

COMMONWEALTH UPDATE

DEREK INGRAM

A clutch of Commonwealth countries was at the centre of attempts in mid-2002 to rescue Africa from strife, drought and AIDS. While South Africa mediated a Congo peace deal, it tried with the help of Nigeria, UK and Canada, to persuade the G8 summit in Kananaskis to back NEPAD, a long-term strategy for the continent. They had little immediate success. A few days later African leaders launched with a fanfare the African Union to replace the OAU, but that event, too, was unpropitious. In June the threat of war between India and Pakistan receded. Mahathir Mohamad gave a year's notice of his retirement as Prime Minister of Malaysia. Helen Clark retained power in New Zealand elections, and after weeks of election confusion Sir Michael Somare came back for the third time as Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea. Manchester silenced the critics by staging the happiest and most successful Commonwealth Games for decades.

NEPAD, the G8 and the African Union

In the first half of 2002 several Commonwealth leaders were involved in a bid to alleviate the economic plight of sub-Saharan Africa. At the forefront were Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Prime Ministers Tony Blair of UK and Jean Chretien of Canada. Central to this activity were the G8 summit in Kananaskis, Canada, and the Organisation of African Unity summit in Durban. The two meetings had been preceded by months of preparation that included Blair's visit to Africa in February, Chretien's in April, and visits by Mbeki, Blair and Obasanjo to Washington. Topping the agenda for all these encounters were growing anxiety over AIDS, the drought striking across Central Africa and the deteriorating political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. Blair had set out at the beginning of the year to make Africa a foreign policy priority, saying that the continent was 'a scar on the conscience of the world'.

Efforts to help Africa centred around the New Economic Plan for Africa's

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ISSN 0035-8533 print/1474-029X online/2002/050585-27 © 2002 *The Round Table* Ltd
DOI: 10.1080/0035853022000038326

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Development (NEPAD), a cooperative effort planned from headquarters in South Africa, under which Africa would commit itself to greater democracy and better human rights. In return the developed countries would contribute £44 billion a year in aid. Africa would adopt a 'peer mechanism' by which African leaders would adhere to acceptable standards of democracy and bring delinquent colleagues into line.

A three-day Africa summit of the World Economic Forum was held in Durban (6–9 June 2002) to fine-tune proposals to be presented to the G8.

Mbeki and Obasanjo, together with Presidents Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, presented the African case personally to the G8 leaders, who now included President Vladimir Putin of Russia. Chretien did all he could as chairman to make sure the issue was given prominence, but for Africa the outcome was disappointing and the money proffered fell far below expectations. Mbeki and Obasanjo put a brave face on it and said a start had been made, but the aid agencies were scathing. Oxfam called the aid offered—an extra £4.3 billion by 2006—'peanuts', and there was no progress on relief of the high duties African countries had long faced in Western markets. The USA actually planned to increase farming subsidies over the next ten years, with President Bush raising handouts to farmers by \$180 billion. The message at Kananaskis was that Africa had to wait for the next round of World Trade Organisation negotiations. For Washington, Africa had slipped down the agenda in favour of the Middle East.

Before Kananaskis, Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon wrote to the G8 leaders in May urging them to take the needs of developing countries seriously. He said: 'My message to them was quite simple: if you really want to help developing countries, bring down your trade barriers and give them access to your markets.' He pointed out on the eve of the summit that agricultural subsidies amounted to \$1 billion a day, seven times the level of global aid. He said: 'This is simply scandalous.'

Also before the summit Blair called the five biggest aid agencies to Downing Street and said Britain was to double its help to Africa to £1 billion by 2006. On the eve of the G8 he persuaded the USA and Japan to grant an extra £685 million in debt relief. Canada created a C\$500 million fund to support the NEPAD action plan and cancelled about C\$1 billion in African debt.

The G8 leaders agreed to set up reconciliation groups to try to solve the conflicts in Angola and the Sudan, backed an education task force to fast-track universal primary education in 11 countries and set a target of 2005 for the eradication of polio. That was about as far as it went. McKinnon voiced Africa's sense of letdown when he said that after World War Two the Marshall Plan saved Europe, but now the same level of generosity did not seem to exist for Africa. Aid announced was 'a drop in the bucket' and debt relief inadequate.

The 53-nation meeting in Durban a few days later that replaced the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) with the African Union (AU) was thrown off course by the dominant presence of President Muammar Gadhafi, who arrived with two Boeing 707s, his personal jet, two transport aircraft and 600 security personnel. Weeks earlier Mbeki had flown to Tripoli to ensure Libya would support NEPAD and not disrupt the meeting, but when Gadhafi reached Durban he said NEPAD was a continuation of imperialist designs by the West

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and called for the creation of a single African country. He said: 'Africa is for the Africans. The land is yours. You are the masters of the continent. You are marching to glory.'

The three-day meeting (8–10 July 2002) gave little consideration to AIDS, the Congo or the war or the drought. It agreed to meet in six months to discuss a single African state, yet the heads could not agree on a new secretary-general or what to do about the OAU's \$25–30 million debt. An AU declaration stipulated the holding of elections at regular intervals and promised an end to electoral bribery—part of the NEPAD programme. A Peace and Security Council was set up giving members authority to intervene in national conflicts. Plans for the AU included a parliament, a central bank, a court of justice, a peacekeeping force and a single currency.

Mbeki, who became the AU's first chairman, warned that Africa must solve its problems before expecting Western leaders to increase its aid or forgive debts—'and I do mean resolve them. Managing is not enough.' UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that it would be much harder to build the AU than it had been to build the European Union.

McKinnon was in Durban and during the meeting Obasanjo tried to persuade President Robert Mugabe to talk to him about the Commonwealth deadlock over Zimbabwe, but Mugabe refused to do so.

Gadafy, who had been given a seat in Durban on the select committee in charge of implementing NEPAD, went on from Durban to tour Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. In Malawi he took a five-hour drive and scattered banknotes to bystanders along the route.

Zimbabwe

President Mugabe ordered 2900 white farmers to stop work from midnight 24 June 2002. Under the law they were allowed to stay in their homesteads for 45 days and could face arrest and two years jail if they set foot on their lands. The move came at a time when the country was facing its worst food shortage for 60 years. Many farmers said they would ignore the order and some officials and even ministers were privately pleading with the farms to carry on as normal. Human rights groups said 100 000 farmworkers could become homeless. The Commercial Farmers Union said: 'This is insanity. Ranchers have got to water their cattle. They can't just leave them.' Two farmers took the government to court in a test case and 15 were charged (4 July 2002) with defying the government ban.

Former prime minister Ian Smith, now 83, said he would defy the government. 'I'm going down to my farm and we will be producing food flat out. Very often if you stand up to people they back down.' The European Union allocated £3.9 million famine aid, but said Mugabe's policies were aggravating the food crisis. The move came only a week before the G8 summit discussed NEPAD.

Mugabe continued to travel abroad despite sanctions. This riled the European Union and led to an extension of sanctions to cover his entire circle of politicians and party officials—a total of 72. Some member countries wanted to delay, but Britain won the day with the support of Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. Mugabe's wife Grace was to have her assets frozen, and 52 other

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people were banned from travel to EU states. Washington also extended its restrictions on travel to the USA. Among those banned was the Chief Justice, Godfrey Chidyausiku

Joshua Malinga, Deputy Secretary for the Disabled and Disadvantaged and former mayor of Bulawayo, was detained at Gatwick (26 July 2002) en route to New York for a conference on the disabled. Himself disabled, he was one of 72 members of the Mugabe government banned from entering EU countries and was sent back to Zimbabwe.

Mugabe, who had travelled to Rome and New York for UN meetings, now went to Cuba (16 July 2002) to see President Fidel Castro. Financial help from him was hardly likely, but Castro was said to have promised to send doctors to replace those who had left Zimbabwe. After Cuba Mugabe flew to Kuala Lumpur in August, where he was welcomed by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

When Mugabe opened Parliament (23 July 2002) he said his land redistribution programme had been 'an unparalleled success story'. He added: 'We reject any attempt to use the present drought relief effort to smuggle in failed and inappropriate IMF policies ... as neo-colonial manipulation under the guise of globalisation.' The country's problems had been caused by 'continual British machinations'. A few minutes after Mugabe began speaking, MPs of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, which holds 57 seats, walked out of the chamber.

Only days earlier the UN had launched an appeal to raise £180 million to avert a drought disaster in central Africa. It said seizure of white-owned land in Zimbabwe was 'a leading cause of the present crisis' and called for restoration of the rule of law in rural areas.

Finance Minister Simba Makoni said the government was 'committed to and striving to ensure that no citizen dies of starvation'. He estimated 7.8 million people would need food help before May 2003.

Relations with Britain took a turn for the worse when Zimbabwe put British High Commissioner Brian Donnelly under surveillance, charging that he was coordinating efforts to overthrow Mugabe, which Britain firmly denied.

Judge Fergus Blackie sentenced Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa to three months jail for contempt of court relating to criticisms of a court verdict governing the illegal possession of weapons by UN citizens in Zimbabwe three years earlier. Chinamasa persistently failed to turn up to answer the charges and the judge ordered his arrest. The ruling angered the government. Blackie resigned (27 June 2002)—the sixth judge to do so after delivering a ruling the government disliked. At 64, he would retire five years early, leaving only one white member of the judiciary.

Learnmore Jongwe, spokesman for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change and an MP, was charged (21 July 2002) after admitting stabbing his wife to death. The government seized on the incident to back claims that the opposition sponsored political violence.

Andrew Meldrum, *Guardian* correspondent in Zimbabwe, was acquitted of charges of abusing journalistic privilege and publishing falsehoods (15 July 2002). Four minutes later an immigration officer handed him papers from Home Affairs Minister John Nkomo ordering his deportation within 24 hours,

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After much legal confusion he was given another 24 hours and then the High Court rejected the deportation move. Justice Anele Matrika asked the Supreme Court whether Nkomo's action was constitutional considering Meldrum, an American citizen, had permanent residence status in Zimbabwe and had lived there for 22 years. The Supreme Court ruling was expected to take a year and Meldrum was free to stay in Zimbabwe until then.

Meldrum was the first of 14 journalists on charges under the Information Protection of Privacy Act and other new laws. One requirement now was for all media organizations and journalists to pay a fee to be registered and accredited. When *Daily News* editor Geoffrey Nyarota and reporter Lloyd Mujdiwa went on trial they requested that the media laws be declared unconstitutional.

Zambia

After only six months in office President Levy Mwanawasa stepped up his drive against corruption, turning on many members of his own ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). He said: 'It does not mean that because the MMD asked me to be the presidential candidate then I must continue with the evils they have been doing.'

His clean-up took a big step forward when Parliament agreed (14 July 2002) to lift the immunity against prosecution of former president Frederick Chiluba. The 140 MPs present voted for the move unanimously. It cleared the way for an inquiry into Chiluba's financial affairs by the Anti-Corruption Commission. But the High Court granted Chiluba an injunction stopping government prosecution until it decided whether lifting immunity was legal. Chiluba accused Mwanawasa of acting as 'prosecutor, judge and jury'.

In other moves Atan Shansonga, ambassador to the USA, was arrested (13 July 2002), accused of receiving £600 000 through a British bank account and the head of intelligence faced charges of stealing a large sum from the state. Shansonga was given bail and had his passport taken away. Access Financial Service Director Faustin Kabwe faced charges involving a large sum of public funds. Numerous other individuals were accused of corruption.

Mwanawasa said he was forced to clear up a 'mess' in the defence force left by Chiluba. He sacked four heads of defence and appointed a new Inspector General of Police. Foreign Minister Katele Lalumbe resigned when it was found that he had received payment from Chiluba, and Mwanawasa forced out Chief Justice Ngulube because he too had accepted money from the ex-president.

Opposition MP Dipak Patel, who fought for years for transparency and democracy in Zambia, Fred M'membe, editor of the independent *Post* newspaper and two others were acquitted of calling Chiluba a thief.

The UN said more than 400 000 Angolan refugees were to be repatriated from southern African countries at the end of the year following the end of the civil war—large numbers from Zambia. Other good news for landlocked Zambia was that Angola planned to rebuild the Benguela railway which once ran across southern Africa from Lobito on the Atlantic coast to Beira on the Indian Ocean, taking copper and cobalt from Zambia. Building of the highly profitable railway started in 1902 and was completed in 1928. In the Angolan

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war large stretches were destroyed.

Customs officers in Singapore seized six tonnes of ivory—equal to the tusks of 600 elephants—bound for Japan from Zambia. Several arrests were made, including that of a British citizen from Hong Kong.

South Africa

Following the cabinet's reversal of policy on anti-retroviral drugs in April 2002, the Constitutional Court, the country's highest, ordered the government to make the AIDS drug Nevirapine available immediately and free of charge to pregnant women who are HIV-positive. It denied the government leave to appeal. Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson said the government's policy had been 'unreasonable' and infringed the constitutional rights of its citizens. The chairman of the activist group Treatment Action Campaign was elated, but said: 'There is an element of sadness, too, because we had to fight government for five years and it was a totally unnecessary battle.'

At the close of the international AIDS conference in Barcelona (12 July 2002) Nelson Mandela challenged political and business leaders to get life-saving drugs to the 40 million people infected with HIV 'wherever they might be' and 'regardless of whether they can afford to pay or not'. In an impassioned speech he told how he and his wife Gracia Machel had personally helped a brilliant woman whose doctor said he could do nothing for. They had given her money for drugs and food and now she had recovered.

Two weeks after the conference Mandela visited Zachie Achmat, the seriously ill leader of the Treatment Action Campaign, who was refusing to save his own life until President Thabo Mbeki made anti-retroviral drugs widely available to the poor. Mandela hugged him as a 'role model' and said he had 'a case to take to the President to acquaint him with his position'.

The conference was told South Africa and neighbouring Botswana, Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland would have negative growth by 2010. In Botswana, the worst-hit country, a baby born that year would die on average before his or her 27th birthday.

A group of apartheid victims began a series of legal actions against Swiss banks for supporting South Africa's white government. In the first a \$51 billion lawsuit was launched in Manhattan (17 June 2002) against Crédit Suisse and UBS. The case, expected to last several years and involve scores of banks, was lodged by the lawyer who won \$1.25 million compensation for Holocaust survivors. A barrage of lawsuits was expected to follow against British, American, German and French companies accused of profiting from the apartheid regime during the 1985–1993 UN trade embargo. In another legal action, in Cape Town, a victims' support group sued the government and Archbishop Desmond Tutu for compensation for thousands who suffered under apartheid. The group charged that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, chaired by Tutu, granted amnesty to 1100 people while their victims received nothing.

Despite the mining industry's opposition, Parliament approved (25 June 2002) by 243 votes to 35 a controversial law returning all mineral rights to the state. The government dismissed investors' worries about security of tenure.

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The bill aimed to attract new participants into the industry and so redress past injustices that left the country's mineral riches in the hands of a few white-owned companies.

Sixteen men on Robben Island locked themselves up and went on hunger strike for 24 hours (11 July 2002) in protest at the way the museum of the prison where Mandela spent 18 years was being run. The director resigned and their action ended.

In July the Communist Party voted off its central committee two of Mbeki's Cabinet ministers—Essop Pahad and Jeff Radabe. Mbeki had angered delegates by backing out of addressing the party conference because of sharp differences over economic policy between the Communist Party and its ally, the African National Congress.

Opposition parties denounced Mbeki for taking delivery in August of a £40 million business jet. The government argued that the plane could fly non-stop to Europe and Asia, save refuelling in Africa and reduce security risks. There were also protocol problems—wherever the President stops protocol dictates that the president of the country visited must receive him, even if it is 3 am.

Winnie Mandela, president of the African National Congress women's league, appeared in a Pretoria court (9 July 2002) to plead not guilty to 85 fraud and theft charges relating to an £85 000 banking scam. The trial was suspended (29 July) until October.

Hansie Cronje, who captained South Africa in 53 cricket Tests and was disgraced for taking bribes to fix matches, was killed in a cargo plane that crashed outside George, Western Cape (1 June 2002). He was working for a machinery company and was 32.

Lesotho

A general election was held (25 May 2002) under a system never tried before in Africa that mixed simple majority and proportional representation. The idea was to ensure majority rule by the victorious party while guaranteeing a voice in the national assembly for minority parties. In 1998 the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) won 79 of the 80 seats with 60 per cent of the vote, leaving the opposition Basotho National Party (BNP) with only one seat for 24 per cent of the vote. Unrest led to the South African military intervention, 100 deaths and huge damage to property. This time the LCD, led by Prime Minister Bethuel Mosisili, again won all but one seat. But under the proportional allocation in a House now of 120 seats it received 77, the BNP 21 and 20 went to other small parties. Two remained vacant because of the candidates' deaths. Turnout was more than 70 per cent. The BNP was led by former military ruler Justin Lekhanya.

A Commonwealth Observer Group led by Sir James Mitchell, former prime minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines, said that despite some administrative and logistical problems the result was a 'true expression of the will of the people'. A group from the Southern African Development Community led by the Foreign Minister of Mozambique reached a similar conclusion, finding polling free, fair and peaceful. An EU mission also declared approval.

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Congo war

Under the watchful eyes of President Thabo Mbeki, Presidents Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo signed a South Africa-brokered peace deal in Pretoria (30 July 2002) that was expected to end the four-year civil war. Rwandan troops, put at 20 000, would be withdrawn from eastern Congo and the *interahamwe* militia, hostile to Rwanda and based within the Congo, would be disarmed. The two countries were given 90 days to fulfil their obligations. An array of diplomats from the UN and many African countries applauded the signing as Mbeki said: 'This is a bright day for the African continent.' Those present included Clare Short, Britain's Overseas Development Secretary. Crucial to the deal was the disarming of the 30 000–50 000 *interahamwe* who fled to Congo after killing a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus in the 1994 genocide. The deal did not include withdrawal of the Zimbabwean troops still in the Congo.

Mozambique

The government agreed to let at least 13 white Zimbabwean commercial farmers settle in Manica province. Each would be given 2400 acres of land under a law banning land ownership but allowing 50-year leases.

Two hundred people were killed in the country's worst train disaster (25 May 2002). It happened when a passenger train and a freight train collided at Moamba on the main line linking Maputo with Johannesburg.

Kenya

The expected retirement of President Daniel arap Moi at the end of 2002 began to dominate the political scene. Three key politicians put up their names (29 July 2002) to take over—Transport minister Musalia Mudavani, Lands Minister Natana Ngala and one-time opposition leader Raila Odinga who had joined the ruling KANU Party in March. Moi said (28 July 2002) he favoured Uhuru Kenyatta, a son of independence leader Jomo Kenyatta. He added: 'I have chosen Uhuru to take over leadership when I leave. I have seen that he is a person who can be guided.'

Six opposition parties launched the National Alliance Party of Kenya and pledged to rally behind one figure. Earlier (28 June 2002) Moi had called on parliament to postpone the election because constitutional reforms would not be ready in time. Professor Yash Ghai, the man delivering the new constitution, said this was not true. A constitution could be in place by the first week of December 'in ample time for the election'.

MPs working out a retirement package for Moi proposed seven chauffeured cars, 34 staff, a 12-bedroom house and a pension worth 80 per cent of his salary.

The British Ministry of Defence agreed (19 July 2002) to pay £4.5 million compensation to 228 Kenyans bereaved or injured by British army explosives left lying around after exercises on their herding grounds at Archers Post and Dol Dol, in the north. It was the first time the ministry had accepted liability for

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the deaths and injuries, which had occurred 20 years earlier. Two victims and four community leaders flew into London for the mediation talks. Almost all the accidents happened when children picked up unexploded weapons. Legal action had been started a year earlier. The victims fought a Ministry application to have the case transferred to Kenya.

Tanzania

International Development Secretary Clare Short flew to Dar es Salaam for talks to sort out a growing rift in Britain–Tanzania relations caused by the controversial sale of a £28 million British air traffic control system. President Ben Mkapa assured her that no more British aid money would be spent on such projects. As a result Short unblocked £10 million she had frozen and signed a memorandum of understanding giving Tanzania £45 million aid a year for six years.

The sale had divided the British cabinet over many weeks, with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Trade Secretary Patricia Hewitt and Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon supporting the deal made with British Aerospace. World Bank aviation experts, however, said the system was outdated technology and not adequate for the country's needs, giving Short the edge on the argument.

New controversy arose with reports that the government had ordered a jet plane for the use of the President. The World Bank asked why it not been consulted as required for all major expenditure under structural adjustment. The government said the plane would cost under £7 million and no decision had yet been taken (22 July 2002), but Finance minister Basil Mramba said: 'The fact that we have been forgiven our debts does not mean that our president has to use the donkey.' Short defended the purchase saying that the matter had been openly disclosed in the Tanzanian parliament, that the Fokker currently used by the President was 24 years old, and that the Tanzania roads 'are hopeless'.

A packed train rolled back into an oncoming freight train at Igandu, 30 miles from Dodoma (24 June 2002), killing 200 people and injuring 800. All but one of the 125 carriages were derailed. The government declared two days of national mourning.

Seychelles

President Albert Rene, who seized power in 1977, won another term of office in elections (31 August–2 September 2002). He defeated his main challenger Wavel Ramkalawan, whose Seychelles National Party (SNP) took 44.95 per cent of the vote against 54.19 per cent for Rene's Seychelles People's Progressive Front. The SNP alleged election fraud and Ramkalawan boycotted the opening of the new Assembly.

Mauritius

Islanders evicted by Britain from the Chagos islands between 1965 and 1973 began an indefinite protest outside the British High Commission in Port Louis. They said it would go on until they were allowed back to their homes. They had

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been prevented from returning despite a High Court ruling in November 2000 that they had a right to go back. The Ilois, as they are known, were removed to make way for the US military base in Diego Garcia. Today 4500 islanders and their descendants live in Mauritius. They say British promises to charter a ship and to provide cash payments have still not been kept.

Malawi

A Red Cross report in June 2002 said Malawi was the world's most disaster-prone country. Nearly one-sixth of its population, it said, was affected by natural disasters every year, particularly drought.

Mid-2002 was proving the point. Unprecedented floods had been followed by two years of drought. Field after field of parched maize was withering on bone-dry stalks. In April the World Food Programme said 200 000 Malawians would need food aid to see them through to the next year's harvest. In July that figure had risen to three million as widespread famine spread across the whole region of Africa, affecting 15 million in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland.

After a budget review the IMF announced (14 May 2002) that it was delaying \$47 million in aid until the government cut overspending and implemented a new budget. Malawian ministers, the Save the Children Fund and several other Western aid agencies said the IMF and other donors had pushed Malawi into selling off its maize reserves to save money on storage and repay foreign debts at the moment the harvest failed in 2000. The IMF said it had merely advised the government to reduce its grain reserve.

Britain said it planned to spend £35 million over five years to help strengthen Malawi's ailing civil institutions—to overhaul the antiquated criminal justice system, strengthen the rule of law, and boost confidence in the police, courts and prison system. Although it was ten years since Banda's rule ended the legacy of his 30 years has not been overcome.

Uganda

A controversial World Bank-backed project to build a dam at Wujagali on the Nile hit delays when corruption inquiries involving a former minister were followed by a report from an inspection panel in June 2002 that the dam risked environmental damage. Building had been scheduled to start early in the year.

A fuel lorry and a bus collided and burst into flames at Lutoto, 180 miles from Kampala, killing 60 people, including ten foreign tourists (8 July 2002).

Cameroon

In elections (30 June 2002) the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement gained control of 280 municipalities and 150 of the 180 seats in parliament. The main opposition Social Democratic Front fared badly. Allegations of intimidation and stuffed ballot boxes—a feature of all Cameroon elections—led to a boycott of parliament and councils by the SDF and a call from church and opposition leaders for the polls to be annulled, but after a few days the boycott

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was called off. A Commonwealth expert team led by Khotso Khasu, a provincial electoral officer from South Africa and including a UK council leader and Secretariat officials, was sent to report on the arrangements for the elections.

Sierra Leone

A week after his election victory Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was sworn in for a second term as President, with Solomon Brewa, former Attorney General, as Vice-President (20 May 2002). In his inaugural speech Kabbah pledged to work 'to ensure that within the next five years no Sierra Leonean should go to bed hungry'. He told a press conference he would avoid making extravagant promises.

Nigeria

President Olusegun Obasanjo postponed local elections (3 August 2002) due to take place on 10 August and originally scheduled for April because officials were unprepared and voters' lists incomplete. The governors of the 36 states agreed by consensus that the date was not realistic. Obasanjo had announced at a meeting of his ruling People's Democratic Party (25 April 2002) that he would stand for a second term as president in 2003.

Gani Fawehinmi, leader of the National Conscience Party, and 20 other parties, were refused registration for the elections by the National Electoral Commission, which required new parties to have an extensive campaigning network in place. By June only six parties had been registered and fears were growing that the election would become a battle between former military rulers. Generals Babangida and Muhammadu Buhari were likely candidates. Fawehinmi and the other barred parties took the decision to the courts.

The public accounts committee had reported in June that government spending had breached constitutional rules and contributed to a 'virtual slide into financial anarchy'. It instanced such spending as a grant to the government of Niger in 1999 and a discrepancy between £230 million officially recovered from the family of former dictator Sani Abacha and a lesser amount recorded in the budget as revenue.

The World Bank decided in July 2002 that it would halve its lending capacity for Nigeria. It was worried about the public spending programme in the run-up to the 2003 elections and the deadlock between President Olusegun Obasanjo and parliament over the annual budget. It said: 'The budget has been endlessly debated. It doesn't look as if it's going to solve the problems of overspending.' The President's financial adviser denied there was evidence of rising spending.

Caribbean Union

A proposal for a political union of the Commonwealth states in the Leeward and Windward islands was being studied by the prime ministers of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St Kitts–Nevis, St Lucia and St Vincent (combined population 450 000). The group already has a common currency,

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common aviation and telecommunications authorities, and shares an appeal court. St Vincent Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves said he saw a basis for a confederation like the European Union. Such a body could solve problems of representation at WTO and other forums which individual islands cannot manage.

Trinidad and Tobago

The political situation remained deadlocked in the wake of the 10 December 2001 election when the two main parties tied 18–18. The result had shown that people were still voting along ethnic lines.

The ruling People's National Movement (PNM) is supported mainly by Afro-Trinidadians, while the opposition United National Congress (UNC) draws most support from descendants of immigrants from South Asia. About 41 per cent of the 1.3 million people are Indian and 40 per cent African.

After the election President Arthur Robinson named Patrick Manning, leader of the PNM, as prime minister. UNC leader Basdeo Panday refused to accept the appointment, arguing that as the incumbent prime minister he should have been declared the winner of the election. The UNC said it would end the parliamentary deadlock only if Manning appointed an equal number of UNC and PNM ministers to the cabinet or called a new election.

Meantime, Robinson's term as president expired on 18 March and Manning had still not convened parliament because he did not think he could command a working majority. On 26 March 2002 Manning approved an extension of the President's term on the grounds that parliament would not be able to elect a successor in accordance with the constitution. Parliament was finally convened on 5 April 2002—nearly four months after the election. But now the House of Representatives (lower chamber) failed to elect a Speaker, who holds a casting vote in parliamentary proceedings. Ten candidates stood, but MPs from the opposition UNC and the ruling PNM always voted on party lines. So two days later Robinson prorogued parliament on Manning's advice. Manning said new elections would be held, but set no date.

During this parliamentary hiatus Manning began changing the boards of state-owned companies and replacing people employed by the previous Panday government. Opposition MP Ganga Singh accused the government of 'ethnic cleansing'. The political stalemate was beginning to affect the strong economy. Businessmen said that without a functioning parliament to approve agreements they could not commit to projects.

Bahamas

Perry Christie became Prime Minister when his opposition Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) was unexpectedly swept to power in elections to the 40-seat House of Assembly (2 May 2002) The PLP won 29 seats with 50.8 per cent of the vote. The Free National Movement (FNM) led by banker Tommy Turnquest won only seven seats. Turnout was 82.4 per cent. The FNM had been in power for two terms under Hubert Ingraham, who had retired as prime minister.

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Bermuda

Sir John Vereker, former permanent secretary to the Department of International Development in London, was sworn in as Governor (11 April 2002) in succession to Thorold Masefield. At the centre of his concerns on taking over was the island's role as an offshore financial centre. Of the 13 000 international companies registered there, only 400 have a physical presence. Vereker said Bermuda must 'be seen to be squeaky clean on complying with best international practice'. In 2000 it had avoided inclusion in the OECD blacklist of harmful tax havens. Now Bermuda's links to Enron, Global Crossing and Tyco were raising eyebrows in a Manhattan engulfed by financial scandals. When the chief executive of Tyco was accused of £8.9 million tax evasion it was said that the company had a nominal HQ in Bermuda to avoid US tax.

Cayman Islands

Bruce Dinwiddy became Governor (29 May 2002) in succession to Peter Smith, who had held the post since May 1999.

Guyana

A prison breakout in February 2002 signalled a renewed crime wave which police blamed on the escapees. Five police and several other people were killed in the following weeks. One escapee appeared on TV screens armed with a submachine-gun and warned that if the problems of black Guyanese were not addressed the unrest would not end. A videotape had been delivered anonymously. Racial tension was behind the crime wave. At the start of the Caribbean Community summit in Georgetown (3 July 2002) police shot dead two people in an anti-government protest near the office of President Bharrat Jagdeo. Opposition leader and former president Desmond Hoyte blamed the government for a collapse of law and order. Indo-Guyanese (47 per cent of the population) claimed the violence was aimed at them and perpetrated by Afro-Guyanese (39 per cent).

Papua New Guinea

Sir Michael Somare, the first prime minister after independence in 1975, was elected Prime Minister (5 August 2002) after weeks of uncertainty following a general election that began on 15 June 2002. Voting continued into mid-July, with a record 2875 candidates standing for the 109 seats. More than 25 deaths, stolen ballot boxes, multiple voting and incomplete electoral rolls marred the poll, the seventh since independence in 1975. At each election about 80 per cent of the 109 sitting MPs have lost their seat. This time the army was called out to quell the violence.

For Somare, aged 66, this was his third term in office. His National Alliance won only 19 of the 109 seats, but eventually he won the backing of 70 MPs in an informal seven-party coalition.

Outgoing prime minister Sir Mekere Morauta had held office for three years

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and became popular with the international community for his efforts to fight corruption and reform the economy. When seven opposition parties formed a coalition (19 July 2002) that included former prime ministers Sir Michael Somare, Sir Julius Chan and Bill Skate, it began to look as if Morauta was losing out. Since independence no government has served a full five-year term.

Solomon Islands

The country was beset by financial problems in the first half of 2002. Less than a week after Finance Minister Michael Maina announced a 25 per cent devaluation in the value of the Solomon Islands dollar, Prime Minister Sir Allan Kemakeza dismissed him (1 April 2002). It emerged that Maina had not consulted the cabinet on the move. Laurie Hok Si Chan succeeded Maina and reversed the devaluation.

The World Bank and Asian Development Bank said aid programmes were suspended until Solomons cleared its debt arrears (5 April 2002) and the EU said it would release aid arranged in 2001 only when the Solomon Islands Development Bank fulfilled agreed conditions. Then the High Court ordered the government to pay US\$8 million to three commercial banks in compensation for treasury bonds it had defaulted on in 1999.

By August the economic situation had worsened. Foreign reserves were almost gone, public servants had not been paid for months, most primary schools had closed, and a government reshuffle had failed because two ministers refused to resign.

Kemakeza set a 31 May deadline for handing in illegally held guns under the amnesty that was part of the 2001 peace deal ending the ethnic conflict.

Vanuatu

In elections (2 May 2002) Prime Minister Edward Natapei's Vanua'aku Party won 14 seats in the 52-seat National Assembly and its ruling coalition partner, the Union of Moderate Parties, led by Serge Vohor, 15 seats. The result was much delayed by bad weather, recounts and other problems. After talks between the leading parties it was agreed (28 May 2002) Natapei would continue in power. Former prime minister Barak Sope, whose party won only two seats, accused the election commission of fraud in one recount and said he would challenge five results.

Kiribati

A Newspaper Registration Amendment Bill before Parliament in May 2002 would give the state power to strike off and close newspapers. The country's only independent paper, *The Kiribati Newstar*, was launched by former president Ieremia Tabai in 2000. Tabai had been frustrated in his efforts to start a radio station. Now Parliament threatened to stop the printing of anything that could lead to disorder.

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Nauru

After 529 Australia-bound asylum seekers had been processed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, only seven of 292 Afghan claimants gained refugee status because of the change in the situation at home following the fall of the Taliban government. Out of 201 Iraqis, 126 were given refugee status. The UNHCR was seeking settlement for them. Nauru said its contract with Australia to house the asylum seekers temporarily expired in mid-May.

Niue

After a general election (21 April 2002) the 20-member Fono (legislature) elected Young Vivian, of the Niue People's Party with 14 votes against six for Hunukitama Hunuki, nominated by the Alliance of Independents. Former prime minister Sani Lakatani became his deputy. Vivian said Western-style politics were inappropriate for such a small country (population 1700) and the elections had left a lot of hurt feelings that would take a long time to heal.

Australia

Violence broke out (April 2002) in two of the remote camps housing asylum seekers—at Curtin, a former air base in Western Australia and at Woomera. In Curtin 100 rioted when their asylum applications were rejected. They held the main compound until talks ended the siege (24 April 2002). Another 150 rioted at a third detention camp, Port Hedland, also in Western Australia. Australia said (23 May) it would pay £5000 to hundreds of Afghan asylum seekers held in Australia or in Nauru. Canberra gave them a month to decide whether to take the money or stay in detention.

A report from the UN High Commission on Human Rights called the detention of asylum seekers 'a great human tragedy' and accused the government of locking up children in an inhuman and degrading system in Australia's refugee detention centres. Former Indian Chief Justice, P. N. Bhagwati led the UN mission to Australia and wrote the report. The government insisted that Australia's refugee detention system met international human rights standards. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said the allegations would have the effect of 'undermining the credibility of the UN'.

Treasurer Peter Costello predicted in his budget speech (14 May 2002) a deficit of £600 million for 2001–02 after five years of surpluses. Growth was predicted at 3.75 per cent and a return to surplus for 2003–04.

Nearly 20 people were charged with causing many of the 154 bush fires that broke out in New South Wales in December 2001.

The dreaded cane toad, introduced 70 years ago by misguided European settlers from South America to combat beetles attacking the sugar cane, was found in 2002 to have reached Kakadu National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site in northern Queensland. It can kill a freshwater crocodile in half an hour and puts 154 species in danger.

Sir John Gorton, Liberal prime minister 1968–71, died aged 90 (19 May 2002).

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New Zealand

Prime Minister Helen Clark won a second term in a general election called four months early (27 July 2002), but she failed to win an overall majority. Her Labour Party secured 52 seats (41 per cent of the vote) in the 120-seat one-chamber parliament. The main opposition National Party took 27 seats (21 per cent)—12 down and the worst result in its history. Its leader Bill English had led the party for under a year after unseating former prime minister Jenny Shipley. The small parties made much headway—New Zealand First led by Winston Peters (11 per cent), Peter Dunne's United Future (7 per cent), which had held only one seat, ACT (7 per cent), Green Party (6 per cent) and Progressive Coalition (2 per cent).

One surprise was New Zealand First, the anti-immigrant party with almost treble its 1999 vote; immigration became a major issue in the election campaign. Another was the rise of United Future.

Clark pointed out that it was only the third time in 70 years that the leading party in government had raised its majority going into a second term and she was 'a very happy prime minister'.

A prominent issue in the election was the sale to an American businessman of Young Nick's Head—the clifftop which was Captain Cook's first sight of New Zealand. Maoris occupied it because they said it contained sacred grounds as important to them 'as Stonehenge is to British people'. The episode highlighted a growing unease in New Zealand about the process for settling centuries-old Maori grievances.

Finance Minister Michael Cullen, in his election year budget (23 May 2002), said the forecast surplus of £826 million was three times higher than expected and proved the ruling Labour Party was prudent and not the big-spending party portrayed by its opponents. Earlier, Reserve Bank governor Don Brash, credited with a big role in stabilising the economy, resigned (25 April 2002) to stand as a candidate for the National Party.

Helen Clark admitted signing another person's artwork when she was asked to provide a painting for an animal welfare charity in 1999. It fetched about £400. Clark apologised and reimbursed the person who bought the painting. Police said (6 July 2002) she had not benefited personally and they would not prosecute her.

India

Dr Abdul Kalam, a 70-year-old nuclear scientist with no political experience, was overwhelmingly elected the country's 12th President (18 July 2002). He became the third Muslim President of India—son of a poor boatman from a Tamil Nadu fishing village whose sister was said to have pawned her wedding jewellery to pay for his education. He headed India's satellite programme from 1983 and oversaw nuclear tests in Pokharan in 1998. He said the nuclear programme helped to prevent war with Pakistan, holding the view that 'in our planet only weaponised states are friends. Strength respects strength'.

Kalam's nomination by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was seen as inspired since pressure was strong from BJP supporters for a Hindu nationalist.

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The appointment was broadly supported by the opposition Congress and other parties. The Communists put up a last-minute candidate—Dr Lakshmi Seghal, an 87-year-old freedom fighter from the days before independence and the first woman to contest the post. Kalam was inaugurated on 25 July 2002, succeeding K. R. Narayanan, who fell out with the BJP government for its handling of the Gujarat communal riots earlier in the year and did not seek another term. After the election President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan said to Kalam: ‘I hope to work with you for the establishment of tension-free relations between our two countries.’

In a cabinet reshuffle (1 July 2002) Vajpayee gave his hard-line Home Minister, 74-year-old L. K. Advani, the additional title of Deputy Prime Minister—a move seen as putting him in line to become prime minister. In a job swap Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh became Finance Minister and Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha became Foreign Minister. Thirteen ministers were given new jobs, nine of them BJP and four from coalition allies. Advani and BJP hawks were said to be winners in the shake-up.

Jaswant Singh, regarded as a reformer, was taking over the economy at a good time, with growth of six per cent forecast and inflation at two per cent. The disinvestment programme took a step forward when it was decided (11 July 2002) to put two state-controlled metals companies up for sale.

An article by British journalist Alex Perry headed ‘Asleep at the wheel?’ in *Time* magazine (7 June 2002) provoked a storm in India. It said 77-year-old Vajpayee’s health and lifestyle threatened his ability to govern. It accused him of falling asleep at meetings and questioned whether he should be entrusted with his finger on the nuclear button, although crediting him with preventing war with Pakistan. Youth members of the BJP burned copies of the issue because of the lack of an official apology.

The cabinet decided (25 June 2002) to allow foreign media companies to take a 26 per cent stake in newspaper and print media and up to 74 per cent in non-news publications. The move ended a ban on foreign direct investment in print media dating back to 1955. Foreign investment in broadcasting is already allowed. Information minister Shushma Swaraj said editorial and management control would stay in Indian hands and foreign companies investing would need security clearance. Three-quarters of any board of directors would be Indian and top editorial posts would be held by Indian nationals.

A local survey showed that 230 unique Islamic monuments, including a particularly fine 400-year-old mosque, had been destroyed or vandalized in the Gujarat riots. Experts compared the losses to the destruction of the Buddhas in Afghanistan and the wrecking of the Tibetan monasteries. One monument destroyed was the tomb of Vali Gujarati, inspiration of Urdu poets and singers, who died in Ahmedabad in 1707. Gangs with pickaxes replaced it on the night of 1 March 2002 with a small brick Hindu temple. The death toll in the Gujarat riots was estimated in April at 2000 and a report prepared for European Union embassies published in the Indian press (30 April 2002) agreed that it had not been a spontaneous fury over the train massacre but a long-prepared pogrom. One diplomat talked of ‘genocide’.

Minister for Coal and Mines Ram Vilas resigned from the Vajpayee cabinet (29 April 2002) over the violence which he said had ‘tarnished India’s image’ at

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home and abroad. He took his small LJP party out of the coalition.

Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi resigned (19 July 2002), dissolved the legislature (19 July 2002), and headed a caretaker government pending new elections. Gujarat was one of the few states controlled by the BJP. Modi had been under pressure for months for doing too little to end the fighting.

A Constitutional Review Commission set up by the central government handed in (31 March 2002) a four-volume report making 250 proposals for change. Among them were said to be strengthening of the right to education, religious and press freedom and a new right to freedom from torture.

The New Delhi High Court rejected (10 June 2002) a 'charge sheet' accusing the Hinduja brothers of receiving kickbacks in the £189 million Bofors arms scandal dating back 15 years. The sheet, compiled by India's Central Bureau of Investigation, contained allegations still not accepted as a basis of formal charges. The court said the Bureau had not got permission from the government Central Vigilance Commission to proceed with the prosecution, as required.

But the Supreme Court reversed the decision (12 July 2002) and ruled that Srichand and Gopichand Hinduja must return to India from Britain, where they live, to face trial on £6 million bribery charges. The third brother, Prakash, who lives in Switzerland, would have to remain in India to stand surety. Each brother had paid £2.2 billion bail. In London the House of Commons Public Administration Committee reopened (10 June 2002) the argument over the Hinduja passport application by summoning two permanent secretaries to answer charges that they obstructed an investigation by the parliamentary ombudsman. The dispute over the passport application led to the resignation of Peter Mandelson as Northern Ireland Secretary.

Pakistan

Major-General Ehtesham Zamir, head of the political wing of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate, was ordered back to regular army duty in June 2002 after less than a year in the post. He was said to have been a key player in organizing the April referendum that entrenched President Pervez Musharraf in power for five more years. After the referendum Musharraf said he had ordered a fair vote, but in a TV speech a month later he admitted there had been rigging and expressed his regret.

Defence spokesman Major-General Rashid Qureshi attacked the Commonwealth (8 April 2002) for complaining that the referendum had not been part of the roadmap to restore democracy originally promised by Musharraf. Qureshi said: 'Only the people of Pakistan have the right to support or oppose the referendum and no one from outside Pakistan has any right to interfere in the internal affairs of the country.'

With parliamentary elections scheduled for October, Musharraf announced constitutional reforms (27 June 2002) giving him the power to sack an elected prime minister, dissolve parliament and set up a national security council, which would rule on important issues and bypass the prime minister. He issued a decree (8 July) banning anyone who had served as prime minister for two terms from holding the post again. This eliminated Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, now both in exile.

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Opposition parties fiercely attacked the new rules and Musharraf seemed to backtrack when he promised (12 July 2002) he would give full executive authority to the next prime minister. He said: 'I am not power hungry. I want to give power, not to usurp it.'

Bhutto said (25 July 2002) she would contest the election—'there is no law through which the military government can stop me from becoming a member of parliament'. She told *The Financial Times* there would never have been the World Trade Center attack, the bombing of Afghanistan and nuclear tension if the military had not been predominant in Pakistan politics.

Sharif did not stand in the leadership ballot of the Pakistan Muslim League (3 August 2002), but instead nominated his brother Shahbaz, former Punjab chief minister. Shahbaz was in exile in Saudi Arabia with his brother, but unlike Nawaz had not been convicted and was free to return. He was thought to command support in the army.

The tensions with India badly knocked the economy in the first half of 2002, but a 3.6 per cent rise in growth was predicted and international financial institutions continued to support the 30-month economic reform programme. Foreign exchange reserves at \$7 billion were the highest ever. The IMF released the latest (£117 million) tranche of its Poverty Reduction Growth facility. The central bank said remittances from Pakistanis living overseas more than doubled in 2001–02—largely because of fear of US-led world-wide investigations into money laundering. The bank announced (1 July) tough rules to regulate foreign currency and curb laundering.

In his budget (15 June 2002) Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz said the economy was 'in a more comfortable and stable position than at any time in at least the last three decades'. He cut taxes and raised defence expenditure by 15 per cent.

A suicide bomber in a van loaded with explosives drove into the US consulate in Karachi (14 June 2002), killing 11 people, all Pakistanis, and hurting 45 others. The attack came within hours of a visit to Islamabad by US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and was followed by arrests of militants suspected of al-Qaeda links. A month later two Pakistanis with links to the Taliban admitted they were behind the bombing.

More than 40 000 Pakistan troops were now engaged in the search for al-Qaeda fighters who had fled Afghanistan, mainly in the semi-autonomous south Waziristan tribal region. Ten Pakistanis were killed in the first armed clash (26 June 2002). Musharraf was the first Pakistani leader to order troops into these treacherous areas, having won commitments from tribal leaders that they would not obstruct his campaign against al-Qaeda.

A British-born Islamic militant known as Sheikh Omar, a former student of the London School of Economics, was sentenced to death (16 July 2002) in Hyderabad for the kidnapping and murder of *Wall Street Journal* journalist Daniel Pearl. Three accomplices were given life sentences. Washington wanted Omar extradited, but after the sentence did not press its request. Britain appealed to Pakistan not to execute Omar.

India and Pakistan

The tension over Kashmir of May and early June 2002 rapidly eased when

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India lifted restrictions banning Pakistani aircraft from its airspace (10 June 2002). The move followed a marked drop in the number of Pakistani militants crossing into Indian-administered Kashmir. British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Jack Straw told the Commons (11 June 2002) that India had long charged that terrorism into India had had the covert support of successive Pakistani governments and in particular the Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (ISI), the main intelligence agency in Pakistan. Britain accepted that there was a clear link between the agency and terrorist groups.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, on a visit to New Delhi (12 June 2002), offered India the use of Western surveillance equipment to help assess whether Pakistan was living up to its pledge to stop the militants. After this visit indications grew that Washington might be quietly moving into third-party mediation on Kashmir. An official said: 'We are already de facto mediators and there's a recognition that this time we must stay involved'—a remark that also suggested that India might be moving slightly away from its historic adamant opposition to mediation.

Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes said (19 June 2002) that there had been a large drop in militants crossing into India, but later the new foreign minister Yashwant Singh warned (3 July 2002) that terrorist incursions were on the rise again. Indian ministers asked British Defence Minister Geoff Hoon when he visited Delhi to keep up the pressure on Pakistan. Newly appointed Pakistani Foreign Minister Iam-ul-Haq appealed to the international community to help seek a Kashmir solution.

Another indication of the lessening of tension came when Britain withdrew its advice to its nationals to leave India (26 June 2002).

Anxiety was renewed when gunmen disguised as Hindu holy men shot dead 27 civilians—one a child—in a mainly Hindu slum in Jammu (13 July 2002). But this time reaction was restrained. Indian Deputy Prime Minister L. K. Advani visited the site after an emergency meeting of the cabinet security committee, and was notably careful not to blame Pakistan or any group. Pakistan quickly denounced the attack.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell visited Pakistan and India (28 July 2002) en route to the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) foreign ministers meeting in Brunei, where he signed an anti-terrorism pact. He called on India to let independent observers monitor the upcoming elections in Kashmir and free political prisoners there. He said he believed Islamist terrorists were still crossing into Kashmir. Musharraf insisted infiltration had stopped.

Chief election commissioner J. M. Lyngdoh said foreign observers would not be allowed to monitor polls for the assembly in Indian-controlled Kashmir due in October 2002. The election would be the first there since 1996. 'Good people' from India, probably civil servants, would be asked to ensure unhindered voting and foreign diplomats could visit polling booths. New Delhi has always rejected calls from Kashmiri separatists for foreign monitors. Farooq Abdullah, leader of the National Conference Party, the largest pro-India party in the state, said (15 July 2002) that India had appointed a mediator to discuss autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir.

In Britain four House of Commons committees criticized arms sales to India and Pakistan at a time of tension, but Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary

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Jack Straw defended (20 July 2002) them. He said decisions he was involved in were made before the rise in tension, but 148 licences had been issued for India and 128 for Pakistan. A report said that in 2001 British sales to Pakistan doubled to £14 million while sales to India stayed at £60 million.

Bangladesh

President Musharraf of Pakistan paid a three-day visit to Bangladesh—the first by a military leader since the independence war of 1971. He expressed regret for the atrocities committed by the Pakistan army and spoke of the ‘excesses’. He laid a wreath at the National Martyrs Memorial outside Dhaka and wrote in the visitors’ book: ‘Your brothers and sisters share the pain of the events of 1971. Let us bury the past in the spirit of magnanimity.’ The government welcomed the statement but opposition parties wanted a formal apology. In talks with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia increased trade was discussed, but also the return of 237 Biharis held in refugee camps and claims that Pakistan still holds £3.2 billion Bangladeshi assets.

The report of an inquiry commission blaming senior officers for what happened in 1971 was kept secret until Musharraf ordered its release in 2000. It suggested some officers should be tried for war crimes, but no action was taken.

Enam Ahmed Chowdhury said (20 June 2002) that Bangladesh was determined to privatize within a year 50 state companies dealing in jute, textiles, chemicals, food and timber. The IMF had been pressing for a speed-up of the disposal of loss-making state enterprises. On 30 June 2002 19 000 workers with families, totalling 100 000 people, left the Adamjee Jute Mills—the end of what had been for half a century the world’s biggest jute mills. The mills had lost £118 million since nationalization in the 1970s.

A filter costing about £2 that could save 80 million people at risk from arsenic poisoning was launched in Dhaka in July 2002. It was invented by a Bangladeshi professor and claimed to mark a major breakthrough in combating the deadly chemical in Bangladesh’s water supplies. Vast amounts of natural arsenic occur in the underground water supply. The World Health Organisation has said arsenic in Bangladesh’s drinking wells is the largest poisoning of a population in history.

Malaysia

Mahathir Mohamad, aged 76 and Prime Minister for 21 years, stunned the annual conference of the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) by announcing that he was stepping down from all posts in the party and in the coalition government. Delegates rushed to the podium to beseech him to stay. On TV Mahathir was seen weeping and saying: ‘No, I’ve decided, I’ve decided’. Ministers and officials went offstage with Mahathir and Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi announced within the hour that they had persuaded him to stay on. Mahathir flew off to Naples on holiday.

Next day (23 June 2002) the atmosphere calmed and UMNO announced that Mahathir was indeed to retire after a transition period of 15 months and former foreign minister Badawi, a 62-year-old Islamic scholar with a reputation as a

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Mr Clean, would succeed him. The change would happen after Mahathir had hosted the Organisation of Islamic Conference summit on 23–24 October 2003. He would gradually cede power and take two months leave during the transition.

Ever-suspicious opposition leaders were left wondering whether the unpredictable Mahathir was playing a complicated political game.

At the conference Mahathir had been his usual outspoken self, accusing the Malays of being lazy and squandering their opportunities. He said Malaysia would be nowhere without the Chinese minority. He had failed to change the Malay character.

Mahathir took a hand in forming Badawi's 2003 regime when he named Najib Tun Razak, 48, his defence minister as the next deputy prime minister (5 July 2002). Najib is the nephew of former prime minister Hussein Onn.

The UMNO meeting coincided with news of the death of Fadzil Noor, president of the opposition Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), the most aggressive opposition party, which now held two of the country's 13 states and had been seeking to impose sharia law. Deputy president Abdul Hadi Awang, seen as less moderate, was named successor. PAS has links with al-Qaeda and in facing them down after 11 September Mahathir had arrested 60 militants.

As chief minister of Terengganu state, Hadi approved strict Muslim laws (8 July 2002), including death by stoning for adultery and hand amputation for theft, but central government was certain to veto such laws and Hadi's move was expected to damage PAS electorally. It would frighten moderate Malays and the Chinese and Indian minorities.

Just before Mahathir announced his retirement he visited the White House for the first time since 1994 (14 May 2002). A meeting with President George W. Bush on cooperation in the campaigns against Islamic militants in southeast Asia marked an improvement in relations between the USA and Malaysia.

Amendments to the electoral law passed by parliament (8 April 2002) included prohibition of any legal challenge to the electoral roll, which the opposition said contained the names of thousands of dead voters. The ceiling of candidates' deposits was raised.

Malaysia signed a pact with Indonesia and the Philippines on cooperation against cross-border terrorism (7 May 2002). The signing by the three foreign ministers was witnessed by Mahathir and Philippines President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. It took place in the new administrative capital of Malaysia, Putrajaya. A ministerial meeting of ASEAN in Kuala Lumpur (20–21 May) reaffirmed a commitment to a unified approach to fight terrorism.

Malaysia announced (5 June 2002) it was buying its first submarines as part of a £670 million deal with French and Spanish shipbuilders. Two would be delivered in 2007–08. A third refurbished one was being bought from France for training.

The Sultan of Perlis was installed as Malaysia's 12th supreme head of state (25 April 2002)—Yang di Pertuan Agong (He Who Is Made Lord).

Singapore

In the second quarter of 2002 the economy grew by 3.2 per cent, taking the country out of its worst recession in 40 years. Electronic goods account for half

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of all manufacturing and 60 per cent of non-oil exports. A sharp fall in global demand for these, as well as for petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals led to a 2 per cent contraction in the economy.

J. B. Jeyaretnam, former leader of the Workers Party, apologized (2 April 2002) in the High Court and withdrew unreservedly remarks he had made about Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in 1997. In return the government dropped seven lawsuits. The suits had bankrupted Jeyaretnam and prevented him from holding political office.

Chee Soon Juan, leader of the Singapore Democratic Party, was charged (26 June 2002) with making a public speech in February without a permit.

Hong Kong

Teng Chee-hwa began his second term as Chief Executive on 1 July 2002. A week beforehand he introduced a new ministerial system which involved the most important government restructuring since the handover to China in 1997. Five people from outside the government, including a university vice-chancellor and nine existing officials, formed a new tier of principal officials—a so-called accountability system.

President Jiang Zemin of China flew in for the fifth anniversary of the handover, which came at a time of economic downturn. The unemployment rate rose to a record 7.7 per cent in April–June.

Demonstrators turned out to protest against lack of job security and the slow pace of democracy. Tung pledged to pull Hong Kong out of the slowdown but, in an article in the London *Financial Times*, former chief secretary Anson Chan said the city had lost its ‘can-do’ spirit. She said the government could help restore the feel-good factor if people were allowed more influence in its decision making. Opinion polls showed high approval ratings for Jiang and Premier Zhu Rongji, but only 33 per cent for Teng’s performance. Optimism about the future had fallen to 26 per cent.

Ascension Island

Packed public meetings in mid-2002 denounced Britain for a decision to impose income tax, property tax and taxes on alcohol and tobacco that doubled prices overnight. The islanders threatened legal action under the European Convention on Human Rights. Administration of the island (population 850), a dependency of St Helena since 1922, was taken over by the British government two years ago from local operators such as Cable and Wireless. Its governor, David Hollamby, planned to introduce for the first time a democratically elected council. It would advise him but not make decisions. Hollamby has argued that the people are not ready for democracy—‘as they gain experience they can take on more responsibilities’. The island was uninhabited until Napoleon was exiled there in 1815.

Cyprus

A fourth and fifth round of talks between President Glafcos Clerides and

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Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş took place in June–July 2002, bringing to 51 the total of separate sessions held since the UN-assisted effort began in January. No progress was made, although the June target set by the UN Security Council for a settlement had passed. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he would meet the two leaders to review the position in Paris in September. The July meetings focused on missing persons since the 1974 conflict. The Security Council concluded that the Turkish Cypriots had been ‘less constructive’ in the talks than the Greek Cypriots.

The Antiquities Department announced (24 July 2002) that the whole of Nicosia Old City should be declared an ancient monument. The move was prompted by the discovery of the remains of a Crusader castle from the early 13th century.

Gibraltar

In a surprise statement to the House of Commons (12 July 2002) Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Jack Straw said that for the first time Britain and Spain had agreed to share sovereignty of Gibraltar, although the deadline set for a deal—said to be the end of July 2002—would be missed. Spain had refused two British demands—retention of the military base and acceptance that any deal would be permanent. A new foreign minister, Ana Palacio, had been appointed in Madrid (9 July 2002) and talks between her and Straw scheduled for days later cancelled. Straw had last talked to her predecessor, Josep Pique, in London on 26 June 2002.

Straw told MPs: ‘In 12 months of negotiations we are now closer than ever before to overcoming 300 years of fraught history. A better future for Gibraltar—more stable, secure and prosperous—is too important to let slip’. However, it soon became plain that hurdles had to be overcome, the biggest of which was the referendum promised to the people of Gibraltar. Chief Minister Peter Caruana said Straw’s statement would cause consternation, adding: ‘There is more chance of hell freezing over than the people of Gibraltar ever voting in favour of joint sovereignty with Spain.’ Former chief minister Joe Bossano said the statement was an ‘absolute scandal’ and British shadow foreign secretary Michael Ancram said it was ‘shabby and dishonourable’.

Europe Minister Peter Hain said joint sovereignty would make little difference to Gibraltarians’ lives. It might merely mean a Spanish flag flying on the Rock alongside the Union Jack. He said: ‘We are not prepared to see the agreement as a stepping stone to full Spanish control of Gibraltar ... that’s not on the cards, full stop.’

But Britain made a concession to Spain by saying that the base would become a NATO facility and as such Spanish forces would have access to it. It emphasized, however, that the base would stay under full British military command.

Caruana launched a pre-emptive strike (25 July 2002) by announcing that he would hold a referendum on Gibraltar’s future in October and invited international observers to monitor it. Technically, Caruana did not have the right to organize a binding referendum as Gibraltar was still a colony. Straw said the idea was ‘eccentric’ and unrealistic and Britain and Spain said the referendum would have no legal standing.

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Falkland Islands

Four years after hopes of oil exploration fizzled ten offshore licences covering 58 000 sq km were awarded to a consortium of three companies headed by Global Petroleum of Australia. The rarely explored area is in the south of the islands. Traces of oil were first found there in 1974 and ExxonMobil struck oil in 1981, but withdrew when the conflict took place a year later. Drilling to the north by several companies in 1998 failed and they also pulled out.

Commonwealth Games

The 17th Commonwealth Games held in Manchester (25 July–4 August 2002) was a sell-out and a resounding success. Those critics who had long argued about the importance of the Games and their relevance to the international sporting calendar were silenced. One leading commentator in the London *Times* said: ‘The Commonwealth Games are dwarfed by the scale of the Olympics, but what Manchester has shown is that they have a deserved place in the sporting calendar.’ A *Guardian* writer said: ‘This was a festival of sport that left pessimists confounded.’

It was the most ambitious multi-sport festival to be staged in the UK, involving 5000 athletes and officials from 72 countries and territories. The budget was modest by modern standards of international sporting events—£250 million. Between the spectacular opening and closing ceremonies Australia won 82 gold medals, England 54 and India 32 (its best ever haul). Canada was fourth with 31. Nauru, Guyana, Mozambique, St Kitts–Nevis all figured in the list of golds. The Manchester Games made history by becoming the first multi-sport event at which medals won by disabled athletes counted towards the medals table.

The Games baton relay was launched from Buckingham Palace on Commonwealth Day, 11 March 2002, and covered 64 000 miles through 25 Commonwealth countries. The baton was lowered by balloon into the Queen’s hands at the opening in Manchester. It electronically recorded the pulse of all those who held it and ceremonies involving sports personalities were held along the way. In nine countries debates were organized for young people to discuss Commonwealth issues such as human rights and the digital divide.

The poems of nine Commonwealth writers were displayed in 2000 London tube carriages in mid-2002 to coincide with the Games and special stamps were issued.

United Kingdom

In his spending review (15 July 2002), Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown raised international development aid by 35 per cent—from £3.4 billion to £4.6 billion by 2005–06. This would bring aid spending to 0.4 per cent of the national income—the highest share since 1982. Most of the extra help would go to sub-Saharan Africa. Development Secretary Clare Short warned (28 July 2002) that she was considering taking back control of Britain’s £700 million contribution to the EU international aid budget unless it focused on global

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poverty instead of wasteful, politically driven projects in the Mediterranean and eastern Europe. Just 38 per cent of EU aid now went to the world's poorest countries against 70 per cent ten years ago.

Sir Michael Jay, former ambassador to France, took over from Sir John Kerr as permanent secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in mid-2002. He said more staff would be recruited from ethnic minorities and the level of public diplomacy would be raised, particularly by using Arabic speakers to make the West's case on Muslim TV and radio. More attention would be paid to failing states. In the Gordon Brown spending round of July the Office got a 2.8 per cent rise, giving it £1.5 billion by 2005–06. The British Council went from £157 million to £185 million. The BBC World Service was given £38 million more, taking it to £239 million by 2005–06. Much of the new money would be spent on output to Afghanistan, the Arab world and southwest Asia. A BBC survey in India showed a fall in listenership of 12 million in seven years—said to be the result of economic liberalization that had broadened the media choices of the urban middle classes and the growth of satellite TV. Globally, BBC listeners totalled 150 million. The Voice of America figure was 91 million and Deutsche Welle 30 million.

Commonwealth Secretariat

Florence Mugasha of Uganda became Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General (1 May 2002) on the retirement of Kris Srinivasan of India. In 30 years as a public servant she became the first woman in Africa to serve as Head of the Public Service. For five years she was Secretary to Cabinet in the Office of the President.

Around the Commonwealth

At the Golden Jubilee Festival (4 June 2002) in central London, climax of the 50th anniversary celebrations for the Queen, 4000 people took part in a Commonwealth procession that included displays by Maori dancers, South African artists, Caribbean performers in carnival costumes and Indian bagpipers. The procession ended with the hanging of a giant tapestry from the balcony of Buckingham Palace featuring the flags of all 54 Commonwealth countries.

Central bankers, senior officials in international finance and private sector executives met in London (3–4 July 2002) for a conference on Enhancing Capital Flows to Developing Countries in the New International Context. The meeting was organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat, World Bank and Commonwealth Business Council. Subjects included private sector involvement in crisis resolution and savings management in developing countries.

An International Institute on Gender Mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS is being set up at Dalhousie University, Halifax, by the Commonwealth Secretariat and Canada's Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. It will help Commonwealth countries fight AIDS, acting on evidence that women and girls are relatively more affected by HIV/AIDS than men and boys. The nine most heavily infected countries in the world are all in the Commonwealth.

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The Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council initiated a four-day youth conference in Sunderland, UK (2–5 July 2002) to mark the Queen's golden jubilee. It was attended by 200 people aged 18 to 25 from 50 countries. Under the title 'Citizen You' delegates discussed young people's vision of citizenship for the twenty-first century. Before that, they spent a week in the UK meeting youth workers and NGOs.

Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, delivered the fifth Commonwealth lecture in London (6 June 2002) on Human Rights in the Shadow of 11 September.

In June the Commonwealth of Learning launched a new programme, Poverty Reduction Outcomes Through Education Innovations and Networks (Protein), under which proposals it will seek new, workable ideas to build capacity for education delivery to the rural poor in areas of food security, environmental protection and rural development.

Part of a banking and financial services symposium held by the Secretariat, Commonwealth Business Council and World Bank in London (3–4 July 2002) was a conference on enhancing private capital flows to developing countries in the new international context—the economic slowdown and the aftermath of 11 September.

A workshop in Mauritius (17–19 June 2002) attended by election management bodies from 35 Commonwealth countries discussed voter registration and election systems.

The Anyaoku Chair in Commonwealth Studies

The Duke of Westminster, as patron of the project for the Anyaoku Chair of Commonwealth Studies, hosted a reception at Eaton Hall, his house near Chester, on 30 July 2002, during the 17th Commonwealth Games.

This Chair is to honour the immediate past Commonwealth Secretary-General, who retired from his post at the end of March 2000 after ten years leading the Commonwealth Secretariat and following a lifetime of service in the Commonwealth. And Chief Anyaoku is still active in promoting Commonwealth causes.

This appeal is to create a senior post which would strengthen the study of the Commonwealth when it faces fresh challenges in terms of democracy, human rights, multiculturalism, civil society and globalization. It is expected that the appointee will work closely with Commonwealth associations in London and elsewhere.

Those interested in making a contribution should contact The Director, Professor Tim Shaw, tel: 020 7862 8826 (direct) or 020 7862 8834 (PA), or at the following address: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 28 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DS. Tel: 020 7862 8844; fax: 020 7862 8820; e-mail: ics@sas.ac.uk; website: <http://www.sas.ac.uk/commonwealthstudies/>.