

Afghan govt takes control of Taliban stronghold

AP, Marjah

The Afghan government took official control of the southern Taliban stronghold of Marjah yesterday, installing an administrator and raising the national flag while US-led troops routed out final pockets of militants.

The ceremony occurred in a central market as US Marines and Afghan troops slogged through bomb-laden fields in northern parts of the town. Some 700 residents gathered to see Abdul Zahir Aryan formally appointed as the top government official in Marjah, according to US officials at the event.

Aryan and a team of advisers held their first meeting in the town Monday and have been staying overnight in a building there since Tuesday, said Marlin Harbinger, the senior US government representative for Helmand province, which contains Marjah.

"Today's event was the civilian Afghan government re-establishing itself officially in front of the local residents," Harbinger said. The Afghan army had previously raised the country's green-and-red flag nearby, but that was only a claim of military control over that neighbourhood, he said.

The ceremony opened with a reading from the Quran, and then Aryan and the Helmand governor pledged to those gathered that they were ready to listen to their needs and eager to provide them with basic services that they

didn't have under the Taliban.

After the ceremony, the generals and high-level officials departed in helicopters, but Aryan remained.

The mass assault in southern Helmand province, with 15,000 Nato and Afghan troops, is the largest military operation in Afghanistan since the US-led ouster of the Taliban regime in 2001.

Nato's strategy is to rout Taliban militants from the town, which had served as a logistical base and drug trafficking hub, restore the Afghan government's presence, and rush in public services in a bid to win over the confidence of local communities.

In the north Thursday, the Marines' progress was slowed by difficult terrain with no roads, few tracks and many hidden mines, but there was no gunfire by midmorning. Several armoured vehicles fell into irrigation canals while others were damaged by roadside bombs.

About 100 fighters are believed to have regrouped into the 45-square kilometre area known as Kareze, according to commanders with the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines Regiment. The Marines and their Afghan partners are working to secure the area, believed to be the last significant pocket of Taliban insurgents in town.

The last few days have been relatively calm throughout Marjah, with limited engagement by insurgents, as troops secured areas they had already taken and moved into position to tackle the final insurgent holdouts.

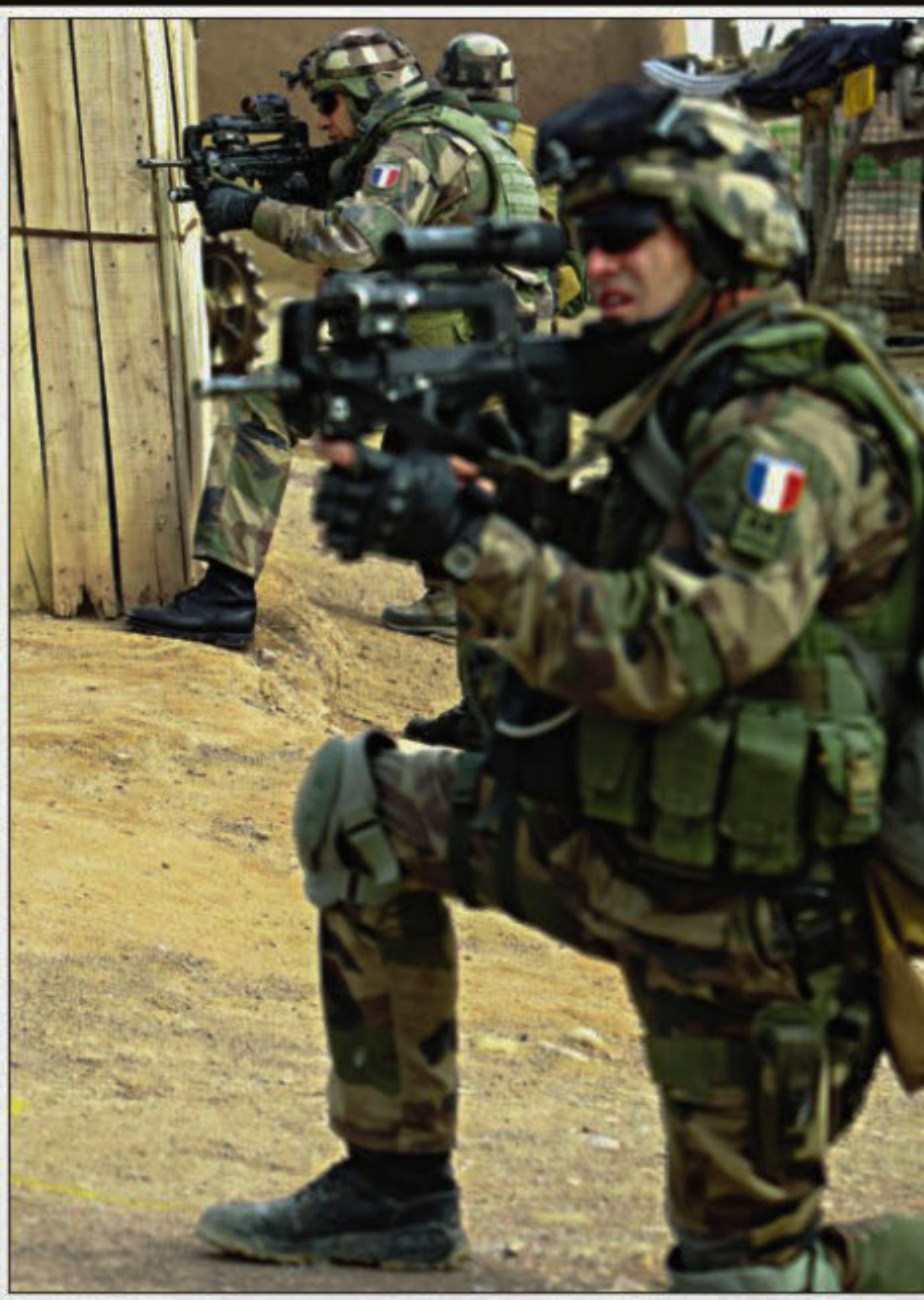


PHOTO: AFP

French soldiers of the 21st RIMA use their riflescopes while on joint patrol with unseen Afghan soldiers in a market of Showal town in the Nad-e-Ali district of southern Afghanistan's Helmand province yesterday.

Turkey's civilian, military leaders pledge to resolve 'coup' row

AFP, Ankara

Turkey's army chief and civilian leadership pledged to resolve tensions over an alleged 2003 coup plot after crisis talks yesterday as prosecutors grilled top military figures.

A statement issued after the talks at the presidential palace said "the problems will be resolved within the constitutional order" and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan hailed the gathering as "very good."

President Abdullah Gul called the meeting with Erdogan and Chief of Staff Ilker Basbug after the army spoke of a "serious situation" following the arrest Monday of some 50 serving and retired officers over an alleged plan to overthrow the Islamist-ruled government in 2003.

The three men also "underlined the need for everyone to act responsibly so as not to weaken institutions during this process," the statement said.

The coup probe marked a new low in ties between government and army, already strained since last year amid allegations that army members made a series of plans to discredit and unseat the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), the offshoot of a now-banned Islamist movement.



PHOTO: AFP

Turkish President Abdullah Gul (C), Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan (L) and Turkey's Chief of Staff General Ilker Basbug meet at the Presidential Palace in Ankara yesterday.

'Daal-Bhaat' no real reason

FROM PAGE 1

"I'm now mentally preparing myself to bid farewell to his departed soul as we're going to observe his first death anniversary," Neheeren said with her eyes filled with tears.

Col Mojib served the paramilitary force for over two years and was the sector commander of Dhaka. He was the brains behind the "Operation Daal-Bhaat" launched during the caretaker rule to combat price hike of essentials through import and sale of groceries at wholesale rate.

During the Operation Daal-Bhaat Col Mojib almost forgot his personal and family life as he had to work from morning till late at night every day.

"As it was leaving an impact on his health, I asked him not to work so hard. But he always replied that not only he, all the officers and soldiers were working hard to overcome the crisis," Neheeren said.

"My husband had to deprive us of his company and in return the BDR took his life," she said in an emotion-choked voice at her DOHS residence in Mohakhali.

"I'll never forgive the killers," she said, demanding exemplary punishment to the killers as soon as possible. She apprehends if the trial is delayed, many pieces of evidence might be destroyed.

She firmly said the soldiers who met Mojib can never kill him and the allegations over Operation Daal-Bhaat are totally baseless. "We want to know the real reason behind such brutal killings," she said.

She demanded recognition of the 57 valiant army officers by giving them posthumous promotion, declaring February 25 as a national day and estab-

lishing a mausoleum commemorating their memory at a place where general people can go.

After 32 years in service, Col Mojib was supposed to go on retirement in a month before he was brutally killed. He was prepared for retirement but at the same time was depressed knowing that he would not wear his favourite combat dress anymore.

Neheeren is bearing the pains of losing her husband, yet she feels lucky to be alive for their two sons and a daughter.

She said she was at the gym when the mutiny broke out. She gratefully remembers two soldiers who locked up the gym and told the advancing killers that no-one was inside.

Their second son Nadeet Haque, who is doing his A Level, was at home when the killers set fire to the upper floor. Nadeet was lucky to survive but is so haunted by the horrors that he cannot sleep at night without the lights on.

Their only daughter Tehreen was outside Pilkhana on that fateful day, while their eldest son Moheeb Haque was at Brisbane University in Australia.

About her husband, Neheeren said he liked to buy uncommon household showpieces. When he was posted as the minister councillor at the Bangladesh Embassy in Thailand, he visited different provinces and bought traditional items.

Many of those pieces were intact in cartons in their Pilkhana residence. But the mutineers looted most of those and burned the rest.

Mojib was always hopeful about the country's future and had dreams to work for the

youth and promotion of tourism after his retirement.

"He was a true patriot," Neheeren said, giving examples of his love for the country. When he was posted in Thailand, he asked his relatives to send him Bangladeshi gift items and always tried to promote Bangladeshi silk sarees at exhibitions there.

He even furnished his residence with all Bangladeshi fittings, she said.

Their relatives have formed Col Mojib Trust, which has published a memorial book with photos and details of the slain army officers.

Pakistan accepts Kabul's demand to hand over Baradar

ANI, Kabul

The Pakistan government has agreed to handover the top Afghan Taliban commander Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who was nabbed in a joint operation by the Pakistani and US officials in Karachi earlier this month, to Afghanistan.

A statement issued from the office of President Hamid Karzai stated that Islamabad has accepted Kabul's request to hand over Baradar and other extremist leaders to it for further investigations.

"The government of Pakistan has accepted Afghanistan's proposal for extraditing Mullah Baradar and other Taliban who are in its custody and showed readiness to hand over those prisoners... on the basis of an agreement between the two countries," The Dawn quoted the statement, assaying.



PHOTO: AFP

An Indian tigress wearing a radio collar jumps into the river from a boat as she is released by wildlife workers in Storekhali forest in the Sundarbans, some 130km south of Kolkata on Wednesday. The tigress had been caught close to human habitation a few days ago.

Civil society rallies

FROM PAGE 16

They also demanded immediate implementation of the CHT Accord, constitutional recognition to indigenous people, cancellation of land leases in the hills, protection and compensation for the affected families.

A series of clashes between indigenous people and Bangalee settlers started on February 19. The six-day violence claimed three lives and injured 70 while more than 500 houses were set on fire, over 400 of which belonged to indigenous families.

Even Buddhist temples, church, mosque and schools were not spared from the arson attack.

The brutality displaced 3,000 adivasis and 500 Bangalee settlers from their homes.

Justice Golam Rabbani in his speech said whenever the nation steps in to build a democratic society, it faces obstacles from fascist segments.

Lawmaker Rashed Khan Menon described the incident as a scheme planned to foil the peace process in hill land. He blasted the role of military and local administration for their failure to ensure security of indigenous people. He also stressed the need for activating the land commission and resolving land dispute.

Lawmaker Hasanul Haq Inu

insisted on immediate parliamentary-level inquiry to find out how such atrocity took place in presence of army.

Raja Debashis Roy, chief of Chakma Circle, questioned the army presence in the hill districts and also pointed to their inactivity during the fight.

He also said the attack on indigenous people is a blow to democracy, religious forbearance and ultimately, the state sovereignty.

The protest meeting was followed by a procession that circled the Dhaka University campus.

Expressing solidarity with the cause, Pankaj Bhattacharya, presidium Member of Gono Forum, Rokeya Kabir, president of Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha, cultural activist Ali Zaker and Mamunur Rashid, Shirin Akter, chairperson of Karmojibi Nari, Prof Anwar Hossain, Prof Dalem Chandra Barman, Prof HKS Arefin, Prof Mesbah Kamal, Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, Prof Robayet Ferdous, Dr Sourav Sikdar, Ajoy Roy of Sammlito Samajik Andolon, Sharif Jamil, joint general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, Rekha Chowdhury of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad also addressed the meeting among others.



Be a part of history in the making!

Information Technology has been one of the core driving forces of Grameenphone Ltd. Born out of this success, Grameenphone IT Ltd. promises easy access to state-of-the-art IT solutions at par international standard for business conglomerates, both local and international.

Creating compelling and innovative IT solutions is more than our business. We constantly evolve to bring out the best in terms of excellence and professionalism.

At Grameenphone IT Ltd., you get the first-hand experience to showcase your talents from a unified platform that integrates unrivalled technology expertise and resources.

If you have the zeal in you and ready to be a part of history in the making, then perhaps you're the one we have been looking for!

Director, Finance & Corporate Affairs, Grameenphone IT Ltd.

Key Responsibilities:

Develop and implement strategies to ensure regulatory/statutory/legal compliance and establish sustainable government relations. Formulate strategy for growth initiatives, including industry and competitors' analysis. Guide and support potential merger and acquisitions. Develop a modern supply chain strategy that supports the company's overall strategic business plan and performance objectives as well as customer expectations.

Qualification:

Masters Degree in Business, Finance, Accounting or equivalent (CPA, CFA, CMA) with 10 or more years of relevant and progressively responsible experience, preferably in a major company or division of a large corporation.

Director, People & Organization, Grameenphone IT Ltd.

Key Responsibilities:

Design and implement strategic human resource planning to ascertain efficient talent sourcing. Develop and maintain HR policy framework and practices according to local laws and regulations. Ensure effective talent management and engagement through different initiatives and activities. Carry out effective HR risk analysis and develop proactive risk countermeasures. Promote and incorporate Codes of Conduct, health and safety initiatives in all aspects of company's business.

Qualification:

Masters Degree specializing in business/human resources along with Post-Graduate Diploma / Certification in HR would be an added advantage. Minimum 7-8 years of experience of which 4 years in a managerial role.

Director, Strategy & Business Development, Grameenphone IT Ltd.

Key Responsibilities:

Initiate and develop marketing plans and strategies in collaboration with internal stakeholders for local and international markets. Establish and maintain new strategic partnerships to support business growth and targets. Identify new business growth opportunities in local and international markets. Win clients/accounts through direct selling efforts, relationships building and forging new partnerships.

Qualification:

MBA (from top global institution) along with MS in IT or Technology relevant field will be preferred. 6-10 years of experience in business development/sales experience in Global IT company.

For more details and to apply, please visit: career.grameenphone.com

Closing Date: March 11, 2010

Grameenphone IT Ltd.

INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH

13th Convocation

Estd: 1993

The 13th Convocation of the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) will be held on Tuesday, 2nd March 2010 at **Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC)** in Dhaka and the Rehearsal for the Convocation will be held on Monday, 1st March 2010 at 2 pm at the same venue.

All the graduating students (**Class of 2009, graduated by 31st May 2009**) of the University are requested to collect their invitation cards/ gowns from the venue on the day of Rehearsal on Monday, 1st March 2010.

Registrar