

## UK warns against widening anti-terror campaign

AFP, London

Britain's senior military officer has warned against attempts to widen the campaign against terrorism beyond Afghanistan, admitting for the first time that London and Washington are at odds over the issue.

Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, the chief of Britain's defence staff, said in a speech Monday that the choice was between maintaining peace in Afghanistan and spreading military action to other countries.

"We will have to decide soon whether we make a commitment to a broader campaign or make a longer-term commitment to Afghanistan," he said.

"It's not a question of whether we will trap our hand in a mangle but which mangle we will trap our hand in."

Boyce's remarks, in a speech to the Royal United Services Institute in London, are seen as a rebuff against what he described as "the United States' single-minded determination" to wage war on a broader front than

just in Afghanistan.

He admitted there was "some slight difference in emphasis" between London and Washington on the issue.

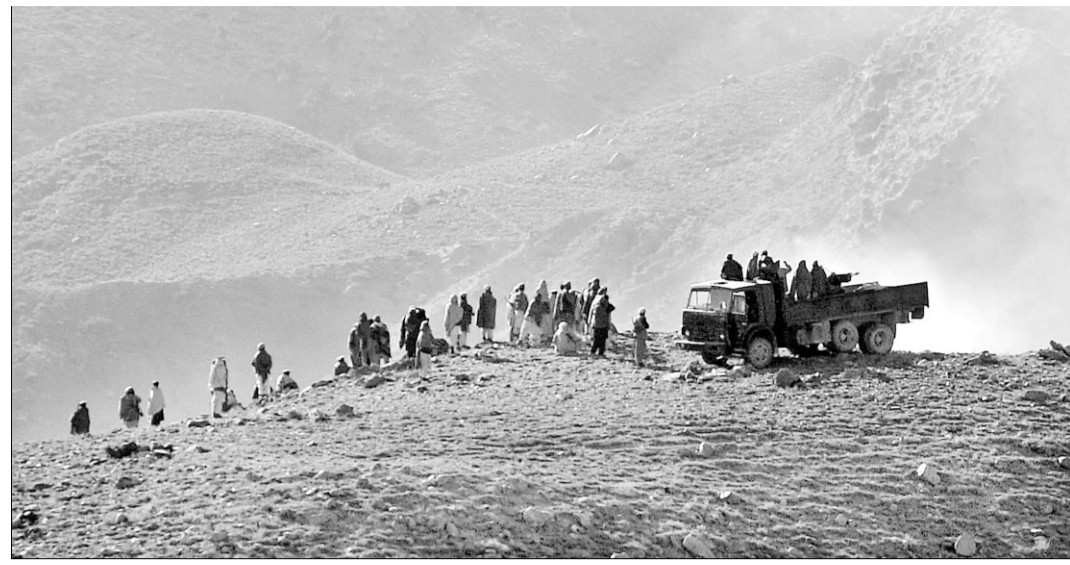
It also suggests that, if Britain was to lead or at least contribute to the multi-national security force to be deployed in Afghanistan shortly, it could not simultaneously join in any US-led attack on other countries.

"We cannot be all-singing, all-dancing; we do not have the resources," the Daily Telegraph quoted him as saying.

If British troops were to join their US counterparts in such action, it could result in "prosecuting operations that we may find contradict national policy."

US officials have hinted that they want to widen the campaign to countries such as Iraq, Somalia and Yemen.

Britain, for its part, is wary of such a move, and has stated several times that it sees no evidence directly linking Baghdad to the September 11 atrocities in the United States.



Mujahedin forces use anti-aircraft gun on an Al-Qaida position in Tora Bora mountain on Monday. US bombers launched the latest offensive in a succession of punishing bombing raids on the mountain ranges of eastern Afghanistan in the hope of finally dislodging terror suspect Osama bin Laden from his mountain fortress.

## Milosevic's hearing on genocide charge begins

AFP, The Hague

Former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic appeared before the UN war crimes tribunal here on Tuesday when he was scheduled to enter a plea on genocide charges for his role in the 1992-95 Bosnian war.

At the hearing, which started around 9:30 am (0830 GMT), the full text of the Bosnia indictment will be read out in court to make sure the defendant is aware of the charges against him before he is asked to enter a plea.

## Indian envoy to visit Kabul

AFP, New Delhi

India's newly-appointed special envoy to Afghanistan, S.K. Lambah, will travel to Kabul on Wednesday for talks with top leaders of the country's new administration, a foreign ministry official said.

Lambah is due to meet with Hamid Karzai, head of the interim government, to discuss developments in Afghanistan following the total collapse of the Taliban regime.

He will be accompanied by a joint secretary in the foreign affairs ministry as well as other officials to assess work on reopening India's embassy.

India established a diplomatic mission in Afghanistan last month, five years after abandoning the country.

India became a main backer of the Northern Alliance during the Taliban's time in power and has moved swiftly to establish diplomatic relations following the alliance's military victories over the Islamic militia.



Swedish Princess Christina (L) and Nobel Literature Prize winner V.S. Naipaul (R) attend the banquet for the Nobel laureates at Stockholm's City Hall late Monday. The banquet is to mark the 100th anniversary of the first Nobel prizes with all living laureates invited to take part in the centennial week in Stockholm.

## Nobel laureates accept awards in style

AP, Stockholm

Describing a little of what winning this year's Nobel literature prize meant to him, VS Naipaul said his watch broke on the plane to Stockholm last Thursday, and normal life will resume only after he leaves and gets it fixed.

"Here is the strapless watch," Naipaul told a delighted audience Monday evening that included King Carl XVI Gustaf, Queen Silvia, senior government officials, ambassadors and dozens of laureates from this and previous years at the annual Nobel banquet at a resplendent Stockholm City Hall.

The Nobel whirlwind for Naipaul and 13 other laureates began after the award announcements last October. The past few days, Naipaul half-heartedly groused, he was asked so many questions that

"I begin to feel now that I lose the capacity for spontaneous thought."

But no one at the feast was really complaining.

The menu at the Nobel's 100th anniversary featured lobster and quail, champagne and wines from France and Germany. Entertainment included arias from Giuseppe Verdi's "A Masked Ball" in which Swedish King Gustaf III was assassinated at the opera house in Stockholm in 1792.

Other laureates in their short addresses fell short of the master touch of Naipaul. Scientists and economists talked lyrically about "asymmetrical information" and the "Boss-Einstein condensate." But the audience seemed lost.

"It's the smell that got me into carbon chemistry," enthused chemistry laureate K. Barry Sharpless of the United States.

Hours earlier, 13 laureates from

four countries received their awards in a glittering ceremony at Stockholm's Concert House. Separately in Oslo, Norway, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan of Ghana accepted the Nobel Peace Prize he shared with the United Nations as an institution.

"The prizes in 1901... marked the beginning of a chain of Nobel Prizes for contributions that have assumed the nature of milestones in the development of our civilization over the past century," professor Bengt Samuelsson, chairman of the Nobel Foundation, said in opening the ceremony.

"Each year's Nobel Prize-winning contributions can therefore be regarded as another annual ring on the verdant tree of humanism, and these humanist values will be just as valid and necessary in the future as they have been over the past century."

## UN envoy in Kabul to prepare for transition of power

AFP, Kabul

The top UN official for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, held talks with the Afghan leadership in Kabul on Tuesday to prepare for the upcoming transition of power to a new interim government.

Brahimi, who flew in from Islamabad Tuesday morning, met the incoming foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah before holding discussions with the defence minister General Mohammad Qasim Fahim.

A meeting was also possible with Hamid Karzai, who is to head the interim authority and has been until now in the southern city of Kandahar, surrendered by the Taliban last week after negotiations led by the Pashtun royalist.

"He (Brahimi) is in Kabul today to talk to the leadership about a smooth transition of power," the

UN envoy's spokesman Ahmed Fawzi told journalists, referring to the six-month interim administration due to come into effect on December 22.

Among the thorniest issues on the agenda is the deployment of an international security force that formed a key clause of last week's historic UN-brokered power-sharing accord signed in Bonn.

The ethnic Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance now in power in Afghanistan threw a potential spanner into the works on Monday when it insisted it would not withdraw all its soldiers from Kabul.

It had pledged in the Bonn accord to demilitarise the city before the deployment of UN-mandated peacekeepers.

In the first clear sign of resistance to the proposed force, a top aide to General Fahim also said the peacekeepers would not be

allowed to patrol Kabul.

That, said defence ministry spokesman Mohammad Habeel, was a task reserved for Afghan security forces.

"The question of security is of paramount importance for the new interim administration," said Fawzi, asked about the disagreement over the peacekeeping mission.

"The four groups who were in Bonn, when they signed onto this agreement, made a specific request to the (UN) Security Council to consider early deployment of a security force in Kabul," he added.

However, the UN spokesman conceded that the alliance, which will keep the key foreign, interior and defence ministries in the new government, would have to cooperate for the international peacekeepers to be deployed.

## Arafat has obligation to fight terror: Solana

### Israeli helicopters raid security posts in Gaza

AFP, Jerusalem

EU foreign policy Chief Javier Solana said Tuesday that Yasser Arafat has an "obligation" to fight Islamic militants, at the start of a new mission to contain Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Solana, who also acknowledged that "miracles" were hard to come by in the Middle East crisis, spoke after separate meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and US peace envoy Anthony Zinni.

He will meet the Palestinian leader later in the afternoon in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

"I will tell Mr. Arafat the same thing I've been telling him lately: he has to continue to fight against terror," Solana said.

"It is his obligation at this point

and time and he will have the necessary support to do that," Solana said.

On Monday the European Union asked the Palestinian leader to dismantle the "terrorist networks" of the radical Islamic groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who are responsible for a spate of deadly suicide bombings in Israel.

Israel said it was "satisfied" with the demand.

"We greet with satisfaction the declaration of the European foreign ministers whose message was addressed to Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority," said foreign ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon.

"This is a change, it's the first time that such a demand has been formulated with such clarity and lack of equivocation and addressed to

Yasser Arafat," he said.

Solana said his talks with Sharon and Zinni focused on "how all of us can work together to get out of the situation which is very bad."

Meanwhile, Israeli helicopters fired at least four missiles on Palestinian security positions near Beit Jala in the northern Gaza strip overnight Monday, Palestinian officials said.

The officials said the target of the raid was a base of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's elite Force-17 guard.

The building hit was destroyed in the attack, but there were no immediate reports of any casualties.

An Israeli military spokesman confirmed the raid on the Force-17 post, which he said was carried out in retaliation for mortar fire on a Jewish settlement.

## Afghan reconstruction talks begin in Tokyo

AFP, Tokyo

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from Japan and Afghanistan as well as international groups began three days of talks here Tuesday to discuss measures to support Afghan reconstruction, organisers said.

Some 100 people, including 27 Afghans engaged in NGO activities in the country, participated in the meeting at a Tokyo hotel, the organisers said.

Other attendants were officials from UN bodies, the Japanese foreign ministry and Japanese companies.

"We invited Afghan NGOs to hear what they really need in their country," said Eizaburo Kami, an organiser said.

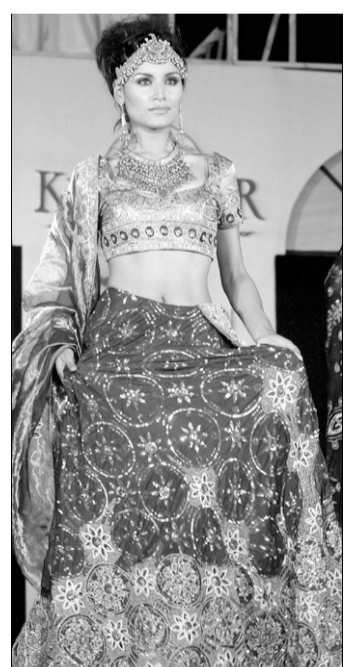
"Their expectations from Japan are high... at a time when they are to rebuild their new nation," Kami said.

"We plan to adopt an appeal at the end of the conference with hope that we can draw up proposals for Afghan reconstruction ahead of a ministerial meeting by donor countries to be held in Tokyo in January," he said.

During the NGO conference, participants are to focus on measures to back activities in agriculture, education, health and medicine, and the removal of land mines, organisers said.

Last month Japan offered to host a ministerial meeting on the reconstruction of Afghanistan in January, which ministers of finance and foreign affairs from more than 22 countries are expected to attend.

According to initial estimates, more than 10 billion dollars will be needed over as many years to rebuild Afghanistan, one of the four poorest countries in the world, which has suffered from more than 20 years of war.



A model displays a creation from Ritu Beri's "Nirvana" collection at the glittering Kingfisher Fashion Awards - 2001 at the Turf club in Bombay on Monday.

## US mounts spy mission in Somalia

AFP, London

US army officers have secretly entered Somalia in the first indication of President George W. Bush's determination to extend the war against terrorism, a British daily said Tuesday.

Five military personnel reached the heart of the country and met a rebel movement in Baidoa, 240 kilometres west of the capital Mogadishu, in a search for suspected terrorist camps, the Daily Telegraph said.

## Coffin scandal haunts Indian government

AFP, New Delhi

Corruption in Indian defence circles returned to the spotlight Tuesday with parliament in uproar over reports that the government bought 500 coffins at exorbitant prices during a 1999 conflict with Pakistan-backed forces in Kashmir.

Both houses of parliament were eventually forced to adjourn for the day as opposition MPs, shouting slogans and tearing and throwing paper, demanded an explanation from the government benches.

The row focused on a special report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India on defence procurement relating to the 10-week conflict in the Kargil sector of Kashmir between Indian troops and Pakistan-backed forces.

According to the Times of India, the CAG found that the government had approved the purchase of 500 aluminium coffins at hugely inflated prices to carry the remains of what are now referred to as the Kashmir "martyrs".

## Vajpayee wraps up Japan visit

AFP, Tokyo

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee ended a five-day visit to Japan Tuesday that included meetings with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Emperor Akihito.

Vajpayee left Tokyo's Haneda airport for New Delhi on a government plane, an airport official said.

He met the emperor for lunch at the Imperial Palace before leaving, an official for the Imperial Household Agency said.

On Monday, Vajpayee and

Koizumi discussed their shared support for the US-led operation against terrorism, the need for international efforts to rebuild Afghanistan and increased cooperation generally.

But he avoided responding to Koizumi's call on India to sign the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Neither India nor Pakistan -- which carried out a series of underground nuclear tests in May 1998 -- has signed the CTBT.

## Taliban supporters in Kashmir disillusioned

AFP, Srinagar

The swift rout of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan has left Kashmiri supporters of the radical Islamic militia angry and disillusioned.

The launch of US-led air strikes against Afghanistan following the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, triggered demonstrations and strikes in Indian-administered Kashmir where a Muslim separatist insurgency has claimed at least 35,000 lives since 1989.

The protests had condemned the US military action and backed the Taliban's decision not to hand over suspected terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden.

"The Taliban's refusal to hand over bin Laden to the United States had created a heroic image of the militia in Kashmir," said radical student Idriss Ahmed.

evidence linking bin Laden to the September 11 attacks."

But Ahmed said the Taliban's image had taken a nosedive after the fall of the strategic northern Afghan town of Mazar-i-Sharif which prompted the spectacular collapse of Taliban forces elsewhere in the country.

"We were expecting the Taliban to give a tough time to their opponents, but that didn't happen," said fellow student Nasir Dar.

"It has been a meek surrender after a lot of Taliban rhetoric that they would fight until the last man."

Ahmed and Dar both took part in pro-Taliban protests in Kashmir, but now admit they may have done better to heed the call of the All Party Hurriyat Conference -- Kashmir's main separatist alliance -- not to agitate in favour of the militia and bin Laden's Al-Qaida network.

"The issue of Osama bin Laden is irrelevant to us," Hurriyat chief Abdul Ghani Bhat said at the time.



Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee (L) is welcomed by Japanese Emperor Akihito during an audience at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on Tuesday. Vajpayee concluded his five-day official visit to Japan.

## Misuari seeks asylum

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Captured Philippine Muslim leader Nur Misuari is seeking political asylum, the UN refugee agency said Tuesday, as Malaysia hinted it could grant him safe passage to a third country.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesman Shinji Kubo said Misuari filed for asylum through his lawyer in Washington in late November.

"Misuari is asking for asylum so that he will not be returned to anywhere that will endanger his freedom and life," Kubo told AFP.

## President-PM's bickering holds up Lanka's cabinet

AFP, Colombo

The swearing-in of Sri Lanka's new Cabinet has been held up after President Chandrika Kumaratunga openly clashed with her political rival Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, officials said Tuesday.

The two were due to hold talks Monday evening to finalise a list of cabinet ministers due to be sworn in Tuesday, but at the last minute Kumaratunga cancelled the meeting, Wickremesinghe's office said.

"A fresh meeting has been scheduled for later Tuesday which means the new cabinet will be delayed by at least another day or two," a spokesman for the prime minister said.

It was the first clash between the president and the new prime minister.

Wickremesinghe's United

National Party (UNP) last week won parliamentary elections, and he was sworn in as prime minister on Sunday.

Kumaratunga, who heads the rival People's Alliance (PA), was elected at a separate vote and remains president until December 2005.

Further cracks in the cohabitation showed Tuesday as Wickremesinghe rejected the president's decision to summon parliament on December 17, which coincides with a Muslim holiday in Sri Lanka.

His office denied a statement by Kumaratunga which said that the UNP had agreed to the date.

Parliament was previously due to meet on January 1, 2002.

"She must have some sense not to fix the opening of parliament on a holiday that is most important to the

(minority) Muslim community," a spokesman said.

Parliamentary officials said Kumaratunga had already issued a proclamation summoning parliament on December 17, but she would now have to issue a fresh order giving another date.

There was also unease in the prime minister's camp about the key defence and finance portfolios, which before the election Kumaratunga held along with six other portfolios.

The prime minister finalised his cabinet on his first full day in office Monday.

Former attorney general Tilak Marapone was tipped as the new defence minister while senior lawyer K. N. Choksy was likely to be given the finance portfolio -- if Kumaratunga agrees to give up the two positions.