Hezb, Government agree to negotiate

After 26 days of indecisive fighting between Hezb Islami and the Islamic Government, the two sides agreed on an informal ceasefire effective from February 15.

After the initial success of the government forces in eastern sector, the fighting reached a stalemate. Hezb took some areas it lost in the east with the help of some local commanders from other parties, but its efforts to advance in the south did not succeed.

He launched several offensive to retake the lost ground in the east. It succeeded to recapture Butkhak with the help of a commander from Khalis’ party. Recapture of Butkhak reopened Hezb’s supply route through Lataband pass. Hezb’s efforts to recapture its lost positions in Shina, and the villages along the main Kabul-Jalalabad road was repulsed and its fighters suffered heavy casualties.

Hezb’s successive attempts to capture Jangalak and Aishqan mountain, south of the city, was foiled but joint action by Hezb and Wahdat made the auxiliary road to Darulaman, used by government to resupply its troops, became unsafe.

The offensive against Hezb was launched 20 days after that party resumed rocking the city. There is evidence that Hezb was preparing for war. According to a source in the defense ministry, Hezb and its allies would have launched a ground attack against the government towards the end of January, and the government attack was a preemptive move.

After each defeat in the battlefield, Hezb turned its guns towards the city, pouring hundreds of rockets and artillery shells on the defenseless people of Kabul. Rocket attacks on Kabul were very heavy on the following days:

- On February 4, 115 rockets were fired killing 28 people and wounded 65.
- On February 5, 34 rockets were fired killing four civilians and wounding 15.
- On February 6, 100 rockets were fired killing 12 civilians and wounding 48.
- On February 8, 200 rockets were fired killing 54 civilians and wounding 100.
- On February 13, 150 rockets were fired killing 18 and wounding 100.

In addition to indiscriminate rocket attack of the city, Hezb made the foreign missions in Kabul a target of its rocket attacks. The aim was to isolate the government by forcing the foreign countries to close their embassies in Kabul. Hezb had successfully used this tactic during its summer attack on Kabul.

As result of these attacks, Italy, Turkey, India and China closed their embassies in Kabul and Pakistan reduced its staff. The embassies of Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia remained open.

As the time passed, Hezb Wahdat become further involved in fighting with the government, first in south and then in west of Kabul. The government decided to deal first with Wahdat and then turn to Hezb. In two days of fighting, on February 12 and 13, the government troops captured the headquarters of Hezb Wahdat and liberated vast areas from control of that party. Silo, the government bakery, was also brought out control of Wahdat.

Wahdat suffered heavy casualties and its defenses collapsed quickly. The quick defeat of Wahdat surprised many and that party put the blame on its field commanders, who were accused of selling their positions. But those watching the war know that the sell-out theory was fabricated for save-face purposes. Wahdat fighters resisted, but they were facing a stronger and better equipped force.

The government announced a ceasefire with Wahdat after two days of fighting. By doing so, the government did not want to frighten the Shia community in Kabul. A government communique described the operation against Wahdat as limited and only directed against the radical faction of Mazari.

While fighting between government and Hezb-Wahdat alliance continued in Kabul, the role of Dostum remained a subject of discussion. At one stage sources in the government said that Dostum had agreed to fight alongside government, but it did not happen. Dostum had told reporters in Mazari that he had sent a proposal to the government in which he had demanded a share in the government. He said if his proposals were accepted he would fight for the government, otherwise he would remain neutral. In practice, however, he did not remain neutral.

Dostum sent arms, ammunition and fighters to Hezb Wahdat through Hezb territory in the south.

Press reports said the government had offered to Dostum the post of the deputy defense minister. Clarifying the report, a spokesman of the president said that it was a proposal by Dostum which was being considered by the government but no firm decision had been made yet.

While fighting was continuing, a peace delegation reached Kabul from Pakistan. The delegation included Qazi...
Hezb, Government agree to negotiate

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Hussain Ahmad, the leader of Jamaat Islami of Pakistan, General Hamid Gul, the former head of ISI and Ijazul Haq, the son of late President Zia. The peace delegation had established contact with the warring sides from Pakistan and they had agreed to receive it.

From the government point of view, any deal should have not nullify the decisions of the Hal-o-Aqil Council and should have resulted in permanent peace.

After several meetings with both sides, there were enough reasons for accepting an unofficial ceasefire by both sides which was announced by the government on February 14.

Each side had its own reasons for accepting the ceasefire. Following are the possible reasons for government decision to accept a ceasefire:

The government offensive did not go well due to fighting with Wahdat and possible fighting with Dostum. In order to win the war it had to mobilize a large force. The government troops were facing some logistical problems due to the harsh winter.

Politically, the government had antagonized a considerable number of the Mujahideen leaders by convening Hal-o-Aqil Council against their wishes.

Some of these parties were either supporting Hikmatyar or remained neutral. The government relied on forces of Jamiat and Iltihad to wage a war against Hezb and Wahdat.

Casualties among the fighters and civilians were high. The ordinary people who were demanding action against Hezb because of its rocket attacks began to get impatient as the war became long. World opinion was against the war. UN and friendly countries were demanding the end of hostilities and solving the issue through political means.

Hezb also had its own reasons for accepting the ceasefire some of which are:

The casualties among Hezb fighters were high. It faced logistical problems due to winter and military operation by the government forces. The alliance formed with Wahdat and Dostum did not work as it was intended. Hezb had no significant achievement in the battlefield, and its hope to capture Kabul by force faded away. The Hezb leader who acted as the de facto leader of the opposition was frustrated by the indecisiveness of the party leaders opposed to the government. Hezb did not see time in its favor.

US commandos land in Peshawar

The arrival of a group of American commandos in Peshawar in the first week of February is being exploited by the leader of Hezb to enhance his “revolutionary” image.

Qazi Hussain Ahmad, the leader of the Jamaat Islami of Pakistan, has claimed that the commandos had come to kill an Afghan leader - an indirect reference to Hikmatyar. He did not elaborate. Why would the American commandos want to kill Hikmatyar?

The government of Pakistan has confirmed the arrival of a group of American commandos, but has said they had come to take part in military exercises with Pakistani commandos.

According to Jamaat sources, 65 American commandos landed at Peshawar airport.

Other sources say that the commandos have a mission to hunt down a Pakistani national suspected of killing a CIA officer in Washington recently.

Hikmatyar and his friend Qazi, as usual, were quick to exploit the arrival of American commandos for their political ends. Such a thing is not new for the leader of Hezb. When he was receiving the lion’s share of American aid during the years of Jihad, he used to raise, anti-American slogans. While Washington ignored his rhetoric, the anti-American slogans helped Hikmatyar to win the confidence of radical Muslim groups in Middle-East. They provided him with enormous funds.

Kabul not involved in Tajik conflict

The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr. Najibullah Lalaie said reporters on February 6 in Quetta, Pakistan, that the government of Afghanistan was not involved in Tajikistan conflict. “We support no side in the conflict,” he said.

He informed the foreign minister of Tajikistan about this position of the government of Afghanistan when he met him in Quetta.

The minister said Afghanistan was in favor of a political solution of the problem of Tajikistan.

Tajikistan has imposed a state of emergency along the border with Afghanistan. According to Russian sources, the measure was taken to stop infiltration of armed, men from Afghanistan into Tajikistan.

Around 3,000 Russian and 2,000 soldiers from other ten countries of the CIS states are guarding the 3,000 kilometer border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has asked the United Nations to provide emergency assistance for about 100,000 Tajik refugees who have taken refuge in Afghanistan.

In a letter to the UN Secretary-General on January 11, the Afghan permanent mission to the United Nations said that as a country that has experienced 14 years of war and was faced with an extremely difficult financial and economic situation, Afghanistan was not even in a position to provide basic services to its own population.

The letter asked for urgent emergency assistance for the Tajik refugees in the form of basic commodities such as food, clothes, medicines and shelter.

Some Arab relief organizations are flying in relief goods from Peshawar for Tajik refugees in Kunduz by chartered planes.

Drug smugglers busted by Iran

Iranian security forces have claimed they captured 30 drug smugglers in neighboring Afghanistan and released members of Iranian security forces who were held hostage, an Iranian newspaper has reported.

"Iranian forces chased the smugglers five kilometers into Afghanistan, destroyed the bandits and liberated our forces," Hamshari newspaper said.

The incident took place on the border of Sistan and Baluchistan Province, which borders both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistani sources said Afghan drug smugglers killed 20 Iranian border guards and took 80 hostages in a gun battle near the Pakistan border on January 22.
Four UN workers killed in Jalalabad

Four UN workers were killed by unidentified gunmen on February 1 east of Jalalabad.

The workers, one British, one Dutch and two Afghans, were ambushed in the Surkh Diwal area, 15 kilometers from Jalalabad. They were travelling in two cars from Pakistan to Jalalabad when they were attacked. The fifth officer, a foreign national, escaped unhurt.

The governor of Nangarhar, Haji Qadeer has arrested 17 people, most of whom are Arabs, in connection to the killing of the UN officials. Arabs have a camp in Samar Khali, close to the area. Arab volunteers had been fighting along side the Mujahideen against the communist regime. They remained in the area after the fall of the regime. The decision of Pakistan to limit the activities of Arabs in Pakistan forced some of them to move from Peshawar to Jalalabad.

Hikmatyar, whose party has a strong presence in Jalalabad, had welcomed Arabs' stay in the areas. Some of these Arabs have been fighting against the Islamic government alongside the forces of Hikmatyar.

Haji Qadeer has promised to the UN to arrest the culprits and has described the motives of the killers as political. The UN Secretary General described the incident a barbaric act. The government of Afghanistan condemned the killing and promised its cooperation in arresting the culprits.

The killing of UN workers resulted in suspension of UN activities in Jalalabad and Kandahar. The UN coordinator Stoutris Misouris said despite the sad incident the UN will not abandon the people of Afghanistan.

On December 16 two Afghan workers of a private organization were also killed in the same area.

Some days ago the Shinwari tribe confiscated 12 truck-loads of wheat belonging to the UN. The Shinwaris are opposed to distribution of government farmlands by Nangarhar Council of commanders to another tribe.

The security situation in Nangarhar Province is deteriorating. Different Mujahideen groups collect tolls from vehicles passing through the road. The money they charge on essential goods is added to the price of these goods.

The governor of Nangarhar is trying to suppress the wave of crime by putting restrictions on carrying of arms in that province, but this move is being resisted in a tribal society.

Girl leaps to death to save her honor

To save her honor, a young girl has leapt to her death.

Naheed, a fourteen year old girl, jumped from the sixth story of an apartment in Macrorayan housing complex, when a group of armed men entered the house and tried to rape her.

The criminals failed to achieve what they wanted, due to the resistance offered by the family of the girl, but the frightened girl jumped from the balcony of the apartment and died immediately.

The armed criminals escaped from the scene when the neighbors came out of their houses to see what was happening.

The next day, the body of the young girl was buried amid emotional scenes.

The security men on duty close to the scene of the crime are being criticized for their failure to react in time to save the life of the innocent girl. Some people wanted to make a political issue of this sad incident by raising anti-government slogans. Most of the inhabitants of Macrorayan are the former regime officials and have little sympathy for the Mujahideen government.

If Allah wills it

Nasruddin had saved up to buy a new shirt. He went to a tailor's shop, full of excitement. The tailor measured him and said: "Come back in a week, and if Allah wills-your shirt will be ready."

There has been a delay. But-if Allah Wills-your shirt will be ready."

The following day Nasruddin returned. "I am sorry," said the tailor, "but it is not quite finished. Try tomorrow, and-if Allah wills-it will be ready."

"How long will it take", asked the exasperated Nasruddin, "if you leave Allah out of it?"

Forgetting himself

Nasruddin called at a castle to collect for charity.

"Tell your master," he said to the doorkeeper, "that Nasruddin is here and asks for money." The man went into the building, then came out again.

"I am afraid that my master is out," he said.

"Let me give you a message for him, then," said Nasruddin.

"Even though he has not contributed he can have this advice, free. Next time he goes out he should not leave his face at the window. Someone might steal it."

Narrate Khansa bint Khidam Al-Ansari that her father gave her in marriage when she was a matron and she disliked that marriage. So she came and (complained) to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and he declared that marriage invalid.
Will politics solve the issue?

After one and half months of fighting in Kabul, both sides agreed to an unofficial ceasefire effective from February 15.

The Hal-o-Aqd Council led to a resumption of rocket attacks by Hezb Islami of Hekmatyar on Kabul. After 20 days of that the government launched an attack on Hezb positions east of Kabul to destroy the rocket launchers targeting the city.

The government won quick victories in the east but faced problems in the south. Facing not only the forces of Hezb Islami, but also involvement by Hezb Wahdat and Dostum - Hekmatyar's new allies - the government was forced to act with caution. The fighting mostly involved artillery duels between the government and the Hezb Islami - Wahdat coalition. While the government was attacking specific military targets, Hezb and Wahdat had a bigger target: the city of Kabul.

Casualties among fighters on both sides were believed heavy. The main sufferers, however, were the ordinary people of Kabul. Rockets which fell into residential areas killed hundreds and wounded thousands. Several thousand families became refugees within the city.

Mediation efforts by friendly countries and personalities had begun as soon as fighting was over. General (ret'd) Hamid Gul, Senator Qazi Hussain Ahmad and Ijazul Haq, the son of late President Zia, reached Kabul after contacting all sides in the conflict from Pakistan. Although they embarked on their peace mission as private personalities, their efforts had the support of the governments of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Hekmatyar and the Pakistani press tried to give the impression that Prof. Rabbani had asked the delegation to come to Kabul, while in fact the delegation reached Kabul after consultation with all sides.

After initial rounds of talks with the government and Hezb, they found that there was a chance for a permanent ceasefire and solving the issue through political means. The government seemed ready to give concessions to Hezb if the results of the Hal-o-Aqd council were accepted by that party.

The government had not closed the door to solving the issue through political means. While it opposed a permanent ceasefire, it favored a permanent ceasefire as a part of an overall solution.

Peace talks are usually long and complicated, and the current talks between the government and Hezb are not an exception. In order to achieve a permanent peace, the following points should be taken into account:

- An agreement should not undermine the decision of the the Hal-o-Aqd council, which elected Prof. Rabbani as the head of state for two years.
- Revival of the defunct Leadership Council, a demand by the opposition, could plunge the country into chaos and should be avoided. A government in which all the parties have a share is a practical approach. One cannot run a country with nine leaders, each with an army equipped with deadly weapons.
- Any peace agreement should be based on the realities. One cannot achieve peace if political parties have their weapons in and around the capital. Experience has shown that most of the party leaders are ready to use force to achieve their political objectives. Therefore, collection of heavy weapons from the parties should be the main condition of any deal.

The road of peace is difficult. After years of trouble in the country, no agreement can bring peace over night. Peace will come along with a sense of responsibility. The government has acted responsibly, but the opposition have acted as destabilizers. Hikmatyar and other leaders opposed to government may insist on some impractical approaches, but the government should not allow the situation slip out of control. The relative stability in Kabul should maintained, and the peace agreement should strengthen it.

President sends envoys abroad

President Rabbani sent special envoys to several countries to inform the governments of these counties about the situation in Afghanistan and the policies of the Islamic Government on major nation and international issues.

Sayyed Noorullah Emad, the secretary of Jamiat Islami and the Organizing Committee of the Hal-o-Aqd Council, delivered a message of Prof. Rabbani to Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the president of Pakistan, and held talks with other officials of that country. He apprised the leaders of Pakistan about the result of the Hal-o-Aqd Council and military-political situation in the country.

A three-member delegation, headed by Dr. Abdul Hay Elahi, visited Tehran to attend the ceremonies of the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. The delegation held talks with foreign and interior ministers and other concerned officials of the Islamic Republic.

The delegation briefed the Iranian officials about the results of Hal-o-Aqd Council and discussed the policy of the government towards opposition parties with a special reference to tension between the government and Hezb Wahdat. Wahdat has special relations with the government of Iran and is believed to be receiving funds from some circles in Iran. The delegation also raised the issue of anti-government bias of Iranian media with the Iranian officials.

A third delegation, headed by Dr. Abdur Rahman, the minister of civil aviation and tourism, visited France, Germany, Britain, Switzerland and the United States of America. He handed over the messages of the president to the heads of these countries and informed them about issue concerning convening of Hal-o-Aqd Council and the policies of the government.

The delegation also met with Afghans living in exile to inform them about the situation in the country and encourage them to participate in the reconstruction of their homeland.

The visits by special envoys proved useful in describing the position of the government to the concerned countries.
Roadblocks hurt ordinary people

Closure of roads leading to Kabul by Hezb Islami and some other commanders has caused a sharp increase in the price of food and fuel.

In response to the request by Mujahideen leaders, Hezb had earlier conditioned opening of roads to formation of a commission from the Mujahideen parties to supervise distribution of food in Kabul.

Later, Hezb announced that it will leave the roads open for the merchants to transport food to Kabul and sell it to the people in markets established in areas controlled by that party. A Hezb source said the food and fuel markets were formed at Bagrami, Maidan Shar, and Bini Hisar from where the people of Kabul can buy their food and fuel at lower prices. The source said this procedure was necessary to stop food reaching the government. Hezb has claimed that it can guarantee the safety of roads from Pakistan to Kabul through Toorkham, Jaji, and Gardiz. These claims seem to be tailored to give the impression that these routes are fully controlled by Hezb. In reality, Hezb is the only political party which creates problems for roads leading to Kabul. It worth mentioning that Hikmatyar had proposed a similar arrangement for supply of food to the people of Kabul during the rule of Najib.

The real motive behind Hezb’s decision to block the roads in face of commercial traffic is a political one. A commander of Hezb stationed in Rishkhor, south of Kabul, told the AFP reporter that the blockade was aimed to weaken the government politically.

The recent decision of Hezb to allow the food and fuel to reach Kabul has an economic motive. Each truck has to pay a large sum while passing through the territory controlled by Hezb. Some other Mujahideen of Ningarhar also take money from the drivers. The money given to Hezb and other Mujahideen along the road pushes the prices of the food and fuel higher. If they leave the road open, the prices will fall at least by 30 percent. The money collected on the road is financing the savage rocket attacks on Kabul.

The road to the north is also blocked in the face of commercial traffic in Qarabagh, about 40 kilometers north of the capital, by a Hezb commander. Keeping the roads open is a must for economic recovery of the country. The government’s failure to keep the roads open will discredit it in the eye of the people. It is an irony that the Mujahideen involved in the road blocks were not blocking the roads the same way during the Soviet occupation and the communist regime’s rule as often as they are practicing it now. At that time, some commanders were selling the donated food to the Mujahideen in markets around Kabul. One of such markets had the name of ‘Guibuddin’s Market’ because it was controlled by commanders from his party.

Iran expells Afghan refugees

Changiz Pahlawan, an Iranian scholar and expert on Afghanistan, has confirmed the reports of forcible repatriation of Afghan refugees from that country.

In an interview with BBC, he said authorities in Khurasan Province, bordering Afghanistan, detained the refugees in special centers and deported them in groups.

"The deported refugees usually have no personal papers and money," he said.

He said the number of Afghan refugees living in Khurasan were larger than other parts of Iran. The refugees work to support themselves and even, they have a market. The refugees treated the Iranians properly and they were good pec-12, he said.

He said the repatriation was not taking place in accordance with the tripartite agreement between Iran, Afghanistan and UN. The proposed twelve member commission agreed upon had not been formed yet.

Prof. Pahlawan advised the government of Iran not create problems for Afghan refugees in Iran because they were ready to return to their country voluntarily adding that the problem created by 13 years of war could not be solved within one year.

He said the refugees who were welcomed by the people of Iran during Iran-Iraq war should not be expelled by force now.

There are around two million Afghan refugees living in different parts of Iran.

A new mosque was inaugurated in premises of the headquarters of the National Security Authority on January 16.

Pahim, the Head of the National Security Authority inaugurated the mosque.

Hezb Islami of Hikmatyar has recently released 12 prisoners of the Islamic government. The prisoners were handed over to ICRC officials in Charasay, about 25 kilometers from Kabul. ICRC welcomed the move by Hezb.

In two weeks after convening of Hal-o-Aqil Council, Hezb Islami fired 210 rockets into the city of Kabul killing at least 30 people and wounding tens of others.

The rockets caused immense damages to the public and private property in the city.

A delegation of the ministry of defense, headed by the Political Chief of Army Mohammad Yunous Qanuni, has paid a visit to Ghazni province to discuss military issues with the provincial officials. The delegation was received by Qari Taj Mohammad, the governor of Ghazni. The purpose of the visit was to study ways of reactivating military organizations in that province.

Informal sources in Peshawar has said that nine Arabs have been killed and 15 were wounded in recent fighting in Kabul.

The wounded were transferred to Al-Fauzan hospital in Peshawar. These Arabs were fighting alongside the forces of Hikmatyar against the Islamic Government.

A government source in Tehran has said that Iran had sent 200 plane-loads of relief goods to Afghanistan during the current Afghan year. The goods, sent to Kabul and Mazari, were distributed by the officials of Iranian Red Crescent Society.

A helicopter of the Islamic Government crashed north of Kabul on February 1 killing more than 20 people. The helicopter was on its way from Bagram to Kabul when hit a mountain due to overloading.
Peshawar ignores Jihad victory

Habibur Rahman

Peshawar has historical ties with Afghanistan. This city once served as the winter capital of the the Kabul kings. During the years of Jehad it hosted the majority of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and it housed the headquarters of most of the Mujahidin parties.

The people of Peshawar treated the Afghan refugees in a friendly manner. Despite the hostile attitude of the National Awami Party of Wali Khan and other leftist groups, which tried to create a rift between the refugees and the local people, the people of Peshawar maintained their good relations with the refugees until the end of Jehad.

The attempts by the communist regime in Kabul to incite the people of Peshawar against the refugees by exploding bombs in public places were not successful.

Some people gave the credit for the good relationship between the people of Pakistan and Afghan refugees to the government of General Zia-ul-Haq.

It is true that the government of Pakistan was friendly with the refugees, but the refugees would have faced tremendous problems if the ordinary people were against them. The sympathy of the government alone would not have been enough to maintain harmony between the two peoples.

Islamic scholars played a positive role in bringing the two people close together. On Fridays, local ulama spoke in support of Jehad and the need for cooperation with refugees.

Despite good wishes for the Mujahidin the local people in Pakistan received little information about Jehad and the Mujahidin. Pakistan TV rarely showed the activities of the Mujahidin. The radio and TV spoke in support of the Mujahidin which was in line with the government policies, but failed to give the people the full story.

The print media of Pakistan was also divided into two groups. The press belonging to the leftist groups projected Jehad as rebellion against a progressive government. These papers did not like the ultimate objective of Jehad, which was establishment of an Islamic government. There was another reason for the opposition of these papers to Jehad, and that was Pakistan government's support to the Mujahidin. Support for the Afghans helped the government of Zia to improve its international image -- something that the rivals of Zia did not like. The papers sympathetic to Jehad published the views of political parties rather than first-hand reports about the activities of the Mujahidin. Pakistani journalists rarely travelled to Afghanistan during the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. When they started to visit Afghanistan, their visit was limited to Paktia and Nangarhar provinces.

The papers affiliated to the Islamic parties supported the Jehad but tried to favor some Mujahidin groups against others. They committed the mistake of involving themselves in the internal politics of Afghans. Papers affiliated to Jamaat Islami of Pakistan, for example, supported Hikmatyar and papers close to Jamaat' Ulama Islamii supported Mawlawi Nabi Mohammadi.

While lack of information about events in Afghanistan among the ordinary Pakistanis was understandable, there were indications that the government officials, even those who were directly involved with the issue, lacked thorough information about developments in Afghanistan. Some of this was due to the official policy favoring the Mujahidin parties to justify the policy of unjust distribution of aid. A former head of ISI had not heard about AFGHANews, which was published for seven and half years in Pakistan. This paper is very well known among circles interested in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Jehad brought prosperity to Peshawar. The city expanded and trade flourished. Presence of a large number of new cars in the streets of Peshawar was a witness to its economic prosperity. Landlords benefited from the presence of city-dweller refugees.

Creation of a large number of relief organizations, Western and Arab, and presence of several hundred foreign nationals gave Peshawar an international outlook. New restaurants, Pakistanii and foreign, enlivened the night of this border city.

Internationalization of the city brought some of the foreign problems to Peshawar too. The assassination of a prominent Arab leader, attempt on the life of supporters of Iran and fight between some Arabs and Western nationals during the Gulf War were part of these problems.

Afghan learned good things as well as bad things from living in Peshawar. They will bring these back to their country. A considerable number of Afghans studied in schools and Madarasas of Pakistan. A large number of young men memorized Holy Quran there. Afghans also began to learn foreign languages and get experience in trade. Several hundred young Afghans learned operation of computers and gained experience in administration by working in foreign relief organizations.

Unfortunately, some Afghans learned bad habits of forging passports, driving licences and college graduation certificates. Some became addicted to heroin and a small number were hired by local mafia to indulge in smuggling, kidnapping and other criminal activities.

Life in exile has its own problems. The corrupt police of Peshawar extorted money from Afghan refugees, especially those not speaking Pushtu, by different means. The landlords charged Afghans higher then local Pakistanis and officials of Commissioner for Afghan Refugees took money from poor refugees for doing their work.

Two examples show the type of problems the refugees and Mujahidin parties were facing in Peshawar:

The political office of Jamaat' Ulama published AFGHANews in Peshawar. Sending the papers through the post became a problem. The post office used to seal the postage stamps and throw away the paper bundles. We tried to buy the postage stamps in bulk, and stick them to the parcels, but were denied buying them from the central post office in Peshawar. The main trouble maker was Lal Bahadur, a Pushtun who wore a red cap announcing his affiliation to Wali Khan's party. It was not certain whether his motive was economic or political, but both factors could be involved. The issue was raised with the postmaster of Peshawar, who promised to solve the issue, but it was proved that red-capped clerk was more powerful than the postmaster. Losing hope of solving the issue, we decided to buy the postage stamps from Lahore, about 400 kilometers from Peshawar.

The second problem was the refusal of the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees to do the work of refugees affiliated to Jamaat' Ulama for several months. The problem started with the demand of a tribal merchant, Malik Nadir Khan, who claimed that some of his merchandise which was on its way from Soviet Union to Kabul lost in an attack on a convoy by a commander
from Jamiat north of Kabul, he demanded a large sum for compensation. Jamiat argued that since Afghanistan was in occupation of Soviet Union and convoy escorts were the main targets of the Mujahideen attacks, compensation could not be demanded.

The tribal merchant found a way to take the issue to President Gulam Ishaq Khan. The president of Pakistan ordered that either Jamiat should pay compensation or the responsible commander should be handed over to the Pakistani authorities. Jamiat refused to give compensation and said that it was the job of Pakistani police to arrest the person they want. To pressure Jamiat to comply with the order, Pakistani authorities stopped doing the work of members of Jamiat for several months. The ban opened the door for taking large sums of bribe by government officials. Jamiat was the only party which was penalized by the Pakistani authorities this way.

If we forget about the harsh summer of Peshawar and problems created by some corrupt officials, life was generally comfortable in Pakistan. Afghans coming from Iran and Saudi Arabia felt at home in Pakistan.

The victory of the Mujahideen delighted the people of Peshawar. They expected the return of the refugees would bring economic improvement. The day I left Peshawar with my family, our Pakistani neighbors gave us a warm send off. They were good neighbors whom we will remember a long time.

We expected that the Peshawar would remain friendly after the Mujahideen’s victory but unfortunately this did not happen.

Some political parties refused to cooperate with the Islamic government and continued their hostile activities against the government from that city. Peshawar turned into a base of anti-government activities and a center of propaganda against the Islamic Rule in Kabul. Dissident parties continued to publish their papers from the city, run news agencies and get money from their foreign supporters through banks in Peshawar. Hundreds of Arab and Pakistani volunteers used to leave Peshawar for Afghanistan to fight against the government and fire rockets on poor citizens of Kabul. While the return of refugees to Afghanistan continued, some communist elements, especially those affiliated to Khalq faction, went to Peshawar where they were lodged and helped by Hezb Islami.

Peshawar has reputation for the arbitrary arrest, kidnapping and assassination of political opponents. Hezb Islami was blamed for most of these criminal activities in the past. This party has continued its activities after the fall of the communist regime. The Pakistan police do little to stop that party from its illegal activities. According to reports by Pakistani papers and refugees returning, the city is still unsafe for the opponents of Hikmatyar.

Peshawar is still the home of dozens of relief organizations working for the welfare of Afghans. These organizations prefer to continue their activities from the comfort of Peshawar and are reluctant to move into Afghanistan. Some workers of these organizations indulge in propaganda against the Islamic Government to justify their presence in Peshawar.

Some party leaders regularly go to Peshawar without having any proper travel documents or visas to convene political meetings, form alliances, even plot coups and organize military operations against the government. From the comfort of Peshawar, these leaders give anti-government interviews to the sympathetic Pashtu services of BBC and VOA.

Peshawar is also a witness to subversive activities by some so-called Afghan intellectuals. They publish papers and magazines and hold seminars to prove that the government in Afghanistan is not legitimate and that a Loya Jirga and neutral government under the UN is the only solution to the problem. BBC and VOA provide ample time for this idle chatter. The seminars are funded by USIS, the Asia Foundation and a German organization.

The multidimensional policies of the leaders of Pakistan have given an opportunity to the opponents of the Islamic government to make use of Pakistan territory for their anti-government activities. These activities are being allowed because Peshawar had little role in developments leading to the fall of the regime.

The announcement of the government of Pakistan that it will close offices of the Afghan parties and Arab organizations working for Afghanistan by January 31, 1993 is extremely good news. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has welcomed it. It will put an end to the activities of anti-government forces in a neighboring and friendly country. The government of Pakistan is obliged by international law to stop such activities against a government which it has recognized officially.

It is said that Islamabad waited so long before announcing this right decision. Action speaks louder than words. Eyes are fixed on the government of Pakistan to see whether this decision is implemented.

Opposition still active in Peshawar

Two nationals of France and Saudi Arabia have been arrested in North Waziristan Agency while trying to enter Afghanistan without valid travel documents, The News reported.

Zikria son of Ali Mohammad, a citizen of France, and a Saudi national Mohammad Madani son of Ali, were stopped by the Pakistani officials while trying to cross over into Afghanistan.

The government of Pakistan had said it would end activities of foreign volunteers involved in Afghan Jihad by the end of January.

Several hundred Arab and Pakistani volunteers are currently fighting along the forces of Hezb Islami against the Islamic Government of Afghanistan. All of them have entered Afghanistan from Pakistan. At least nine Arabs were killed and 15 were injured in recent fighting.

According some Pakistani papers and journalists visiting Peshawar, the offices of the Afghan parties have not been closed according to the plan earlier announced by the government of Pakistan. Afghan News Agency, a mouthpiece of Hezb Islami of Hikmatyar is still operating in Peshawar. The government of Afghanistan had termed the continuation of the activities of the dissident parties in the neighboring countries as an interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. It is not clear why the government of Nawaz Sharif failed to implement its decision of ending the activities of the Afghan parties in Pakistan?

Pakistan has also postponed closure of the offices of Afghan NGOs. The decision was taken after a meeting between NGOs and the government of Pakistan.

There are 50 unregistered Afghan NGOs based in Pakistan. Some of these NGOs have little activities in Afghanistan.

The reports reaching Peshawar say that Hezb intelligence office has been allowed to resume its activities in Peshawar. Some weeks ago this organization which is notorious for the arrest and even killing of political opponents of Hezb was under pressure to move out of Pakistan. It is not clear why the organization was allowed to resume its activities.
ECO members vow to improve their communication network

The first regular meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the member states of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) ended in Quetta, Baluchistan Province of Pakistan, on February 7 after adopting the "Quetta Plan of Action".

The plan sets targets in the field of transport, communication trade and tourism but the main emphasis is laid on improvement of transport and communication links between the member states. The plan has set the year 2000 to achieve its targets.

The ECO member states expressed determination to allocate national resources and mobilize external resources, jointly and separately, to achieve the objectives of the plan. The plan proposes holding of a meeting of the transport and communication committee of the ECO within the next two months to prepare an outline for the development of projects in this sector. The plan recommends expansion of railways networks, air connections between the capitals and major cities of each ECO country and the expansion of port facilities.

In the field of telecommunications, the conference directed the committee on communication to prepare a plan before October 1993 ensuring that by the end of 1995 at least 40 telephone channels are installed between each ECO country, besides exploring the possibilities of expanding the satellite links between all ECO countries for telecommunications, television, and radio broadcasts.

For the early delivery of mail, the plan asked the transport and communications committee to improve the postal facilities ensuring delivery of mail within the ECO countries in a week's time.

Najibullah Lfraie, the minister of state for foreign affairs, led the Afghan delegation in the ECO ministerial conference.

In addition to addressing the conference, he held separate meetings with the foreign ministers attending the conference, briefing them about the current situation in Afghanistan.

Return of peace to Afghanistan is a must for the successful implementation of the Quetta Plan of Action. The foreign ministers of the ECO called for a peaceful solution of the Afghan problem.

ECO, a regional economic organization, was originally founded by Turkey, Pakistan and Iran. After the collapse of the Soviet Union it was expanded to allow the membership of Central Asian countries. Now it has ten members. Afghanistan joined ECO at the end of 1992.

UN appeals for aid to Afghans

Secretary General Boutros Ghali on January 21 issued an urgent appeal for $136.1 million to meet emergency humanitarian needs in Afghanistan.

"The severe hardships faced by large sections of the Afghan population in an environment devastated by 14 years of war must be of priority concern to the international community," Boutros-Ghali said.

The Secretary General said that during 1992, despite adverse conditions, over 1.5 million refugees returned to Afghanistan and up to 2 million are expected to follow in 1993. He said they must deal with harsh winter weather, a collapsed infrastructure, the threat of numerous land mines, and lack of adequate food, shelter and health facilities.

The appeal covers the needs of the most vulnerable sections of the population from January to September 1993 and focuses on what the United Nations calls "life-sustaining" actions that include mine clearance; providing food, water, medicines, seeds, fertilizer and insecticides; and repairing sanitation facilities and agricultural irrigation systems.

A UN spokesman said that the secretary general was placing special emphasis on Afghanistan's needs, because the UN's humanitarian aid efforts are in "real peril." The UN's 1992 appeal for Afghanistan raised only $85 million of the $180 million needed.

Undersecretary General Jan Eliasson said that "the humanitarian assistance provided by the United Nations will remain essential in 1993."

Eliasson said that the government of Afghanistan is not yet able to provide its citizens with many of the most basic necessities, and that while Kabul remains insecure, few donor governments are in a position to discuss the resumption of bilateral development aid. Positive developments in 1992, he said, were marred by the resurgence of hostilities in Kabul in August and December that destroyed vast areas of the city and forced large numbers of people to flee from their homes.

Bomb kills Mawlawi Mansoor

Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor, a deputy leader of Harakat Inqilab Islami and the governor of Paktia Province, was killed along with five other people on February 9 when a mine planted in his car exploded on the road between Gardez and Zurmat.

There is no information about the culprits but some people have been arrested in connection to the incident.

Mansoor had developed problems with Hezb Islami of Hikmatyar. His appointment as the governor of Paktia was opposed by Hezb Islami and Commander Jalaluddin Haqani. Hezb Islami kidnapped Mansoor in November but he was released after negotiation by other Mujahideen leaders. Mansoor was a target of Hezb's propaganda.

Mansoor played a key role in convening of Hal-o-Aqil Council and acted as its secretary. He was appointed a member of parliament by the council.

Mansoor was one of the few religious scholars who joined the action against the Daud regime in 1975. When Harakat was formed in 1979 from the temporary merger of Hezb and Jamiat, he joined this party. Later, he created his own faction and rejoined the party in 1992 after the fall of the Najib regime and was appointed one of the three deputies of Harakat.

Mansoor was born in 1959 in Zurmat district of Paktia and completed his studies in Ghazni Province. He became a member of a religious organization, called Khodamul Furqan, (servants of Quran) in 1967.

Prof. Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masood called his death a major loss to the Mujahideen. Memorial service was held in Kabul in which thousands of people attended.