

*The Indian* **EXPRESS**

# Afghan blast victim gets a helping hand in Delhi

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NEW DELHI, JULY 6

NOT many people caught in a suicide bombing live to tell the tale. But Farid Ahammad is special.

It started like an ordinary day but by the time it ended, Ahammad (39) had witnessed a suicide bomb go off in front of a truck full of US Army personnel. And despite being within a five-metre radius of the explosion, he knew he was going to survive.

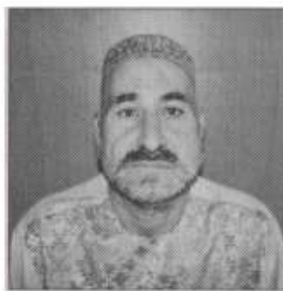
"I will never forget May 8, 2009," Ahammad, who used to run a popular general store in the Helmand province of Afghanistan, said.

"It was a Friday morning and I was helping customers in my store. I saw an army truck

park just five metres away. Though army trucks are a normal sight in Afghanistan these days, I knew something was about to happen the minute I noticed a man running towards the truck. And before I could realise what was happening, everything turned into a ball of fire," he said, recollecting the day he lost almost all of the flesh on his right arm.

By the time Ahammad came to Delhi, he had lost a lot of blood and his vision, and his forearm, bones still visible, was severely infected, despite receiving treatment at the Army Hospital in Helmand.

"My condition was deteriorating constantly and a friend who was treated in Delhi recommended the hospitals here. Since our country



does not have hospitals to care for war victims, it makes India the closest and best option," he said. He was admitted at Max Hospital on June 5 and three days later underwent a surgery.

During his week-long stay at Max Hospital, Ahammad's forearm was reconstructed using skin grafts and tissues from his groin. "Farid had lost all the flesh on the back

of his right hand when he came to us and had a serious infection that threatened his hand. His hand is now functional as before and the wounds have healed. To cover the exposed bones we transferred tissue from his groin and made a flap on his arm," Dr Sunil Choudhary, director of Aesthetic and Reconstructive Surgery at Max Superspeciality Hospital, said.

"I never thought the pain would subside. Though have I lost my livelihood and my vision, my hand has finally stopped hurting. I can sleep in peace. This has also given me the confidence to pick up the pieces and move on," he said before being discharged from the hospital.