

COMMONWEALTH UPDATE

DEREK INGRAM

The postponed CHOGM in Coolum, Australia, took place while a strong Commonwealth team was observing the last stages of a turbulent presidential election in Zimbabwe. The observers gave the election a big thumbs down and within days Zimbabwe was suspended from the Commonwealth. Earlier, the suspension of Fiji Islands had been lifted and its Prime Minister attended Coolum. Pakistan, however, remained outside 'the councils', although it had now come centre-stage internationally because of the war in Afghanistan and its strong support for the US-led war against terrorism. In Commonwealth Asia terrorists stormed the Indian parliament, Khaleda Zia returned as Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and a change of government in Sri Lanka brought new hope of peace in Sri Lanka.

AT A JAM-PACKED PRESS CONFERENCE in Marlborough House on 19 March 2002 Australian Prime Minister John Howard announced that Zimbabwe would be suspended 'from the Councils of the Commonwealth for one year with immediate effect'. Beside him sat Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa. The three made up the newly created Commonwealth Chairpersons' Committee on Zimbabwe.

This troika had been mandated by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Coolum, Australia (2–5 March 2002) 'to determine appropriate Commonwealth action on Zimbabwe in the event the Report [of the Commonwealth Observer Group] is adverse, in accordance with the Harare Commonwealth Declaration and the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme, which ranges from collective disapproval to suspension'.

The committee formed in Coolum comprised the past (Mbeki), current (Howard) and next (Obasanjo) chairperson-in-office.

The Zimbabwe elections were held on 9–11 March 2002—at the end of the week CHOGM met. The observer group of 42 observers from 26 countries and 19 staff sent to Zimbabwe by Secretary-General Don McKinnon made its

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preliminary report on 14 March.

Several African observer groups had also been on the ground and some countries from outside Africa, such as Norway, sent teams, but the European Union withdrew its observers at an early stage and the Commonwealth group was the only truly international one to watch the process.

It was well balanced. Members, serving in their personal capacity, included people from every country neighbouring Zimbabwe. It was made up in percentage terms of Africans 38, Caribbean 28, Pacific 19 and Asian 12.

The report's conclusion was unambiguous. Its verdict was 'that the conditions in Zimbabwe did not adequately allow for a free expression of will by the electors'. It cited, *inter alia*, the climate of fear and suspicion that had been created by violence and intimidation; limitations on freedom of speech, movement and association; lack of transparency in the registration process; and government's near monopoly of the broadcast media.

The observers called on the Commonwealth to help in national reconciliation, a point taken up by the troika in their statement, which said Mbeki and Obasanjo should continue this process and appoint special representatives 'to remain engaged with all the parties concerned towards this end'.

The two presidents had visited Zimbabwe on the way to the London meeting and tried to encourage President Robert Mugabe to work with the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) towards some form of government of national unity. Mugabe rejected any such idea and the troika decided on suspension.

Zimbabwe

After months of violence and intimidation and further seizures of white-owned farms, President Mugabe called the presidential election for 10–11 March. The results declared gave Mugabe 1 685 212 votes against 1 258 401 for Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the MDC. Tsvangirai commented: 'We took into consideration the possibility of fraud, but not the daylight robbery we face.'

In the weeks running up to the election violent incidents increased markedly. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum said 31 people had died in the first two months of the year, with 125 abductions, 26 disappearances and 366 cases of assault or torture.

An ironic twist in the situation concerned New Zealand-born Sir Garfield Todd, Prime Minister (1953–58) of the then Southern Rhodesia and now 93. A few weeks before the election he was deprived of his citizenship under new legislation. On polling day he turned up to vote and was refused. During the 1970s Todd was long held under house arrest for his support of the African cause. The man he had so bitterly opposed, Ian Smith, Prime Minister from 1964–78 and perpetrator of UDI to keep white rule, also turned up to vote—and was allowed to do so. Smith, now 83, was born in Zimbabwe.

In the aftermath of the agreement made in Abuja in September 2001, under which Zimbabwe agreed to end further occupation of farmlands, restore the rule of law and act against violence and intimidation, nothing changed. When Nigerian Foreign Minister Sule Lumido flew to Harare with the document for Mugabe to sign, the President was said to be out of the country.

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A few weeks later Commonwealth foreign ministers and Secretary-General Don McKinnon paid a three-day visit to Zimbabwe (25–27 October 2001). They called on the government to cooperate with farmers, delist farms which did not meet the set criteria and implement the entire process legally and constitutionally. They talked to government and MDC leaders and civil society groups. Zimbabwean Foreign Minister Stan Mudenge told the ministers that many measures had been taken to ensure that the Abuja commitments were carried out. The ministers had their doubts and asked for reports of human rights and press freedom violations to be investigated. They differed on whether the rule of law was being upheld and called on the UNDP to help Zimbabwe carry out its land reform programme.

The European Union stepped up its pressure when foreign ministers said (29 October 2001) they had seen no visible progress since they reviewed the situation four months earlier. By the end of October it was said 700 farms had been invaded and 800 violent incidents reported since the Abuja agreement. A presidential order (9 November 2001) backdated to May 2000 served notice that 85 per cent of members of the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) owning 4200 farms must vacate their properties within three months. The CFU said the order clearly violated the Abuja agreement. Meantime, inflation in October soared to 97.9 per cent and the World Food Programme estimated that half a million Zimbabweans were hungry.

Violence erupted in Bulawayo (16 November 2001) when so-called war veterans rampaged through the streets randomly attacking bystanders. The MDC regional offices were burned down. In turn, MDC supporters burned a college owned by a Mugabe ally. The incidents had started after the abduction and killing of the leader of a retired guerrilla group, Cain Nkala.

A high-powered European Union delegation of three—Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel, External Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten and Foreign Policy Chief Javier Solana—left Harare (23 November 2001) shocked after Mugabe had told them he would not consider their insistence on minimum international norms for the presidential election. A UN report had accused Zimbabwe of prolonging the war in the Congo.

Harassment of the press continued. Several members of the staff of the independent *Daily News* were arrested, charged and usually released on bail. The editor, Geoffrey Nyarota, a veteran fighter against government misdeeds, was a particular target. Commonwealth media bodies, including the Commonwealth Press Union, the Commonwealth Journalists Association and such NGOs as the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and the Commonwealth Trade Union Council made many protests. Several foreign correspondents, including BBC staff reporters, were banned from Zimbabwe. Hundreds of ZANU–PF supporters tried to enter the offices of *The Independent* newspaper and then attacked vendors selling non-government newspapers.

Moves began to introduce a raft of legislation giving the government control over news reporting in the foreign and domestic media, as well as a Public Order and Security Bill, amendments to the Electoral Act and bills reminiscent of the old Rhodesian legislation. Another Bill required Zimbabweans to renounce their right to foreign citizenship.

The new Chief Justice, Godfrey Chidyausiku, rejected (20 September 2001)

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an application from the CFU for him and two other newly appointed judges to step down from a Supreme Court constitutional hearing over farm seizures. The CFU claimed that two of the judges had been given large cattle ranches at nominal rent. Several weeks later the Court ruled (4 December 2001) that Mugabe's fast-track land seizure programme was legal.

A meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) in London (20 December 2001) decided to put Zimbabwe on its agenda, even though its remit from Millbrook did not clearly give it the power to look at countries with democratically elected governments. CMAG said the 'continued violence, occupation of property, action against the freedom and independence of the media and political intimidation' breached the principles of the Harare Declaration. Zimbabwe accused CMAG of exceeding its remit and acting illegally. Foreign Minister Stan Mudenge, who had been the first chairman of CMAG, said the Commonwealth had combined 'illegality with arrogance'.

The Herald newspaper, now the mouthpiece of ZANU-PF, accused President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa of conspiring with Britain to overthrow Mugabe (3 December 2001). Mbeki had said that 'in a situation in which people get disenfranchised, in which people get beaten up so that they don't act according to their political convictions there can't be free elections'. He told South African business leaders ZANU-PF had caused turmoil by following misguided economic policies for 20 years.

Tsvangirai, who had three times escaped violent attacks, was arrested (14 December 2001) at 4.30 am on a trivial matter of having an unregistered walkie-talkie (it was owned by his party).

Mugabe launched his election campaign with a speech to the ZANU-PF congress (15 December 2001) in Victoria Falls, in which he said: 'This is war, not a game. This is the third chimurenga [revolutionary struggle that brought ZANU-PF to power in 1980] ... when the time comes to fire the bullet, the ballot, the trajectory of the gun must be true.' When Mugabe was endorsed as ZANU-PF's presidential candidate, he said: 'We shall prove that indeed we can do without the white man in this country.'

A meeting of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Harare called for free and fair elections, but opposed sanctions and criticized international media coverage of Zimbabwe.

Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Jack Straw said (8 January 2002) Britain would recommend suspension of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth at CHOGM in March if the situation continued to deteriorate.

Zimbabwe's security forces—army, police, air force and intelligence—warned (10 January 2002) that they would not support any change that would 'reverse the gains' of the liberation struggle. The commanders put their weight behind the draconian legislation before parliament. MDC MP David Coltart said media controls planned were similar to those when Hitler seized power in Germany in 1933. Two of the controversial bills were passed by 62 votes to 49. South Africa said the defence forces' warning was 'not acceptable'. The rôle of the army was to defend the government of the day.

Mudenge headed a five-man delegation to Brussels (11 January 2002) and told the EU that 'we must tackle the question of the colonial albatross that has poisoned ties between Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom'. Britain had used

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the EU 'to gain sympathy for the white farmers'.

At a SADC meeting in Blantyre, Malawi (14 January 2002) of leaders from 14 countries Mugabe gave commitments to respect human rights and freedom of opinion and association and to investigate incidents of political violence. The meeting urged Zimbabwe to ensure political statements were not made by the military but by political leaders. President Chissano of Mozambique said he was worried at the army statements.

The first opposition to the trend of developments from within ZANU-PF came when former senior minister Eddison Zvobgo, now chairing the parliamentary legal committee, opposed the media bill barring foreign journalists from working in the country and severely restricting local journalists. He said (30 January 2002) the Bill was 'the most calculated and determined attack on our liberties guaranteed in the constitution in the 20 years I served as Cabinet minister'. Nevertheless, two days later the bill was passed.

During a visit to Zimbabwe Mugabe promised President Obasanjo of Nigeria (20 January 2002) that he would stop all election violence immediately. Obasanjo complained about the slow progress in implementing the Abuja agreement. Later the same day Obasanjo saw Tsvangirai and reported the promise.

Following a US Congress decision to impose 'smart' sanctions on Zimbabwe and strong lobbying by Britain, EU foreign ministers decided (28 January 2002) to follow suit unless it met several conditions within a week. The sanctions would ban Mugabe's inner circle or their families from travelling to Europe and freeze their assets. Britain wanted the USA and EU to coordinate their sanctions.

At another CMAG meeting in London (30 January 2002) Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Jack Straw of Britain, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer of Australia and Deputy Prime Minister Billie Miller of Barbados wanted the immediate suspension of Zimbabwe. But they could not command a majority of the eight members and the group instead simply condemned the new legislation, called for observers to be deployed, and expressed appreciation for Obasanjo's mediation efforts. They also pointed to the measures provided for by Millbrook, ranging from disapproval to suspension. CMAG kept Zimbabwe on its formal agenda, despite objections from Harare, but critics attacked the Commonwealth for weakness.

When the election campaign was at its height Tsvangirai was charged with high treason (27 February 2002) in connection with a plot to assassinate Mugabe. He was released after two hours. MDC Secretary-General Welshman Ncube and another official were also charged. The accusations arose from meetings Tsvangirai had in Canada with a consultant who had been a Mossad agent working for the Zimbabwean government. A videotaped meeting in which Mugabe's 'elimination' was discussed was shown on Australian television. Tsvangirai admitted he had met the consultant four times in Canada, but the grainy tape was strongly suspected of having been doctored.

The first supplies of UN food aid arrived in Bulawayo (23 January 2002) as the south of the country faced famine. The World Food Programme planned to deliver £42 million worth to 550 000 people. The CFU said large scale farms would produce 200 000 tons of maize in 2002—enough to feed the country for

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only six weeks. Until recently Zimbabwe had been a food exporter. The IMF removed Zimbabwe (25 September 2001) from the list of countries eligible to borrow resources under the poverty reduction and growth facility.

Sierra Leone

As 2002 opened the last of the 47 000 combatants handed in their weapons and the UN officially declared that the 10-year conflict in the country was at an end. President Tejan Kabbah, with President John Kufuor of Ghana at his side, set fire to 3000 weapons in Lungi, outside Freetown (18 January 2002).

The UN and the government agreed (16 January 2002) that a war crimes tribunal would be set up in Sierra Leone—the first such international court to be held in the country where the crimes were committed and the first where UN and local judges would sit side by side. The prosecutor would be foreign. The maximum penalty would be life imprisonment, although national law imposed hanging for murder.

Elections postponed from early 2001 because of the security situation were announced for 14 May 2002. Registration of voters began on 24 January. The situation on the ground had steadily improved. The government released 31 political prisoners, including some from the RUF, but not its leader Foday Sankoh. The UN Security Council extended the peacekeeping mandate of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) for six months from 30 September 2001. The Council also approved Resolution 1385 (19 September) banning the trade in uncut diamonds in and from Sierra Leone for 11 months from 5 January 2002.

The Gambia

Yahya Jammeh, standing as candidate for the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), won a second five-year term in presidential elections (18 October 2001) with 53 per cent of the vote. Ousainou Darboe of the United Democratic Party (UDP) received 32.7 per cent. Turnout was 89.9 per cent. The UDP boycotted legislative elections (17 January 2002) and the APRC won 45 of the 48 elected seats. Two Commonwealth Secretariat officials were present at each election 'to gain a broad overview of the environment in which the elections took place'.

Ghana

The official inquiry report (29 July 2001) into the May football disaster in which 126 people were trampled to death accused the police of indiscriminately using firearms, teargas and rubber bullets, provoking a stampede as fans tried to escape.

Mozambique

The IMF and International Development Association (IDA) said (25 September 2001) that Mozambique had taken the steps necessary to reach completion point under the enhanced framework of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)

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Initiative—the third country to reach such a point after Bolivia and Uganda.

A new political party, the Congress of United Democrats, was set up under Antonio Palanje, an MP from 1994–99. Afonso Dhlakama was re-elected Chairman of the main opposition party Renamo at its fourth congress.

Uganda

Mama FM, Africa's first ever all-female community radio station, went on the air (21 June 2001)—the brainchild of the Uganda Media Women's Association, a group started by women journalists in 1983. It was a sister station of Radio Orakel in Norway, broadcasting in English and several local languages. It aimed to give a voice to Africa's least heard people—rural and urban women, children and people with disabilities.

Kenya

Twelve people were killed and scores injured in the most serious civil conflict since the 1997 elections (4 December 2001). Thousands were left homeless. The fighting began with a dispute between landlords and tenants in Kibera, a Nairobi slum. Within hours 1000 Luo and Muslim Nubian men were fighting, looting and destroying property. The riots were seen as a consequence of advice given to the Kibera tenants by President Daniel arap Moi not to pay excessive rents. Senior minister Raila Odinga had repeated the advice.

Mayor Dick Waweru accused white residents of Nairobi of not paying £10 million in rates. Residents had not paid rates since a court ruling in 1994 banned the council from collecting them in the suburbs until it audited accounts for previous years. Rate payments are collected by resident associations and held in a special account. Waweru said the people could invade the areas and subdivide the plots. The chairman of the resident associations said Waweru was 'trying to cash in on events in Zimbabwe'. Unlike Zimbabwe, Kenya has had land reform. Its 10 000 whites own only 2–3 per cent of farms.

Moi reshuffled his cabinet (21 November 2001) and brought in two 'young Turks'—Uhuru Kenyatta (Local Government), a son of former president Kenyatta, and Cyrus Jirongo (Rural Development). He also appointed a team of British advisers to look at measures for combating corruption. They included Graham Stockwell, former head of the London Metropolitan Police and Sir Humphrey Maud, former Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General.

Congo war

A peace agreement was signed in London (6 November 2001) between Presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Paul Kagame of Rwanda to pre-empt fresh fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The talks had been chaired by International Development Secretary Clare Short and attended by Prime Minister Tony Blair. Fighting between Uganda and Rwandan troops had broken out around Kisangani several times. The leaders agreed to third-party monitoring of the agreement and inspection of rebel training camps. Short told the presidents that if their differences led to war they would lose British aid.

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British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Jack Straw and French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine paid a symbolically important joint visit to Congo (21–23 January 2002). One aim was to revive the 1999 Lusaka peace accord and end the Congo war. Another was to press Kagame to withdraw his troops from Congo. Rwanda, however, said it could not pull out until the Hutu militia were disarmed.

Straw told Congo President Joseph Kabila and Uganda President Yoweri Museveni the withdrawal was essential for peace, but a difference of emphasis developed, with the French saying Rwanda and Uganda should withdraw their troops from the Congo in tandem.

Malawi

Former minister Brown Mpinganjira was arrested (16 October 2001) and charged with treason. He was said to have been involved in a failed coup attempt in March. He was dismissed in 2000 after six years in government and formed an opposition pressure group. Mpinganjira was freed on bail when a court declared his detention unconstitutional.

Tanzania

A proposal to supply a £28 million British air traffic control system with military applications to Tanzania raised international controversy at the end of 2001. Tanzania said it needed the system to expand its trade and tourism long-term and would profit from charging for use of its air space. The World Bank, IMF and Oxfam said the system, to be supplied by British Aerospace, was primarily designed for military purposes and unsuitable for a country with a per capita income of £200 a year. Views within the British cabinet differed, with Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown and International Development Secretary Clare Short opposing the grant of an export licence by Industry Secretary Patricia Hewitt. But by this time much of the system, first ordered in 1997, had been assembled in kit form to go out to Tanzania. The licence was delayed briefly, but then given the go-ahead (21 December 2001).

In Zanzibar the national ruling party CCM and the main opposition Civic United Front (CUF) signed an agreement (10 October 2001) ending hostilities between their supporters. The Zanzibar Electoral Commission was to be reformed and a permanent voters' register established.

The International Development Association (IDA) said (27 November) that Tanzania had taken the necessary steps to reach its completion point under the enhanced framework of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative.

The country's 16th political party—the Forum for Restoration of Democracy—was registered (18 January 2002).

The government said the Hadzabe people of northern Tanzania—one of the last hunter fruit-gatherer populations of Africa had decreased from 5000 50 years ago to 1000. The tribe could be extinct within a century—a situation without precedent in Tanzania. Experts blamed lack of access to health care, denial of rights to use and own land, and state attempts to integrate them into the mainstream.

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Seychelles

Albert René, aged 65, won a five-year term as President in elections (2 September 2001) that gave him 54 per cent of the vote. He had been in power for 24 years and this was his third win since the country moved to multiparty rule. His opponent Wavel Ramkalawan, said he would reject the result, accusing the government of bribery and intimidation of voters.

Zambia

Lawyer Levy Mwanawasa, 53, of the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), became the country's third president following elections (27 December 2001) that gave him a narrow win—506 694 votes (28.69 of the total) against 427 697 (26.76 per cent) for Anderson Mazoka of the United Party for National Development. There were 11 candidates. After polling, thousands demonstrated in Lusaka, Kitwe and Ndola, alleging vote rigging. The opposition failed in an application to the High Court for postponement of the declaration of results. It was said that the MMD had stuffed ballot boxes and intimidated voters.

Mwanawasa had been vice-president in 1991–94 to Frederick Chiluba, who abandoned a bid to stand for a third term. In elections to the 159-seat National Assembly, which took place at the same time, the MMD won 69 and the UPND 49, leaving the MMD well short of a majority. Several monitoring groups said the election had not been free and fair. The European Union found 'glaring irregularities'. The head of its team talked of a 'consistently unlevelled playing field' which 'undermines the concept of a free and fair election'. The Commonwealth did not observe the poll.

In his cabinet Mwanawasa retained many of the old faces from the Chiluba government. Enoch Kavindele remained Deputy President and Vernon Mwaanga Information Minister. Chiluba stood down as MMD president, telling Mwanawasa: 'You will be your own man.' Critics said the new President was weak. His response: 'They call me a cabbage, but I will prove I am a piece of steak.'

South Africa

A report from the Medical Research Council said AIDS had become the biggest single cause of death. In 2000 40 per cent of adult deaths and 25 per cent of total deaths were AIDS-related. A letter from President Thabo Mbeki to Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang published in mid-August questioned government spending on AIDS, basing his case on 1995 mortality figures he had found on the WHO website. According to these, HIV deaths ranked only 12th. The letter provoked an outcry from opposition parties, doctors and AIDS groups. The Minister dampened the storm by saying that 'there is no way we are de-emphasising AIDS in this country'. Church leaders, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and others challenged Mbeki and called for declaration of a national emergency. Mbeki continued to reject supplying anti-retroviral drugs in public hospitals on the grounds that they did more harm

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than good.

But in the Pretoria High Court Judge Chris Botha ordered the government (14 December 2001) to begin dispensing the drugs to pregnant women immediately. The Treatment Action Campaign told the court the government was sacrificing tens of thousands of babies' lives by its 'insane' policy. The court also ordered the government to draw up a comprehensive national strategy to reduce mother-to-child transmission of HIV and present it to the court in March 2002. The government argued it did not have the resources to provide the necessary back-up, but the judge disagreed and pointed out that such a programme was in place in Western Cape where the opposition party was in control. The government appealed against the Pretoria ruling, asking the Constitutional Court whether the courts or the government had jurisdiction over health policy.

In open defiance of government policy, Premier Lionel Mtshali of Kwazulu Natal, announced (22 January 2002) that the drug Nevirapine would be made available to pregnant women in state hospitals. Kwa-Zulu Natal was the country's worst affected province. Cosatu said (29 January 2002) it was helping import cheap copies of drugs from Brazil to treat patients. It had teamed up with the Treatment Action Campaign and Médecins sans Frontières to combat the Patent Act.

The rand fell to nearly 14 to the dollar at the end of 2001—a loss of 40 per cent over the year. South African leaders pledged that the government would not change its economic policies and would push ahead with its delayed privatization programme. Mbeki set up a commission of inquiry to find out why the rand had collapsed.

South Africa sent the first contingent of a 700-strong peacekeeping force to Burundi (29 October 2001)—the largest mission it had deployed since white rule ended in 1994. The troops went at the request of Nelson Mandela, official facilitator in the talks to resolve the ethnic conflict between Hutu and Tutsi groups. The force was not under the UN flag because of lack of a ceasefire agreement, but was financed by the European Union.

The former wife of ex-president F. W. deKlerk was found dead in her Cape Town home (4 December 2001). She had been stabbed and strangled. A security guard was held. Mrs de Klerk stood by her husband as he rose in the National Party and became head of the party's women's organization. She was divorced in 1998 and de Klerk remarried. Mbeki called her 'a strong, charming and dignified woman'.

Winnie Mandela, Women's League President of the African National Congress (ANC), was arrested (15 October 2001) on 85 fraud and theft charges involving £65 000. She was given bail.

Marthinus van Schalkwyk, leader of the New National Party (NNP), which ruled South Africa in apartheid days, said (27 October 2001) his party was suspending its participation in the opposition Democratic Alliance. The party had formed the Alliance in 2000 with the Democratic Party (DP). Tony Leon became leader and van Schalkwyk his deputy. The two men fell out and NNP said it would now seek to line up with the ruling ANC. Former president F. W. deKlerk supported the plan.

The agreement had significant consequences for Western Cape. The NNP and

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DP had prevented the ANC from controlling the province, but now the ANC effectively had control.

Tony Yengeni resigned as ANC chief whip when he was arrested on corruption charges (2 October 2001) arising from a Mercedes car transaction involving Daimler-Chrysler Aerospace, which featured in a controversial arms deal.

A long-awaited report on a multi-million dollar arms deal tabled before the National Assembly (15 November 2001) cleared the government of any unlawful or improper conduct and dismissed claims of corruption involving MPs and former defence minister Joe Modise. The Pan Africanist Congress called the report 'a whitewash and a cover up'.

Modise, former commander of the ANC's armed wing and the first black defence minister, died aged 72 within days of the report's release.

Fires swept across the bush (4–5 September 2001) and through Kruger National Park and parts of Kwa-Zulu Natal, killing 32 people.

Botswana

Representatives from the world's leading diamond exporting, processing and importing states agreed in Gaborone (29 November 2001) to implement the Kimberley Process Certificate. This would ensure diamonds were checked and regulated from the mining stage to sale and processing. The aim was to end the use of rough diamonds to finance wars.

India

Zhu Rongji visited India in mid-January 2002—the first trip there by a Chinese Prime Minister for a decade. After years of antagonistic relations China was thought to be ready to be more even-handed between India and Pakistan, partly because of China's fear of Islamic terrorism. It had been thought China influenced President Pervez Musharraf to end Pakistan's sponsorship of cross-border terrorism. China and India started direct air links between Beijing and New Delhi in March.

Annual inflation dropped to its lowest in two decades. In late January 2002 it was 1.52 per cent, down from 8.8 per cent a year earlier. But industrial growth was down to 1.9 per cent against 6.8 per cent for the same month in 2000.

US Ambassador Robert Blackwill said (28 January 2002) that India stood little chance of raising its paltry level of foreign direct investment unless it speeded up its economic reform programme. US exports to India were 'flat as a chapatti'. Blackwill said a recent report showed that it would take an employee 10 working years to achieve all the approvals needed for a foreign investment project to go ahead. He added: 'Innumerable rolls of red tape stretching to the horizon are a major deterrent to investment.'

The attack followed a report from the McKinsey Global Institute presented to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (6 September 2001) that 90 per cent of India's land titles were under legal dispute and would take more than a century to resolve at their current rate of progress. This severely constrained growth.

Another US report showed that India had surpassed Japan as the second

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largest source of foreign students in the USA—second only to China. However, the British Council said (18 November 2001) that Britain was emerging as the first destination for Indian students. Visa applications from people to study in the UK had risen 40 per cent in a year.

Demands for the return by Britain of the 108-carat Koh-i-Noor diamond were made in the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of Parliament (4 December 2001). Prime mover was Kuldip Nayar, former Indian high commissioner in London. The diamond, first mentioned in the 14th century and in Mogul hands for two centuries, sits atop the crown of the Queen Mother. It was taken in 1849 from the 11-year-old Sikh ruler Maharajah Dalip Singh by Governor-General Lord Dalhousie as a gesture of submission to imperial rule.

Vajpayee defended moves by education authorities to delete ‘anti-Brahmin’ references in textbooks of Indian history. The opposition charged that education in India was being ‘talibanised’.

A decision by the patent office to give an American company, RiceTec of Texas, patents on three hybrid versions of basmati rice caused uproar. Angry MPs disrupted parliament and accused the government of selling out to foreign interests. RiceTec was allowed to claim that its brands were ‘superior to basmati’. Opponents of the move said Western corporations were using the WTO’s patent laws to exploit poor farmers in the developing world. The government said the ruling would not affect Indian exports to the USA.

Jayalalitha Jayaram was forced to stand down as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu (22 September 2001) following a New Delhi Supreme Court ruling that she had been illegally installed in May because of convictions for corruption in October 2000. But later (4 December 2001) Jayalalitha was cleared of the convictions in the High Court in Chennai.

Pakistan

Two years after the military coup that led to suspension from the Commonwealth, Pakistan found itself catapulted on to the world stage following the events of 11 September. As the war on terrorism centred on Afghanistan, diplomatic rehabilitation followed. The USA announced (23 September 2001) that it was lifting all sanctions that had been imposed on India and Pakistan when both carried out nuclear tests in 1998. Separate sanctions imposed after the coup by General Pervez Musharraf would remain. Pakistan had promised ‘full support’ in the US-led war on terrorism.

Other financial impositions were lifted—for example, default on \$379 million worth of Pakistan arrears to the USA which had led to further sanctions and restrictions on credit financing by the US Export Import Bank. The USA was to give \$1 billion aid. Later Britain wrote off £20 million debt and announced £105 million new aid funding.

Sitting in military uniform in front of a portrait of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Musharraf told the nation on TV (19 September 2001) that the USA had asked for intelligence, airspace and logistical support. Defending his support for US action, he said: ‘Pakistan is passing through its most difficult period ... You should have confidence in me.’

It was said that George Bush had phoned Musharraf and asked whether

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Pakistan was 'friend or foe'. The USA wanted, among other things, closure of the border with Afghanistan. Pakistan had been one of only three countries to recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and a Gallup poll after Musharraf's broadcast said 62 per cent were opposed to the country aligning itself with the USA.

On the eve of the US-led attacks on Afghanistan, Musharraf purged senior officers in his military and intelligence services who had helped to create and support the Taliban militia. Intelligence chief General Mahmoud Ahmad was prematurely retired and replaced by Lt Gen Ehnasul Haq. General Muhammad Yousuf took over from General Muzaffar Hussain as deputy chief of army staff. Senior corps commander Gen Mohammed Aziz Khan was moved to chair the joint staff committee. Mahmood and Aziz helped Musharraf to power in the 1999 coup. As the US-led campaign began (7 October 2001) Musharraf quietly extended indefinitely his own three-year term as army chief of staff 'in the interests of the country'.

Street fighting and demonstrations took place in several parts of Pakistan. In Karachi 20 000 demonstrated, but Musharraf kept the situation firmly under control and the protests had subsided by the end of October.

Pakistan agreed with UNHCR to reopen its border to let women, children, the elderly, sick and disabled enter the country. Fifteen new camps were set up.

Six masked gunmen on motorbikes thought to be Taliban sympathizers shot dead 15 Christians and a policeman during a Sunday service in a Roman Catholic church in Bahawalpur, Punjab (28 October 2001). The attack was seen as a reprisal for US action against Afghanistan.

Meantime, the last phase of elections to local bodies was held in 29 districts (2–4 July 2001). Nearly 785 000 candidates, including 14 000 women fought for seats. Later nationwide elections of mayors and deputy mayors were held (8 August 2001). Political parties were not allowed to compete openly, but candidates from Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) were believed to have had success in Sind province. Musharraf told the London *Times* (25 January 2002) that he planned to lead Pakistan for the next five years, steering the country to a 'fine-tuned' democracy. The threat of war with India would not hinder his plans for democratization and the elimination of Islamic extremism. A few days earlier Pakistan scrapped its discriminatory separate electoral system for religious minorities.

After the postponement of the October CHOGM meeting in Brisbane, a CMAG meeting in London (30 January 2002) accepted Musharraf's roadmap to democracy with elections in 2002 and said McKinnon should deploy observers.

Musharraf visited Iran, France, Britain and the USA (7–13 November 2001). He addressed the UN General Assembly and met Bush, who disappointed him by rejecting a request to release 28 fighter-bombers paid for but not delivered because of US sanctions imposed when Pakistan tested nuclear weapons in 1998.

The TV channel el-Jazeera said Osama bin Laden had urged Pakistanis to overthrow their government. But attempts at strikes and protests again fizzled out and Musharraf remained firmly in charge. Pakistan closed the Taliban embassy in Islamabad (22 November 2001). It was reported (12 November 2001) that Musharraf had moved his nuclear arsenal to six new secret locations.

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At the end of the year the Paris Club of creditors awarded Pakistan one of its most generous deals—restructuring of the entire stock of the country's \$12.5 billion sovereign debt. Two-thirds was rescheduled for 38 years with 15 years' grace. Maturity of the rest was extended to 23 years. Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz said the deal would save Pakistan \$3 billion in the first three years alone.

When it was thought Osama bin Laden had moved into Pakistan it was agreed that US troops could cross the border to follow al-Qaida terrorists and Taliban fighters. Later it became clear that US forces were more deeply involved inside Pakistan than had been disclosed.

India and Pakistan

In the aftermath of 11 September and the conflict in Afghanistan tensions rose over Kashmir. In an attack on the state assembly building in Srinagar 38 people died and 70 were injured. A stolen car packed with explosives rammed the gates and guerrillas rushed in. India demanded that the group responsible, Jaish-e-Mohammed based in Pakistan, should be banned, but Pakistan refused. US Secretary of State Colin Powell visited India and Pakistan in connection with the war on terrorism (15–17 October 2001), diplomatically spending less than 24 hours in each. India was now ruffled by the political and economic favours being extended to Pakistan as a reward for joining the coalition against terrorism.

Suicide bombers tried to storm parliament in New Delhi (13 December 2001) just before noon. One attacker had explosives strapped to his waist, others hurled grenades. Police fought a gun battle as MPs were herded to safety. All five attackers were killed as well as six security officials and a gardener. Four people were arrested, including two Kashmiris. The attackers drove up in a second-hand car and were dressed as security men. MPs had been about to debate a controversial anti-terrorist bill. The attack aroused strong feelings against Pakistan. No one claimed responsibility, but Pakistan-based Kashmir groups were blamed. President Musharraf of Pakistan quickly condemned the attacks.

India blamed Lashkar-e-Tayyaba militants who, together with the Jaish-e-Mohammed group, were said by the USA to be linked to al-Qaida. Pakistan froze the assets of both groups. Indian charges that Pakistan was linked to the raid were denied by Islamabad, but tension rose as India put its army in Kashmir on high alert. Indian Home Affairs Minister L. K. Advani accused Pakistan of trying to wipe out 'our leadership' and called on Pakistan to hand over the leader of Jaish-e-Mohammed.

India withdrew its High Commissioner in Islamabad—action only taken in 1965 and 1971 when the two countries went to war.

Two Indian border guards died in a clash with Pakistani forces (23 December 2001). As the rhetoric was stepped up and heavy shelling took place along the line of control (29 December 2001), Washington urged restraint on both sides. It feared Pakistan might be diverted from its efforts to search for Osama bin Laden. President George Bush intervened for the first time (30 December 2001) when he appealed personally on the phone to both leaders to avoid war.

India Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee turned down an offer by

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Musharraf to meet him at a regional conference in Nepal. India demanded Pakistan hand over 30 named terrorist suspects. At the conference (6 January 2002) the two men did shake hands when Musharraf strolled up to Vajpayee with hand extended.

All public transport between India and Pakistan was stopped. The Delhi–Lahore bus service opened only two years previously closed and on 31 December 2001 the last train service, run twice a week since 1976, ceased. Families were once more divided, as they had been at independence in 1947.

The Karachi offices of the two suspect terrorist organizations were raided and several leaders were arrested. The leader alleged to have masterminded the Delhi attack, Hafiz Mohammed Saeed, was also seized (30 December 2001). After the arrests Delhi's tone noticeably softened. When Foreign Ministers Jaswant Singh of India and Abdul Sattar of Pakistan met at the Nepal talks they shook hands.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair paid a six-day visit to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in early January 2002. By mid-month 1900 Islamic militants had been detained in Pakistan and on a visit US Secretary of State Colin Powell praised Musharraf for his crackdown. The language between India and Pakistan began to tone down.

International alarm was sounded when massive new laying of landmines took place along the India–Pakistan border, throwing into reverse the worldwide gains made when the international landmine treaty was signed in Ottawa in 1997. An area stretching 1800 miles and up to three miles deep was to be affected. Both India and Pakistan were involved in the minelaying, and farmers were evicted to create the longest fully fortified border in the world. Of an estimated 230–245 million anti-personnel mines stockpiled worldwide India was believed to have four to five million and Pakistan six million. In recent years both countries had been clearing mines in other parts of the world. The Indian army had helped in Congo, Angola, Cambodia, Somalia, Mozambique, Bosnia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

More than one million troops were now facing each other across the Kashmir borders and General S. Padmanabhan, India's most senior general, said (11 January 2002) the armed forces were 'fully prepared' for war right up to the retaliatory use of nuclear weapons.

In a one-hour speech (12 January 2002) Musharraf pledged to eradicate terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism from Pakistani society. He said five militant groups would be immediately banned. India said it would not pull back its troops until words became actions. It rejected 'entirely and categorically' any UN or foreign mediation on Kashmir.

Four gunmen on motor-bikes with AK47s fired on the American Centre in Calcutta (22 January 2002) and killed five policemen. The Indians said the attackers were 'connected to' Pakistan intelligence, which Pakistan denied. A week later police stormed a hideout and shot dead two Pakistan nationals they said had carried out the raid.

On Republic Day (25 January 2002) India test-fired a nuclear-capable short-range Agni ballistic missile from an island off Orissa. Unusually, before going ahead, it notified Pakistan as well as the permanent members of the UN Security Council. Britain said the firing sent 'the wrong signals'.

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Bangladesh

Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia swept back to power in elections (1 October 2001). Her Bangladesh National Party (BNP) won 186 seats and the defeated Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina Wajed took only 61.

At first Sheikh Hasina said she would reject the result as rigged. But foreign observers said it was free and fair. Later she said she would boycott the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) until the ruling alliance stopped repressing Awami League members. During the campaign 140 people had been killed in party feuding. Zia was sworn in on 10 October. Hasina had warned in the campaign that the BNP would force a fundamentalist agenda, but Zia said she would keep the secular constitution.

The new BNP-led government was a four-party alliance with a two-thirds majority. Two members of the coalition were hardline Islamic parties but the BNP had an overall majority. During the campaign both candidates supported the caretaker government's decision to let the USA use its airspace, ports and other facilities in the event of a military strike on Afghanistan.

Sheikh Hasina supported a half-day general strike (15 November 2001) called over the new government's plan to export natural gas to India. Protesters said the World Bank was pressuring Bangladesh to sell the gas, which the opposition argued was against the country's interests.

Two corruption charges were filed (11 December 2001) against Sheikh Hasina. She was accused of plundering £88 million of state funds while in office—charges connected to a 1998 deal to buy eight aircraft from Russia for the air force.

A. Q. M. Badruddoza Chowdhury, former foreign minister, was sworn in as President (14 November 2001). He resigned as member of the BNP.

Sri Lanka

Ranil Wickremesinghe became Prime Minister after his United National Party (UNP) and its allies won elections (5 December 2001) with 114 seats in the 225-member Parliament. For the first time in seven years the country found itself with a president from one party and a prime minister from a rival party. The UNP won 45.62 per cent of the votes and the People's Alliance 37.19 per cent. It had been the bloodiest election campaign in 53 years of democracy, with 61 people killed in clashes. European Union observers appealed in vain for an end to violence.

The ruling People's Alliance coalition (93 seats) had lost its parliamentary majority in September. President Chandrika Kumaratunga, whose term runs till 2005, entered into a formal pact with the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party, under which she agreed to suspend moves to give more autonomy to the Tamils, cut her cabinet from 44 to 20, halt privatization and write off loans to farmers. This restored the government's majority, but the deal was short-lived. Thirteen coalition MPs, including some ministers, defected to the opposition and the President had no alternative but to call an election (10 October 2001), little more than a year after the general election of October 2000.

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After the election long negotiations between President and Prime Minister led Kumaratunga to give up her portfolios for defence and finance in a cabinet of 25.

Wickremesinghe had said before the elections that he would recognize and open talks with the Tamil Tigers. His victory was seen as a vote for the Norwegian-backed peace process and an end to the war. When the cabinet was sworn in (12 December 2001) a police station and army post in eastern Sri Lanka was attacked and 16 people killed, but as the new parliament met Wickremesinghe announced a unilateral truce from Christmas Eve to clear the way for peace talks. He talked to Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee, who was said to be supporting the peace process. The Tigers called a 30-day ceasefire and then both sides extended it for another 30 days.

Tiger leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran had written to the Norwegian government asking it to revive the peace attempts and had earlier hinted that the Tigers might accept something short of independence. A senior Norwegian diplomat met a Tamil Tiger envoy in London (4 January 2002).

The new government faced a daunting task in reviving the economy, which was said to be performing worse than at any time since independence in 1946. Exports, foreign remittances, tourism earnings were all heavily down.

Malaysia

After 15 years of talks, Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia signed a pact (4 September 2001) on long-standing issues between the two countries. They included extension of Malaysia's agreement to supply water to Singapore beyond the expiry date of 2061, the rights of the Singapore airforce to use Malaysian airspace and transport links.

The popular King Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, the country's 11th head of state and Sultan of Selangor since 1960, died (21 November 2001) aged 75. The Sultan of Perlis, Malaysia's smallest state, was elected by the nine sultans (13 December 2001). He was named King Syded Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail.

Mahathir called on the nine other members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) not to join the USA in any military strike against Afghanistan (3 October 2001). He said ASEAN should take on a peacemaking rôle.

The ruling Barisan Nasional won 60 of the 62 seats in elections for the State Assembly of Sarawak (27 September 2001). The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), which rules two states in Northern Malaysia and campaigned for an Islamic state, lost all three seats it fought. In Sarawak 25 per cent of the people are Muslim.

Twelve members of the PAS were arrested (3–4 August 2001) and accused of involvement in an Afghan-trained Islamic militant group. Nine were sent to a detention centre for two years without trial. Mahathir was accused by political opponents of using the terrorist attacks in the USA to justify a crackdown.

The 2002 budget introduced (19 October 2001) by Mahathir as acting Finance Minister included a bonus and 10 per cent rise for 900 000 civil servants. Growth for 2001 was forecast at 1–2 per cent, rising to 4–5 per cent in

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2002.

In a reverse of earlier policy, the government said that all children in Malaysia would in future learn English from their first day at school. Teachers would be recruited from Britain and the USA. Mahathir had said that in a global information age dominated by English Malaysians had to give up the idea that learning English was disloyal because 'the future of our country is at stake'.

The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office rebuked Mahathir for remarks he made about homosexual ministers. He had said: 'The British people accept homosexual ministers but if they ever come here bringing their boyfriends along, we will throw them out.' His remarks were seen as referring to Ben Bradshaw, the Foreign Office minister whose portfolio includes Malaysia. Whitehall said the Foreign Secretary Jack Straw 'considers people's private lives are private'.

Singapore

In an early general election (3 November 2001) Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's People's Action Party (PAP) took 75 per cent of the valid votes and won 82 seats. The Workers Party and the newly formed Social Democratic Alliance won one seat each. It was the PAP's best result for 20 years. Although uncontested seats numbered 55, turnout was 94.62 per cent. The poll was called because the economy was moving into recession. Goh had outlined a 10-year economic blueprint called 'The New Singapore' (19 August 2001), designed to meet the challenge of China's economic power. He introduced the idea of distributing free shares to the 3.2 million citizens. Goh said this would be his last term in office. The PAP has been in power for 42 years.

Fifteen Muslims—14 Singaporeans and one Malaysian—were arrested in December accused of plotting attacks on the USA and other embassies and US facilities and companies in Singapore. Eight were said to have been trained by al-Qaida in Afghanistan. Police found bomb-making materials.

A three-day World Toilet Summit was held in Singapore in mid-November. The focus was on lavatory design, planning and conservation challenges. Twenty delegates came from China, which hosts the 2008 Olympics. Tours were organized of restrooms in Singapore, known for its fastidious cleanliness.

Hong Kong

Tung Chee-hwa was given a second five-year term as Chief Executive (24 March 2002). He was the only candidate. His election was by a committee of 796 members, many of them tycoons and business leaders. When Tung submitted his nomination form it contained 706 signatures from the committee. A recent opinion poll had shown only 16 per cent approved of Tung's performance. Martin Lee, head of the Democratic Party called the election a sham and leading legislator Emily Lau called the election process a farce.

The Court of Final Appeal ended a three-year legal battle when it ruled (10 January 2002) that 5000 Chinese who had settled in Hong Kong must return to the mainland. The Hong Kong government and Beijing had been trying for years to control the number of mainlanders settling in overcrowded Hong Kong.

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Hundreds in the streets outside the court wept over the verdict and vowed not to leave. Many had moved there to be with their parents.

Beijing's chief trade negotiator, Long Yongtu, said (28 November 2001) China was considering Hong Kong proposals to create a free trade area between the territory and the mainland. It might include Macau but not Taiwan, although China and Taiwan were about to join the WTO and Hong Kong was a member in its own right.

Fiji Islands

Following elections and the formation of a government by Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase without Indo-Fijian participation, Australia lifted the sanctions (5 October 2001) it had imposed after the coup by George Speight in 2000. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said Fiji had taken a major step back to democracy. New Zealand said it would defer lifting sanctions until the constitutional issue went before the Court of Appeal in February 2002. Foreign Minister Phil Goff said it wanted to act collectively with the Commonwealth, which had deferred a decision on whether to lift its suspension of Fiji until the court hearing. He said the constitutionality of Qarase's cabinet 'remained in question'.

Speight, who was still held in jail pending trial for treason and had won a seat in the election, made a bid in court to be allowed to take it up. The judge ruled that he must stay in jail (1 October 2001). Then the Speaker decided Speight should be dismissed from the seat.

Qarase began to criticize the Commonwealth for continuing the suspension of Fiji now that it had held an election. He wrote to Secretary-General Don McKinnon and Australian Prime Minister John Howard and took the unusual step of publishing the correspondence as a full-page advertisement in the Fiji *Sunday Post*.

Qarase warned that the longer Fiji was kept out of the Commonwealth the more the Commonwealth would lose its value and importance to Fiji. He added: 'All that the Commonwealth has shown, and particularly in the negative and intransigent attitude of CMAG, is that it is not a genuine partnership of sovereign equals like the United Nations or the European Union/ACP partnership, but more like a neo-colonial organisation which is inconsistent and hypocritical in its treatment of its members ... We are beginning to question whether there is real value in Fiji returning to the Commonwealth ...'

Qarase added that the main interest Fiji had in its membership of the Commonwealth was the fact The Queen was recognized as its Head. Fiji could maintain its deep and continuing respect for her and the British Monarchy within or without the Commonwealth.

When CMAG met in London (20 December 2001) it welcomed Fiji's progress back to democracy and lifted the suspension, although McKinnon had said a few days earlier (11 December 2001) that it would continue until the court had made its ruling on the constitutionality of the formation of the Qarase government. CMAG said that pending the ruling Fiji would stay on the CMAG agenda and the Secretary-General's special envoy, Mr Justice Langa, would remain engaged. After the CMAG decision New Zealand lifted its sanctions,

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but those imposed by the European Union stayed in place.

Police said (3 January 2002) that they had foiled a plot inspired by Speight to kidnap Qarase, the head of the armed forces and the Attorney-General. Four men were arrested.

Australia asked Fiji in October to take 1000 refugees as part of its policy to disperse asylum-seekers in various Pacific countries. A former leper colony, Makogai Island, was considered as a site. The Australian request provoked a big national debate. Strong opposition came from many quarters including the Great Council of Chiefs, the Fiji Muslim League and opposition leader Prem Singh. They said Fiji had enough ethnic and religious problems of its own without taking on Australia's responsibilities. Foreign Affairs Minister Kaliopate Tavola rejected the Australian proposal (23 November 2001).

Papua New Guinea

Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta agreed (11 October 2001) to a request from Australia to provide a holding centre for 216 refugees. Foreign Affairs Minister John Pundari criticized the policy, saying that 'Australia has the capacity and resources to deal with the problem itself'. Morauta dismissed him from the government (31 October 2001). Later Australia asked Papua New Guinea to take a further 1000 refugees. They wanted all of them to be kept for a year, not six months as originally proposed.

Australia said it would fund a detention centre costing millions of dollars, which eventually might be used by Papua New Guinea to manage its own considerable immigration problems.

A second dismissed minister, John Tekwie, announced he was forming a new political party, the Melanesian People's Party.

The UN Security Council welcomed the Bougainville Peace Agreement (20 December 2001) and called for a speedy disposal of weapons. The process had begun two weeks earlier.

Two weeks of tribal fighting in Mendi, capital of the Southern Highlands, led to 49 deaths. It was said casualties were high because traditional axes, bows and spears had been replaced by guns.

The government began to release funds for the residents of the Carteret Islands in East New Britain, where rising sea levels caused by climate change were reducing arable land and sources of fresh water

Solomon Islands

The People's Alliance Party led by Sir Allan Kemakeza won general elections (5 December 2001) with 20 seats in the 50-member national Parliament. Caretaker Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare lost 13 of the 17 seats held by his People's Progressive Party. Sogavare held his own seat and so did the man who was ousted as Prime Minister in the 2000 coup, Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, of the Solomon Islands Alliance for Change. The Alliance was a new party formed by Ulufa'alu and another former Prime Minister, Billy Hilly.

A Commonwealth Observer Group led by British MP Bowen Wells reported that, despite shortcomings, 'overall the outcome of the elections succeeded in

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expressing the will of the people’.

Kemakeza, who was knighted for his work in securing the Townsville peace agreement that ended the two-year ethnic conflict, was elected Prime Minister (17 December 2001) by MPs with 29 votes. Five months earlier Sogavare had dismissed Kemakeza, alleging he had misused public funds.

On taking over Kemakeza likened the Solomons to ‘a company in liquidation’ and set up a committee headed by the central bank governor to advise on how to return the country to solvency.

The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) meeting on 30 January 2002 praised the rôle in overseeing the peace process of the International Monitoring Team led by Australia. But the Solomons remained a troubled country and CMAG said it should continue to be on its agenda so as to promote good governance, peace and stability and economic development there.

Tuvalu

Prime Minister Faimalaga Luka lost a no-confidence motion in parliament when four members of his government joined the opposition. Former Finance Minister Koloa Talake was elected to succeed him (13 December 2001). The new government would hold power for six months until a general election took place.

Kiribati

The government agreed (23 October 2001) to an Australian request to take up to 500 asylum seekers on the almost uninhabited atoll of Kanton.

Vanuatu

The government rejected a request from Australian to take up to 500 refugees.

Sato Kilman, former minister for the Comprehensive Reform Programme, formed a new political party, the People’s Progressive Party (20 August 2001).

Former Prime Minister Barak Sope was charged with forgery (8 November 2001) following the illegal issue to a businessman of US\$423 million government guarantees (8 November 2001).

Tonga

Tevita Tupou resigned as deputy prime minister and justice minister (28 September 2001). Four days earlier an impeachment motion in the Legislative Assembly had linked him to a financial scandal. Funds of about US\$20 million from the sale of Tongan passports, mainly to Hong Kong residents, between 1983 and 1991 had disappeared. The King was in New Zealand for medical treatment and his daughter the regent appointed Police Minister Clive Edwards as the new Deputy Prime Minister. But when the King returned a month later—despite press reports that he was near death—he appointed a long-serving minister pending the return from abroad of the Prime Minister, Prince Ulukalala

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Lavaka Ata.

Following legislative amendments the OECD removed Tonga from the blacklist of countries acting as unfair tax havens or associated with money laundering (24 August 2001).

Nauru

One hundred Afghan refugees from the Australian troopship *Manoora* were landed (19 September 2001) and taken to a detention centre administered by the UN International Organisation for Migration. They had been rescued by the Norwegian freighter *Tampa* from a sinking ferry bound for Australia. Some refused to disembark and the Nauru government ordered a suspension of landings. Next day Australia gave in to Nauru's demand that observers be allowed on board to verify that the refugees were leaving the ship voluntarily. Later another batch of 262 were landed.

The 32nd Pacific Islands Forum (formerly the South Pacific Forum) was held in Nauru (14–21 August 2001). Climate change and rising sea levels were among the topics discussed. Several leaders did not attend, including Prime Ministers John Howard of Australia, Laisenia Qarase of Fiji Islands and Sir Mekere Morauta of Papua New Guinea. The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Don McKinnon, attended for the first time.

Cook Islands

Deputy Prime Minister Norman George was sacked by Prime Minister Terepai Maoate (3 August 2001). As a result the coalition between Maoate's Democratic Alliance Party and George's New Alliance Party collapsed. George claimed he had enough support in parliament to overturn the government and called for an election. Maoate appointed a new deputy and took over George's several portfolios.

Australia

In the wake of the postponement of CHOGM in Brisbane Prime Minister John Howard called a federal legislative election for 10 November. The campaign was dominated by the issue of how to handle the mainly Muslim asylum-seekers who had been turning up in large numbers in the Pacific region for some months. Howard had declared that none of the Afghan, Iraqi and Iranian boat people heading for Australia would be allowed to land there for processing.

The Prime Minister, who happened to be in the USA on 11 September, was also helped by his strong pro-American stance in the aftermath of the attacks and a decision to send 1550 military personnel to join the war against terrorism. Although lagging in the opinion polls at the outset, Howard secured a third consecutive term in office—only the sixth prime minister to do so.

The opposition Labor Party led by Kim Beazley had needed only a 0.8 per cent swing to defeat the ruling Liberal–National Party coalition party. The result produced 81 seats for the government and 65 for Labor—a slightly

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increased majority. Beazley resigned the day after the election and was succeeded by Simon Crean, a 52-year-old former union leader. Another victim of the result was the anti-immigration One Nation Party led by firebrand Pauline Hanson. It lost votes to Howard, polling only 4 per cent and winning no seats. Hanson resigned as party leader but some argued that she had successfully tilted the national debate on immigration and Howard had stolen her agenda.

In his campaign Beazley had tended towards Howard's line on immigration, to the dismay of many Labor voters. Former Labor Prime Ministers Bob Hawke and Gough Whitlam deplored the handling of the issue, but former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and other senior Liberals roundly condemned it. Fraser said: 'The destitute have been made pawns in a harsh political contest.'

Government attempts to prevent asylum-seekers landing in Australia and instead to make arrangements for them to be accommodated in several Pacific countries—Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribati and New Zealand—led to court action in Australia. A judge in the Federal Court upheld (11 September 2001) that the government had acted illegally by detaining 433 refugees in the Norwegian tanker Tampa and stopping them landing on Christmas Island. But six days later the ruling was overturned by the full bench, which said the government had the power to prevent unlawful citizens from entering Australia's territorial waters.

The reaction of Pacific countries to the Australian requests to take refugees was mixed. Some countries accepted, but other refused as their public response proved hostile. New Zealand agreed to take 150.

The Senate in Canberra pushed through strong amendments to the immigration laws (26 September 2001) with the support of the Labor Party. Howard said they were needed to stop Australia being swamped, but in the year up to July 2001 boat people arrivals totalled 4141 against 4275 the previous year.

Half a million hectares of land and 170 homes were razed in hundreds of bushfires that began to encircle Sydney on Christmas Day 2001 and persisted well into the new year. Some 15 000 emergency workers struggled to contain the inferno on a front of 1250 miles. Hot, dry, windy weather fanned the flames until rain finally doused them (8 January 2002). Koalas, possums and kangaroos in the Blue Mountains National Park took a heavy toll. Many of the fires had been started deliberately, mostly by juveniles. More than 25 people were arrested.

A plague of South American fire ants thought to have come in a container ship spread through Queensland in October 2001. The fierce ants destroy crops, livestock and wildlife and can prove environmentally disastrous.

Even the Reserve Bank was surprised when new figures (5 December 2001) showed that the Australian economy had again bucked the world trend by recording 4 per cent growth on 2001, far outperforming the USA, OECD and Eurozone.

The Queensland government handed over 354 000 hectares of land to Aborigines—the largest parcel in the state's history. It had been the site of the Lockhart River mission, set up in the 1920s and closed in the 1960s.

Indigenous leaders in Queensland asked the Queen to apologize for the way

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Aborigines were paraded as human ornaments during a visit to Australia in 1901 by the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall, later George V and Queen Mary. They also sought the return of Aboriginal remains from London's Natural History Museum before the Queen visited Australia in March.

New Zealand

Former Prime Minister Jenny Shipley resigned as leader of the opposition National Party (8 October 2001), saying she had lost the support of her party. Bill English, 39, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister in Shipley's government, was elected to succeed her without contest. Roger Sowry, former Social Services Minister, became Deputy Leader. Shipley had been under pressure to quit for months, having found she had the support of only 10 of the 39 National MPs. The challenge to her leadership was organized while she was overseas—just as had happened when she ousted her predecessor Jim Bolger.

A split in the ruling coalition developed over New Zealand involvement in Afghanistan. Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the Alliance, Jim Anderton came under pressure from leftwingers for supporting the dispatch of 40 SAS troops to join the British forces.

The government announced (4 October 2001) that it was taking a controlling interest in Air New Zealand which was reeling after the collapse of its subsidiary, Ansett. It would take 80 per cent, but Finance Minister Michael Cullen said the shareholding would be short-term. The airline was state-owned until it was sold by an earlier Labour government in 1989.

Christine Rankin, former head of the Work and Income Department, lost a million dollar claim against the government (3 August 2001). She said she had been sacked because ministers and bureaucrats disapproved of her dress sense. Ministers had to give evidence in a court case that absorbed the country for weeks. Women's support groups sprang up and thousands declared a Friday Rankin Day.

Australia and New Zealand

Australians blamed New Zealand when Australia's second airline, Ansett, collapsed in September. Ansett's owners were Air New Zealand. Airline workers blocked the plane in which Prime Minister Helen Clark was travelling from Europe when it refuelled in Melbourne. They put heavy vehicles in front of her Air New Zealand plane to stop it taking off. She was driven to a hotel while officials negotiated. Hours later she was taken to a military base and flown home in a New Zealand service jet. Australian Prime Minister John Howard telephoned to apologize.

Ansett was put into receivership (12 September 2001) because it was losing £450 000 a day.

Canada

In his first major reshuffle (15 January 2002) since 1999 Prime Minister Jean Chretien promoted Foreign Affairs Minister John Manley to Deputy Prime

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Minister in place of Herb Gray, who had retired. Manley was succeeded by William Graham, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons. Allan Rock succeeded Brian Tobin as Minister of Industry. Tobin unexpectedly retired.

Stockwell Day stepped down as leader of the opposition Canadian Alliance (12 December 2001) and was temporarily replaced by John Reynolds. Internal feuding in the Alliance had forced Day to agree to a leadership election. Twelve MPs had left the party since the 2000 election. Three had returned, but eight entered into a coalition with the Progressive Conservative Party.

Strong anti-terrorism legislation (18 December 2001) following the attacks on the USA gave the police extra powers to use electronic surveillance, and allowed preventative arrest of suspects to forestall acts of violence. A delayed budget (10 December 2001) had substantially increased spending on border security and immigration control.

Jamaica

Renewed violence in Kingston following a series of random drive-by shootouts led the government to call out army, air wing and coastguard reserves. The violence coincided with the passing of new anti-terrorism laws. Prime Minister Percival Paterson ordered (7 August 2001) a commission of inquiry into clashes in which 36 people had died. He named former Canadian judge Julius Alexander Isaac as chairman. A cabinet reshuffle (1 November 2001) aimed to revive the economy and fight rising crime.

The British High Commission said (3 January 2002) that one in 10 airline passengers from Jamaica to Britain was smuggling cocaine. UK customs officers challenged the figures, but Scotland Yard tended to agree with them. In a police operation (3 December 2001) 23 passengers on an Air Jamaica flight were charged with swallowing cocaine with a street value of £1 million.

Trinidad and Tobago

A year after winning a second five-year term Prime Minister Basdeo Panday was forced to call another election when three of his ministers broke ranks and left him with no majority. One was Ramesh Maharaj, deputy leader of the ruling United National Congress (UNC) whom Panday had dismissed (1 October 2001). Maharaj's supporters controlled the party executive. The ex-ministers accused Panday of corruption. He agreed to set up a permanent commission of inquiry (9 November 2001).

The election (10 December 2001) led to a constitutional crisis. The UNC and the opposition People's National Movement (PNM) led by Patrick Manning each won 18 seats in the 36-seat House of Representatives. The result was without precedent, two other small parties having failed to secure a seat. In 1995 both parties won 17 seats, but the National Alliance for Reconstruction had won two and helped form a coalition.

After the 2001 result President Arthur Robinson invited Manning to form a government (24 December 2001). Panday said Manning's appointment was unconstitutional and called for a new election. The crisis had a racial aspect.

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Most PNM supporters are of African origin and most UNC supporters Indian in origin. Manning formed a government, but Panday said (4 January 2002) that he would form an alternative one, with himself as chairman.

Trinidadian novelist and essayist Sir V.S. Naipaul became the first writer of Indian descent to win the Nobel Prize in literature for 88 years. The last was Rabindranath Tagore. The academy cited Naipaul for his 'incorruptible scrutiny' of post-colonial society and his critical assessments of Muslim fundamentalism.

Bahamas

Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham, who is 54, said (1 July 2001) he would retire from political life whether or not his Freedom National Movement won the election due in August 2002.

Barbados

Economist Clyde Mascoll was elected President of the opposition Democratic Labour Party (18 November 2001) in succession to David Thompson, who had resigned. He remained leader of the opposition in the House of Assembly, of which he was one of only two DLP members. Sir David Simmons, former Attorney-General, became Chief Justice (31 December 2001) in place of Sir Denys Williams, who had retired.

Belize

Hurricane Iris (8–9 October 2001) killed 22 people and destroyed 3000 houses, leaving 12 000 people homeless. Britain and Japan sent emergency aid and Bahamas gave housing units. Prime Minister Said Musa said it was the worst hurricane to hit Belize for 40 years. He launched a 10-point plan to deal with the destruction and reshuffled his cabinet (17 October 2001) to cope. A revised budget (7 December 2001) was introduced to deal with loss of tourist income as a result of the 11 September attacks on the USA.

Bermuda

Grant Gibbons, 49, was elected leader of the opposition United Bermuda Party (30 October 2001) in succession to former Prime Minister Pamela Gordon who had resigned.

Antigua and Barbuda

After a crackdown on money laundering the US Treasury lifted (21 August 2001) an April 1999 notice warning financial institutions to be cautious in dealing with people and institutions based in the country. Antigua and Barbuda had been put on the OECD list of potentially harmful tax havens.

Under a Prevention of Terrorism Act (18 October 2001) more information could be shared with foreign financial authorities. Assets of groups or indi-

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viduals suspected of having connection with terrorist activities could be frozen.

The Privy Council overturned (16 August 2001) a death sentence imposed by the Antigua courts on a citizen of the Dominican Republic.

Cayman Islands

Tourism Minister McKeeva Bush emerged as leader of the new United Democratic Party and three days later Kurt Tibbetts was removed as Leader of Government Business. The Governor, Peter Smith, has executive control of the colony and until now Caymans has had no political parties. Elections were fought by loose groups of individuals. Half the legislators lost their seats in the 2000 elections. Bush said he had moved against Tibbetts because of his lack of political leadership. Smith said the 10 members who had signed up to the party represented a majority in the legislative council, adding that they 'have apparently decided to change the political leadership'.

Dominica

Finance Minister Ambrose George was removed (27 December 2001) following the arrest in Puerto Rico on money laundering charges of an associate, Julien Girard. Prime Minister Pierre Charles took over the portfolio himself and made George Minister of Industry, Physical Planning and Enterprise Development. He said there was no 'clear and credible evidence' to connect George with Girard's alleged activities. Pierre handed his foreign affairs portfolio to Osborne Riviere. Earlier (8 October 2001), Attorney-General David Bruney resigned four months after his appointment because of differences over several of his actions, including release of a prisoner subject to US extradition.

St Lucia

Prime Minister Kenny Anthony called a general election six months early (3 December 2001). His St Lucia Labour Party won 14 seats against three for the United Workers Party (UWP) and none for the National Alliance. Two months before, leader Morella Joseph withdrew her United Workers Party from the Alliance (18 October 2001) to fight the 2002 election separately. Her move followed the election of former Prime Minister Sir John Compton as Alliance leader. Joseph did not win a seat herself and resigned as party leader. Marius Wilson, winner of one of the three UWP seats, became leader of the opposition.

St Kitts and Nevis

In elections (7 September 2001) the ruling Concerned Citizens Movement, led by Premier Vance Amory, took four of the five seats in the Nevis Island Assembly. The Nevis Reformation Party under Joseph Parry won the other.

Guyana

Officials were sent to remote areas in late 2001 to find hundreds of illegal

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foreign miners, mainly from Brazil. Foreign minister Rudy Insanally said Guyana wanted to register the miners to cut gold smuggling and raise export earnings. Guyana was suffering from low world market prices for gold. Output in 2000 reached 440 000 ounces and in the first six months of 2001 rose 9.3 per cent year on year.

Gibraltar

Spanish Prime Minister José Maria Aznar had talks in London with British Prime Minister Tony Blair (9 November 2001), at which Gibraltar was discussed. Afterwards Aznar hinted that sovereignty would be an issue when British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Jack Straw and Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Pique resumed talks in Barcelona a few days later. Later, Minister for Europe Peter Hain assured the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee: 'There is no question of simply handing over Gibraltar to Spain.' But it emerged that the government wanted to finalize a joint sovereignty arrangement with Spain by summer 2002. Any deal would be the subject of a referendum in Gibraltar.

Another round of talks between Straw and Pique took place in London (14 January 2002). Chief Minister Peter Caruana continued to boycott them and it was said that if he did not take part Britain would go ahead with a joint declaration. British MPs accused the government of trying to strike a secret deal. Caruana held long talks in London with Straw and Hain and afterwards modified his position.

He said that if there were two preconditions he would sit down with Straw and Pique. He wanted, first, assurance that any proposal on the colony's future put to the 30 000 inhabitants would be withdrawn if it was rejected in a referendum. He did not want it to be left on the table. Second, Gibraltar must have an equal voice at the talks.

Commonwealth Committee on Terrorism

Commonwealth leaders issued a statement (25 October 2001) calling for concerted and resolute action to counter terrorism. Pointing out that the Commonwealth is the largest association of democracies in the world, it said: 'Heads of Government have resolved that any member country which aids, supports, instigates, finances or harbours terrorists, or permits such activities within its jurisdiction, violates the fundamental values of our association and should have no place in it.'

A 10-strong ministerial-level Commonwealth Committee on Terrorism was set up and met in London on 29 January 2002. Those attending were the Foreign Ministers of Australia (chair), Canada, India, Malaysia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Prime Minister of Tonga, Finance Minister of Bahamas, Deputy Foreign Minister of Tanzania, and the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the UK. They endorsed a plan of action which was submitted to CHOGM in Coolum and agreed. The ministerial committee would meet annually to review progress.

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Around the Commonwealth

Officials and ex-ministers from African and other Commonwealth countries with experiences of negotiating with the IMF and World Bank gathered for a seminar in London organized by the Commonwealth, Fund and Bank (23–24 July 2001). The idea was to look at current reviews of policies related to conditionalities attached to their loans.

In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 terrorist crisis, Secretary-General Don McKinnon held talks with Bank President Jim Wolfensohn, IMF Managing Director Horst Kohler, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and members of the US government. His visit took in meetings with Caribbean prime ministers and Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada.

Nigeria gave a three-year pledge to the 2001 Commonwealth Education Conference in Halifax, Canada, to resume its place as a major contributor to the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). Receipt of the first contribution was reported by COL at the end of that year. COL, which in 1993 was one of the first organizations to launch a World Wide Web site on the Internet, announced a major revamp in December 2001. The address is still: www.col.org.