

Jalalabad welcomes assistance from S.D.

Afghan city's mayor makes goodwill visit

By Anne Krueger
STAFF WRITER

The mayor of one of Afghanistan's largest cities is visiting San Diego as part of a connection forged from the 2001 terrorist attacks.

Abdul Razzaq Arsalai arrived in San Diego last week from Jalalabad, a city of about 400,000 on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Jalalabad was recently named the 15th sister city to San Diego, part of a program to promote mutual friendship and good will.

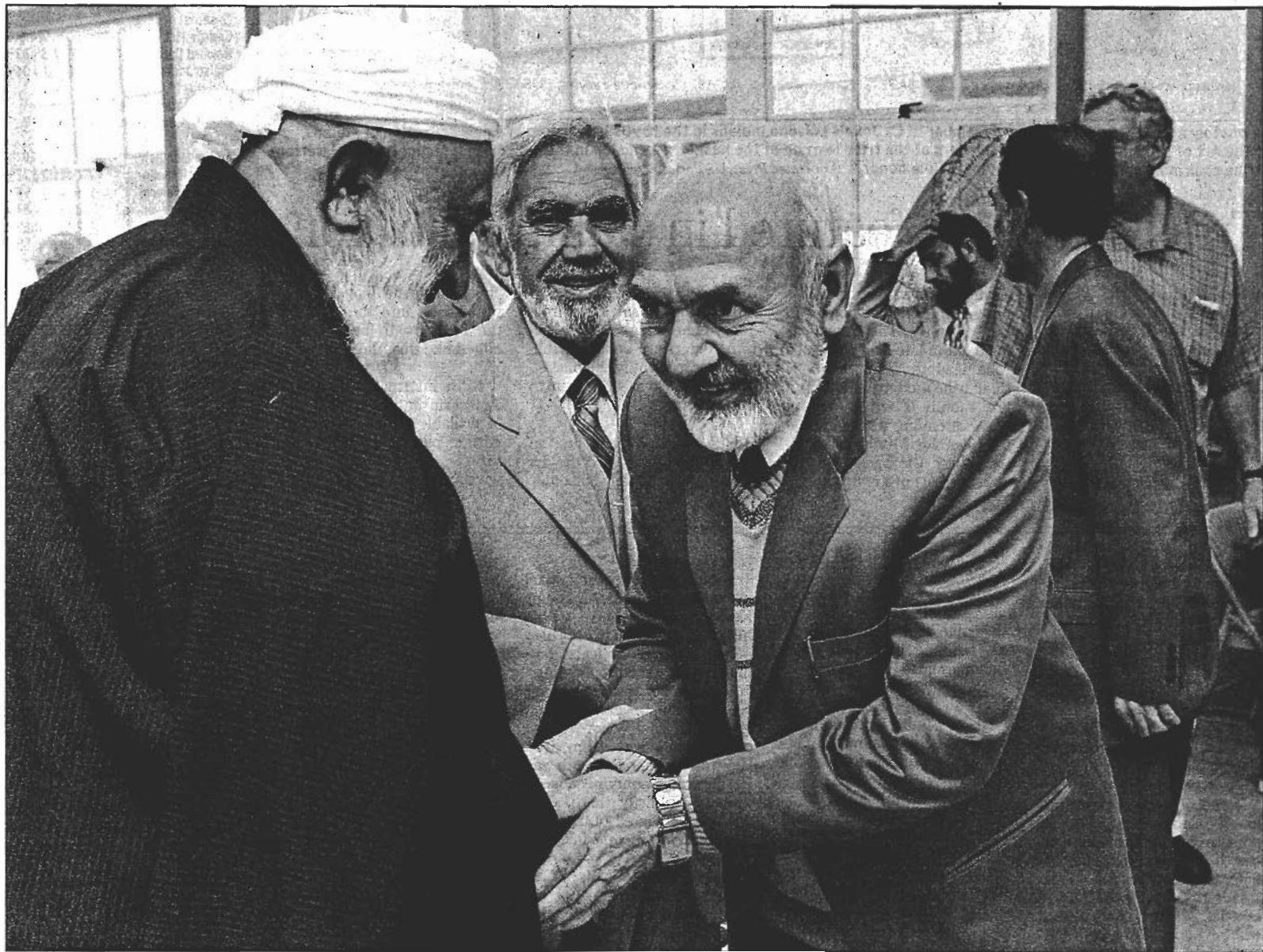
The sister-city designation grew from efforts by San Diegan Steve Brown and other Rotary Club members to assist an Afghan city in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Local group members have enlisted area schools and colleges to help Jalalabad schools, where teachers sometimes have no textbooks and base their lessons on decades-old notes.

"These people will come to like us as friends if they're educated and learn about democracy," Brown said.

Rotary clubs in San Diego provided books and computers for Jalalabad's university, and an elementary school in the city has become a sister school to Doyle Elementary in La Jolla.

Arsalai will be in the United States until Nov. 25. Saturday night, he met with San Diego



Abdul Razzaq Arsalai (right), mayor of Jalalabad, Pakistan, was greeted by Judge Taher Seddiqi (left) and Judge Jawhar Seddiqi yesterday at the La Mesa Community Center. Arsalai said he hopes the visit will result in scholarships and medical assistance for Afghans. *Scott Linnett / Union-Tribune*

Mayor Dick Murphy during a reception at the University of San Diego.

He said he hopes the visit will result in scholarships and medical assistance for Afghans. "It's not just for Jalalabad,"

he said through an interpreter. "It's for the good of the nation."

Afghanistan recently held a historic national vote that resulted in a victory by Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan's first elected head of state. Arsalai said

that election was held without the commotion surrounding America's presidential election.

"It was surprisingly very well-organized, with lots of democratic ideas," Arsalai said of his country's elections.

About 5,000 to 8,000 Afghans live in San Diego, said Masood Roashan, a San Diegan who is Arsalai's interpreter. He said he is glad to assist an effort to bring San Diego and the Afghan city closer.

"We need to do whatever we can to help that country," Roashan said. "If they can look forward to something, they will be our friend."

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