

# Pakistan, India to talk pull-out from Siachen

Nuke safeguard deal signed

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan and India will hold fresh talks on withdrawing troops from a strategic glacier in disputed Kashmir that is billed as the world's highest battlefield, the two sides said yesterday.

"We have both agreed that the directors general of military operations will meet ... we have suggested some dates," Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri told reporters after talks with his Indian host, Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee.

"I spoke to his excellency (Mukherjee) about that (Siachen glacier) and as soon as the dates are agreed we will be very happy for that meeting to take place," Kasuri said.

The talks were part of a peace process that began in January

2004.

Thousands of Indian and Pakistani soldiers stand eyeball-to-eyeball atop the Siachen glacier -- which overlooks China and India -- where the icy temperatures, altitude and accidents have claimed more lives than enemy fire.

The dispute over Kashmir -- of which Siachen is a part -- has been the trigger for two of the three wars since both nations gained independence from Britain in 1947.

Analysts say Siachen is of little strategic value, but the Indian army wants troop positions marked out in case Pakistan moves its soldiers in after a withdrawal.

Islamabad fears that writing down the positions would be tacit acceptance of India's claims to Siachen.

In September, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf agreed to fast-track discussions on the subject to arrive at a solution, during talks in Havana.

"The discussions have taken place both at the civil and military level," Mukherjee said, adding Pakistan had suggested another meeting at the military level. "The date will be sorted out later," he said.

India has occupied most of the 6,300-metre glacier since 1987 and has refused to withdraw its troops.

The rivals had regular artillery duels in the region until a ceasefire was reached, in November 2003, along the heavily-militarised ceasefire Line of Control in Kashmir.

## Cop held for taking bribe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces arrested a sub-inspector (SI) of Dhaka Metropolitan (DMP) Police while taking bribe from a businessman in Sutrapur area on Tuesday night.

The arrestee, Fasiur Rahman, was holding charge of Sadarghat police outpost under Kotwali Police Station (PS).

A case against him was filed with Sutrapur PS under Speedy Trial Act and he was produced before the CMM's Court yesterday. The court placed him on a three-day remand.

Sutrapur police said the businessman, Yunus Ali, had earlier informed the joint forces that the SI was pressing him to pay Tk 5,000 and threatened that if he did not, he would be implicated in a number of cases. And he committed to Fasiur to give him over Tk 1,000 at a particular time and place.

As per an arrangement, Yunus was handing over the money to the police official and the joint forces caught him red-handed.

Asked about this, investigation officer of the case Zillur Rahman of Sutrapur PS said that on February 12 the businessman was shown

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PHOTO: STAR

Thousands of people throng the Ekushey Book Fair on the Bangla Academy premises on the occasion of language martyrs' day yesterday.

## Car bomb kills 13 in Najaf

AFP, Najaf

A suicide car bomber attacked an Iraqi police checkpoint in the Shiite holy city of Najaf yesterday, killing at least 13 people and wounding dozens more, police said.

Najaf's governor, Assaad Abu Gilel, said the dead were seven police, three women and three children.

The attack targeted a police checkpoint in Maydan Square near Najaf's old city, which holds the mausoleum of Imam Ali, the holiest site in Shiite Islam, and the offices of several leading clerics.

"This was a terrorist operation. The police checkpoint prevented the car from entering the old city, so the terrorist blew himself on the spot," the governor said.

Gilel said authorities had received intelligence reports

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## Train blast won't stall Indo-Pak peace process

2 neighbours vow

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India and Pakistan yesterday vowed not to let the blasts in the friendship train, which killed 68 people on Sunday, to stall the peace process between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

Addressing a joint press conference after the India-Pakistan Joint Commission meeting, foreign ministers Pranab Mukherjee of

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# Mughal era mosque in a shambles

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A Mughal era architecture, the Parobarpur mosque in Kaliganj, is in a shambles due to lack of proper maintenance and supervision.

The beautiful terracotta structure of archaeological value has lost its glory as many wall ornamentations were stolen or damaged, said a senior official of the Department of Archaeology.

The roof of the mosque caved in, the walls got damaged while plants, shrubs and trees have been growing all over the structure that has become a refuge for stray animals.

On the outside, the mosque is 52 feet 5 inches long and 39 feet 8 inches wide and the walls are 5 feet 9 inches to 7 feet thick. The mosque has ten doors and one large dome in the centre. There were three more domes over a terrace with columns.

The three domes have already been destroyed while two of the columns damaged.

Inside the western wall of the mosque, there are three mihrabs with attractive ornamentations and figures of two blossomed lilies on one of the spandrels.

Many locals consider the mosque an icon of Satkhira. Historians date the mosque at 1678

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PHOTO: STAR

The Parobarpur mosque, a Mughal era architecture of immense archaeological value, in Kaliganj of Satkhira stands uncared for.

## Baby's first day out of prison

A CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

As Nurunnahar Begum came out of the jail with her one and a half year-old son Bahadur yesterday, the baby took his first breath in the fresh air outside prison.

Pregnant Nurunnahar was sent to Noakhali Jail in mid-2005 as her husband and in-laws, angry at not getting 'enough' as dowry, filed a fabricated child kidnap case against her.

The court granted her bail but she had to stay in prison as she failed to get any guarantor. Even after the birth of her son there, she continued her jail days without any trial.

Her ordeal came to an apparent

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## Cleaner dies in gas-filled underground water tank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One died and five others were injured as a gas-filled underground water tank exploded at a private university in the city's Mohakhali area yesterday.

The dead was identified as Lal Mia, 35, and the injured were day labourers James Baroi, 20, Monsur Sarder, 27, Soheli Mia, 23, Idris Mia, 22 and Golam Mostofa, 23.

James Baroi told The Daily Star that the reservoir, located on the ground floor of a 12-storey building of East West University, was exploded when they got into it for cleaning at around 11:00am.

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# Britain announces start of Iraq troop withdrawal

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced yesterday the start of the withdrawal of British troops from Iraq just as thousands of additional US troops were arriving there to try to restore order in Baghdad.

Blair, whose popularity at home has suffered greatly because of his decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003, said British troop levels there would fall by 1,600 over coming months, but soldiers would stay into 2008 as long as they were wanted.

"The actual reduction in forces will be from the present 7,100 -- itself down from over 9,000 two years ago and 40,000 at the time of the conflict -- to roughly 5,500," Blair told parliament.

"The UK military presence will continue into 2008, for as long as we are wanted and have a job to do."

Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen also said on Wednesday Denmark would withdraw all of its ground troops from Iraq by August and replace them

with a nine-strong helicopter unit. It has about 470 soldiers serving under British command.

Australia, another key US ally in Iraq, said on Wednesday it had no immediate plans to cut troop levels.

President Bush has ordered a "surge" of 21,500 extra American soldiers to Iraq where US forces now number more than 140,000.

Vice President Dick Cheney said on Wednesday the United States wanted to finish its mission in Iraq and "return with honor".

Blair, due to step down later this year, said the British troop withdrawal reflected success in southern Iraq, where command of the main Iraqi army unit in Basra was handed over to Iraqis on Tuesday.

Since the 2003 invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein, British troops have been responsible for Iraq's southernmost four provinces, which are mainly Shia and have been quieter than mixed or mainly Sunni areas patrolled by Americans.

# SHARIAKANDI MUNICIPALITY Probe report reveals Tk 43 lakh graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least Tk 43 lakh of Shariakandi Pourasabha was misappropriated through bills in the name of fake projects, a district administration probe report reveals.

The report found that pourasabha Chairman Md Abdul Hamid Sarder embezzled Tk 2,42,093 showing fake bills of construction work for a fake project in the municipality areas.

It is alleged that although the investigation report was submitted four years ago, the authority has not

yet taken any action. The probe committee headed by former additional deputy commissioner General Abdul Mannan was formed following written complaints of a few ward commissioners to investigate irregularities and financial corruptions of the establishment.

The investigation found irregularities of at least Tk 43,77,473.

Pourasabha Chairman Abdul Hamid, however, denied the allegation against him, claiming that he has been "victimised" by the

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## More dist-level politicians held

STAR REPORT

The joint forces yesterday arrested a few district-level politicians and two municipality chairmen across the country.

In Dinajpur, police arrested Birganj upazila unit of Awami League General Secretary Shiblee

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Prayer Timing		
February 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		