

Interim council agreed on to run Afghanistan

By Associated Press INTERNATIONAL
KOENIGSWINTER, Germany — The northern alliance and the former king's delegation agreed today on a formula for an interim council that will run Afghanistan until a national tribal council can be convened in March, an adviser to the northern alliance said.

"This is an important breakthrough because had it not come through these talks would have bogged down, but now they have a focus," said Mohammad Hussin Bakhshi, an aide to northern alliance delegate Mohammad Natiqi.

The two largest delegations at the talks have agreed the council would comprise 42 members, with 21 members each from the northern alliance and delegation of former King Mohammad Zaher Shah, Bakhshi said.

He said some provision may be made for representation from the two smaller delegations at the talks, exiles based in Peshawar, Pakistan, and in Cyprus.

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The delegations will decide who will be included on the interim council during further talks today, Bakhshi said.

TORKHAM, Pakistan — Authorities closed a key border crossing point into Afghanistan today after tensions mounted over Pakistan's attempts to erect a barbed wire fence along the frontier.

Pakistani paramilitary troops and Afghan fighters loyal to the new anti-Taliban administration took up positions, but there was no exchange of fire.

Border guards told travelers and townspeople to move back about 500 yards from the border. Several hundred people and vehicles are stuck on both the sides of the border because of the closure.

Pakistani authorities plan to erect a 6-foot-high barbed wire fence at key

border points with Afghanistan to prevent refugees and Islamic extremists from entering the country.

But on Tuesday the authorities had to stop the work at Torkham, about 25 miles west of Peshawar, after the new Afghan administration raised objections.

NATIONAL

HARTFORD, Conn. — New test results offered no new clues in the case of a 94-year-old anthrax victim, while University of Connecticut officials said two laboratory vials being tested for anthrax don't contain dangerous spores.

Officials at the university said Wednesday that vials taken by state health authorities from the College of Agriculture contain animal blood residue, not anthrax spores in a form that can be inhaled.

College of Agriculture Dean Kirklyn Kerr said the sealed vials, which were labeled as containing anthrax, held frozen blood samples taken from a cow that may have been infected with the bacteria.

The state Department of Public Health is conducting tests to determine if any anthrax bacteria are in the samples, which date back to the 1960s. But Kerr said that even if the vials contain anthrax, it is not the potentially lethal, powdery form.

"You don't inhale it. It's not dangerous," Kerr said.

Officials were drawing no links between the vials and the Nov. 21 death of an elderly woman from inhalation anthrax in Oxford, Conn., about 70 miles away from the university campus in Storrs. Authorities have speculated that Ottilie Lundgren's death might have been caused by mail that crossed paths with anthrax-laden envelopes sent to members of Congress and the media in Washington and New York.

PORTLAND, Ore. — Corvallis police have joined their Portland counterparts in refusing to interview foreign visitors in Oregon as part of a sweeping federal terrorism probe.

Until Wednesday, Portland had been the only city in the nation to refuse a request by the U.S. Department of Justice to participate in the interviews, citing state privacy laws.

As many as 5,000 foreign visitors from countries with terrorism ties will be questioned nationwide — some 200 of them in Oregon.

Corvallis Police Chief Pam Roskowski believes the city will be better served if officers concentrate on criminal investigations rather than interviewing people on the federal list who are not criminal suspects, according to a police statement released Wednesday.

"It is incumbent on all law enforcement agencies to promote the balance of protecting the community ... while preserving the freedoms and civil liberties of all residents," the statement

said.

HOUSTON — Enron Corp. was pushed to the brink of bankruptcy after the once-mighty energy trading company's credit collapsed and its main rival backed out of an \$8.4 billion buyout plan.

News that Enron was being spurned by Dynegy Inc. sent its stock price spiraling 85 percent to close at 61 cents on Wednesday.

Just a year ago, stock of the nation's largest buyer and seller of natural gas traded at \$85 per share.

The meltdown made bankruptcy seem inevitable for a company that just months ago was the country's seventh biggest in revenue — but crumbled after revealing questionable partnerships and admitting it overstated profits for four years.

"It's the end of Enron, no question about it," said Gordon Howald, an analyst at Credit Lyonnais Securities in New York. "I don't know who else could step in."



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