

hindustan Times, 1 April 2006

aran links N-deal to rising oil prices

Washington, March 31: Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran has cast the nuclear deal with the US in context of environmental consequences of oil consumption. Saran's view echoes some of the arguments advanced by President George W Bush in favour of the pact. "Will India's rising demands for oil and attendant implications for global oil prices help the world economy? What would be the emission consequences of greater consumption of fossil fuels?" Saran asked during a speech at the conservative think tanks Heritage Foundation on Thursday

hindustan Times, 1 April 2006

US clean chit to Pakistan's AQ Khan

Islamabad, March 31: The US envoy in Pakistan has expressed satisfaction over the investigation against Abdul Qadeer Khan, the disgraced nuclear scientist accused of proliferating nuclear technology to North Korea, Libya, Iran and other countries. Noting that Khan's network had been dismantled, Ryan C Crocker told a private news channel that no such person from Pakistan would cause similar trouble again, Pakistan Today reported.

Daily Times, 2 April 2006

US to apply for SAARC observer status

Islamabad, April 1: The US is expected to formally apply for membership as observer of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Radio Moscow reported on Saturday. US Under Secretary John Wright is to formally apply for membership to Dhaka, the current chairman of SAARC. Member countries decided at the last SAARC meeting to include Afghanistan in the regional grouping and invite Japan and China as observers.

Dawn, 2 April 2006

Nuclear deal failure to affect ties with US: India

Washington, April 1: Indian Foreign Minister Shyam Saran, who concluded a three-day visit to Washington this weekend, has said that the failure to get Congressional approval for the Indo-US nuclear deal would have an adverse effect on India's relations with the United States... Asked if there was any suggestion to amend some of the features of the nuclear deal to make it acceptable, Mr. Saran said India did not support any changes in the accord signed in New Delhi on March 2...

Dawn, 3 April 2006

US to review visa plan for Asians

Washington, April 2: A US programme that recruits mostly highly educated Asian professionals has come under increasing scrutiny as Americans debate moves to tighten immigration regulations. Launched in 1990, the H-1B visa programme allows foreign scientists, engineers and technologists to be employed for up to six years, at the end of which they must obtain a permanent residency or return home. While the programme is popular among key high-tech companies and aimed at bringing in some of the world's best brains to help the United States remain competitive, some politicians and groups concerned about American job security argue that it may not be working as intended...

The Frontier Post, 3 April 2006

Pakistan-US meeting on 5th

Washington, April 2: Joint Working Group meeting of Pakistan and US will be formally held in Washington on April 5 (Wednesday). The Pakistani delegation will be headed by Interior Minister. Both the countries will discuss in length cooperation in various bilateral issues, fight against terrorism, steps to control human trafficking, security arrangement in order and other matters in detail during the meeting on April 5.

Daily Times, 3 April 2006

Pakistan exports to US up 13.2 percent in 2005

Washington, April 2: Pakistan's exports to the United States rose 13.2 percent to \$3.3 billion in fiscal year 2005, while imports from the US fell 31.2 percent to \$1.2 billion, according to a US report on trade. The US goods trade deficit with Pakistan was \$2 billion in 2005, an increase of \$945 million from \$1.1 billion in 2004, says the 2006 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers, released by the Office of the United States Trade Representative on Friday. US foreign direct investment (FDI) in Pakistan rose from \$790 million in 2003 to \$991 million in 2004...

Dawn, 3 April 2006

10 members of Indian caucus oppose nuclear deal

Washington, April 2: India's efforts to get congressional approval for a nuclear deal with the US received a major jolt when members of its own caucus on the Hill co-sponsored a bill opposing the agreement. Officials at the Indian Embassy in Washington were shocked when they learned this weekend that of the 18 US lawmakers who have tabled a motion against the nuclear deal at least 10 are members of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans. The caucus was set up in the 1990s to create a pocket of Indian influence on Capitol Hill, the site of the US Senate and the House of Representatives...

Daily Times, 4 April 2006

Rice played godmother to nuclear deal between India and US

Washington, April 3: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is the true architect of the Indo-US nuclear cooperation treaty, which, according to a detailed investigative report in the Washington Post on Monday, now faces a "hard sell" in Congress. Rice is the one who convinced President Bush that India should be helped into becoming a major power in the 21st century as a counterpoise to China. Rice, whose academic work was confined to Warsaw Pact countries, the Soviet Union and the Cold War, has continued to maintain, what observers here see as a "Cold War mindset". Her influence on Bush is considerable. In personal terms, she remains his closest confidante. The nuclear deal was worked out in a highly secretive manner by American and Indian officials and no key congressional leader was taken into confidence, an omission that will come to haunt the agreement as it goes for approval on Capitol Hill. Even nuclear experts within the administration were kept at an arm's length...

Dawn, 4 April 2006

Key evidence in Al Qaeda trial came from Pakistan

Washington, April 3: The key evidence against the only person convicted in the US for his connection to the 9/11 attacks came largely from a senior Al Qaeda leader arrested in Pakistan, US and diplomatic sources told Dawn. The Bush administration is seeking death sentence for Zacarias Moussaoui, a 37-year-old Frenchman of Moroccan descent, for his alleged role in the Sept 11, 2001 attacks. A key piece of evidence in the sentencing trial of Moussaoui is a 58-page deposition from Khaled, who was captured in Pakistan in 2003, interrogated by Pakistani and US intelligence officers and later brought to the US prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. So far almost all senior Al Qaeda operatives in US custody have either been arrested in Pakistan or have been held with Pakistan's assistance...

Daily Times, 4 April 2006

US sees more Afghan violence as NATO expands

Kabul, April 4: The United States expects violence to increase in Afghanistan this year as NATO forces and the government push their authority into lawless areas infested by insurgents and drug gangs, a US official said on Monday. NATO members, including Britain, Canada and the Netherlands, are sending thousands of troops into the south as the alliance prepares to take over peacekeeping duties across the country...

The Hindu, 5 April 2006

U.S. Congress not consulted on nuclear deal: report

Washington, April 4: The India-U.S. civilian nuclear agreement is turning out to be a "controversial deal" and a "hard sell" on Capitol Hill primarily because the Congress was not consulted, according to the Washington Post. The agreement is in trouble because there was little consultation with the Congress or within the foreign-affairs bureaucracy before it was announced, it said. Last month in New Delhi, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and U.S. President George W. Bush reached an agreement on how India will implement the deal. But nuclear specialists in the U.S. Government said their concerns about weapons proliferation also were overridden in the final talks, the newspaper said...

Dawn, 5 April 2006

India's Iran ties not to affect N-deal: US

Washington, April 4: The US State Department has confirmed reports that two Iranian ships recently visited Indian ports but indicated that it will not affect a US nuclear deal with India. A senior US lawmaker, however, claimed that India was training the Iranian navy and said it would adversely affect congressional support to the Indo-US nuclear deal. The State Department disagreed with Congressman Tom Lantos and said the visit was a 'limited type of event' that was 'overwritten'...

Daily Times, 5 April 2006

US envoy to help duty-free access of Pak products to US markets

Lahore, April 4: The US Ambassador to Pakistan, Ryan C Crocker, has said that he would take up the matter of duty-free access of Pakistani products to be produced in earthquake areas to the US market with the US government. He gave the assurance to Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) President Mian Shafqat Ali, who took up the matter with him, at luncheon reception hosted by the LCCI in his honour at Punjab Club. LCCI President Mian Shafqat Ali, Senior Vice President Abdul Basit, Vice President Aftab Ahmad Vohra, immediate past president Mian Misbahur Rehman, former president FPCCI/LCCI President Iftikhar Ali Malik and Executive Committee members welcomed the US Ambassador...

Daily Times, 5 April 2006

US-North Korea mistrust hurdle to talks, says China

Beijing, April 4: China said on Tuesday mistrust between North Korea and the United States was the main hurdle to negotiations on the North's nuclear programme as the Chinese defence minister held talks in Pyongyang. China, North Korea's main benefactor, has been urged to persuade North Korea to agree to another round of so-called six-party talks also involving the United States, South Korea, Japan and Russia...

The Washington Post, 5 April 2006

US to Lay Out U.S.-India Nuclear Deal Before Some Skeptical Lawmakers

Washington, April 4: When President Bush announced a new phase in U.S.-India relations last month in New Delhi, he was not the only foreign visitor to attract attention. A day after his arrival, two Iranian naval ships, carrying several hundred sailors, docked at the Indian port of Kochi to begin five days of joint exercises, part of an extensive agreement Tehran and New Delhi signed in 2003. The port call -- and the broader issue of India's military, scientific and economic ties with Iran -- have raised apprehension on Capitol Hill, where members are weighing an effort by the Bush Administration to form its own strategic partnership with New Delhi...

The Hindu, 6 April 2006

US seeks Congress nod

Washington, April 5: United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Wednesday pitched vigorously for Congress support for the nuclear pact with India, saying it strengthened international security and non-proliferation regimes and advanced America's business opportunities. Appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, she said the U.S.' non-proliferation policies had not achieved the goals. It resulted in a more isolated India...

The Frontier Post, 6 April 2006

Boucher remarks on Musharraf led-govt uniform certainly a problem, US for civilian rule

Islamabad, April 5: US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Richard Boucher has said that President General Pervez Musharraf stay in uniform is certainly a problem adding that US believes in civilian rule as well as keeping the army under civilian control. "President Musharraf stay in uniform is surely a vital issue. We believe in civilian rule. We also have belief that army should remain under civilian control", he said this while addressing a press conference in US embassy here Wednesday. Democratic process in Pakistan is being seen as to how the President Musharraf address these problems, he held...

Daily Times, 6 April 2006

Aziz pleads for Pak-US N-deal

New York: The US-India civilian nuclear technology cooperation agreement has "serious implications" for the security environment in the South Asia region and the US can rectify this by offering Pakistan a similar deal, Prime Minister Pervez Musharraf said on Tuesday... The prime minister said Pakistan was cooperating with the international community to prevent terrorists and extremists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction or knowledge of how to build them...

The Hindustan Times, 7 April 2006

US to ensure fair polling in Pak: Hadley

Washington, April 6: White House national security advisor Stephen Hadley said that the US administration would work with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to ensure 2007 elections in his country are "free and fair". Hadley also said

Washington "will encourage greater democratic reform and political freedom" in Pakistan in a speech to a forum of The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) here on Wednesday, according to a White House transcript...

The Hindu, 7 April 2006

We are pushing for South Asia moratorium on fissile material production, says Rice

Washington, April 6: United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Wednesday said Washington was pushing for a regional moratorium on fissile material production and New Delhi had promised to be helpful. Pushing for the nuclear deal with India at hearings in the Senate and House International Relations Committee, she assured the lawmakers that it would not affect the efforts to stop spread of nuclear weapons, and warned that altering the pact could harm the new partnership with India...

Hindustan Times, 7 April 2006

Resolution to Kashmir issue left to India, Pak: Rice

Washington, April 6: Reiterating its policy on Kashmir, the US has said that the issue has been left to India and Pakistan to find a solution that would open the doors for "greater prosperity" and "greater peace" in the region. Addressing the House International Relations Committee on Wednesday, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the US had encouraged the two countries to "come to a resolution of the Kashmir crisis." ...It's a flashpoint. It's a place that has sparked conflict in the region. And were there a resolution of it, it would open up the region to greater prosperity as well as greater peace," Rice told the Committee during a hearing on the Indo-US civilian nuclear energy agreement...

Daily Times, 7 April 2006

Nawaz, Benazir's return an internal issue, says Boucher

Islamabad, April 6: US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher said on Thursday that the allowing of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto to return to Pakistan to contest the 2007 general elections was of mutual concern to the country's political parties and the government. In an interview with a private Pakistani television channel, Boucher linked their return to politics with the US vision of a free, modern and democratic Pakistan. He also confirmed having met the country's chief election commissioner to assess the extent of Pakistan's democratic process...

The Washington Post, 8 April 2006

\$100 Million in Anti-Terror Military Aid Urged

Washington, April 7: The Pentagon and the State Department have recommended spending about \$100 million this year to train and equip foreign militaries in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, South America and Africa as part of a new strategy to help partner nations fight terrorism beyond Iraq and Afghanistan, administration officials said yesterday. At least eight proposals, expected to go to the White House for approval soon, include strengthening counterterrorism forces and capabilities in northern and Saharan Africa, along the 2,000-nautical mile Gulf of Guinea coast, and around the Indonesia Philippines and Malaysia maritime triangle, the officials said...

Daily Times, 8 April 2006

US to provide \$13 million for earthquake activities

Islamabad, April 7: At a ceremony organized by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Islamabad, US Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker announced that the United States, through the USAID, will provide more than \$13 million for earthquake transition activities and has committed \$6.5 million towards four projects. The ceremony launched the next step in US support for earthquake efforts. "We are pleased to announce these new programs on the eve of the six-month anniversary of the earthquake," said Ambassador Crocker...

Hindustan Times, 8 April 2006

Senior US lawmakers to visit India for nuke talks

Washington, April 7: Republican House leader Dennis Hastert and other US lawmakers have announced plans to visit India next week to discuss a controversial bilateral nuclear deal made in March. Hastert will head the eight-member group, which plans to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress Party president Sonia Gandhi during the April-12 trip?...

The Hindu, 8 April 2006

U.S. wants India to clarify on 'minimum credible deterrent'

New Delhi, April 7: Amid efforts by the Bush administration to push the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal through the Congress, Washington on Friday asked India to "further define" its "minimum credible deterrent" in the nuclear field, saying it was "absolutely necessary" for decreasing tensions in Asia. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Richard Boucher also said New Delhi and Islamabad should work out "mutual understandings" to build confidence in both conventional and nuclear areas?...

The Hindu, 8 April 2006

Good bipartisan support for nuke deal, says White House

Washington, April 7: The United States has said that there has been "good" bipartisan support to its nuclear agreement with India in Congress and maintained that the administration is willing to answer questions and issues that may be raised in Capitol Hill to this effect. "I think you're seeing today that there is good bipartisan support to begin the process of ratifying this agreement," White House Spokesman Scott McClellan said in response to a question...

The Hindu, 9 April 2006

India rejects U.S. suggestion

New Delhi, April 8: India on Saturday rejected the U.S. suggestion that it define its credible minimum nuclear deterrent, asserting that it has "no responsibility" to "declare" it. In an interview to NDTV a day after U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher made the suggestion, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said "what our credible minimum deterrent would be is really for India to decide." India had, on various occasions pointed out this to the United States...

Hawn., 9 April 2006

Failed N-deal to hit ties with US: New Delhi

New Delhi, April 8: A decision by the US Congress to block a nuclear deal between the two countries would hit warming India-US relations, India's foreign secretary said on Saturday. "Given the kind of expectations which have been built up, if this deal does not for any reason go through, there will be some disappointed expectations," Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran told NDTV news New Delhi...

The Daily Star, 9 April 2006

Extend N-deal to Pakistan to lower tension

Chhaka, April 8: Notwithstanding Washington's refusal, Pakistan has sought extension of the Indo-US nuclear deal to it saying this could help control the production of fissile material in South Asia and lower tension with India. Pakistan in the past had proposed a nuclear restraint regime to India, which did not show much interest saying that its nuclear programme was not Pakistan-centric. Aziz said a deal on the lines of one reached between India and United States was also important for Pakistan as its economy is growing at six to eight per cent a year and its "energy needs are very acute."?

The Daily Star, 9 April 2006

US, China to review trade headaches before Hu visit

Washington, April 8: Top US and Chinese officials will go over well-trodden ground when they hold an annual review of trade ties this week just ahead of a visit to the United States by Chinese President Hu Jintao. At Tuesday's meeting here of the Sino-US Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT), the two sides will review a familiar litany of bilateral headaches in the politically sensitive relationship. US Trade Representative Rob Portman and Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez are expected to press China for more currency flexibility, more protection of intellectual property rights and more market access, officials said...

The Hindu, 10 April 2006

U.S. Congress will ratify deal

Washington, April 9: Asserting that United States' acceptance of India's nuclear "separation plan" was "a recognition of our security concerns," Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal said the designation of eight of its 22 nuclear reactors for military purposes and thus out of the IAEA ambit was to meet "security needs." In an informal chat with reporters here on Saturday, Mr. Sibal said he had sought to explain this to everyone he met during his visit to the U.S., including Congressmen, Senators, administration officials and members of the scientific community...

Hawn, 10 April 2006

Pakistan did not influence 9/11 probe'

Islamabad, April 9: The Foreign Office on Sunday rubbished a report implying that Pakistan had bribed members of the US 9/11 Inquiry Commission to drop from its finding negative references to Pakistan. "Pakistan has never indulged in the legal activity of bribing or buying influence anywhere in the world," said a statement issued by the FO spokesperson on Sunday. Reacting to the report titled 'Did Pakistan Influence the 9/11 Commission Report?' appearing in the March 3-9 issue of Lahore-based English weekly, the spokesperson termed it 'utterly baseless and irresponsible'...

Daily Times, 10 April 2006

US warns against travel to Pakistan

Washington, April 9: The US on Friday renewed a warning to its citizens to defer non-essential travel to Pakistan, citing possible terrorist attacks. In issuing the travel warning, the State Department said that Al Qaeda and Taliban militants as well as other groups in Pakistan posed potential danger to American citizens. It also warned that continuing tensions in the Middle East increased the possibility of violence against westerners in Pakistan. "As security has tightened at official US facilities, terrorists have capability to attack more vulnerable targets."

The Daily Star, 10 April 2006

US lobbyists hired for image building, 'positive' reporting

Dhaka, April 9: The government has appointed three American lobbyists including an individual and two firms to arrange high-level interactions with the US government and build a "positive and correct image" of Bangladesh among the US policymakers. The lobbyists have also been assigned to ensure "balanced reporting on Bangladesh" through mainstream media. They will coordinate with the relevant agencies of the US government to facilitate interactions in Bangladesh between the government and the representatives of the US government. The firms, The Washington Group and Ketchum Washington (TWG/K), will get a monthly retainer fee of at least \$45,000 in addition to "certain out of pocket expenditure" that TWG/K will incur in connection with the services. It is not clear from documents how much the individual lobbyist, Richard L Benkin, will get...

Daily Times, 11 April 2006

US importers keen on Pak-made garments

Carachi, April 10: US importers of ready-made garments have shown keen interest in enhancing imports from Pakistan. A spokesman of Pakistan Ready-made Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PRGMEA) said on Monday during their visit to Expo 2006, a 15-member US delegation held business match-making meetings with Pakistani exporters where a large number of export deals were finalized. The US is Pakistan's largest trading partner and has a share of 25 percent in the country's garment exports. However, the US market still offers great potential, which could be exploited by improving quality and price, he added...

Daily Times, 11 April 2006

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The Daily Star, 11 April 2006

M defends appointing US lobbyist

Dhaka, April 10: The government yesterday strongly defended the appointment of a US lobbyist to counter alleged diverse campaigns that try to portray Bangladesh as a fundamentalist state influenced by the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Talking to a group of reporters at his office, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan admitted that the government had appointed a lobbyist firm 'Washington Group' in line with the US political culture to pursue Bangladesh's interest in the US administration and the Capitol Hill. He said the lobbyist firm was appointed on a temporary basis with a monthly retainer of \$45,000 by slashing some expenditure in Bangladesh Mission in Washington that includes closing down the post of the press minister...

The Hindu, 12 April 2006

Restore democracy, U.S. tells Gyanendra

New Delhi, April 11: "As a friend of Nepal, we must state that King Gyanendra's decision to impose direct Palace rule in Nepal 14 months ago has failed in every regard," the United States said in a scathing attack on the Monarch's ways. "The demonstrations, deaths, arrests and Maoist attacks in the past few days have shown that there is more insecurity [in Nepal], not less. The King's continuing failure to bring the parties back into a process to restore democracy has compounded the problem," a statement by the U.S. State Department, released by the American Embassy, said...

The Hindu, 12 April 2006

India to back U.S. entry into SAARC as observer

New Delhi, April 11: India is all set to back the entry of the United States into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as an observer, senior External Affairs Ministry officials told The Hindu on Tuesday. The issue is likely to figure at a two-day meeting of Foreign Secretaries of the seven SAARC nations that began in Dhaka on Tuesday. SAARC leaders decided, in principle, at their 13th summit meeting in Dhaka in November 2005 that China and Japan be associated as observers...

Hindustan Times, 12 April 2006

US approaches SAARC for observer status

New Delhi, April 11: US has sought observer status with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and wants to work actively to promote free trade in the region, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher said... Underscoring the de-hyphenation of ties between the US and India with its relations with Pakistan, he said that both relationships are "important" for Washington and one can't be "traded" for another...

Hindustan Times, 12 April 2006

US condemns Pakistan blast

Washington, April 11: The United States has condemned the Karachi blast that killed at least 55 people and injured many others on Tuesday on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Prophet Mohammed... The bombing was the deadliest in Pakistan in nearly two decades and sparked fears of new sectarian violence between majority Sunnis and Pakistan's minority Shiite community.

The New York Times, 13 April 2006

U.S. Embassy in Nepal Cancels Congressional Visit, Citing Protests

Katmandu April 12: The United States Embassy on Wednesday announced the closing of its consular section here and canceled a Congressional delegation's visit this week. The moves came as a fourth Nepali was killed during pro-democracy protests in the south of the country, according to a political party that called for the demonstrations. Three others have been killed since Saturday, during what have been the most violent and sustained protests demanding the restoration of parliamentary rule in Nepal...

The Daily Star, 13 April 2006

US, Korea to get observer status

Dhaka, April 12: The Saarc Standing Committee on Tuesday agreed in principle to grant the United States and South Korea observer status in the regional grouping. The decision was taken at the two-day 5th special session of the Saarc Standing Committee comprising the foreign secretaries of the seven Saarc nations. The committee also finalised the draft of the joint declaration to be signed between the seven heads of the Saarc states/governments on the one side and the Afghanistan president on the other at the 14th Saarc Summit to award Afghanistan the new full membership of the Saarc. It also finalised the guidelines for observer status to China and Japan approved at the Dhaka summit held in November last year...

Daily Times, 13 April 2006

Indian Left complains about US SAARC observership

New Delhi, April 12: Major allies of the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh-led coalition on Wednesday sought explanation from the government about the moves to make the United States an observer in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Both Left parties the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and the Communist Party of India (CPI), constituting a chunk of 60 MPs in the parliament, announced they would oppose the American entry tooth and nail...

Dawn, 13 April 2006

Pakistan kept informed on N-deal: Washington

Washington, April 12: The US on Tuesday disagreed with the observation that Washington did not take Islamabad into confidence while signing a nuclear deal with India. "We have provided Pakistan with information on the civil nuclear initiative with India," a State Department official told Dawn when asked to comment on a statement issued in Islamabad that the information the US shared with Pakistan initially did not match exactly with the final shape the agreement took... But even US lawmakers are saying that the Bush administration did not keep them fully informed about the deal, finalized during President Bush's visit to New Delhi last month... In her briefing, the Foreign Office spokesman had also said that instead of negotiating an India specific agreement, the US should have offered civilian nuclear technology to both India and Pakistan...

Daily Times, 15 April 2006

US committed to fulfill Pakistan's energy needs

Lahore, April 14: US Assistant Secretary for Policy and International Affairs Karen Harbert has said that Washington is committed to fulfill Pakistan's energy needs for its economic development. Talking to Voice of America (VoA), Harbert said that US is opposed to the Iran-Pakistan India (IPI) gas pipeline project. We have made (our opposition of the IPI gas line) clear to Pakistan and India. We have also discussed with Pakistan and India the substitute energy sources which are technically and commercially feasible to fulfill their energy requirements she said. All possibilities are open and on the table before Pakistan and India, which include sources sufficient for both countries growing energy needs...

Daily Times, 15 April 2006

US FTAs could hit Pak gains in exports: ADB

Islamabad, April 14: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has cautioned that free trade agreements between the US and many of Pakistan's competitors in clothing exports as well as the trade diversion effect of the May 2005 inclusion of 10 east European countries in the EU (itself one of the top three T&C exporters), could affect the country's potential gains in exports. The imposition of antidumping duty on imports of bed linen, as well as the loss of preferential access to the European Union (EU) market under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) may have disadvantaged Pakistan's T&C (textile and clothing) exports to the EU. High business costs, coupled with low labour productivity, also seem to have undermined the country's competitiveness in the international T&C export market...

Daily Times, 16 April 2006

US unwilling on increased market access for textiles

Islamabad, April 15: The United States is reluctant to give increased market access for textile to Pakistan and has conveyed that any new trading arrangement that could be finalized between the two countries would be minus textile, a senior official told the Daily Times on Saturday. Pakistan wants to enter into a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the USA and is of the opinion that market access for Pakistani products in the US market is vital, as it would alleviate poverty, which is the root cause of extremism, the official added...

Daily Times, 17 April 2006

Pakistan wants US aircraft to combat terrorism

Islamabad, April 16: Pakistan has asked the United States to provide an air squadron consisting of 10 helicopters and two planes for its Interior Ministry, reported Geo television channel on Sunday. Brigadier Javed Iqbal Cheema, the ministry's Crisis Management Cell director general, told reporters about Islamabad's request for the aircraft to contend with terrorists. Cheema returned from a Pak-US Joint Working Group meeting on combating terrorism in Washington on Saturday...

Dawn, 17 April 2006

Strategic talks with US begin on 26th

Islamabad/Washington, April 16: The inaugural meeting of the Pakistan-US Strategic Dialogue to be co-chaired by Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan and the US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns will be held in Washington on April 26, it is reliably learnt. Mr. Khan will be leading a six-member team from Pakistan for the two-day talks that will mark the formal launching of the broad-based dialogue aimed at building a long-term, sustainable partnership...

hindustan Times, 17 April 2006

US condemns Jama Masjid explosions

Washington, April 16: The United States condemned the explosions inside Delhi's Jama Masjid and said the incident appears to be the handiwork of terrorists. "We are aware through media reports that people have been injured," in the attack at Jama Masjid, a senior State Department official said. "Our embassy in New Delhi is seeking more information. It appears to be a terrorist attack. We strongly condemn it and send our sympathies to the victims and families," the official added. "We have no information of anyone claiming responsibility," he added.

Lawrence, 17 April 2006

American spy beheaded

Islamabad, April 16: Residents of a troubled Pakistani border region found the beheaded body of a man with note saying he was an American spy and a warning others would face the same treatment, an official said on Sunday. The body was found on Saturday in a market area in the North Waziristan region on the Afghan border, where Pakistani forces have been battling Al Qaeda-linked militants. Many Al Qaeda militants fled to Pakistan's border region after US and Afghan opposition forces ousted the Taliban from power in Afghanistan in late 2001...

The Hindu, 18 April 2006

India won't accept no-test option

New Delhi, April 17: India has conveyed to the United States that it will not accept a provision in any civilian nuclear agreement with the U.S. that says cooperation would be discontinued if New Delhi were to conduct a nuclear test. Responding to reports in a section of the press, External Affairs Ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna confirmed on Monday that a draft agreement provided by the U.S. contained such a provision...

Daily Times, 18 April 2006

Two US spies beheaded

Islamabad, April 18: Pro-Taliban militants beheaded two tribesmen in North Waziristan for allegedly working for American forces, said a security official on Monday. Gunmen captured one of the tribesmen and killed him in Khar Khar on Sunday, said the official. They beheaded the man and fled in his vehicle... the official said on condition of anonymity. Residents also found a headless body in Madhakhel, said the official...All those working as US spies will face the same fate proclaimed a note found near the body.

The Hindu, 18 April 2006

Observer status for U.S., South Korea in SAARC

New Delhi, April 17: Foreign Secretaries of the seven South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations granted the observer status in SAARC to the United States and South Korea during a two-day meeting held in Dhaka last week. Official sources said on Monday that there was no opposition to the U.S. becoming an observer. With last year's meeting of SAARC leaders granting observer status to China and Japan, the stage is set for the involvement of major powers in the group. According to the sources, the Foreign Secretaries also agreed on a set of modalities that would govern the association of observer nations. These will have to be approved by Foreign Ministers during their meeting in May...

Lawrence, 18 April 2006

US-India talks on curbing terror

Washington, April 17: The US and India will hold talks in Washington from Wednesday on stepping up cooperation to combat global terrorism. Proposals prepared for the meeting show growing US concern on the resurgence of Taliban-riven violence in Afghanistan. India, however, has proposed discussing Pakistan's role as a supporter of radical militancy in the South Asian region. The Indian team is also expected to argue that while the so-called cross-border terrorism in the occupied Kashmir has decreased since 9/11, Pakistan-based militant groups continue to infiltrate the state for carrying out attacks...

The Hindu, 19 April 2006

Iranies with U.S. in India's interest: Prime Minister

New Delhi, April 18: Iran has had a clandestine nuclear programme for several years and it is not in India's interest to

ave another nuclear weapon state in the neighbourhood, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said here on Tuesday. Iran would have all the rights and duties of a state signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. According to him; improvement in Indo-U.S. relations was in the interest of all Indians. He assured the delegation of representatives of various Muslim organisations, led by the Shahi Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid Syed Ahmad Bukhari, that there was no question of India succumbing to any external pressure...

Daily Times, 19 April 2006

Indo-US N-deal will strengthen strategic ties

Washington, April 19: The White House said on Tuesday that there was good bipartisan response from members of Congress about moving forward on the nuclear deal with India. White House Spokesman Scott McClellan described the nuclear deal with India as an important agreement that would strengthen the countries bilateral relationship. "I think there's been a good response from Congress members because the nuclear deal is an approach based on addressing the realities we face," he said. "It will help both countries meet their future energy needs, he added". The deal will also bring India into compliance with the non-proliferation agreements for its civilian nuclear programme...

Hindustan Times, 19 April 2006

New jobs will go to India, China: Bush warns students

Washington, April 18: President George W Bush has warned the country's schoolchildren that if they did not have the skills needed to compete with their counterparts from India and China, new jobs would go to those countries. The president was addressing a magnet school in Rockville, Maryland, on Tuesday, stressing among other things, the criticality of such subjects as Mathematics and Science...

The Daily Star, 20 April 2006

US worried over political violence

Washington, April 19: The United States has expressed its concern over renewed political violence in Dhaka. Saddened by the latest developments, a spokesman for the US embassy in Dhaka told the news agency yesterday that political interests should be advanced by democratic means, not by violence. The spokesman made the remarks responding to a query concerning the fierce clashes between the opposition workers and police during the Awami League-led 14-party combine's sit-in programme outside the Prime Minister's office (PMO). The programme was virtually foiled following police interception that triggered the troubles. The spokesman also expressed concern over the street fights between the Awami League workers and police in the capital's Lalbagh area on Tuesday...

Daily Times, 20 April 2006

Nepal rebukes US envoy

Kathmandu, April 19: Nepal has rebuked the US ambassador after he suggested the king might end up fleeing the country as a mass pro-democracy movement gathers pace, a report said on Wednesday. The Foreign Ministry in Kathmandu said ambassador James Moriarty had been summoned on Tuesday but refused to divulge details. Two Nepalese newspapers said Moriarty was in trouble over a forthright interview he gave to CNN television. The envoy had said the US did not want to see King Gyanendra forced to flee clinging on the wings of a helicopter The Himalayan newspaper said. Foreign secretary Hira Bahadur Thakpa reminded the envoy about diplomatic norms while making comments on Nepal's king and other internal affairs, the Kathmandu Post said. The US Embassy refused to give details of the interaction.

Hawn, 20 April 2006

India should uphold ban on N-tests: US

Washington, April 19: The US said on Wednesday that India made a commitment to maintain its unilateral ban on atomic testing when it signed an agreement for nuclear cooperation with Washington. Giving the background of the Indo-US understanding on this issue, the official said: India made a commitment to maintain its unilateral ban on testing in the July 8, 2005 joint statement during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Washington. The joint statement laid the foundation for the nuclear agreement President Bush later ratified during his visit to New Delhi on March 4. But on Monday an Indian foreign office spokesman told reporters in New Delhi that India would not cede the right to conduct nuclear tests to secure an agreement with the US. The deal finalised last month in New Delhi aims to lift a US embargo on the transfer of nuclear fuel and technology to India for civilian purposes. Later, media reports claimed that the latest draft version of the agreement provided by Washington includes a clause that would cancel the deal if India conducted further nuclear tests...

awn, 20 April 2006

Militants behead US spy

Miramshah, April 19: Suspected militants beheaded a tribesman in the Mirali tehsil of North Waziristan Agency on Tuesday night. According to officials, Waseullah, a resident of Sira Tala, had been kidnapped from the Mirali town earlier in the day. His beheaded body was found in a ditch on Wednesday. The officials said that the tribesman had been killed for spying for the United States. Meanwhile, three missiles were fired on the paramilitary fort in Miramshah on Tuesday night. However, no casualties or damage was reported. In another development, security forces fired artillery shells which hit several houses in Qutabkhel and Angher villages near Miramshah. Our Khar correspondent adds: Paramilitary forces arrested two tribesmen in the Khar area of Bajaur Agency on Tuesday night on suspicion of having links with terrorist organisations. Officials said that paramilitary and levy forces jointly raided the house of tribesman Abdul Khaliq in the Shandai village, near Khar, the agency headquarters...

The Hindu, 21 April 2006

Manmohan points to unilateral moratorium

Washington, April 20: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh categorically ruled out placing all of India's nuclear reactors under full scope safeguards and reaffirmed commitment to a unilateral moratorium without predicting what the "distant future" held...Some critics of the Bush administration have said that the United States should have insisted on India placing all its reactors under full scope safeguards for the civilian nuclear energy cooperation between the two countries..

Hindustan Times, 21 April 2006

U.S. sales: No special status for US

Washington, April 20: India has dismissed the talk in some quarters that the US has sought preferential treatment for its companies in the sale of nuclear equipment and technology as a quid pro quo for concluding the nuke deal. None of the American companies has come out with any demand of the kind, says deputy chairman of Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia, who is also the co-chair of Indo-US energy dialogue...He, however, conceded that even a level playing field in the nuclear domain will present "a terrific opportunity" for the US, given the fact that it is the world's leading source of technology and a country with the maximum number of companies capable of benefiting from any new trade opportunity...

awn, 21 April 2006

Washington urges more democracy in Pakistan

Washington, April 20: A senior US diplomat told reporters on Thursday that he met Pakistani politicians during his recent visit to Pakistan because he wanted to know their views in the context of the 2007 elections. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher, who returned from a visit to South Asia, last week, also acknowledged that Pakistan could not be relieved about some aspects of the Indo-US nuclear deal because the agreement was finalised in the very last moment. Mr. Boucher said the US has a very broad agenda in Pakistan, ranging from strategic cooperation to economic assistance and educational reforms. The US, he said, would like to see Pakistan a more democratic society."...

The Hindu, 22 April 2006

India's freeze on nuclear testing must hold: U.S.

Washington, April 21: United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher said India voluntarily imposed a moratorium on carrying out nuclear tests and the U.S. expected that position to hold. He, however, made it clear that the Bush administration would not insist on any new commitments in this regard... He expressed confidence that the Congress would approve the Indo-U.S. civilian nuclear energy legislation and that it would be done soon. He based his optimism on the fact that Congressmen and Senators are aware of the deal's benefits for energy, the environment and to non-proliferation. Asked whether the Congress would insist on India getting its safeguards cleared by the International Atomic Energy Agency before putting its seal of approval, Mr. Boucher said the Congress was already relieved about the progress in this regard...

Hindustan Times, 22 April 2006

Pakistan nudges US

New Delhi, April 21:"Either Pakistan gets the same deal... or it does everything it can to ensure that the Bush administration's deal with India does not go through, or is at least amended by Congress in such a manner that India

refuses to accept it." A leading daily in Pakistan had rightly analysed the implications of the Indo-US nuclear deal for Islamabad. That Pakistan is not happy with the deal is quite apparent and it is doing everything in its might to urge US Congress to call off the agreement. According to Pak media, India is just using Uncle Sam to be a nuclear hegemon in South Asia. As it says, "India wants to fine tune its nuclear weapons technology by utilising the US nuclear expertise. India had recently rejected America's call to define its credible minimum deterrent and it also refused to make explicit commitment to the US not to conduct fresh nuclear tests..."

Hindustan Times, 23 April 2006

Non-proliferation concerns over N-deal not credible: India

Washington, April 22: Hoping that the historic nuclear deal would soon be approved by the US Congress, India has said that concerns raised by some about non-proliferation were not "very credible" and should not prevent anyone from endorsing the pact. "We really appreciate the fact that President George W Bush has taken strong action; Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's testimony before Congress is a very strong affirmation of the deal and the need for the deal and the fact that it is good for the US, it is good for India," Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia said at a media event at the Indian Embassy in Washington...

Daily Times, 23 April 2006

Legal-like action: Rice parries question on Pakistan

Washington, April 22: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice avoided an answer when asked if she would welcome a legal-like move in Pakistan were President Pervez Musharraf to step down tomorrow. She said, "We welcome the idea, we welcome the proposal that the King would now turn to the political parties to form a government, to select a prime minister, to hold elections. That's extremely important...the United States has supported democratic processes in all countries and we've been clear with Pakistan that they have elections in 2007..."

Daily Times, 23 April 2006

Indo-US nuclear deal called flawed and problematic

Washington, April 22: David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), has described the Indo-US nuclear cooperation agreement, now before Congress, as a flawed deal with serious problems. Addressing a discussion organised by the US Institute of Peace on the nuclear agreement, Albright, a leading American expert on nuclear proliferation issues, said he simply cannot get enthusiastic over the agreement and urged that the administration not try to rush it through, since there are several aspects of it that need scrutiny and careful analysis, given their grave implications for non-proliferation. He feared that if the agreement goes in its present form, it would lead to an arms race involving India, China and Pakistan. He said the agreement severely weakens nuclear suppliers control over dual-use technology. He pointed out that the separation plan prepared by India was not satisfactory, slanted as it was in favour of New Delhi

Hawn, 23 April 2006

US wants free and fair elections: Rice

Washington, April 22: The United States has again lent support to the democratic process in Pakistan, saying that it hopes the 2007 elections in the country would be free and fair. But US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who was asked at a briefing whether America would welcome an announcement by President Pervez Musharraf to step down, parried the question. Instead, she said that the US supports democratic processes in all countries, and with Pakistan we've been clear...that they have elections in 2007. Ms Rice told a group of journalists also said that the US expects the 2007 elections to "be free and fair"...

Hawn, 24 April 2006

-16 tops agenda of talks in Washington

Islamabad, April 23: The Pakistan-US Defence Consultative Group will meet in Washington on April 30 to discuss security issues, including procurement of F-16 jets. Islamabad has apparently indicated to the US the number of F-16 aircraft it wants to acquire. The order includes both new and used F-16s besides up gradation of the ones Pakistan has. The meeting to be held at the Pentagon headquarters will be presided over by Defence Secretary Tariq Wasim Ghazi and US Under-Secretary of State for Defence Eric Edleman. Pakistan's delegation will include top military and civilian officials. The meeting will take place two days after the inaugural session of the Pakistan-US strategic dialogue in Washington...

awn, 24 April 2006

Al Qaeda chief hiding in border areas: US

Washington, April 23: Osama bin Laden is hiding in a remote tribal area along Afghanistan's border with Pakistan, separated from his top deputy and, in a sign he has to be careful about whom he trusts, surrounded by fellow Arabs, according to US intelligence officials familiar with his pursuit. His No. 2, Ayman al-Zawahri, is hiding in a more settled area along the border, surrounded by Al Qaeda operatives of his Egyptian nationality, they say. Their separation has opened a debate in national security circles in the United States and elsewhere about whether the leaders have split up. Neither man mentions the other by name in public pronouncements, and both headed separate groups before joining forces in 1998...

Nepal News, 24 April 2006

US State Department asks non-emergency Embassy Staff, Families to Depart Nepal

Kathmandu, April 23: The United States (US) State Department has ordered all non-emergency US mission personnel and dependents to depart Nepal. A press statement issued by the US Embassy in Kathmandu said this decision, made at the recommendation of the Embassy, was taken out of concern for the safety of US Government employees and their families...The State Department had authorized voluntary departure for non-emergency Mission staff and families on April 12. The US Mission includes the Embassy, its Consular Section and American Center in the Yak & Yeti Hotel, and USAID. The Consular Section and American Center Library have been closed since April 12 until further notice citing ongoing violence, curfews, and widespread insecurity in Nepal.

The Daily Star, 24 April 2006

US wants to work together with Bangladesh to check bird flu

Dhaka, April 23: The United States wants to work with Bangladesh to prevent bird flu in the country. Stewart Simonson, the visiting US Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Resources Division, said this when he called on Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain at the minister's office yesterday. The health minister welcomed the initiative and informed the US official about the steps taken to combat bird flu in Bangladesh. He informed that the ministries of fisheries and livestock, health and family welfare, and environment and forest have jointly chalked out a national plan of action to prevent bird flu. Musharraf said import of poultry birds from the affected countries has been prohibited and steps have been taken to prevent any import of poultry birds from the affected countries. The visiting US official praised Bangladesh for the quick measures it had taken before the outbreak of bird flu in the country...

The Daily Star, 24 April 2006

Govt confirms US citizen's deportation

Dhaka, April 23: The government yesterday confirmed the rounding up and extradition of Ehsanul Islam Sadequee, a 19-year-old US citizen of Bangladeshi origin. According to unconfirmed reports, a special chartered plane secretly took Sadequee back to the USA on Thursday, three days into his capture in Dhaka. He faces a charge of planning terrorist attack in the USA. His father Sarder Mohammed Sharif yesterday gave some medicines to US embassy officials who promised to hand those over to his son. Sadequee's activities were suspicious; so he was sent back to the USA, State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar told reporters yesterday emerging out of a meeting with the new US ambassador to Bangladesh, Patricia A Butenis...

The Hindu, 25 April 2006

U.S., Australia order citizens to leave Nepal

Kathmandu, April 24: The U.S. Embassy here on Monday ordered the mission staff and family members, U.S. employees and citizens to leave Nepal due to the deteriorating situation and security concerns after 18 days of general strikes...The Department of State is concerned by threats to personal safety from "political instability, civil disorder, demonstrations" and lack of supplies and essentials entering the country, according to the statement. It also said that protesters have attacked numerous vehicles, including diplomatic ones, during demonstrations. The Australian Government has also advised its citizens not to travel to Nepal. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on Monday issued its travel advisory to Nepal.

The Hindu, 25 April 2006

US asks Nepal King to assume ceremonial role

Washington, April 24: Hours after King Gyanendra announced that he was reviving the country's dissolved parliament, the US urged the Nepal monarch to step aside and take on a more ceremonial role in the kingdom's governance... In a statement, Deputy Spokesman Adam Ereli urged Nepal's political parties to step up to their responsibilities and cooperate to turn people's demands for democracy and good governance into reality". Ereli said that before peace and democracy can be restored in Nepal, the Maoists must "end their violent attacks and join a peaceful, political process". Asked why it was that the Bush administration was responding in this fashion, Ereli said that the "status quo was untenable"...

Hindustan Times, 25 April 2006

US ambassador to India presses case for civil nuclear cooperation deal

Washington, April 25: The US ambassador to India returned to Washington to press the Bush administration case that a civilian nuclear cooperation pact with India now being considered by the US Congress will strengthen the world's non-proliferation system. Ambassador David Mulford told an audience at the American Enterprise Institute think tank on Monday that India regards its budding strategic relationship with the United States as the most important diplomatic initiative of the past 50 years. And the civilian nuclear agreement, he said, is the cornerstone... Lawmakers in the US Congress are currently considering a pact that would send nuclear fuel and technology to India in return for international inspections and safeguards at certain nuclear reactors...

Hindustan Times, 25 April 2006

Deal okay, but India no nuclear weapon state: US

New Delhi, April 24: Seeking to allay apprehensions that it was shifting goal posts on the Indo-US nuclear deal, the US on Monday said it understands that India will continue to maintain its strategic programme but believed that majority of future growth will be on the civilian side. The US Embassy in a statement also said that Washington believed that India will not join NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state. The Embassy statement came in the wake of reports that Washington was reneging on the nuclear pact reached in 2005 and on India's plan to separate its military and civilian nuclear facilities formed up during the visit of President George W Bush in March this year...

Daily Times, 25 April 2006

Bangladesh defends handover of terror suspect to US

Dhaka, April 24: Bangladesh on Monday defended its handover to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of an American-born Bangladeshi to face possible terror charges. Ehsanul Islam Sadequee, 19, who has US-Bangladeshi citizenship, was arrested in the capital Dhaka last week...The US ambassador to Bangladesh declined to comment on the case. CNN earlier quoted unnamed law enforcement sources as saying Sadequee's detention was linked to the arrest of US student Syed Haris Ahmed, 21, who was indicted last month in Atlanta by a grand jury on a charge of "material support of terrorism". US attorney David Nahmias said in a statement the case against Ahmed "involves national security" and was "the first international terrorism charge" to be filed in Georgia State. Sadequee's father Sardar Mohammad Sharif, who was in Dhaka when his son was arrested, said his son was not involved in any terrorist activities...

Hindustan Times, 26 April 2006

Maldives seeks US help to net hashish smugglers

Colombo, April 25: The Maldives has sought US help to investigate how a huge cache of hashish was smuggled into the Indian Ocean tourist paradise, the Haveeru news service said on Monday. The US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) had promised to help in the case, officials said, adding that no arrests had been made since local fishermen gave police their biggest ever catch of drugs last week. Lobster fishermen found about 1,700 kilograms (3,520 pounds) of hashish packed in 1,697 plastic bags on the ocean bed, the agency said. Authorities believe the drugs were placed there about a week to 10 days ago...

Dawn, 26 April 2006

Strategic talks with Washington begin today

Washington, April 25: Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan arrives in Washington later on Tuesday for the inauguration of the US-Pakistan strategic dialogue, initiated during President Bush's visit to Islamabad last month. The two-day talks, which begin on Wednesday, will be co-chaired by Mr Khan and US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns. Pakistan's Ambassador General (retd) Jehangir Karamat, who will also attend the meetings, described the talks as "an over-arching dialogue which brings everything under its ambit." The dialogue acquires special significance against the backdrop of Islamabad's demand for a 'package approach' on the US civilian nuclear technology

deal with India and Iran's declaration about having successfully enriched uranium to make nuclear fuel...

Nepal News, 26 April 2006

US asks King to assume ceremonial role

Katmandu, April 25: Hours after the King's announcement to reinstate the dissolved House of the Representatives as per the demand of the seven political parties, the United States (US) has urged the King to step aside and take on a more ceremonial role in the kingdom's governance...King Gyanendra took absolute power after sacking the government in February last year saying it had failed to tackle the decade long Maoist insurgency. In a statement, Deputy Spokesman Adam Ereli urged Nepal's political parties to step up to their responsibilities and cooperate "to turn people's demands for democracy and good governance into reality"...

Lawrence, 26 April 2006

US plan to use Pakistan against Iran, says US

Manila Sulman, (Bahrain), April 25: The commander US Naval Forces Central Command has said that America has no plans to use Pakistan against Iran. Talking to a group of visiting reporters based in Islamabad, Vice Admiral Patrick M. Walsh, who is also commander of the Combined Maritime Forces, dispelled the impression that the assumption of command of Coalition Task Force-150 by Pakistan had something to do with a possible US attack against Iran, saying the scope of the CTF did not cover the Persian Gulf. He said the CTF-150 was responsible for conducting Maritime Security Operations in an area that includes the Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. He said the CTF-150 was meant to prevent attempts to destabilise the maritime environment...Admiral Walsh said that tension between the United States and Iran was of a political nature and had no link with maritime security operations...

The Hindu, 27 April 2006

Norway, U.S. condemn Colombo blast

Oslo, April 26: The main mediator in the Sri Lankan conflict, Erik Solheim of Norway, on Wednesday condemned the break-up of violence on the war-torn island but said he was optimistic that it would end shortly...Mr. Solheim said he did not believe the violence signified the end of a ceasefire in place since February 2002. At the United Nations, Secretary-General Kofi Annan has condemned the blast and urged the Government and Tamil leaders to resume peace talks. "No cause can justify such acts of violence," Mr. Annan said in a statement and expressed his condolences to the families of the bereaved and the Government...

Hindustan Times, 27 April 2006

US ambassador to India presses case for civil nuclear cooperation deal

Washington, April 26: The US ambassador to India returned to Washington to press the Bush administration case that a civilian nuclear cooperation pact with India now being considered by the US Congress will strengthen the world's non-proliferation system. Ambassador David Mulford told an audience at the American Enterprise Institute think tank on Monday that India regards its budding strategic relationship with the United States as the most important diplomatic initiative of the past 50 years. And the civilian nuclear agreement, he said, is the cornerstone...Lawmakers in the US Congress are currently considering a pact that would send nuclear fuel and technology to India in return for international inspections and safeguards at certain nuclear reactors...

Nepal News, 27 April 2006

US Asst. Secretary Boucher arriving Nepal on May 2

Katmandu, April 26: United States (US) Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Richard Boucher, is arriving Kathmandu on May 2 to assess the recent developments in Nepal. Reports quoted a spokesperson for the US Embassy as saying that Boucher, who will meet key political leaders and civil society representatives, would leave Nepal on May 3. This is the first Nepal visit of Boucher after his appointment as Assistant Secretary of the State. Report quoted him as saying that the US would consider renewing military aid to Nepal, but the assistance would depend on the army's support of the political process here...

Daily Times, 27 April 2006

US pledges \$2.8 million to NGOs for quake relief

Islamabad, April 26: The United States Agency for International Development announced four grants worth more than \$2.8 million for earthquake relief under its Earthquake Transition Assistance programme. These grants are in addition to

re \$13 million that the US government has provided for the rehabilitation of earthquake survivors. These grants will be delivered between April and December 2006. Three programmes will be initiated to assist union councils to support the livelihood programme. The USAID partners Concern International and Rural Support Programme Network will receive funding for two programmes. These transition programmes will work to re-establish an economic base in the rural areas through agriculture and livestock development support...

Hindustan Times, 28 April 2006

US, Pakistan air raids kill 11 pro-Taliban fighters

Kabul, April 27: US and Pakistan aircraft pummelled pro-Taliban forces either side of the Afghan-Pakistan border, while Afghan police battled 50-armed militants in the south, in clashes that killed at least 11 insurgents, officials said on Tuesday. At least five Afghan soldiers were also killed, including four in a roadside bombing on Tuesday during a joint operation with US forces in eastern Afghanistan, officials said. More than four years since the Taliban's toppling, insurgent-related violence is rising across this volatile region and coalition military forces expect militant attacks -- led by bombings and shootings -- to increase during the spring and summer months. Spain's Defence Minister said more Spanish troops were needed to protect the 540 already in Kabul...

Hindustan Times, 28 April 2006

Analysts split over Indo-US nuke deal

Washington, April 27: Influential defence analysts on Wednesday differed over a controversial new civil nuclear energy deal with India, with one describing it, as a grave threat to non-proliferation efforts and another saying the problems it poses in this regard are "manageable." Former Defence Secretary William Perry and a former top Pentagon aide, Ashton Carter, backed the agreement, which would give nuclear-armed India access to US and other foreign nuclear fuel and reactors for the first time in three decades. But Robert Gallucci, a former top non-proliferation official at the State Department who negotiated a 1994 nuclear agreement with North Korea, urged the US Congress to reject the deal because it "trashes" the non-proliferation regime. The three experts, who served in Democratic administrations, were among witnesses called to testify by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which will play a key role in deciding whether the agreement at the heart of a new US-India relationship goes forward...

Daily Times, 28 April 2006

US will help South Asia get electricity from Central Asia

Washington, April 28: The US wants to spearhead a project to transmit electricity from Central Asia across Afghanistan to Pakistan and India, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian affairs Richard Boucher said on Thursday. Under the plan, a regional power grid stretching from Almaty to New Delhi would be fed by oil and gas from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and hydropower from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. "Within the next few years, we expect to see private investment lead to the establishment of a 500 kilovolt power line transmitting much-needed electricity from Central Asia across Afghanistan to Pakistan and India," Boucher told a Congressional hearing...

The Hindu, 29 April 2006

Gen not Bush's poodle: Musharraf

Rawalpindi, April 28: Pakistan's General Pervez Musharraf, facing a surge of anti-American sentiment, on Thursday warned that covert U.S. air strikes against Al-Qaeda inside Pakistan were an infringement of national sovereignty. Admitting that his popularity was waning, the Pakistani President insisted, in an interview with the London-based Guardian newspaper, he was "not a poodle" of (U.S. President) George Bush and rejected accusations he was running a military dictatorship. Speaking at Army House in Rawalpindi weeks after a tense visit by the U.S. President that brought a torrent of domestic criticism, Gen. Musharraf insisted he was his own man...

The Hindu, 29 April 2006

Indian student held in U.S.

Washington, April 28: An Indian graduate student at Purdue University, was arrested on Friday and charged with threatening to kill President George W. Bush, Laura Bush, Vice-President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld. Vikram Buddhi, 34, allegedly posted the detailed threatening messages on an online message board, according to the Chicago Sun Times. Mr. Buddhi allegedly posted his messages on a Yahoo finance board. A concerned citizen contacted the Secret Service office in Dallas to report that a subject was posting threatening messages about Mr. Bush...

Hindustan Times, 29 April 2006

US condemns Myanmar military crackdown

Washington, April 28: The United States has strongly condemned the Myanmar military's offensive against ethnic minority groups, believed to be the biggest crackdown in a decade. Up to 11,000 people have been driven from their homes in eastern Myanmar, where some 2,700 villages have been destroyed by the ruling junta, according to non-governmental groups which also reported cases of "torture and killings."...Reside said the attacks were resulting in "ever increasing number" of displaced Myanmarese -- within the country and across the border -- "highlighting again the threat of the regime's actions posed to the region." Myanmar's military rulers have long been accused of gross human rights abuses, including for locking up the country's opposition leaders, particularly democracy icon and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Their latest crackdown on ethnic minorities is largely targeted against the Karens. Rights groups say it is the most serious offensive since 1997...

Hindustan Times, 29 April 2006

Indian laws a handicap: US

Washington, April 28: India's fight against terrorism is "hampered by its outdated and overburdened law enforcement and legal systems", says the US State Department's annual country reports on terrorism. But the report also praises India for improving its "tactics against terrorists and making significant arrests." While listing India as one of the worst victims of terrorism in 2005, it says militants staged "hundreds of attacks on people and property". Unlike previous years, the report does not provide country-specific data on the number of incidents and casualties, but its South Asia section talks of increased activity by terrorist groups in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. While commending Pakistan for significantly increasing the effectiveness of its counter-terrorism operation "by capturing or killing hundreds of terrorists, the report retains a host of Pakistan-based outfits including Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Tayyeba on the list of "Foreign Terrorist Organizations"...

Hindustan Times, 29 April 2006

US warns Naxalites may pose a long-term challenge in India

Washington, April 28: The United States on Friday warned Naxalites in the eastern India are "growing in sophistication and lethality and may pose a significant long-term challenge." In its annual report on worldwide terrorism, the State Department said terrorists staged "hundreds of attacks" on people and property in India and most prominent among them are terror outfits operating in Jammu and Kashmir, the Maoists in the eastern India and the "ethno-linguistic nationalists" in its Northeastern states. "Naxalite terrorism is growing in sophistication and lethality and may pose a significant long-term challenge," it said...

The Hindu, 30 April 2006

U.S. giving impetus to India's n-programme'

Paris, April 29: Al-Qaeda number two Ayman al-Zawahiri has lashed out at U.S. President George W Bush accusing him of giving a "strong impetus" to India's nuclear programme while "doling out orders" to Pakistan. In a video released on Jihadist website, Zawahiri pointed to a visit by Mr. Bush in March to New Delhi during which he signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with India...He also lashed out at Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf for his support to the U.S.-led war... The video followed an audiotape broadcast on Al-Jazeera television last Sunday in which Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden called on Muslim fighters to go to Sudan to wage war against "crusader thieves" and slammed the international isolation of the Hamas-led Palestinian government. The tape was the first from bin Laden since January 19. Zawahiri also lashed out in his message at the United States, Britain, and the governments of Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt...

Hindustan Times, 30 April 2006

India on US Priority Watch List again

Washington, April 29: The US has yet again placed India on the "Priority Watch List" under the Special 301 provisions of its trade law for what it regards as inadequate protection for copyrights, trademarks and patents of American products. Twelve other countries, including China and Russia, also figure on the list released by US Trade Representative Robert Portman. The report acknowledges the improvements brought about by India in the intellectual property rights regime in the past year, but takes the stand that "protection concerns remain due to inadequate laws and ineffective enforcement". It says piracy of copyrighted work remains rampant in the case of software, films, fiction works, textbooks and cable signals. The USTR wants India to join the World Intellectual Property Organisation's Internet Treaties...

Hindustan Times, 30 April 2006

India targeting Democrats to support nuclear deal

New Delhi, April 29: With less than a month left before the US Congress goes in for the summer recess, India has stepped up its diplomacy to win over Democratic skeptics to support the civil nuclear deal that is at the heart of improving relations between New Delhi and Washington... Only about half a dozen Congressmen, all Republicans, have co-sponsored legislation to amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 to provide an India-specific exemption to facilitate civil nuclear commerce with India. None of the influential Democrats have lent their names as co-sponsors to the proposed legislation. In a major disappointment to the Indian community in the US, who have raised thousands of dollars for her reelection campaign, Hillary Rodham Clinton, co-chair of the Friends of India Caucus in the US Senate, has yet to express her support for the nuclear deal...

Daily Times, 30 April 2006

US condemns Myanmar military crackdown

Yangon, April 29: The United States strongly condemned the Myanmar military's offensive against ethnic minority groups, believed to be the biggest crackdown in a decade. Up to 11,000 people have been driven from their homes in eastern Myanmar, where some 2,700 villages have been destroyed by the ruling junta, according to non-governmental groups that also reported cases of "torture and killings." "We condemn in the strongest possible terms the Burmese regime's actions against civilians and ethnic minorities within Burma," US State Department spokeswoman Julie Reside said, using tough diplomatic language. "The military campaign is another indication of the repressive nature of the regime," she said. Burma is the former name of Myanmar.

Hindustan Times, 30 April 2006

Jamaat-ud-Dawa, Idara Kidmat-e-Khalq declared terror outfits

New Delhi, April 29: In a bid to checkmate Lashker-e-Taiba (LeT) from operating under disguises, the US on Friday declared as global terrorist organisations two renamed outfits of the banned group active in Jammu and Kashmir and some other parts of India. Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JUD) and Idara Khidmat-e-Khalq (IKK) were added to the Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) list by the US Department of State under the Executive Order 13224 blocks, an American Embassy statement said in New Delhi. The move will empower authorities to confiscate properties of the two groups in the US and areas under the control of Americans. The action "blocks all property and interests in property of JUD and IKK that are in the US or come within the US or under the control of the US persons," it said. After the LeT was designated as a global terrorist by the US and banned by the Pakistani government in 2001, it had renamed itself as JUD in order to evade sanctions, the statement noted...