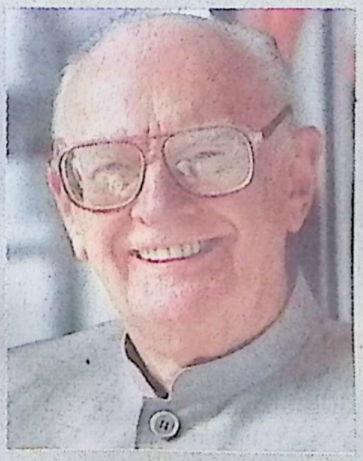

AFP

Cypriot leaders start peace talks

The new president of Cyprus Demetris Christofias starts talks on March 22 with Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat, aimed at reunifying the divided island. It is the first time the two men have met since Christofias was elected president in February. Both leaders are from the political left and optimistic about the chance of a settlement. Talks have been stalled since 2004 when Greek Cypriots rejected a UN peace plan that was backed by Turkish Cypriots. The Greek and Turkish Cypriots have been divided since 1974, and the island's partition has long been an obstacle to Turkey's bid to join the EU. The Greek Cypriot south, which joined the EU in 2004, holds veto rights over Turkey's accession.

Visionary, sci-fi pioneer dies

Visionary and sci-fi pioneer Arthur C Clarke, best known for his "Space Odyssey" series, dies in his adopted home of Sri Lanka at the age of 90. Doctors say he died of respiratory complications and heart failure linked to the post-polio syndrome that had kept him wheelchair-bound for years. Clarke, born in England in 1917, was one of the first to suggest the use of satellites orbiting the earth for communications, and in the 1940s forecast that man would reach the moon by the year 2000 -- an idea experts at first dismissed. When Neil Armstrong landed in 1969, the US said Clarke "provided the essential intellectual drive that led us to the moon."



Taslima Nasreen 'exiled' again


AFP

Taslima Nasreen arrives in Europe to begin a new life, media reports say on March 19, after protests by Muslim groups last year forced her into hiding in India. A spokesperson tells the media that her exact location in Europe cannot be given. Taslima says days before the move that her health had suffered as a result of spending time in hiding. She was moved from Kolkata under cover last November after Muslim groups staged violent protests, accusing her of having again insulted Islam.

'Iraq war was right' says Bush on 5th anniversary

The invasion of Iraq and overthrow of Saddam Hussein was "the right decision," and the world is a better place because the US acted, George Bush says on March 20 in a speech to mark the 5th anniversary of the war. While Bush makes his speech, hundreds are arrested across the US as anti-war protests are staged in several major cities amid mounting opposition to the war and its costs. Nobel-prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz calculates that the war will cost $3 trillion once health care for veterans and future economic losses are considered.

