The Daily Star

INTERNÄTIONAL

DHAKA SUNDAY NOVEMBER 18, 2001

Taliban resistance weakens

Tension over UK troops

AFP, Kabul

The Taliban vowed to defend its headquarters city on Saturday following reports its grip there was weakening, as a UN envoy arrived in Kabul to pressure opposition leaders to begin talks on Afghanistan's future

"Our forces, numbering thousands, have decided to defend Kandahar, the neighbouring provinces. Islamic religion and law." Mohammad Tavveb Agha, said to be a spokesman for Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, told Al-Jazeera television.

The Taliban strongly denied it had lost control of Kandahar, home to its supreme leader and one of the ousted regime's last bastions, but witnesses and opposition chiefs said the militia was trickling out of the city.

"It is wrong that we have surrendered or have the intention to do so to (local commanders) Nageebullah and Bashar." Taliban spokesman Maulvi Najibullah told reporters at Spin Boldak, a post on the Afghan border with Pakistan

The Afghan Islamic Press news agency said Friday the Taliban had agreed to pass control of the city to local commander Mullah Naqeebullah and the city's current military chief Haji Bashar under pressure from US airstrikes.

An eyewitness, Kandahar resident Babrak Ali, told AFP that a "small column" of Taliban vehicles had been seen leaving Kandahar early Saturday and heading northwest towards the opposition-led town of Herat.

His account tallied with that of anti-Taliban commander Hamid Karzai, one of the leaders of an anti-Taliban rebellion among Pashtun tribes in the south, who told CNN: "Some Taliban forces are moving up north and probably they are leaving Kandahar city and there are some skirmishes.

There were no reports, however, of mass defections or desertions and US military officials were sceptical of reports the city was ready to fall.

Elsewhere a besieged garrison of Taliban loyalists were still holding out in a shrinking pocket in and around the northern city of Kunduz, where a heavy US B52 bomber was again used Saturday to bombard their positions.

West Bengal

terrorism law

parliamentary affairs, told AFP.

kidnapping," Sinha said.

the aim to effectively combat terror-

ism and organised crimes like

tated by the escalation in crimes

leading to a new and disturbing

situation in the state," Sinha added.

US prepares

for long-term

military ties

with India

AFP, New Delhi

"The ordinance was necessi-

seeks own

AFP, Kolkata

tion

The opposition Northern Alliance said it had given the Taliban in Kunduz, thought to include thousands of hardline foreign volunteers, until Sunday to render or face death in an all out assault.

There were signs of progress in an internationally backed push to set up a broad-based Afghan government which might stop the country falling back into the internecine civil war that preceded Taliban rule.

The collapse in Taliban power, which came after the United States launched a military campaign to punish the militia for harbouring Islamic militant Osama bin Laden, triggered a landgrab by Afghanistan's competing opposition factions.

. The Northern Alliance -- a loose confederation of forces from the Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara minorities -- seized Kabul, while Pashtun tribes took back control of their traditional lands south and east of the capital.

Fearing a return to fighting between rival warlords, the international community led by the United Nations has been pushing the factions to agree to a multi-ethnic power-sharing administration.

UN envoy Francesc Vendrell, deputy to Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN's special epresentative on Afghanistan, arrived in Kabul on Saturday amid signs the UN was growing impatient at the Northern Alliance's apparent foot dragging. Brahimi said Friday he wanted the UN-backed conference, bringing

together all factions n Afghanistan, to go ahead next week. 'The more time is wasted, more problems may crop up and make prog-

ress that much more difficult," Brahimi said. Both main factions have publicly backed the UN initiative, but since the fall of Kabul put them in the driving seat the Northern Alliance have appeared in no hurry to share power with their traditional rivals.

They have said the meeting should be held in Kabul, rather than on neutral ground, and have insisted that ethnic Tajik president-in-exile Burhanuddin Rabbani should take the lead role, rather than Afghanistan's

Pashtun former king, Mohammed Zahir Shah,



A Northern Alliance soldier (far R) leads captured Taliban fighters to the prison of the city of Taloqan, northern Afganistan on Friday. The group of Taliban fighters was captured near the front line at the village of Banghi between Talogan and Kunduz

Voting begins in Kosovo AFP, Pristina

The people of Kosovo went to the polls on Saturday in the first general elections since the province was placed under UN administration in . 1999 after NATO air strikes drove out the forces of then Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic

More than 1.25 million people are eligible to cast ballots to elect a 120member parliament to run the province for three years together with UN officials and a NATO-led peacekeeping force. Polls opened at 7:00 am (0600 GMT) and are scheduled to close at 7:00 pm (1800 GMT).

The vote is the result of a UN Security Council resolution in June 1999 that authorized "substantial autonomy" for the province in southern Serbia, the dominant Yugoslav republic, and the deployment of a NATO-led peacekeeping force, KFOR.

Blasts kill 37 in Chinese coal mines **REUTERS**, Beijing

Gas explosions killed 37 workers in two coal mines in China's northern province of Shanxi this week, media reported yesterday.

One blast killed 33 when it ripped through a mine on Thursday Jiaocheng County, about 70 km northeast of the capital Taiyuan, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The other explosion occurred on Wednesday at a mine in Yuxian County, about 50 km southwest of Taiyuan, killing four people and leaving four missing, the China Daily said. It said two workers had been rescued after the blast and 26

escaped the small mine. The back-to-back blasts are the latest reminders of the appalling safety record of China's mining industry, the world's biggest but also one of its deadliest. Last year, more than 5,300 deaths were reported in mining accident.

Veerappan offers to surrender

AFP, Madras

India's most wanted bandit Veerappan has offered to surrender along with his gang members in return for the authorities calling off a massive police hunt for him around

The notorious bandit, who has eluded police for three decades, has offered to hold talks for his surrender with state officials through a trusted intermediary, A.S. Mani, editor of the Tamil language magazine, Netrikan The offer to surrender was sent on a recorded audio tape to Mani. who made it public at a news conference in Madras the capital of the southern Tamil Nadu state. "If you want to hold immediate talks for my surrender, the Special Task Force police personnel of both Tamil Nadu and Karnataka states, must be withdrawn from the forest. the bandit said in his taped message.

The communist government of the eastern Indian state of West Bengal said Saturday it will introduce its own bill to fight terrorism as the federal government struggled to gain consensus on similar legisla-The Prevention of Organised Crime Ordinance (POCO) will be introduced in the legislature during the winter session beginning on December 7, Probodh Chandra Sinha, West Bengal's minister for "POCO has been drafted with

PHOTO: AFP Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani (L) greets Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee with flowers at the Chief Minister's Conference on Internal Security in New Delhi on Saturday. Vajpayee called for extreme vigilance as terrorist groups shaken by the developments in the region following the US airstrikes on Afghanistan may try to create trouble in the country out of desperation

Northern Alliance shows

can one do with them?" he asked.

US forces continue Laden hunt

Taliban forces were reportedly

preparing to abandon their strong-

hold of Kandahar and head for the

dered or have the intention to do so

to (local commanders) Bashar and

Nageebullah." spokesman Maulvi

Naiibullah told reporters at Spin

Boldak, an Afghan border post

been clashes between the Taliban

and opposition forces in Uruzgan,

the northern neighbour of Kandahar

province, but did not say that it had

leader Hamid Karzai, who has the

However, top Pashtun tribal

"It is all propaganda of our anti-

The spokesman said there had

leading into southwestern Pakistan.

Taliban forces.'

"It is wrong that we have surren-

mountains to wage a guerrilla war.

At the start of fighting last week

Vajpayee seeks consensus on anti-terror law

Impose sanctions against states harbouring terrorism

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Saturday urged chief ministers of all provinces and opposition parties to back a tough new law, which arms security agencies with greater powers to tackle terrorism

"India is high on the list of terrorists' targets, but our structures and procedures are lax," Vajpayee told a meeting of chief ministers of 28 states and union territories here.

"We have a porous border with several neighbours. Our long sea coast also needs to be better patrolled. A large number of foreign nationals who have come on visitor's visas have become traceless

"These vulnerabilities need to be checked," Vajpayee said

He pointed out that in the wake of the September 11 terrorist strikes in New York and Washington, many countries had immediately taken steps to tighten immigration laws and procedures

To forge a consensus on the law, the premier called for an all-party meeting later on Saturday. Last month, the Indian Cabinet approved The Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) 2001,

The ordinance defines terrorism as acts intended "to cause death or injuries ... or loss of damage to property or disruption of essential supplies or services with intent to threaten the unity and integrity of India or to strike terror in any

eastern states.

measure was an attempt to bring back the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA), which lapsed in 1995 and was not revived following protests from political parties and the National Human Rights Commission that it was "draco-

Most political parties, including the opposition Congress Party have opposed the ill saying that it

"free and frank" debate on the anti-terrorism ordinance saving the federal government had He also emphasised the need for a sound and

dependable disaster management system to deal with security and other threats.

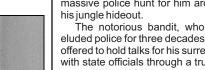
Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani, in his speech said POTO was a "comprehensive legislation taking cognisance f terrorist acts, terrorist organisations and financing of terrorism."

"POCO has been drafted with the aim to effectively combat terrorism and organised crimes like kidnapping," Sinha said.

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee Saturday called for the US-led war on terror to be widened to include sanctions against countries harbouring "terrorist organisations". Vajpayee also said militant groups in Muslimmajority Kashmir -- where an insurgency allegedly fostered by Pakistan has raged for 12 years -- were on the run as a result of the internationa

"In our talks with our friends abroad, we have emphasised that the fight against terrorism should not be limited to fighting only certain symbols or symptoms," he told a conference of

Black beauty outsmarts all



little mercy to Taliban says that more than 10,000 of the most of them foreigners. 30,000 Islamic militants taken at This practice is also followed by Kunduz, the last Taliban foothold the Taliban which this week exeabout 40 km from Talogan, are cuted eight alliance soldiers whom Chechens, Arabs, Uzbeks and they caught on the front at Kunduz according to an alliance com-Pakistanis 'You want to know what we do

Agbani Darego of Nigeria won the 2001 Miss World contest Friday at the Sun City resort in South Africa,

AFP, Sun City

which seeks to curb funding to suspected terrorist groups, confiscate their properties and intercept communication between terrorists.

section of the people."

India is fighting separatist insurgencies in Muslim-majority Kashmir and also in its north-

However, critics of the legislation said the

nian.

In his speech on Saturday, Vajpayee urged a

can be grossly misused.

taken care to plug all the shortcomings in TADA.

campaign state chief ministers.

The United States is preparing the framework for long-term "strategic military collaboration" with India, including arms sales, US ambassador Robert D. Blackwill said.

Top military officials will visit India soon to discuss the new military relationship, the envoy told AFP late Friday.

"Admiral Dennis Blair, commander of US forces in Asia, will be in New Delhi in little less than two weeks and he will bring with him specific ideas about US-India military-to-military cooperation over the long-term," Blackwill said.

Blair for close NATO-Russian relations AFP, London

British Prime Minister Tony Blair has proposed closer ties between NATO and Russia to reflect the changed relationship between the former Cold War foes after the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, government sources said on Saturday.

Under the proposals, contained in a four-page letter to Britain's 18 NATO allies and President Vladimir Putin, a new joint council would be set up opening up unprecedented possibilities for joint decision making and joint action in hotspots of common concern like the Balkans.

A British government source stressed that the enhanced ties would not pave the way for full Russian membership of the transatlantic military alliance, nor give Russia a veto over NATO decisions.

Vulture downs plane in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

A Twin Otter aircraft loaded with emergency food supplies crashed in remote western Nepal after it was struck by a vulture Saturday morning, an airport official said

The Yeti Airlines plane took off from Surkhet, 380 kilometres (240 miles) northwest of here, carrying the supplies for Jumla district 80 kilometres away when the vulture struck a cockpit window, the Kathmandu Airport Rescue Co-ordination official said

Dressed in rags and with emaciated faces, about 40 terrified Afghan Taliban soldiers are held in a prison in Talogan. And they are the lucky ones

AFP, Talogan

Other captured militants, such as Pakistanis or Chechens, are not held for a long time: they are usually killed on the spot

US forces continued Saturday to

hunt for suspected terrorist master-

mind Osama bin Laden, amid

reports -- strongly denied by the

Taliban -- that fighters from the

hardline regime were fleeing their

last major strongholds in

the militia's leader. Mullah

Mohammed Omar. had surrendered

control of the southern city of

Kandahar, a foreign ministry spokes-

man said, responding to reports in

the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic

Press (AIP) that Omar ordered the

pullout to avoid further civilian casu-

According to news reports,

alties from US air strikes.

The Taliban denied Saturday that

Only three of those at Talogan, capital of the northeastern province of Takhar, are foreign: a Pakistani, a Saudi and an Uzbek, who recently "went mad," according to his guards.

AFP, Washington

Afghanistan

The difference in the number of close to the border with Tajikistan, an alliance commander claimed to Afghan and foreign prisoners is have shot five Taliban prisoners. curious considering the alliance

mander with foreign prisoners," said the A truck arrives at the Talogan head of the crime unit at the police police station carrying 20 new station, Ewaz Mahmad. He then Taliban prisoners, all of them Afghans captured by the alliance on made a gesture as if to slit his throat. "These are terrorists, criminals, the Kunduz frontline.

who have killed thousands of people Some are young men, whose in New York and who have cut the beards are only beginning to grow. throats of Afghan people, what else Others are old men, their beards sparse.

They sit in silence against a wall, afraid of the soldiers who look at them with contempt.

support of the United States, said

Friday that ethnic Pashtun anti-

Taliban fighters had taken control of

their arms

Laden

indescribable Darego, an 18-year-old computer

science student, tall, athletically built, and with shoulder-length hair, is a hiker, a dancer, and has the ambition to become a supermodel.

Runners-up at the luxury casino etreat in the South African bush, 180 km northeast of Johannesburg, were Miss Aruba, Zerelda Lee, a 19 vear-old law student (second), and Miss Scotland, Juilet-Jane Horne, an 18-year-old media student (third). Darego won a cash prize of 100.000 dollars, plus gifts valued at 150,000 dollars, and will travel the world over the next year.

Television viewers took part in the voting for the first time, directed to local telephone numbers from the Miss World Website

Their votes -- with each country given equal weighting -- counted toward the first winnowing-out: the viewers and the jury at Sun City were each given 50 percent of the vote for the first 10 finalists out of the 96 contestants

the province, where Omar was born. After that, the jury decided. Bookies had made Miss USA, Karzai said a delegation from the Carrie Ann Stroup, the favourite, alliance and former king Mohammed Zahir Shah had left the Pakistani city followed by Miss Chile, Christianne of Quetta to meet Taliban officials in Balmeli, but neither figured in the Kandahar and urge them to lav down final 10. About 3,000 spectators viewed

The Taliban's retreat, if ultimately the event live inside the Sun City Superbowl, while an estimated 1.2 confirmed, would signify a major success for the six-week old US-led billion others watched it on television around the world. military offensive unleashed to "I am happy and excited. The joy punish them for harboring suspected of winning is just indescribable, and terrorist mastermind Osama bir

that's all I can say," Miss World told AFP minutes after the crowning before being whisked away by bodyguards.

PHOTO: AFF Miss World 2000 Priyanka Chopra (L) passes her crown to the newlyenthroned Miss World 2001, Agbani Darego of Nigeria on Friday in Sun City.

'Harry Potter' makes debut in US AFP, Washington

The much-awaited film version of "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" opened across the United States after weeks of hoopla, with Warner Brothers studio hoping to set a new box-office record for ticket sales

Fans of all ages, many clutching tickets purchased weeks ahead o time, lined up at cinemas across the country to catch the 125 million dollar silver-screen version of J.K Rowling's hit 1997 novel.

The book, adapted into a hightech 2.5 hour movie, is about how 11-year-old Harry's life is transformed as he discovers that he is a wizard, and is sent to the prestigious Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry to learn to harness his magical powers.

S

Israel pours cold water on EU pace mission

requested he not be named.

Palestinian territories," he added.

conflict with the Palestinians, who

on the contrary perceive

Washington as biased in favour of

Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt

started a three-day Middle East tour

in Cairo on Saturday with the hope

EU leaders headed by Belgian

the Jewish state.

been lost by the Taliban.

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel poured cold water Saturday on an impending Middle East peace mission by senior officials from the European Union (EU), saying the EU was "pro-Arab and anti-Israeli".

"The European Union cannot hope to play a more active role in the negotiations because of its unbalanced positions, its pro-Arab and anti-Israeli tendencies," a senior official from Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office told AFP.

"The EU turns a blind eye to Palestinian terrorism. which (Palestinian leader) Yasser Arafat is doing nothing about, and just condemns

Israel every time we act to defend of leading Israel and the ourselves," said the official, who Palestinians back to the negotiating table.

The EU "cannot in these condi-The team, which also includes tions play the role of honest broker EU foreign policy chief Javier and must be satisfied with a role Solana, European Commission limited to making investments in the head Romano Prodi and Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel, are to Israel has always said that only meet with Arafat in the West Bank the United States can act in its later Saturday.

They are scheduled to hold talks with Sharon on Sunday in Jerusalem.

Solana said Saturday after talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that he hoped for "positive news for the peace process in the coming weeks.

World leaders share vision on terrorism governments see some groups

AP, United Nations

talk about a new world order after the terrorist attacks in the United States left them pondering what went wrong to allow such destruction to happen.

Mideast conflict that dragged on for too long, trade rules that wound up punishing the little guy, injustice left to fuel extremism.

And they found hope: They signed treaties to fight terrorism, from clamping down on the money that funds terrorists to curbing trafficking in illicit arms, and they realized how important it is to work together.

"We find that the concept of coalition is a good thing," French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine told

a press briefing. "We hope eventually that we can extend the coalition against terrorism and have a coalition" to tackle other "major problems across the world.'

Forty-two heads of state and government, nine deputy prime ministers and 96 foreign ministers spoke during the UN General Assembly's weeklong, annual highlevel debate, which ended Friday. US President George W. Bush

came here to shore up support for his coalition against terrorism.

"Every nation has a stake in this cause, "Bush said. "As we meet, the terrorists are planning more murder, perhaps in my country or perhaps in vours.

The leaders condemned the Sept. 11 attacks and urged concerted efforts to fight terrorism. A

few countries, including Iraq and Cuba, lashed out at the attacks on Afghanistan, saying they punish innocent civilians.

The leaders got a convenient forum to discuss how to fill the power vacuum in Afghanistan after the Taliban fled Kabul Tuesday following punishing US airstrikes something they weren't quite ready

"All ethnic groups must be equally represented," Ravan Farhadi, the UN ambassador representing the Afghan administration that the Taliban defeated five years ago, told the 189-member assembly Wednesday. But so far, the victorious northern alliance has shown no

sign of sharing power. The leaders disagreed on how to define terrorism an old issue that has taken on new significance. Arab

Washington calls terrorist as legiti mate liberation movements, and demand that the United Nations take that view. They want a UNsponsored conference to define terrorism. "How could anyone fail to differ-

entiate between terrorism and resistance" Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa asked Wednesday.

Arab leaders also demanded that the world support the return of a Palestinian state and withdrawal of Israelis from all Arab lands in order to restore peace to the Middle East.

"The Palestinian people found themselves with no alternatives expect to start one uprising after another in the face of occupation, all-Sharaa added.

The world's leaders came here to

They offered some answers: a