

ENVIRONMENT & TRAVEL NEWS BRIEFS

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On Borders in Kashmir and the Fate of the Siachen Glacier, The Panda House in Washington D.C., Biophilia and Therapeutic Dolphins.

Borders and the Glacier between India and Pakistan

India and Pakistan have agreed on a January deadline to end their dispute over the world's coldest and highest battlefield: the Siachen Glacier, which is the natural barrier between Pakistani Baltistan and India's Ladakh.

There are now two crossing points on the Line of Control which separates Pakistan-occupied Kashmir from Indian-occupied Kashmir and Jammu. The earthquake that devastated the region on October 8th left more than 74,000 people dead.

Sources: "India doesn't Want a Repeat of Kargil: Mukherjee," *The Times of India*, 3 November 2005; "Kalam to Visit Last LoC Village in Kashmir," *The Times of India*, 25 November 2005; "Winter is Coming to Kashmir," *The Economist*, 10 November 2005.

Timed Tickets to the Panda House in Washington, D.C.

Given the enormous popular interest in Tai Shan (the National Zoo's giant panda cub), free, timed-entry tickets are issued on a first-come, first-served basis on the zoo's Web site. Visitors will have 10 minutes each to peep at the cub. No tickets will be required to see his parents who will be on exhibit outside on most days.

Sources: "Panda Ticket Scramble To Begin at 9 Tomorrow," *The Washington Post*, 20 November 2005; <http://www.fonz.org/pandaticket.htm>.

Biophilia and Therapeutic Dolphins

A study published in the *British Medical Journal* supports the theory of biophilia, which asserts that human health depends on relationships with the natural environment. Psychiatrists from the University of Leicester recruited 30 patients diagnosed with mild to moderate depression in the US and Honduras. The volunteers' psychotherapeutic and anti-depression drugs were replaced by outdoor activities which included swimming and snorkelling, with or without dolphins. After two weeks, measurable symptoms of depression and anxiety decreased in the dolphin group. The coral reef alone, no matter how bright the fish, did not have the same effect as did mammals. The improvement was still felt three months after the experiment.

Sources: "Swim with Dolphins 'Lifts Depression'," *The Australian*, 25 November 2005; "Swimming with Dolphins can beat Depression," *The Daily Mail*, 25 November 2005.