

Pak PM due in India today for talks

AFP, New Delhi

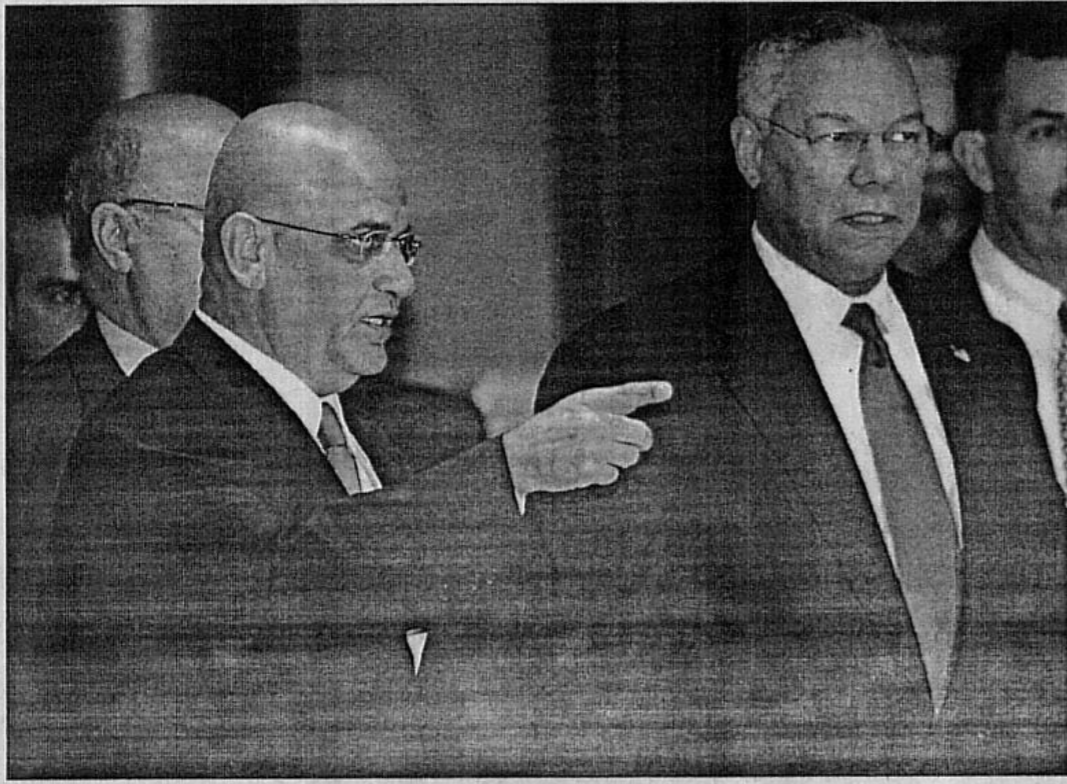
Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz is due to make his first visit to India this week as New Delhi conceded patience to Islamabad as the nuclear rivals argued anew over Kashmir.

Aziz, who arrives today in his capacity as outgoing chairman of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, a regional forum of seven nations, will meet his counterpart Manmohan Singh the following day, according to India's foreign ministry.

The two leaders are expected to review recent developments in the formal peace process, known as the composite dialogue, round two of which is due to begin later this month.

Aziz's visit comes as a fresh verbal spat broke out between the two sides, which have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir.

The week saw fireworks from both sides, with Singh setting the ball rolling by rejecting President Pervez Musharraf's new proposals on solving the core Kashmir dispute.



US Secretary of State Colin Powell (R) leaves a hotel with Palestinian negotiations minister Saeb Erakat (L) after meeting PLO Chairman Mahmud Abbas in the West Bank town of Jericho yesterday. On his first visit to the region in 18 months, Powell met Palestinian leaders here yesterday after top-level talks with Israeli officials, signalling a new US departure following Washington's long boycott of late leader Yasser Arafat.

PHOTO: AFP

Powell wins Israeli vow to ensure Palestinian polls

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Reviving a long-dormant US peace-making role, Secretary of State Colin Powell won an Israeli pledge yesterday to allow Palestinians freedom of movement to enable them to hold an election for Yasser Arafat's successor.

Powell, on his first visit to the region in 18 months, voiced confidence Israel would help facilitate the vote, but Israeli leaders made no public commitment to pull back troops from West Bank cities as the Palestinians have demanded.

No breakthroughs were expected in talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders as Powell, who announced his resignation last week, is now seen by both sides as a lame duck with little clout in future US policy.

Despite that, Powell's mission was intended to give substance to President Bush's pledge for a new push for peace while Palestinians prepare to elect a successor to

Arafat, who died on Nov. 11. Washington had shunned Arafat as an "obstacle to peace."

"This is a moment of opportunity as we look forward to the Palestinian elections that will be held on the ninth of January," Powell said before talks with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Jerusalem.

"We will do everything that we can, working together, to see that these elections are held in a peaceful way and give the Palestinian people new opportunity to move forward," he said.

While urging Israel to give the Palestinians breathing room to hold their first presidential election since 1996, he called on the new Palestinian leadership "to speak out clearly against terrorism...and stop all violence."

Powell later met the interim Palestinian leadership in the West Bank town of Jericho.

Following talks with Powell, Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan

Shalom said Israel would do "everything in its power" to enable Palestinian elections to take place.

"It includes, of course, freedom of movement," he told reporters. "We'll do everything we can in order to remove any obstacles that they might face in their preparations to have their elections."

But Shalom's pledge was short on specifics and he insisted any easing would be carried out "in a way that won't harm Israel's security."

Israel says its army blockade of the West Bank, a network of roadblocks and checkpoints, is to stop Palestinian suicide bombers from entering the Jewish state.

US officials had suggested before Powell's one-day visit that he would lean on Israel to pull back forces from West Bank cities and Palestinian officials to restrain militant groups.

The Bush administration has been criticized for making only

sporadic attempts to bring Israel and the Palestinians together during the past four years of violence.

Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qorei said he would urge Powell to help bring about an Israeli army redeployment away from West Bank urban areas one month before the vote.

"If elections are held under occupation, people will say the candidate rode in on top of an Israeli tank," Qorei said, reflecting the fear of pro-negotiation moderates being branded stooges of Israel by militant factions.

An Israeli official said the government would consider such a redeployment if it received a formal request.

Bush has vowed to capitalize on what he calls new opportunities for peace after Arafat's death at a Paris hospital. Washington and Israel had tried to isolate Arafat, saying he incited violence, an accusation he always denied.

Iran suspends key nuke acts to avert sanctions

REUTERS, Vienna

Iran yesterday froze sensitive nuclear work including uranium enrichment in a move likely to thwart US efforts to report the Islamic state to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

The suspension was confirmed by Mohamed ElBaradei, head of UN atomic watchdog the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"I think pretty much everything has come to a halt right now," ElBaradei told reporters in Vienna.

"We're just trying to apply seals and make sure everything has been stopped," he said, adding that operations at the uranium conversion facility at Isfahan had also stopped.

The suspension, which Iran said would come into effect on Monday, came three days ahead of a meeting of the IAEA board to discuss Iran's case.

Washington wants the IAEA board to refer Iran to the Security Council and sanctions imposed on Tehran for failing to disclose a range

of nuclear work and facilities in the past.

But Iran -- which says its nuclear program is geared entirely to electricity generation, not bombs -- last week struck a deal with the European Union to avoid Security Council referral if it suspended sensitive nuclear work.

The EU hopes to persuade Iran in the coming months to make the temporary suspension permanent by offering it a range of economic and political incentives. But Washington is skeptical that Iran will stick to any deal and Iran says it will never abandon its nuclear program.

Scepticism about Iran's intentions was heightened last week when diplomats revealed it had stepped up some uranium conversion activities just ahead of the suspension.

ElBaradei confirmed Iran had produced several tonnes of uranium hexafluoride (UF6), the form of uranium used in the enrichment process. Enrichment is a process of

purifying uranium for use as fuel in atomic power plants or weapons.

He said Iran had produced around two tonnes of UF6 which would not have been enough for a weapon. Iran had previously denied the reports that it had produced UF6.

IAEA inspectors currently in Iran are expected to verify that Iran has halted all such activities and to seal the facilities where they are carried out.

Iran agreed to suspend uranium enrichment as part of a deal similar to one it made with Britain, Germany and France in October 2003.

But that deal subsequently unravelled and Iran resumed building and assembly key nuclear parts.

That behavior, coupled with the fact that the IAEA still has several outstanding "questions" about an atomic program which Iran kept secret for nearly two decades, means many diplomats fear Iran will find a reason to resume uranium enrichment again in the future.

Major powers gather in Egypt to help Iraq emerge from violence

AFP, Sharm el-Sheikh

Delegates to an international conference on Iraq began gathering in an Egyptian resort yesterday to discuss the war-ravaged country's future and other contentious Middle East issues.

The two-day meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, on the Red Sea, is to bring representatives of the United States, Iraq and Iran together at the same table with those of other major Western powers, Arab countries, China, Russia and the United Nations.

The focus is on bringing stability to Iraq, which has been in the grip of a bloody insurgency since the US-led invasion in 2003.

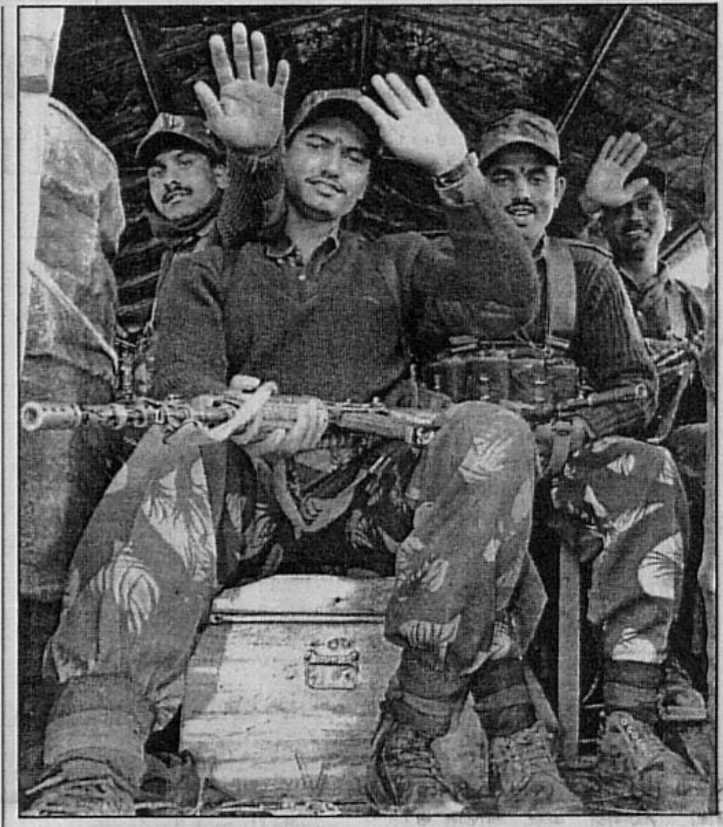
Baghdad's interim government announced at the weekend that nationwide "elections" would take place on January 30, despite the continuing conflict between US-led troops and insurgents and reluctance by the United Nations to expose its workers to the violence.

Further impetus to the conference came when the so-called Paris Club of creditor nations agreed on Sunday to cut Iraq's debt to it -- 40 billion dollars (30 billion euros) -- by 80 percent.

The United States pushed the idea of the international meeting months ago as President George W. Bush campaigned for re-election. But it rejected the call from France -- which first suggested the conference last year -- for it to be under the aegis of the United Nations and to include Iraqi opposition figures.

UN chief Kofi Annan, who in September called the Iraq war "illegal", was from late Monday to attend the conference to be chaired by Egypt.

Bush on Sunday welcomed the debt-reduction, and used a media conference in "Chile" to dismiss criticism about the Iraq war, which was originally justified by the supposed existence of weapons of mass destruction, none of which were ever found.



Indian army soldiers wave from the back of a truck in Srinagar yesterday prior to their departure from the state as part of the troop pullout. Indian troops starting leaving the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir from November 17, in a move which was welcomed by Pakistan.

PHOTO: AFP

Restrictions around Suu Kyi intact

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's planned release of nearly 4,000 prisoners appeared to have halted yesterday with no sign of any easing of restrictions around the nation's most famous detainee, democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Families of political dissidents faced an anxious wait after one opposition MP expected to have been released was told he faced an additional 60 days in prison, according to his family.

Myanmar's military leaders on Thursday ordered the release of nearly 4,000 inmates they say may have been wrongly imprisoned by a now-dissolved military intelligence unit. The opposition said red tape meant the process could take a week.

Only several hundred have so far been released, among them a couple of dozen dissidents including the leader of 1988 student protests, Min Ko Naing, the country's number two political prisoner after Aung San Suu Kyi.

Media on Monday gathered close to the home of the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) amid widespread rumours of her release from house arrest but security remained at normal levels, according to an AFP correspondent.



A British soldier attached to the Black Watch searches an Iraqi man at a check-point in the desert near camp Dogwood, 45km south of Baghdad Sunday. The British forces stepped up security and changed their check-point procedures after rising incidents of suicide bombing.

PHOTO: AFP

BRITISH GENERAL SAYS Troops could stay in Iraq beyond 2005

AFP, London

British troops could be sent to help US forces anywhere inside Iraq and may stay in the country beyond the end of US-led coalition forces' mandate in 2005, Britain's army commander said in an interview published yesterday.

General Sir Mike Jackson's remarks in the Independent newspaper come three weeks after British troops were deployed for the first time to a hotspot near Baghdad to support the US takeover of the rebel stronghold of Fallujah.

Iraq's transition process, under way since June, specifies December 2005 as the end of the foreign military coalition's mandate, but Jackson, without giving any date, said the British deployment was "event-driven".

"How long we stay there is going to be event-driven," Jackson said.

The recent redeployment by the Black Watch regiment away from the relatively safe British-held area around Basra further angered a public expressing growing opposition to the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq.

All the British operations had been in the southern area of Basra "until this one-off deployment of the Black Watch," Jackson told the Independent.

"That is not to say, in the future, there may not be a military requirement of the coalition as a whole for a British unit or units to be elsewhere," Jackson said.

The Black Watch would be pulled back within a few weeks and would not be replaced at Camp Dogwood, the area where they have been deployed near Baghdad, he added.

Troops quit Kashmir summer capital

AFP, Srinagar

A battalion of Indian army soldiers yesterday pulled out of Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar, marking the first withdrawal from the urban hub of insurgency in the Himalayan state, officials said.

India has been cutting troops from Kashmir since November 17, in a planned move to nurture a fragile peace process with nuclear-armed rival Pakistan.

A fall in incursions by Islamic militants into Indian Kashmir from the Pakistani-zone and less violence in the hinterland were given as the reasons for the troop cut.

The cut comes a day before the arrival of Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in New Delhi to meet Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to discuss the status of peace talks on Kashmir.

Reports say India may pull-out as many as 40,000 of an estimated

200,000 soldiers in the state, which has been hit by an anti-Indian rebellion since 1989. Thousands have died since the unrest broke out.

"Today (Monday) one battalion of Indian army troops have pulled out of the hinterland. They will be deployed outside the state," Indian army spokesman Colonel Sam Sung told reporters in Srinagar.

The troops wearing camouflaged clothes boarded buses, trucks and jeeps, and waved at their colleagues at Srinagar's high-security army airport.

Srinagar, which serves as summer capital between May to October, is regarded as a hotbed of the insurgency and is frequently the scene of car-bomb explosions, clashes and ambushes by rebels against Indian forces.

However, the violence has been declining sharply in the state's main city over the past year.

Taiwan says to push for referendum on island's future

AFP, Taipei

In a move likely to anger China, Taiwan's president has vowed to push through a new constitution describing the island as an independent state and threatened to hold a referendum on Taiwan's future.

In campaigning for candidates from his pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) ahead of December 11 parliamentary elections, President Chen Shui-bian appeared to turn away from recent conciliatory gestures towards Beijing.

Chen said Taiwan, which China claims as part of its territory, needed a new constitution to reflect changes on the island which has been ruled as a de facto independent state for over half a century.

"What we need are substantial changes...and it is a new law," Chen told a rally on Sunday.

**Export Promotion Bureau**  
1, Kawran Bazar (TCB Bhaban)  
Dhaka

**Circular**

This is for the information of all concerned that 3 (three) more telephones have been added to the PABX of the Export Promotion Bureau Head Office (1, Kawran Bazar, TCB Bhaban, Dhaka) for convenience of the clients. The particulars of the telephones are as under:

Existing 5 (five) Telephones	New 3 (three) telephones
9144821	9128377
9144822	8112427
9144823	8151497
9144824	
8151496	

S M Ashrafur Islam  
Secretary

GD-724

**Bush vows to work for spy agency overhaul**

AP, Washington

Unwilling to concede defeat, congressional leaders expressed hope Sunday that lawmakers could return next month to resolve a turf battle that has blocked passage of an overhaul of the nation's intelligence agencies. President Bush pledged to work with them for passage.

Congressional leaders said prospects depended on how successful Bush was in lining up support.

"For us to do the bill in early December it will take significant involvement by the president and the vice president," said Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn. "It will take real focus on their part."

At a news conference after an economic summit in Chile, Bush said: "I was disappointed the bill didn't pass. I thought it was going to pass up to the last minute."

He said he and Vice President Dick Cheney had talked with key members of the House and "it was clear I wanted the bill passed." He did not respond directly to a question about whether opposition from Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld contributed to the deadlock.

**Nepali communists urge Maoists to shun violence**

AFP, Kathmandu

The Maoists fighting to overthrow Nepal's monarchy are in a "day dream" if they think war will achieve their aim, the communist party said Sunday, urging for talks to end the bloody conflict.

The Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist also assured the Maoists it would support their demand for elections to a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution if the rebels helped to restore peace.

"If the Maoists think they can capture Kathmandu and seize the government by terrorism, it would be merely a day dream for them," party general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal said at a memorial for a district chief killed by Maoists.

"I appeal to the Maoist leaders to give up the practice of killing individuals innocent people as such acts can never fulfill their political objectives," Nepal said.

"The Maoist rebels should give up their violence and destruction of the country's economic infrastructure and join the main political stream or they will also meet the same fate as that of the Khmer Rouge of Cambodia and the Shining Path Communists of Peru," Nepal said.

His call came as the military said at least 66 Maoist rebels and 10 government troops were killed in an overnight clash in the bloodiest incident in the Himalayan kingdom in months.

"I appeal to both the government and the Maoists to come to the negotiating table and end the current violence against the innocent people," Nepal said.

"If the Maoists assure us that they would help restore peace and security in the country, our party is ready to support their demand of constituent assembly elections," he said.

Peace talks between the government and the Maoists broke down in 2003 over the rebels' demand for a constituent assembly that would ultimately aim for the establishment of a secular communist republic.

The Maoist rebels have been fighting since 1996 to overthrow the

**unicef**

**Bangladesh Country Office**

**Sale Notice**

- Sealed bids are invited from privileged and non-privileged persons/institutions for the sale of IT equipment, Miscellaneous Office equipment, furniture and vehicles on "as is where is basis".
- The vehicles were imported duty free to Bangladesh, therefore the offer from privileged persons should be made in US Dollars (\$), and non-privileged persons in Taka, excluding duty and taxes.
- Non-privileged buyers will be responsible for obtaining the permission of NBR/Customs and payment of CD/VAT and other duties and taxes prior to taking delivery of vehicle.
- Bid papers and conditions can be collected from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor reception desk of UNICEF Office at BSL Office Complex, 1 Minto Road, Ramna, Dhaka from 24 November to 07 December 2004 from 10:00 to 15:00 hours except holidays, Fridays and Saturdays.
- Sealed bids will be received up to 10:00 hours on 08 December 2004 and opened at 10:30 hours on the same day.
- UNICEF Bangladesh reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids without assigning any reason.

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