Idaho on Saturday as the western United States reeled from storms and floods that have killed at least 20 people and forced 100,000 from their homes, reports Reuters.

Lankan jets smash key Tiger base: 17 killed

COLOMBO, Jan 5: Air Force bombers smashed a key Tamil Tiger guerrilla base in eastern Sri Lanka, killing at least 17 this weekend, as the rebels stepped up hit-and-run attacks to kill 10 troops, officials said today, reports AFP.

Aircraft destroyed a training facility of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the district of Batticaloa on Saturday, officials said.

Interception of rebel radio indicated that 15 were killed and 18 injured, they said.

"About 80 per cent of the base was destroyed. First fixed-wing aircraft bombed the place, and we followed it up with artillery fire and then helicopter gunships," a local official said.

He said within hours the Tigers retaliated in the same district, ambushing a crowded military bus using a mine, though the blast narrowly missed the vehicle.

Two soldiers traveling in a tractor were killed when their vehicle detonated a land mine at Punnani, and guerrillas shot another soldier dead at the small village of Jayanthiyaya.

Five soldiers were also killed in a Tiger ambush in the Welik Oya region in the northeast. The rebels also attacked a police post at Vaan Ela, killing two troops but losing two of their own men.

Tiger guerrillas have escalated their attacks in the region following an offensive by security forces in eastern jungle areas, where the military claimed killing 19 rebels on New Year's Day.

The LTTE is leading a drawn-out separatist campaign in the island's northern and eastern regions, where Sri Lanka's Tamil minority of two million is concentrated.

The Vatican embassy in Sri Lanka today denied a claim by Tamil Tiger guerrillas that its top envoy who visited the island's embattled northern peninsula of Jaffna expressed dismay and horror.

The LTTE in a statement from its London office said on Saturday that the Pope will hear of the shocking conditions in Jaffna.

Clinton declares major disaster in California

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 5: President Bill Clinton declared a major disaster in California and Idaho on Saturday as the western United States reeled from storms and floods that have killed at least 20 people and forced 100,000 from their homes, reports Reuters.

Officials said more than 1,000 homes were under water in central California and 450 more north of Sacramento. Preliminary flood damage estimates from six northern and central California counties — just a small proportion of those affected — exceeded dollar 50 million, officials said.

"Our thoughts are prayers are with those who have lost loved ones or their homes and businesses in these terrible floods," Clinton said in a statement released during his vacation in the US Virgin Islands.

His disaster declaration makes federal aid available to flood victims and local governments in 13 Idaho counties and 37 California counties, Nevada, Oregon and Washington state have also been hard hit in the last 10 days by powerful storms that caused widespread floods, mudslides and power a failure.

The storms are estimated to have caused hundreds of millions of dollars of property damage and were blamed for the deaths of at least 20 people, most killed by drowning, by falling trees or in traffic accidents.

AP adds: The rain stayed away from flood-ravaged northern California for a second day, giving hope to tens of thousands of evacuees waiting to get back to their homes.

Anti-Taliban jets bomb Kabul: 4 killed

ISTANBUL, Jan 5: Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, supporters of different warring factions in Afghanistan, came together in a first-ever meeting Sunday to find a solution to the conflict, reports AP.

Iran supports the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, which was ousted from the capital, Kabul, in September by the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban militia. Pakistan is believed to have supported the militia. Turkey backs northern warlord Rashid Dostum, leader of a smaller but mighty Afghan faction.

Iran and Turkey, which have been critical of the Taliban, met in Iran last October to discuss the fighting. Pakistan, although invited, did not attend the meeting.

"We the three nations want this bloodshed pitting brother against brother to end as soon as possible," said Necmettin Erbakan, Turkey's prime minister at an opening speech.

Erbakan said the meeting would focus on five steps for achieving peace: — Declaring an immediate ceasefire. — Halting arms transfers to Afghanistan. — Uniting all factions in a dialogue. — Increasing humanitarian aid. — Setting up a government representing all factions.

Sunday's meeting follows a summit Saturday attended by eight Muslim nations here.

Meanwhile, enemy planes bombarded the shattered capital Sunday killing four people, including a small child.

Fifteen others were wounded, said officials and witnesses.

The planes belonging to rival northern warlord Rashid Dostum screamed in low over the city around noon (0630 GMT) dropping several bombs on the heavily populated residential district of Wazir Akbar Khan, once a posh neighborhood.

AP adds: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat met secretly early Sunday but failed to finalise a plan to withdraw most Israeli troops from Hebron, Israeli Radio and a Palestinian source said.

The two leaders met at 2:30 am at the Erez crossing linking Israel and the autonomous Gaza Strip and talked for 4-12 hours, a Palestinian source said on condition of anonymity.

Israel Radio said the two made progress toward an agreement but did not initial an accord, which has been held up over Palestinian demands for a strict timetable for further withdrawals in the West Bank after the Hebron pullback.

Clinton declares major disaster in California

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 5: President Bill Clinton declared a major disaster in California and Idaho on Saturday as the western United States reeled from storms and floods that have killed at least 20 people and forced 100,000 from their homes, reports Reuters.

Officials said more than 1,000 homes were under water in central California and 450 more north of Sacramento. Preliminary flood damage estimates from six northern and central California counties — just a small proportion of those affected — exceeded dollar 50 million, officials said.

"Our thoughts are prayers are with those who have lost loved ones or their homes and businesses in these terrible floods," Clinton said in a statement released during his vacation in the US Virgin Islands.

His disaster declaration makes federal aid available to flood victims and local governments in 13 Idaho counties and 37 California counties, Nevada, Oregon and Washington state have also been hard hit in the last 10 days by powerful storms that caused widespread floods, mudslides and power a failure.

The storms are estimated to have caused hundreds of millions of dollars of property damage and were blamed for the deaths of at least 20 people, most killed by drowning, by falling trees or in traffic accidents.

AP adds: The rain stayed away from flood-ravaged northern California for a second day, giving hope to tens of thousands of evacuees waiting to get back to their homes.

Anti-Taliban jets bomb Kabul: 4 killed

ISTANBUL, Jan 5: Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, supporters of different warring factions in Afghanistan, came together in a first-ever meeting Sunday to find a solution to the conflict, reports AP.

Iran supports the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, which was ousted from the capital, Kabul, in September by the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban militia. Pakistan is believed to have supported the militia. Turkey backs northern warlord Rashid Dostum, leader of a smaller but mighty Afghan faction.

Iran