

# AL calls hartal

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Briefing newsmen later, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil however said, "Tough programmes will be announced instantly if the government tries to foil our peaceful programmes."  
Jalil said the AL will bring out a massive procession in the capital on February 22 and hold a rally next on February 23 at Tongi to protest the attack on local lawmaker Ahsanullah Master during Thursday's hartal and on the local ALOffice.  
From February 24 to 27, rallies and processions will be organised in different thanas of the capital, he said.  
Earlier on Monday, the AL announced that 'anti-repression day' will be observed across the country today to protest police atrocities on party leaders and activists during the last three hartal days.  
The ALCWC meet also urged all pro-liberation and secular political parties, groups and forces to join the oust-government agitation.  
Referring to discussions at the meeting on a common platform of all opposition parties, Jalil said, "We are ready to welcome initiatives of every pro-liberation and secular force in anti-government agitation."

# Free anti-corruption

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Bac will cease to exist with the formation of the anti-graft commission, which also takes over the charge of investigations pending with the former.  
The Anti-Corruption Act, 1957 will also be abolished.  
The BNP-led coalition government fulfilled one of its election pledges by passing the bill at a time when Bangladesh has been rated as the most corrupt country in the world for the third consecutive year by London-based Transparency International, a global corruption watchdog.  
Although the bill, piloted by Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed, went through several layers of scrutiny and the relevant parliamentary standing committee made many changes to it, it had the provision of obtaining approval from the government, prompting the civil society, media and development partners to doubt the commission's independence.  
Chairman of the parliamentary standing body and BNP lawmaker Khandaker Mahbub Uddin Ahmad, who submitted the crucial amendment proposal in the last hours, suggested ceasing the application of sub-sections 5 and 6 of Section 6 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1958.  
He argued an independent anti-graft body should not require government nod to probe graft charges against a state official and

## AL MPs visit

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Banu Shova were the other members of the AL team while ex-state minister for fisheries and livestock Prof Abdul Kuddus accompanied them.  
Earlier, BNP supporters at Natore town showed black flags to the AL delegates. They also chanted slogans against the AL, blaming its activists for the killing of Sabbir Ahmed Gama, nephew of Deputy Minister for Land Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar Duli, sources said.  
Local AL leaders alleged a group of BNP men assaulted its 10 leaders when they were escorting the parliamentary team to Shahpara village.  
Elements allegedly belonging to the BNP burnt down nearly 44 houses of AL adherents at Shahpara on February 7 and February 10 after unidentified gunmen shot dead Gama.

## Saber, Kamal

**FROM PAGE 12**  
The orders came upon petitions filed by Awami League Organising Secretary Saber Chowdhury and others apprehending that police might implicate them in the cases in order to 'victimise them politically at the behest of the government'.  
Saber Chowdhury, who suffered head injuries in a reported attack with a police rifle while he was leading a procession in the capital during the hartal, appeared in person before the court in a wheel chair from ZH Sikder Hospital to seek bail.  
The other petitioners were also present in the court and prayed for anticipatory bail.  
The court further directed the police authorities not to harass Saber Chowdhury, also political secretary to Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, and asked Saber to submit a bail bond in two weeks.  
On Saber Chowdhury's prayer for a direction from the court to proceed abroad for treatment, the HC division bench remarked that there was no need for any such direction as receiving treatment is a fundamental right of an individual.  
Advocate Mahbube Alam moved the petition for Saber Chowdhury while advocate Abdul Baset Majumder appeared for Kamal Majumder and others.

# CUTA suspends agitation till March 7

CU CORRESPONDENT

The Chittagong University Teachers Association (CUTA) has suspended its tomorrow's daylong work abstention till March 7 after a meeting with the vice-chancellor Monday night.  
But Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) will observe its scheduled class boycott programme tomorrow demanding immediate removal of alleged Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) cadre Enayetullah Patwary, appointed to political science department as lecturer.  
Campus sources said the CUTA called off the agitation as VC Prof AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury gave assurance to meet its 22-point demand by March 7.  
CUTA General Secretary Helal Uddin Nizami said if the authorities failed to meet our demands by March 7, they will go on agitating for removal of the VC. "We hold back our programmes due to the admission test on February 24."  
The BCL leaders alleged that the authorities have made the CU a hub of the ICS cadres, as of the 85 teachers appointed during the present government, 65 belong to the ICS.

# 2 to die for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A court yesterday awarded death sentence to two persons including an Indian citizen in abstentia for the killing of a carpenter at Saher in Naogaon.  
Additional District and Sessions Judge of Naogaon SM Sulaiman jailed two others for life and fined Tk 15,000, in default, two years more imprisonment.  
The convicts had hacked to death Paran, 35, a carpenter hailed from Goplaganj.  
The death convicts are Subal Chandra, 40, son of Mongal Chandra of Salghat at Maladah in West Bengal and Azizul Huq, 40, son of Abdul Basir of Saphar in Naogaon, while Basir and Habibur Rahman got life term.  
The convicts killed Paran, 35, of Gopalganj to grab Tk 65,000 from him in 1996. Local Union Parishad member filed a case after recovering the body of Paran from a field.

## BNP-JP meet

**FROM PAGE 1**  
preconditions for its return to the House.  
The chief whip proposed at the meeting that the JP should return to the House and then raise its demands. But lawmakers of the JP, the second largest opposition party, rejected the proposal and again submitted their four-point demand to the chief whip.  
JP lawmakers said it was 'disgraceful' for the party to accept the chief whip's proposal, according to meeting sources.  
Delwar then said he should have talks with the ruling coalition high command on the demands.  
JP legislators however made it clear at the meeting that their party had no links to the on-going anti-government agitation by the Awami League (AL), which is boycotting parliament since June 25 last year.  
"The meeting proved the government side is not so interested to bring us back to the House. If they (government side) were interested, they could assure us of meeting our demands in consultation with their leadership," JP legislator Ghulam M Quader told The Daily Star after the meeting.

The JP started boycotting parliament on February 9 following a walkout on the previous day protesting the bar on party chief HM Ershad's going aboard. The party later made the four-point demand. The demands include an end to 'harassment' of Ershad, same privileges for JP lawmakers as enjoyed by treasury bench legislators and expunction of the remarks of the communications minister and the prime minister's advisor on parliamentary affairs on Ershad's personal life from the House proceedings.

## PM calls

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Hannan (social work), AZM Enayetullah Khan (journalism) and Chashi Nazrul Islam (films).  
The prime minister handed over the awards that carried a gold medal, Tk 40,000 in cash and a certificate to the recipients or to the near ones of those deceased.  
Ministers, MPs, elite, diplomats, intellectuals, poets, writers, educationists, artists, professionals from various fields, and senior civil and military officials were present.  
State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman and Cabinet Secretary Saadat Hossein also addressed the function.  
She called for a march forward with the glory of the language movement and not to lag behind clinging to the history only.  
"Sorrow of Ekushey should be transformed into a strength to move forward and the path should be enlightened with education, knowledge, talent and creativity."

# Lower interest

**FROM PAGE 1**  
seen as one of the critical elements of the projects, he added.  
While the usefulness of micro-credit in generating income and employment and, ultimately, empowerment of the poor can hardly be overemphasised, we should not forget the importance of access to markets, technology and knowledge for the poor to sustain the micro-credit-run programmes, the secretary general felt.  
Kamal Hyat, chief executive officer (CEO) of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, chaired this session on creating autonomous micro-credit funds. Salehuddin Ahmed, managing director of Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation, Shankar Man Shrestha, CEO of Rural Micro-finance Development Centre Ltd of Nepal, VK Chopra, CEO of Small Industries Development Bank of India, Senarath Gunasena, managing director of National Development Trust Fund of Sri Lanka, and AFM Matuir Rahman, director general of Bangladesh Rural Development Board, were the other plenary discussants.  
In his speech, Hyat emphasised creating linkage between micro-

## Shop-owners

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Mannan assured them of his best efforts to fight extortion and crime to provide a better business environment in the area, said business leaders who attended the meeting.  
"Each shop-owner has to pay a huge sum of money --from Tk 30,000 to 1 lakh -- to these criminals every year. I already paid thrice last year," a shop-owner told this correspondent on condition of anonymity.  
Police arrested three people in connection with the murder but local traders say the real killers are still out of their reach. Besides, the extortionists have grown bolder as police have so far been unable to arrest them.  
A gang of extortionists demanded Tk 2 lakh from Kamal, owner of Shalda Travels, before his murder. Three other people also suffered injuries in the shooting.  
Local traders held a milad mahfil at Tejituribazaar Jam-e-Masjid yesterday to pray for the slain trader.

# 2 killed in city

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Ali Azam, commissioner of ward No. 62, rushed him to the DMCH where he is undergoing treatment at the Intensive Care Unit.  
He received three bullets in the back and one in his left hand.  
Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan visited Newaj at the DMCH yesterday afternoon.  
In Tejaigon, a gang called Humayun Kabir, 26, an office assistant at the DU registrar's, out of his Ambagan DU staff quarters house at around 11:30pm and shot him in front of his house, locals said.  
Neighbours rushed Kabir, who got four bullets in the face and head, to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he died at 2:30am.  
No case was filed till 7:30 last night.  
In Sutrapur, miscreants shot dead metal scrapper Mohammad Loton, 40, and injured his younger brother Amir Hossain Babu alias Kana Babu.  
Their sister Aleya quoting Loton's wife Nihar Begum said a gang of 15 called the brothers out of their Shashimohan Basak Lane house at around 2:30pm. On his way back home from school,

# Saifur blasts NGOs

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Saifur said, we should concentrate on reducing poverty rather than using it for business. Unleashing a caustic attack on the high rate of interest charged by certain MFIs, he labelled such operations as "a sort of Kabuliwalah business."  
"I think what they are charging is extortion," the minister remarked.  
He stressed generating sustainable income sources for the poor, saying, "giving them ducks and chickens is not going to bring them out of poverty."  
Saifur said poverty reduction was a prime objective of economic progress and micro-credit was one of the means to realise that. But, "if good governance and efficient management are not there, micro-credit won't be able to benefit its recipients."  
The finance minister also reminded the commercial banks that in a poor country like Bangladesh collateral should not be demanded from rural and poor borrowers in order to increase business ventures.  
Referring to the recent move to amend the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation, Saifur said it was taken to ensure transparency, not to restrict NGO operations.  
Speaking at the workshop, Sharad Pawar, member of parliament (MP) and president of Nationalist Congress Party of India,

and macro-level policies and institutions, saying, "behind the number there are poor people who do not have access to credit."  
Salehuddin Ahmed said private and autonomous organisations that worked at the grassroots and knew the ultra-poor should be involved in channelling funds.  
Shrestha said the problems and challenges in micro-finance operations could be addressed by an effort-based approach, proper planning and implementation and an effective monitoring and evaluation system.  
Speaking at the other session, Brac Executive Director Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury said it was not possible to alleviate poverty only with micro-credit, but it was equally impossible without it.  
Jaime Aristotle B Alip, managing director of CARD Bank of Philippines, chaired the second session.

## Rejoinder

**FROM PAGE 12**  
For Bangabandhu Bridge Approach Road Gas Pipeline Project and on the basis of the investigation report the Petrobangla on instruction by the energy division has already taken action against those responsible.  
The rejoinder claimed that the latest three-member investigation committee was also constituted at the initiative of the state minister.  
"As regards the parliamentary standing committee members' visit to the spot the Energy State Minister being head of the ministry considered it not appropriate for him to visit the spot with the committee. It may be mentioned that Energy State Minister is not the member of the parliamentary standing committee. He represents the hon'ble Prime Minister in the committee," the rejoinder added.  
**Our reply**  
There had been two official investigations, none of which was initiated by the state minister. Rather, when the latest Petrobangla investigation committee last month asked for the one-year old report from the ministry, the ministry refused to oblige it, saying the report was 'classified'.

Russell, Loton's son, saw the gang hold them against a wall, she added.  
The gang shot them indiscriminately, as Loton received eight bullets in his face, chest and head, and Babu three at the right leg, stomach and left shoulder.  
Family members rushed them to the DMCH where doctors declared Loton dead. Critically injured, Babu is undergoing treatment.  
Aleya told our DMCH correspondent that hired hoodlums of the ruling BNP launched the attack, as her brothers supported the Awami League. "They returned to Dhaka Sunday after a 2-month hiding, as BNP cadres threatened them of dire consequence if they wouldn't leave the area," she added.  
However, Sutrapur police said the brothers have several cases, including for those murders, filed against them.

## U-19 WC cricket

**FROM PAGE 1**  
second straight wins.  
Pakistan defeated Ireland by eight wickets at the Khulna Divisional Stadium and Sri Lanka got one better against Canada at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium.  
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## Kidnapped

**FROM PAGE 1**  
aviation and tourism, said Bablu would be rescued within a day or two.  
Later next week, Zafrul Hasan Chowdhury, state minister for forest and environment, went to the restive hill district and directed local administration to strengthen presence of armed forces personnel with a view to free Bablu.  
Meanwhile, efforts made by Bablu's family to release him by paying ransom also went in vain.  
Apart from Bablu, 29 people were kidnapped in Bandarban last year. Of them, 14 were freed on ransom, nine were killed and six others remained missing.  
Among them, 12 are businessmen, five politicians, two school-teachers, one Union Parishad chairman and another a UP member.

# Counter Ekushey programmes criticised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sammitilo Sangskritik Jote (SSJ), a group of cultural organisations, yesterday condemned the 'counter Ekushey programmes' announced by a ruling BNP's cultural front at the Central Shaheed Minar at the same time.  
Expressing resentment, the SSJ in a joint statement said declaration of the programmes was an expression of 'undemocratic and autocratic attitude' and said it has been organising the Ekushey programmes at the venue for the last 20 years.  
The 'counter programmes' have made the SSJ 'aggrieved', it added.  
Mamunur Rashid, president of Group Theatre Federation, Asaduzzaman Noor MP, president of Abriti Somonnoy Parishad, Ramendu Majumder, president of International Theatre Institute of Bangladesh, Rafiqunnabi, president of Charu Shilpi Sangsad and Prof Jatun Sarkar, president of Udichi Sangkritik Gosthi, signed the statement.

## Fertiliser factory

**FROM PAGE 1**  
about the matter, who acted quickly to mend the faulty pipeline.  
The CUFL authorities called an emergency meeting yesterday afternoon, which decided to compensate the affected villagers, sources said. Top CUFL officials, the UP chairman and the Director of Department of Environment (DoE), Chittagong, among others, attended it.  
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The kingdom's grand mufti and highest religious authority, Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh, condemned the party-goers.  
"What these workers did in a holy place by celebrating and singing and drinking alcohol is a very grave sin," he told the daily. "Committing a sin in a holy place is doubly sinful."  
"Valentine's is an infidel tradition that has no place in Islam," he said.  
The paper did not reveal if the 200 had been released or would face prosecution. Consuming alcohol is strictly forbidden in the conservative kingdom.  
The mufti had already branded February 14 a "pagan Christian holiday" and newspapers published the full text of a fatwa he first issued three years ago.

Officials of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority admitted at a recent meeting that 50 percent of the vehicles in the capital do not have fitness certificates, a DoE source mentioned.  
"More change of law may not help improve the situation. We have to force unit vehicles to obtain fitness certificates by getting repaired and complying with the standards," he stressed.  
Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) with only six sprinkler trucks sometimes tries to contain dust at different places. But its efforts can hardly solve the problem.  
Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka told The Daily Star the DCC would launch "a massive cleaning programme" in June as soon as road repair works are completed.

## First to flame

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Built eight houses," said Shahnaj.  
Razia, Mosheda, Khuki and Delwar, all used to own shanties, but now are left to rue the bleak days ahead.  
At least 60 such people threw up shanties on the 55 katha vacant land owned by one Moazzem Bepari opposite to Sony Cinema Hall a few years back, locals said.  
The slum-dwellers have sought police help to erect shanties again on the land.  
Firefighters are yet to put their fingers on the reason of the inferno although some slum-dwellers suspect that someone set the slum alight in an attempt to grab the land.  
Some victims alleged that firefighters reached the spot about half an hour after being informed, an allegation the station master of the Fire Brigade and Civil Defence Headquarters refuted.  
About 14 units from Mirpur, Kurmitola, Mohammadpur, Palashy and the headquarters fought for two hours to douse the flame but could save no slum.

## Ten robbers

**FROM PAGE 1**  
newspersons.  
The killing of the operative prompted the gang to fire on the villagers, who caught and bludgeoned another nine robbers to death in an outlying area, 25 kilometres northwest of Fatkhkhari upazila headquarters.  
Locals linked one Moshed to the gang as its lynchpin, who was aided by his second-in-command Manik in the raids on locals on the way to a local bazaar.  
Police recovered the bodies from Lambabil and Rangapania and sent them to hospital for autopsy in the afternoon. They also seized two guns and a pistol.  
Police named one of the dead as Nurul Alam, accused of his role in the killing of Jamal and Bhabotshi, who were ruling BNP's youth front Jubo Dal activists.  
Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police (Chittagong) Abdus Satter and Superintendent of Police (SP) Mahbubur Rahman visited the scene.  
Talking to the DIG and SP, locals blamed a reign of terror on Moshed-led gang and said six families fled the village for fear of life.  
Fatkhkhari Police Station Sub-Inspector Shamsuddin filed two cases.

# TIB slams bill

**FROM PAGE 1**  
budget in a provision that he said would infringe on financial and jurisdictional independence of the new body.  
"The provision has chained the commission to financial hurdles," Prof Murshid said, adding it will not be able to work as an independent body like the Election Commission, Comptroller and Auditor General's Office and the Supreme Court.  
Section 28 of the bill repeats the provision of seeking government permission before prosecuting government officials protected by the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1958, he said before the House accepted the amendment excluding the controversial provision from the act.  
The concern hit the spotlight a day after a Bureau of Anti-corruption (Bac) official told The Daily Star that the provision will dent independence of the body.  
The bill lifts the bar that prevents commission members from engaging in extra-jurisdictional work in a move that he said would put strains

# Bangladeshis held

**FROM PAGE 12**  
They charged five riyals a ticket (1.4 dollars) without dinner, and put a large banner outside a tent where the all-night fiesta was held, next to a site where Muslims gather to "stone the devil" during the pilgrimage.  
A singer was among those held after he fell and injured a foot trying to run away, Alm-Madina said.  
The kingdom's grand mufti and highest religious authority, Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh, condemned the party-goers.  
"What these workers did in a holy place by celebrating and singing and drinking alcohol is a very grave sin," he told the daily. "Committing a sin in a holy place is doubly sinful."  
"Valentine's is an infidel tradition that has no place in Islam," he said.  
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## Saifur

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Only 1 percent less than previous fiscal year's.  
The government borrowings in the first seven months of the current fiscal year was Tk 98 crore compared to Tk 700 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year.  
Revenue earnings through the National Board of Revenue (NBR) went up by 12 percent (Tk 553 crore in 6 months) and non-NBR by 22 percent (Tk 451 crore in 6 months).  
The minister said reserve, remittance and exports have also gone up. Export increased by 14 percent and imports by 15 percent. Of the Tk 5,206 crore imports, 43 percent was spent on capital machinery and 16 percent on raw materials. "This proves that the economy is dynamic."

## 3 US soldiers

**FROM PAGE 12**  
United States and its allies are preparing to hand over sovereignty to the Iraqis by July 1, despite disagreements over the best way to choose a new government.  
Some members of the Governing Council said the US-favored use of caucuses was losing support.  
"This system is alien to us," said Naseer Kamel al-Chaderchi, a Sunni Muslim. "It's based on city councils and the integrity of these councils is in question."  
He added that the Governing Council, which is sticking to the June 30 deadline for the transfer of power, hasn't had a formal discussion about caucuses, but said there is an "inclination" toward rejecting them.  
Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish Sunni member of the council, Agreed that the caucus plan has little support. He said the Americans could simply hand over sovereignty to the Governing Council but most Iraqis wouldn't accept it because the body was appointed by the United States.  
"So the second option is to hold a national conference with the wide participation of political and religious figures. A leadership will emerge from this conference to take over," he said. "Personally I prefer the second option because I think it will enjoy the greatest support among Iraqis. They Americans are saying now that they will not block any option agreed upon by the Iraqi people."  
On Monday, US administrator L. Paul Bremer said he would move to block any effort by Iraqi leaders to put Islamic law as the foundation of legislation in the interim constitution, which is supposed to take effect at the end of February.  
However, Mohsen Abdel-Hamid, the current president of the Iraqi Governing Council and a Sunni Muslim hard-liner, has proposed making Islamic law the "principal basis" of legislation, which many Iraqi women's groups fear will threaten their legal rights.

on the commission's performance.  
"As the search body (the five-member group that will select six members for the president to appoint three of them as commissioners) does not include any representative of the opposition party, it may favour the government by handpicking members for the commission," Prof Murshid said.  
The bill overlooked some civil-society proposals, including non-inclusion of Bac officials and employees in the commission and inclusion of customs, money laundering and passport in its outreach. "We don't want a second Bac that played a biased role."  
On what the TIB will do next, the watchdog chairperson said it would hold talks with civil society leaders to mobilise them to voice for amendment to some sections of the bill.  
TIB Director (Research) Dr Iftekhar Hossain, Research Associate Shamaila Mahbub and Dr Asif Nazrul, a law teacher, were also present.

# Bangladeshis held

"Valentine's Day is a pagan Christian holiday that no Muslim who believes in God or judgement day should celebrate," it said. "A Muslim is forbidden from taking part in this holiday and other unholy celebrations through food, drink, commerce, shopping, gifts, greetings, advertisement or any other form."  
Muslims only celebrate two feasts, Eid-ul-Fitr which follows the fasting month of Ramadan, and Eid-ul-Adha at the end of the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah.  
The religious police bar shops from selling red roses, teddy bears, greeting cards or even red-coloured gifts to celebrate St Valentine's Day.  
They also warn shops, hotels, restaurants and public parks not to stage any special activities on the day named after the Christian patron saint of lovers.

## Saber

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Thursday's AL-enforced country-wide hartal and was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). As his condition did not improve, he shifted to ZH Shikdar Medical College Hospital at Gulshan on Friday.  
Earlier yesterday, Saber appeared before the High Court with a petition for ad-interim bail in the case lodged against him with Motijheel Police Station on charge of creating unrest during Thursday's hartal. The court granted him bail.  
He came to the court in an ambulance and went to the courtroom in a wheel chair.  
Saber, a former deputy minister and lawmaker, was having pain in the head and vision problem, particularly in the right eye. A medical board was formed for him at the hospital and it feared serious damage to his right eye.  
Family sources said Saber's treatment would begin soon after he reaches London today.  
Meanwhile, the hartal-hour attack on Saber enraged the AL rank and file, forcing the party leadership to go for another hartal on Saturday.  
Top political leaders excepting those from the BNP-led ruling alliance visited Saber at the DMCH and Shikdar hospital. They expressed sympathy for him and blamed the government for the attack on him. The leaders who visited him included Sheikh Hasina, former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Dr Kamal Hossain, HM Ershad, Rashed Khan Menon, Monjurul Ahsan Khan and Mujahidul Islam Selim.

## Nuke rivals

**FROM PAGE 1**  
was since their 1947 independence from Britain.  
A cease-fire line divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan, but both claim the territory in its entirety. More than 65,000 people have been killed in an insurgency that has raged in Indian-controlled portions of the territory since 1989.  
In January, Vajpayee agreed to discuss Kashmir while Musharraf promised not to support terrorism in Pakistani territory directed against India. India accuses Pakistan of training and arming Islamic guerrillas fighting for Kashmir's independence from India or its merger with Pakistan, a charge Pakistan denies.  
Early this month, Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes said Pakistan's government has taken effective measures against Islamic militant groups based in Pakistan, leading to a decline in incursions into Indian-controlled Kashmir.  
In recent months, India and Pakistan have moved to restore transportation links and diplomatic ties. Soldiers in November halted cross-border firing in Kashmir.  
India is also set to embark on its first cricket tour of Pakistan since 1989.  
The talks on a Kashmir bus service and a possible train and bus route between Pakistan's southern Sindh province and India's north-western Rajasthan state are expected to occur on March 8-9 and March 29-30, the diplomats said.