

Daily Times, 1 February 2005

Tehran vows enrichment suspension to be short-lived

TEHRAN: Iran's top nuclear negotiator on Monday warned that the Islamic republic intends to resume uranium enrichment and its current suspension of the controversial process will not last long. "The length of the suspension will not be very long and will be valid for the duration of the negotiations and only on the condition that the negotiations make progress," Hassan Rowhani told the Hamshahri newspaper in an interview. "In the future we will most certainly resume enrichment, but as for how long the suspension will last is going to depend on many factors." Iran, accused by Washington of trying to build an atomic bomb, has suspended uranium enrichment as a confidence-building measure during talks with the European Union but the bloc now wants Tehran to commit itself to abandon the process completely.

International Herald Tribune, 1 February 2005

Nuclear 'good cop' aims to calm U.S. and Iran in dispute (Mark Landler)

DAVOS, Switzerland His agency is heading into its third showdown with a potential nuclear-weapons state in three years, and the United States is trying to push him out of his job. But when Mohamed ElBaradei, the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, came to the annual conference of the World Economic Forum here, he behaved like someone who expects to be in the thick of the proliferation debate for the foreseeable future. In an interview, ElBaradei fleshed out his proposal for a five-year moratorium on the building of uranium-enrichment facilities, to stop the spread of atomic weapons to Iran or other countries. "The danger of proliferation has become much more real, much more imminent, and we cannot address it with business as usual," he said during a break from meetings with foreign ministers and American lawmakers.

Terror Wire, 1 February 2005

Gaddafi feels betrayed after WMD deal

Libyan leader Moamar Gaddafi has complained that he has not been sufficiently rewarded by the United States and Britain for agreeing to dismantle his weapons of mass destruction program. "They promised, but we haven't seen anything yet," Mr Gaddafi said in an interview with Time magazine. "Libya and the whole world expected a positive response, not just words, although they were nice words, from America and Europe," he said. "[British Prime Minister Tony] Blair and [US President George W] Bush expressed their satisfaction. "But there must be at least a declaration of a program like the Marshall Plan, to show the world that those who wish to abandon the nuclear weapon program will be helped," he added.

The Nation, 1 February 2005

Rice doesn't rule out miltary action against Iran (Iftikhar Ali)

NEW YORK - US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice expressed concern Sunday over the actions of Iran and Syria in neighbouring Iraq, saying the two countries have not been helpful. "We certainly are concerned by the role that Iran has tried to play in Iraq," Rice said in an interview with the ABC television programme "This Week." "The Iranians need to understand that the Iraqis are going to build their own future, that it is going to be a future that is very different than the Iranian regime. I do believe that the Iranians have not been particularly a force for stability and for good," said Rice, who was confirmed as Secretary of State last week, replacing Colin Powell.

People's Daily, 2 February 2005

Iranian nuke chief meets EU's Solana on enrichment

The head of Iran's atomic energy programme says Tuesday talks with the European Union on Iran's uranium-enrichment is at a "precise and sensitive point". Gholamreza Aghazadeh met EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana on Tuesday at the EU headquarters in Brussels. Solana's office works with the foreign ministries of France, Germany and Britain in talks aimed at persuading Iran to suspend indefinitely its uranium enrichment programme. In exchange, the EU is offering technological and financial support and talks on a trade deal. After the meeting, Aghazadeh said there was some agreement. "Both parties agree that the work must be accelerated. I think that the next negotiations will be more precise and more punctual." Iran has suspended enrichment during the talks, but has repeatedly insisted the freeze won't last long.

Daily Times, 2 February 2005

Iran to sign key agreement on Russian N-plant

TEHRAN: Iran is ready to sign a key agreement on the return of nuclear fuel to Russia that will enable Moscow to launch the first controversial nuclear power plant in the Islamic state, Tehran's ambassador here said on Tuesday. News agencies quoted Iran's ambassador Gholamreza Shafei as telling reporters that an agreement may be reached during a visit to Iran by Russia's atomic energy chief Alexander Rumyantsev later this month. "Rumyantsev will visit Iran at the end of February to discuss this question," Shafei said. "Tehran is ready to sign a commercial agreement on this issue," he said in reference to the return of the nuclear fuel. The issue has remained the key impediment to Russia's launch of a nuclear power plant that is being built under an 800 million dollar contract at Bushehr.

Khaleej Times, 2 February 2005

Iraq, Iran talks with Schroeder planned as Rice visits Germany

BERLIN - Far from ignoring Germany as she once famously suggested, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will discuss the war in Iraq and tensions with Iran when she meets Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder on Friday. Rice's brief trip to Berlin, part of a major fence-mending exercise in Europe after the divisions sparked by the US-led war in Iraq, is mainly aimed at smoothing the way for a visit to Germany by President George W. Bush on February 23. While he will be in Southeast Asia during Rice's visit, their talks in Washington last week suggest that international efforts to persuade Iran to give up its

suspected nuclear arms programme will be a major topic

People's Daily, 3 February 2005

Iran reiterates suspension of uranium enrichment should be temporary

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi reiterated here Wednesday that Iran's suspension of uranium enrichment should be short-term in spite of the European Union's (EU) call for a permanent stop, the official IRNA news agency reported. "Tehran's precondition is that its suspension of uranium enrichment program should be limited and short-term, but Europe from the beginning called for a long-term and permanent suspension," Kharazi was quoted as saying. But Kharazi added that the EU has always been trying to solve the issue through negotiations. "Perhaps through this we may be able to get a formula of guarantees acceptable both to us and Europe, thus reaching mutual understanding," Kharazi said.

The News, 3 February 2005

Iran did not buy uranium from mine: Namibia

JOHANNESBURG: Records show Namibia's Rossing mine has not sold uranium to Iran, accused by the United States of secretly pursuing nuclear weapons, in the past 15 years although Tehran has a stake in the firm, Namibia said on Wednesday. Namibia's Director of Mines Asser Mudhika told Reuter's shareholders do not influence the sales policy of Rossing Uranium Ltd, the world's biggest open-pit uranium mine. "When the mine is going to export uranium it must get authorisation from the ministry, signed by the minister, specifying how many tonnes the mine is selling," Mudhika said. The ministry keeps track of exports and their destinations, providing this information to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, he added. "As far as Iran buying Namibian uranium, our data indicate not a single ounce of uranium bought by Iran," Mudhika said.

Hindustan Times, 3 February 2005

Pak may launch nukes against India: NIC

Washington, Feb.2.A US-based think tank has said that Pakistan, given the lack of its strategic depth, may use nuclear weapons against India to counter successes of the larger Indian conventional forces. However, it ruled out a similar attack by New Delhi. "India and Pakistan appear to understand the likely prices to be paid by triggering a conflict. But nationalist feelings run high and are not likely to abate," the National Intelligence Council said in a chapter titled, Pervasive insecurity: Envisaging possible developments by 2020."Under plausible scenarios, Pakistan might use nuclear weapons to counter success by the larger Indian conventional forces particularly given Pakistan's lack of strategic depth," the council report said.

International Herald Tribune, 3 February 2005

U.S. suspects North Korea sold Libya uranium (David E.Sanger & William J. Broad)

WASHINGTON Scientific tests have led U.S. intelligence agencies and government scientists to conclude with near certainty that North Korea sold processed uranium to Libya, bolstering earlier indications that North Korea had exported sensitive fuel for atomic weapons, according to officials with access to the intelligence. The determination, which has circulated among senior government officials in recent weeks, has touched off a hunt to determine if North Korea has also sold uranium to other nations, including Iran and Syria. Nonetheless, the conclusion about the uranium transfer to Libya, which is contained in a classified briefing that has been described to The New York Times, could alter Washington's debate about the assessment of the North Korea nuclear threat.

People's Daily, 3 February 2005

Bush demands Iran dismantle nuclear program

US President George W. Bush on Wednesday demanded that Iran dismantle its nuclear program in his annual State of the Union address. "We are working with European allies to make clear to the Iranian regime that it must give up its uranium enrichment program and any plutonium reprocessing," Bush said. The Bush administration has accused Iran of developing a nuclear weapon program and Iran says its nuclear program is for civil purposes only. Bush said on Jan. 17 that he would not rule out military actions against Iran in his second term. Condoleezza Rice, then secretary of state-designate, threatened a day later to refer Iran's nuclear case to the UN Security Council. In response, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, chairman of Iran's powerful Expediency Council and former president, said on Jan. 18 that Iran was "not a proper place for adventurism".

People's Daily, 4 February 2005

China holds Iran nuclear issue should be solved within IAEA framework

It is China's stand that the Iran nuclear issue should be solved within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan in Beijing on February 3. US President George W. Bush said Wednesday in his annual State of the Union address that Iran was the "world's primary state sponsor of terror." When asked to comment on Bush's remarks and on the Iran nuclear issue at a regular press conference, Kong said the Chinese government always upholds that disputes between different countries should be solved through dialogue, and should accord with the UN charter and principles on international relations.

The News, 4 February 2005

Iran nears bomb production, says NCRI

PARIS: Iran has obtained the materials and expertise to make the triggers for an atomic bomb, bringing closer its goal of acquiring nuclear weapons later this year, the main Iranian opposition grouping said in Paris on Thursday. Citing secret sources inside Iran's nuclear development programme, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) said that Tehran has produced or bought from abroad quantities of polonium-210 and beryllium-two elements required for building a "neutron

initiator." It has also developed the know-how to make a "neutron generator" which is another key part of the neutron initiator, the NCRI said.

Indian Express, 4 February 2005

Pakistan too a suspect in Libya uranium transfer (Glenn Kessler)

WASHINGTON, FEB.3. The Bush administration's claim this week that North Korea appears to have been the supplier of converted uranium to Libya is based on evidence that could just as easily point to Pakistan, a key US ally, as the source, according to analysts and officials familiar with the data. The IAEA, which has been investigating the nuclear smuggling network led by Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan, has collected a mountain of conflicting information pointing to both Pakistan and North Korea as Libya's source of uranium. "In order to come to this conclusion you need a sample from North Korea and no one has a uranium sample from North Korea," said one official investigating the network and Libya's former programs.

The News, 4 February 2005

Rumsfeld seeks to revive burrowing nuclear bomb (Walter Pincus)

Defence Secretary Donald H Rumsfeld sent a memo last month to then-Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham saying next year's budget should include funds to resume study of building an earth-penetrating nuclear weapon designed to destroy hardened underground targets. An Energy Department official said yesterday that \$10.3 million to restart that study is expected to be included in the Bush administration's budget, which is to be released next week. The study, which had been undertaken at the Los Alamos, Sandia and Livermore national laboratories, was halted late last year after Congress deleted \$27.5 million for it from the fiscal 2005 Omnibus Appropriations Bill.

Daily Times, 5 February 2005

Iran agrees to UN inspection of nuclear site

VIENNA: Iran has agreed to give the UN nuclear watchdog agency a fresh look at a military complex linked by the United States to possible atomic arms research, diplomats said on Friday. The diplomats, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, said no date for the inspection had been set. But one of them suggested that it could come before the planned Feb. 28 meeting of the board of the International Atomic Energy Agency - the U.N. watchdog now probing Tehran's nuclear activities. IAEA inspectors last visited the Parchin complex just outside Tehran in mid-January in their search for radiation that could point to such research.

South Asian Media.net, 5 February 2005

Iran not hopeful about EU nuke talks

TEHRAN: A leading hardline cleric said on Friday Iran was not optimistic about its nuclear talks with the European Union, insisting Tehran would not scrap atomic fuel work which Washington says could be used to make bombs. "We do not have much hope for these negotiations," Ayatollah Ahmad Janati told worshippers at Friday Prayers in Tehran in a sermon broadcast live on state television. "But the negotiating delegation, the other side and everybody should know that the (nuclear) fuel cycle is our red line ... If anyone wants to stand against it, our people will stand against them," said Janati, whose comments reflect the view of powerful hardliners within the Iranian leadership. Janati heads Iran's Guardian Council which vets all legislation approved by parliament and candidates standing in national elections.

China Daily, 5 February 2005

Rice says diplomacy can succeed in Iran

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice joined British and German allies pledging Friday to help Israel and the Palestinians seize an opening for peace in the Middle East. They also said diplomacy can neutralize a nuclear threat in Iran. Rice toned down the rhetoric Friday and sought to play down the possibility that the United States might invade or attack Iran. "Diplomacy can work in this case if there is unity of purpose and unity of message to the Iranians that the international community expects them to live up to their obligations," Rice said in Berlin. An attack "is simply not on the agenda at this point. We have diplomatic means to do this," Rice said in London, where she met with British Prime Minister Tony Blair before seeing Straw. Britain, Germany and France are leading a European diplomatic campaign to end Iranian nuclear weapons ambitions. The United States has not joined that effort.

The News, 5 February 2005

IAEA writing report on Egyptian nuclear activity

VIENNA: The UN atomic agency is writing a report on its investigation of suspicious atomic activity in Egypt, diplomats said on Friday, with Cairo already admitting it failed to tell the agency about some research experiments. The report will be submitted to a meeting that opens in Vienna February 28 of the watchdog International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) 35-nation board of governors. The IAEA is "writing a report, yes," a diplomat close to the agency told AFP, confirming that Egypt's nuclear program will now be a special topic of consideration at the board meeting. The diplomat said, "there are a number of little failures" in honouring international safeguards to report.

Indian Express, 5 February 2005

S Korea drops 'main enemy' tag for North (Jack Kim)

SEOUL, FEBRUARY 4: For the first time in a decade, South Korea has stopped labelling North Korea its "main enemy" but its latest Defence White Paper on Friday said it suspects the reclusive state of possessing nuclear weapons. The tag of main enemy has angered the North in the past and the move to drop the label coincides with attempts by Seoul to coax the

communist state back to six-party talks on ending Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions. "The existing expression of the main enemy North Korea has been replaced by an explanation of the North's specific military threat, such as its conventional weapons, weapons of mass destruction, and its forward deployment of military power," the Defence Ministry said in briefing notes to the White Paper.

Korea Times, 6 February 2005

Roh, Bush Agree to Resume 6-Way Talks (Shim Jae-yun)

President Roh Moo-hyun and U.S. President George Bush agreed on Saturday to resume the stalled six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear issue at the earliest date possible. The two heads of state had a 10-minute telephone conversation, vowing to closely cooperate to resolve the standoff over the North's nuclear drive. "President Roh urged all nations participating in the multilateral talks, including Seoul and Washington, to redouble their efforts to realize the six-way talks as soon as possible," Roh's deputy spokesman Kim Man-soo said. He added that President Bush responded by saying he will cooperate closely with Roh to ensure regional and global peace. The prospect for resuming the six-party talks has brightened recently since Bush showed a slight reconciliatory gesture toward the reclusive nation by refraining from using harsh remarks against the North in his State of the Union Speech Wednesday.

Daily Times, 7 February 2005

Howard mediating US-Iran N-stand off

CANBERRA: Australia had become a mediator in a nuclear standoff between Iran and the United States, Prime Minister John Howard said on Sunday, in a move that mirrors Australia's role in the North Korea nuclear crisis. Howard said Australia had been able to use its close alliance with the United States and diplomatic ties with Iran to act as a go-between for the two nations - a role illustrated when US President George W Bush called him on Friday. "I was able to talk at some length with President Bush about the substance of my discussion with the Iranian Foreign Minister (at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland)," Howard told Australian television. "I think all of that helps ... There are a number of countries around the world that we talk to that the Americans don't talk to in the same way and we are able to pass on information," he said.

People's Daily, 7 February 2005

US backs Europe's diplomacy on Iran nuclear issue

The United States supports Europe's efforts to persuade Iran to abandon its nuclear program through diplomacy but stressed it has not "eliminated any alternative," US Vice President Dick Cheney said in an interview on Sunday. "I think there's a good-faith effort under way by our European allies to try to resolve this issue diplomatically. We support that effort," Cheney said in an interview with Fox News. "If this process breaks down, the next step probably is to go back to the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency and ultimately refer to the United Nations Security Council for the imposition of international sanctions on Iran," Cheney said. "There are a number of steps here to be considered. We have not eliminated any alternative at this point, but we obviously are seriously pursuing diplomatic resolution of this problem," he added.

Dawn, 7 February 2005

Rice says Iran N-plan must be stopped

LONDON, Feb 6: Diplomacy and unity among the world's "great democracies" are key to ensuring Iran meets its international obligations, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in an interview broadcast on Sunday. Iran had become a major obstacle to peace and stability in the Middle East and must be prevented from developing nuclear weapons, she told BBC television. "We believe dealing with the Iranians diplomatically is the key and that is why I am here for discussions," Ms Rice told the BBC on Friday at the start of her first diplomatic mission to Europe and the Middle East since taking office. "We do need a strong message to Iran. We need a united front on the Iranian nuclear programme. We need us great democracies to tell the Iranian people that they deserve a better future than the present they currently have," she said.

Dawn, 7 February 2005

Iran tells EU to be 'serious' in N-talks

TEHRAN, Feb 6: Iran cautioned the European Union on Sunday that it needed to be "serious" in negotiations on the Islamic republic's nuclear programme, and repeated warnings that any failures would jeopardise the key talks. "We hope the Europeans remember the promises they made in the previous negotiations. We expect the Europeans to be serious," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters. "Naturally, if we see they cannot keep their promises or are not serious, we'll make other decisions. It's too early though to reach that point, and I personally hope we won't reach that point." In November Iran agreed with Britain, France and Germany to suspend all uranium enrichment-related activities in return for talks on trade, security and technological bonuses for the Islamic Republic.

Dawn, 7 February 2005

India-Pakistan military imbalance

The presence of a high-level American military delegation in Pakistan has coincided with a thought-provoking report by a US think-tank. Prepared by the US National Intelligence Council, which is affiliated with the CIA, the report warns of a possible nuclear conflict in the subcontinent if the current imbalance between Pakistan and India in conventional arms continues. Because of this imbalance and Pakistan's lack of strategic depth, the report warns, Islamabad was "pulling ahead in terms of nuclear-capable systems". The council, which reports directly to the CIA, claims that Pakistan could use its nuclear option if it ever felt it could lose a conventional war. In his Friday's meeting with the American delegation, led by Under-Secretary for Defence Douglas J. Feith, President Pervez Musharraf made no reference to the nuclear question; all he said was that the US

arms aid to Pakistan was critical for maintaining military balance in the region.

Daily Times, 7 February 2005

Khan network still operational: TIME

LAHORE: While the world is focused on a possible showdown over the Iranian nuclear programme, a recent investigation has revealed that Pakistan's AQ Khan network played a larger role in helping Tehran and Pyongyang than had been previously disclosed, TIME magazine reported on Sunday. According to US intelligence officials, the magazine said, Dr Khan sold North Korea much of the necessary material to build a nuclear bomb, including high-speed centrifuges used to enrich uranium and the equipment required to manufacture more of them. They, along with officials at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), also believe that Iran may have bought the same set of goods - centrifuges and possibly weapons designs - from Khan in the mid-1990s. Although the IAEA says it has so far not found any definitive proof of an Iranian weapons programme, its investigators have revealed that Tehran privately confirmed at least 13 meetings (from 1994 to 1999) with representatives of the Khan network.

Indian Express, 7 February 2005

US redesigning N-weapons: Report

New York, February 7: American scientists, worried that the nation's ageing nuclear arsenal is becoming increasingly fragile, have begun designing a new generation of nuclear arms meant to be sturdier and more reliable and to have longer lives, a media report said on Monday. The programme could help shrink the arsenal and the high cost of its maintenance, it said quoting federal officials and private experts. But critics were quoted as saying it could needlessly resuscitate the complex of factories and laboratories that make nuclear weapons and could possibly ignite a new arms race. So far, the New York Times report said, the quiet effort involves only nine million dollars for warhead designers at the nation's three nuclear weapon laboratories, Los Alamos, Livermore and Sandia. Federal bomb experts at these heavily guarded facilities are now scrutinising secret arms data gathered over a half century for clues about how to achieve the new reliability goals.

Daily Times, 7 February 2005

Iran 'years away' from N-weapon: Rumsfeld

WASHINGTON: Iran is believed to be years away from having a nuclear weapon and the United States has decided to use diplomacy, not military action, in dealing with the issue, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said on Sunday. "It's fairly clear from the public statements of the Iranians that, that they are on a path of seeking a nuclear weapon and don't have it at the present time," Rumsfeld said in a taped interview with CNN's "Late Edition." Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rohani said in an interview with Reuters on Sunday that Iran would retaliate and accelerate its nuclear program if attacked. The Bush administration has been severely criticized for going to war against Iraq in 2003 by using the justification that Baghdad had weapons of mass destruction, when none have been found since the invasion. Rumsfeld was cautious about the accuracy of intelligence estimates on Iran's nuclear program. "I don't make estimates, that's the business for the intelligence community. But they're (Iran) some years away according to the estimates, but I don't know if the estimates are correct or not," Rumsfeld told CNN.

Daily Times, 7 February 2005

Terrorists using nuclear weapons against US can't be ruled out

Washington: The possibility of Al Qaeda or another such outfit using a nuclear device against the United States should not be ruled out, according to Steve Coll of the Washington Post. Spelling out what some would consider a "doomsday scenario," Coll, who last year published 'Ghost Wars', a book on Afghanistan, Pakistan and the region, argues, "In Pakistan today, some Islamist insurgents, such as those in the frontier territory where Bin Laden is presumed to be hiding, receive almost-state sponsorship or failed-state sponsorship. Individual officials or sections of a corrupt bureaucracy join with these radicals for a variety of reasons - cash payoffs, ideology, venality, or a blend of all three. "These fluid relationships threaten to render irrelevant the traditional postures of nuclear deterrence, in which governments frighten other governments into nuclear restraint, usually by credible threats of massive retaliation. President Bush's pledge after 9/11 to make 'no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them' does not seem likely to intimidate a future jihadi nuclear cell.

The News, 7 February 2005

Iran to accelerate nuclear plan if attacked

TEHRAN: Iran would both retaliate and accelerate its drive to master nuclear technology if the United States or Israel attacked its atomic facilities, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator warned on Sunday. Secretary-General Iran's Supreme National Security Council Hassan Rohani also told Reuters that there was nothing the West could offer Tehran that would persuade it to scrap a nuclear programme, which Washington fears may be used to make bombs. Asked about a possible attack by the US or Israel, which have both said a nuclear-armed Iran would be unacceptable, Rohani said: "If such an attack (against Iran's atomic facilities) takes place then of course we will retaliate and we will definitely accelerate our activities to complete our (nuclear) fuel cycle." Speaking in a rare interview, Rohani said that Iran's ability to produce its own nuclear parts had made it "invulnerable" to attack since it could simply rebuild whatever was destroyed. "But I do not think the United States itself will take such a risk ... They know our capabilities for retaliating against such attacks," he added.

Daily Times, 8 February 2005

Pakistan denies it sold N-tech to Arab states

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan denied on Monday that nuclear scientist Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan sold nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries after Time magazine reported that the United States was investigating the matter. AQ Khan admitted last year to leaking nuclear secrets to Iran, Libya and North Korea. The latest edition of Time said US officials were investigating whether Khan also sold sensitive technology to Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed dismissed the report as "baseless and sensationalised", though a Foreign Office spokesman said the case was not yet closed. "As far as Iran, Libya and North Korea are concerned, there was an admission. But there is no truth as far as Saudi Arabia and other countries are concerned," the minister said.

Daily Times, 8 February 2005

Russia and Iran may sign nuclear deal this month

MOSCOW: Russia is preparing to sign a deal with Iran this month to start atomic fuel shipments for a Moscow-built nuclear reactor, a Russian nuclear source said on Monday. The move is certain to enrage the United States which says Iran can use Russian fuel to secretly make a nuclear bomb. Washington has long called on Russia to drop the plans. The source in Russia's Atomic Energy Agency said Moscow and Tehran had largely settled all remaining technicalities and were preparing to sign the accord when Alexander Rumyantsev, the agency's head, travels to Iran at the end of February. "This time the deal will be signed. Of course you can't be 100 percent certain about anything but the probability of that is very high," said the source. The comments confirmed earlier hints by Moscow-based diplomats that Russia and Tehran had overcome disagreement over the deal's terms and were moving closer to signing it after years of talks.

Daily Times, 8 February 2005

Iran sees crucial phase ahead in nuclear talks, sticks by fuel cycle

TEHRAN: Negotiations with the European Union on Iran's nuclear programme are entering a crucial phase but Tehran will continue to reject calls for it to abandon sensitive fuel cycle work, Iranian officials said on Monday. "This week's negotiations with the Europeans are the most important part of the nuclear negotiations," Iran's vice president and atomic energy head Gholamreza Aghazadeh told state television. "The conclusion of three months of nuclear negotiations is close, and the Europeans this week should more clearly tell us their plans," he added. "We are expecting the negotiations to be serious and meaningful." Iran agreed in November with Britain, France and Germany to suspend all uranium enrichment-related activities in return for talks on trade, security and technological bonuses for the Islamic Republic. The Iran-EU talks began in Brussels in December, moved to Geneva in January and are to resume Tuesday in Geneva, diplomats said. But there is a risk of deadlock, with EU negotiators demanding Iran totally dismantle its nuclear fuel programme, including enrichment, as "objective guarantees" that it does not seek atomic weapons.

Dawn, 8 February 2005

N-black market network disabled: No uranium gas cylinders missing from KRL - FO (Hasan Akhtar)

ISLAMABAD, Feb 7: Pakistan on Monday said the so-called international nuclear black market network in the country had been dismantled and neutralized and denied US media reports about the 16 cylinders of uranium hexafluoride gas missing from the Khan Research Laboratories (KRL). Speaking at his weekly press briefing here, Foreign Office spokesman Masood Khan said the report claiming that the network was still functioning, was incorrect because international black market, as far as Pakistan was concerned, had been dismantled and neutralized. Referring to claims made in the US media reports that the evidence against the A.Q. Khan network was far more (in its scope) than admitted by the Pakistani authorities, the spokesman said that Dr Khan had been removed and put in house arrest about a couple of years ago. He said the latest media report was entirely speculative and a rehash of some of the previous speculative reports on the subject. It was without any substance and merited no official rebuttal. However, he reiterated that Pakistan's record and inventories had been checked by the authorities concerned and found to be clean and complete with no gaps.

Dawn, 8 February 2005

A nuclear Iran is not the problem (Peter Preston)

LONDON: Winston Churchill, as usual, gave the policy a floridly eloquent gloss. Britain, he said, almost 50 years ago to the day, must reach that happy condition "where safety will be the sturdy child of terror, and survival the twin brother of annihilation". He was talking about mutually assured destruction, or MAD - the theory of nuclear deterrence that dominated the second half of the 20th century and, uncountable billions of dollars later, kept us supposedly safe from obliteration. If our enemy had a bomb and we had a bomb, then neither of us could use it on the other because we'd both be dead in an instant. And, at least in a negative way, that seemed to work, because the only bombs anyone dropped - on Hiroshima and Nagasaki - were Uncle Sam's message to non-nuclear Japan. MAD was salvation. MAD was security. MAD was the way of life most of us grew up with, the prevailing logic of uneasy peace. So whatever became of our mad, mad world?

The News, 8 February 2005

Iran to resolve problems with US

TEHRAN: Iran's top nuclear negotiator said on Tuesday that Tehran wants to resolve decades of differences with the United States but warned that a US military strike would not be able to destroy its nuclear facilities. "We are not seeking tension with the United States," Hasan Rowhani told the state-run television. "We are seeking to resolve our problems with America but it's the Americans who don't want problems be resolved." "There is no problem in today's world that can't be resolved," he insisted. Rowhani, who is the secretary of the powerful Supreme National Security Council, said a US military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities would fail. "Iran's nuclear technology is in the hands of its scientists and workshops throughout the country. All of them have the ability to produce centrifuges. Therefore, America will not be able to destroy our nuclear facilities

and mines through a military strike," he warned.

The News, 8 February 2005

Iran ready to accept nuke safeguards

KUALA LUMPUR: Iran is prepared to accept a mechanism to ensure it will not use its nuclear expertise to produce weapons, Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar said on Monday after talks with Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi. Syed Hamid Albar told a news conference, "We discussed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The position of Malaysia is clear. I told him Malaysia wants to see the abolition of nuclear weapons. And he gave the assurance that their programme is for peaceful purposes and is not aimed towards making weapons of mass destruction." Syed Hamid added: "Kharazi stated during the meeting that Iran cannot be over-dependent on any one country or any one source of energy, so that is why it is building up its nuclear programme for energy needs." Kharazi told reporters that the United States was a diplomatically isolated superpower and international outcry forced US President Bush to withdraw a threat of military action against Tehran.

Dawn, 8 February 2005

Making the same mistakes in Iran (David Kay)

One year ago I told the US Senate Armed Services Committee that I had concluded "we were almost all wrong" at the time of the Iraq war about that country's activities with regard to weapons of mass destruction - and never more wrong than in the assessment that Iraq had a resurgent programme on the verge of producing nuclear weapons. I testified about what I saw as the major reasons we got it so wrong, and I urged the establishment of an independent commission to examine this failure and begin the long-overdue process of adjusting our intelligence capabilities to the new national security environment we face. It is an environment dominated by too-easy access to weapons of mass destruction capabilities and to the means of concealing such capabilities from international inspection and national intelligence agencies. A year later we are still awaiting the independent commission's report. The discussion of intelligence reform has focused on reordering and adding structure on top of an eroded intelligence foundation.

Hindustan Times, 8 February 2005

Report on AQ Khan incorrect: Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Feb.7: Pakistan on Monday termed as "incorrect" and "unrealistic" a report in the Time magazine that the US is investigating whether the disgraced scientist AQ Khan sold nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries but said it has not closed the probe against proliferators. "The Time has distorted the facts and made them sensational. There is no reality in the report and it is not based on facts," Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said. Rashid also denied the magazine charge that some cylinders of uranium hexafluoride gas have disappeared from Kahuta Research Laboratories (KRL). "We have checked all the records and no cylinder is missing from the KRL. We are ready to remove apprehensions if there are any," he said adding Khan has admitted to provide information to three countries but the Time story about selling technology to Saudi Arabia or other Arab countries is "incorrect".

Indian Express, 8 February 2005

US vows sanctions to stop spread of missile know-how to Iran

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8: The Bush administration lashed out at China before an international audience for not stopping its munitions companies from selling missile technology to Iran and other rogue states. Speaking to a conference in Tokyo sponsored by Japan on Monday, Undersecretary of State John R Bolton said the US would move aggressively to suspend business with companies that provide sensitive weapons technology to Iran and other countries trying to build weapons of mass destruction. The speech by the administration's top arms control official appears to mark a shift in tactics. Sanctions normally have been applied quietly against offending firms. Bolton's forceful public talk about meting out punishment held the Chinese government directly accountable. In the speech, Bolton also renewed the administration's opposition to plans by European nations to resume arms sales to China by ending an embargo imposed after China's bloody attack on protesters in and near Tiananmen Square in 1989.

The News, 9 February 2005

Iran tells US N-sites cannot be destroyed

TEHRAN: Iran warned the United States on Tuesday that its nuclear sites cannot be destroyed by air or missile strikes, as Britain entered the fray by declaring that Tehran is a state sponsor of terrorism. Top national security official Hassan Rowhani said on state television that a military strike would only push Iran's nuclear activities underground, and told Washington that the stand-off should be settled by dialogue. "Our nuclear centres cannot be destroyed. Our nuclear technology comes from our scientists (and) we can transfer our nuclear workshops under mountains and carry out enrichment where no bomb or missile can be effective," said the cleric, adding he did not consider an attack as a "serious threat." Rowhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, insisted that Iran was "not looking for increased tensions with any country, even with the Americans." "We are seeking to resolve our issues with the US. But they are blocking any chance of resolving the issues."

Daily Times, 9 February 2005

Nuclear experts discuss ways to punish 'NPT deserters'

TOKYO: Nuclear experts and diplomats from 20 nations on Tuesday looked at ways to punish countries deserting the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), at the end of a two-day meeting here on strengthening the pact. The 40 delegates held closed-door talks ahead of a May conference in New York to review the non-proliferation treaty, which North Korea pulled out of in 2003 to world shock. Iran is also in a nuclear standoff. "Some participants argued we should increase the costs of withdrawal

for a deserting country" by requiring them to return materials and equipment which they received for peaceful use of atomic power upon joining the treaty, a Japanese government official said, adding that Tokyo backed the proposal.

Dawn, 9 February 2005

N-centres can be moved underground, Iran tell US

TEHRAN, Feb 8: Iran's top national security official has warned the United States that the country's controversial nuclear programme cannot be destroyed by air or missile strikes, state television reported on Tuesday. Hassan Rowhani said such an attack would only push Iran's nuclear activities underground, and added that he would prefer to see tensions with the United States resolved by dialogue. "Our nuclear centres cannot be destroyed. Our nuclear technology comes from our scientists (and) we can transfer our nuclear workshops under mountains and carry out enrichment where no bomb or missile can be effective," said the official. "The United States will not gain anything from a military attack. I do not see a military attack as a serious threat," added Mr Rowhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

Dawn, 9 February 2005

EU accuses Iran of breaching nuclear deal

GENEVA, Feb 8: Officials from European heavyweights Britain, France and Germany on Tuesday warned Iran about activities that verge on "breaches" of a deal to freeze nuclear fuel cycle work in talks that opened in Geneva. Britain, France and Germany "read the riot act to the Iranians", a diplomat close to the talks, which is aimed at getting Iran to guarantee that it is not developing nuclear weapons, said. The European trio, who are leading the negotiations for the European Union, are following advice from UN nuclear watchdog chief Mohamed ElBaradei "who has warned Iran in two letters in December and January" about quality control work on centrifuge parts despite an agreed freeze on nuclear fuel cycle work, said the diplomat, who asked not to be named.

The New York Times, 9 February 2005

Up to 480 U.S. Nuclear Arms in Europe, Private Study Says (Eric Schmitt)

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8: The United States still keeps as many as 480 nuclear weapons at air bases across Europe, more than twice what independent military analysts previously estimated, according to a new study that says the weapons' presence is hurting efforts to curb nuclear proliferation worldwide. Military officials insisted that the size of the nuclear stockpile in Europe, while classified, was smaller than that. But they acknowledged that it still existed to deter terrorists or nations that could threaten America or its allies with unconventional weapons. The officials also say the stockpile's presence and its long-term fate have caused simmering tensions among senior NATO political and military officials.

The New York Times, 9 February 2005

U.S. Asking China to Increase Pressure on North Korea to End Its Nuclear Program (David E. Sanger and William J. Broad)

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8: Driven by new evidence that North Korea may have begun selling nuclear materials around the world, President Bush sent an emissary last week to see President Hu Jintao of China and urge him to intensify diplomatic pressure on the North to give up its weapons program, according to senior American and Asian officials. The emissary, Michael Green, delivered a letter from Mr. Bush to Mr. Hu that, in the words of one American official, "was written to underscore the greatly heightened urgency" of the problem. According to Asian officials, the Chinese promised to send a delegation to Pyongyang later this month, but also advised Mr. Bush against making public pronouncements about the North Korean situation, the way he regularly talked about the threat posed by Iraq in the year leading up to the March 2003 invasion. Mr. Bush has never publicly mentioned the new information about suspect North Korean nuclear sales, which was reported by The New York Times last week.

Daily Times, 9 February 2005

'China plans revolutionary, pebble bed nuclear reactor'

BEIJING: China plans to develop a revolutionary, "pebble-bed" nuclear reactor which would be both meltdown- and proliferation-proof, and come on stream in five years time, the Financial Times reported on Tuesday. A Chinese energy consortium has chosen the city of Weihai in northeastern Shandong province to build the 195-megawatt gas-cooled power plant, the newspaper said, citing an unnamed official representing the consortium. The plant would be the first radically new reactor design for decades, putting China at the forefront in nuclear energy research that offers a "meltdown-proof" alternative to conventional nuclear power stations, it said. "Pebble bed" reactors are fuelled by thousands of small graphite balls with minute uranium cores which provide the fuel for the nuclear reaction.

The New York Times, 9 February 2005

Bush Bites His Tongue (Nicholas D. Kristof)

There are two words the Bush administration doesn't want you to think about: North Korea. That's because the most dangerous failure of U.S. policy these days is in North Korea. President Bush has been startlingly passive as North Korea has begun churning out nuclear weapons like hot cakes. The dangers were underscored with last week's reports that the uranium in Libya's former nuclear program may have come from North Korea. Indeed, Mr. Bush seems to recognize that his policy has failed - that's why he isn't talking much about North Korea now, at least publicly, and why (as reported in The Times today) he sent an emissary to talk last week with the Chinese leader, Hu Jintao, about how to tame North Korea.

China Daily, 10 February 2005

US asks China to push for N. Korea talks

US President Bush sent an envoy to China last week to urge a renewed push to get North Korea back to stalled negotiations over its nuclear weapons program, U.S. officials said on Wednesday. The envoy, Michael Green, an Asian expert on the National Security Council, carried with him a letter for Chinese President Hu Jintao, the officials said. Similar letters were given to South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. "We feel and believe that the Chinese government does understand the threat a nuclear-armed Korean Peninsula represents and thus understands the need for North Korea to return to the six-party talks," said a senior administration official. Another official said Green had delivered a message to the Chinese about information suggesting that Libya had obtained uranium hexafluoride from North Korea and made the case that this underscored the need to restart six-party talks.

Daily Times, 10 February 2005

We can't do business with nuclear sanction threat, India tells US

BANGALORE: India's defense minister on Wednesday expressed reluctance to sign deals with US arms suppliers because Washington could re-impose sanctions, such as those slapped on after 1998 nuclear tests, choking off vital spare parts and technology. Pranab Mukherjee said India needs to ensure uninterrupted support for any defense system it purchases. "With the possibility of sanctions, (America's) credibility as a supplier is in question," Mukherjee said on the sidelines of an international air show in the southern city of Bangalore where US defense contractors are displaying their wares. "Dependability as a source of supply and technology transfer are the two most important criteria for defense cooperation," he said. Washington banned the sale of military technology to India under sanctions imposed after the series of nuclear tests in 1998. The United States lifted all sanctions by the end of last year as relations between the two countries improved, and has not threatened to re-impose them since.

Daily Times, 10 February 2005

Iran asks Japan to help smooth relations with US

TOKYO: Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi has asked Japan to help ease tensions between Tehran and Washington over Iran's plans to make nuclear fuel that could be used for atomic weapons, a Japanese official said on Wednesday. US President George W Bush, who has refused to rule out military action, last week called Iran the world's primary state sponsor of terror and accused it of trying to build nuclear arms. Iran has said its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes. "Kharrazi said ... Japan probably has abundant (positive) information about Iran and asked that it convey such information to the United States," a Foreign Ministry official told reporters after the Iranian minister met Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. Iran is the third-largest energy supplier for Japan, which relies on the Middle East for almost all of its oil. Kharrazi reiterated that Iran was not seeking nuclear weapons and that its nuclear programme would be used for peaceful aims such as generating electricity, the official said.

Daily Times, 10 February 2005

Germany dangles 'winning' future for Iran if it renounces N-plan

WELLINGTON: German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said on Wednesday Iran could be "on the winning side in a new Middle East" if it presses forward with democratic reforms and backs away from its nuclear programme. Asked on a visit to New Zealand about efforts by Germany, France and Britain to convince Tehran to call off its nuclear activities in return for trade privileges, Fischer said the country was at a crossroads. "This is a situation where the nation could be on the winning side in a new Middle East if substantial reforms are moving forward, if the country's opening for trade," he said. "We try to convince by diplomatic means the Iranians that they should go for their long-term interests and not miscalculate." US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Tuesday in Paris that the EU powers had given the Iranians "an opportunity to live up to their obligations" and Washington hoped they would seize it.

Daily Times, 10 February 2005

Rice tells Iran to take EU deal or face UNSC

BRUSSELS: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged European allies on Wednesday to get tougher with Iran, highlighting continuing policy differences despite her call for a new chapter in transatlantic relations. Rice flew to Brussels for talks with NATO foreign ministers and the European Union after saying Iran should be warned it faces referral to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions unless it accepts an EU deal on its nuclear programme. "(The) Iranians need to hear that if they are unwilling to take the deal, really, that the Europeans are giving ... then the Security Council looms," she told Fox News. "I don't know that anyone has said that as clearly as they should to the Iranians," she said in a comment intended not only to pressure Tehran but also to spur France, Britain and Germany to get tough in their negotiations with Iran on the EU's behalf. Policy divisions over Iran and China were likely to test the upbeat mood nurtured by Rice this week on her maiden journey as secretary of state.

Reuters, 10 February 2005

Iran Says It Will Never Give Up Nuclear Technology

TEHRAN/WASHINGTON: Iran, in a renewed challenge to U.S. and European efforts to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear bomb, vowed on Wednesday it would never give up its nuclear program. President Mohammad Khatami also warned of "massive" consequences if it was treated unfairly over its nuclear program which Iran says is for peaceful purposes only and Washington believes is a cover for producing a bomb. "We give our guarantee that we will not produce nuclear weapons because we're against them and do not believe they are a source of power," Khatami told foreign ambassadors in Tehran. "But we will not give up peaceful nuclear technology." In Washington, President Bush said a nuclear-armed Iran would be "a

very destabilizing force in the world" and urged the West to work together to stop this happening. Britain, France and Germany are trying to persuade Iran to end permanently all nuclear activities which could be used to produce a bomb in return for economic and trade incentives. While the talks go on, Iran has suspended nuclear work, including uranium enrichment which can be used to make weapons-grade fuel.

Dawn, 10 February 2005

European response pleases Bush: Iran nuclear programme

WASHINGTON, Feb 9: US President George W. Bush said on Wednesday he was "very pleased" with European leaders' response to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's call for a harder line on Iran's nuclear programmes. "The Iranians just need to know that the free world is working together to send a very clear message: Don't develop a nuclear weapon," he said as he met with Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski at the White House. "And the reason we're sending that message is because Iran with a nuclear weapon would be a very destabilizing force in the world," said Bush, who told reporters he would bring that message on his late February trip to Europe. Rice said during her first trip to Europe since taking her new post that Tehran must face possible UN sanctions if it rejects diplomatic overtures aimed at ending the dispute over its atomic programmes. "I don't know that anyone has said that as clearly as they should to the Iranians," she told Fox News in an apparent message to British, French and German leaders who have spearheaded talks with Tehran.

The New York Times, 10 February 2005

Encouraging Nuclear Proliferation

There are many things the United States military badly needs these days, like better armored vehicles for combat zones like Iraq and more unpiloted aircraft for reconnaissance and bombing. One thing it has no pressing use for is a new line of nuclear warheads being designed at America's three nuclear weapons laboratories to replace the roughly 10,000 still on hand from the overbuilding frenzies of the cold war. This is essentially a make-work project for weapons designers that risks triggering a new worldwide nuclear arms race. America's nuclear creativity should be focused on convincing nations like Iran and North Korea that nuclear weapons will not enhance their own security, not on setting a perverse contrary example. Nuclear weapons are extremely ill suited for most conceivable battlefield situations. They are unique in their power to destroy innocent civilian lives, and there are almost always cleaner, more efficient ways to destroy purely military targets. Since the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki almost 60 years ago, they have never again been used in combat.

Khaleej Times, 10 February 2005

Europeans to warn Iranians about violating spirit of nuclear freeze

GENEVA: The EU was set to warn Iran against violating an agreed nuclear fuel freeze when the two sides meet Thursday, amid concern that Iran is secretly developing nuclear weapons, diplomats said. The meeting comes the day after US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned that the European Union was not being tough enough with Iran. But on Thursday Britain, France and Germany "are going to read the riot act to the Iranians," a diplomat close to the talks told AFP earlier in the week. The nuclear issue is coming up in talks between officials in Geneva that opened Tuesday, marking the third round in negotiations that began in December after Iran agreed with the European trio to temporarily suspend uranium enrichment as a confidence-building measure. Britain, France and Germany are pushing diplomacy as the trio leads an EU initiative to get Iran to widen the suspension into a permanent dismantling of its program to enrich uranium, a key part of the nuclear fuel cycle, in return for trade, technology and political security goodies.

The New York Times, 10 February 2005

Uranium Enrichment Plant Is Proposed for New Mexico (Matthew L. Wald)

HOBBS, N.M., Feb. 9: The uranium enrichment centrifuge plant that gets the most attention these days is in Iran, but a larger one, carefully watched by the civilian nuclear power industry and its opponents, is taking shape here, in the desert just west of the Texas border. If built, it would be the largest commercial nuclear project ordered in this country in more than three decades. To supporters, the proposed \$1.3 billion plant is a sign of faith in the nuclear power industry's perseverance and revival, and a way to make reactor fuel with far less energy, replacing an enrichment technology invented for the Manhattan Project. To opponents, it is a risky new industry that could release clouds of chemical poisons. Even if it operates accident-free, opponents say, it would produce radioactive waste that nobody knows what to do with. New Mexico's governor, Bill Richardson, said in an interview he would support the project if there were "an ironclad guarantee" that the waste would leave the state. But Mr. Richardson, who was energy secretary in the Clinton administration, has expressed skepticism that the Energy Department would take the waste away, as the law requires.

Khaleej Times, 10 February 2005

Europeans to warn Iranians about violating spirit of nuclear freeze

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Reuters, 10 February 2005

N. Korea Says It Suspends Participation in 6-Way Talks

TOKYO: North Korea said on Thursday that it is suspending its participation in six-way talks on its nuclear arms program for an "indefinite period." The statement, attributed to a Pyongyang Foreign Ministry spokesman, was reported by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

The Korean Herald, 11 February 2005

N. Korea declares possession of nuclear weapons (Choi Soung-ah)

North Korea declared yesterday it possesses nuclear weapons and announced it will suspend indefinitely its participation in the six-nation talks on its disarmament. "We had already taken the resolute action of pulling out of the NPT and have manufactured nukes for self-defense to cope with the Bush administration's evermore undisguised policy to isolate and stifle the DPRK," the North Korean Foreign Ministry said in a statement which coincided with South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon's departure from Seoul to Washington for previously arranged talks on the nuclear standoff and other issues with new U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "Its nuclear weapons will remain nuclear deterrent for self-defense under any circumstances ...," the statement carried by the North's Korean Central News Agency said.

People's Daily, 11 February 2005

UN chief urges DPRK to resume talks

Visiting United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan on Thursday called for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to continue to participate in the international talks on the nuclear issue of the Korean peninsula. "I expect that with efforts by other countries, North Korea (DPRK) could be brought back to the table," Annan told a joint news conference with British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. The DPRK announced that it would suspend its participation in talks on the nuclear issue and admitted for the first time that it has nuclear weapons. Straw, whose country has called on the DPRK government to review its decision and reengage in discussions with the international community, told the news conference that it would be a "major mistake for the DPRK were they to go down that route."

The Washington Post, 11 February 2005

S.Korea, China Urge N.Korea to Return to Talks (Jon Herskovitz)

SEOUL: South Korea and China joined calls for North Korea to return to the negotiating table after the isolated communist state announced it had nuclear weapons and had pulled out indefinitely from disarmament talks. The move by the North presents a major challenge to President Bush, starting his second term with a policy aimed at ending North Asia's nuclear crisis through the six-party talks that China has been shepherding for nearly two years. Standing right in the firing line is South Korea, under constant threat from a neighbor that keeps 70 percent of its 1.2-million-strong army along a border that passes just 40 miles north of the capital, Seoul. "The assessment is that North Korea may be trying to raise its negotiating stakes," Vice Foreign Minister Lee Tae-shik was quoted as saying. "But it could turn into a very serious problem if the North takes additional steps." North Korea's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday the state had been forced to boost its defenses and to acquire nuclear weapons to contend with U.S. hostility and the policy of the Bush administration to seek regime change.

The News, 11 February 2005

N Korea to resume talks, says US

WASHINGTON: The US has said it hopes to persuade North Korea to return to multi-party talks on its nuclear weapons programme, but it ruled out offering concessions. Washington also played down the significance of Pyongyang's public claim that it has nuclear weapons. White House spokesman Scott McClellan said the US remained "committed to a peaceful diplomatic solution". Pyongyang has said it is quitting talks indefinitely, declaring them pointless because of "hostile" US policy. Deputy state department spokesman Adam Ereli said the US had long assumed that North Korea had a nuclear capability, and stressed the importance of the six-party talks. However, he ruled out offering North Korea new incentives to return to the negotiations.

The News, 11 February 2005

EU, Iran extend nuclear talks

GENEVA: EU-Iranian talks focusing on persuading Iran to give guarantees it was not secretly developing nuclear weapons had been extended until Friday, a diplomat said. The talks had begun in Geneva on Tuesday and were due to wrap up Thursday. But the diplomat said it was "worthwhile not to leave any detail unconsidered in these discussions. It is better to extend the talks than to cut them off." Iranian and European Union officials met behind closed doors in Geneva on Thursday to try to resolve disputes hampering an accord on Tehran's nuclear programme, diplomats said. The meetings between experts and officials from Iran, Britain, France and Germany started Tuesday and were set to conclude Friday, but there is no deadline for reaching an agreement, diplomatic sources said on condition of anonymity. No additional details of the meeting would be made public, they said. A senior EU minister said that the negotiations on the third day of talks on Thursday, as were moving forward but warned Iran to take the issue seriously. The stalemate focuses on demands that Tehran abandon uranium enrichment.

Daily Times, 11 February 2005

Rice says Iran is moving in wrong direction

LUXEMBOURG: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Thursday that Iran's support of terrorism, nuclear ambitions and lack of democracy are out of step with trends in neighbouring nations, notably Pakistan. Rice, speaking to reporters after

meeting with EU officials, said Pakistan - though a nuclear power - has moved toward internal reforms, better ties with archenemy India and has joined the fight against terrorism. "If one looks at where Pakistan was 3 1/2 years ago, (then) those trends are moving Pakistan away from extremism, toward a policy that recognises that extremism and modernisation in Pakistan cannot exist side by side," Rice said. She added that Saudi Arabia, another US ally, also is making cautious moves toward democracy. As she spoke, Saudi men were voting in city elections - the first time Saudi Arabia has staged elections largely conforming to international standards. Women, however, are banned from running for office and from voting.

Daily Times, 11 February 2005

US N-strategy calls for outsourcing strikes

WASHINGTON: US nuclear strategy calls for outsourcing nuclear strikes, in case of a major conflict in Europe, to NATO allies that do not have such weapons, in what experts view as an attempt to skirt international law, according to an authoritative report made public here. The study by the Natural Resources Defense Council, a national security and environmental think-tank, is based mainly on declassified official documents and provides a detailed analysis of the US nuclear arsenal in Europe as well as of doctrines justifying its presence there more than a decade after the end of the Cold War. But for the first time, the document revealed on Wednesday a specific number of nuclear warheads which, under US and NATO war plans, will be transferred to US non-nuclear allies to be delivered to targets by their warplanes. If war were to break out in Europe, as many as 180 nuclear bombs would be earmarked for delivery by the air forces of Belgium, the Netherlands, Turkey, Germany and Italy, the report said.

Asahi Shinbun, 11 February 2005

Tokyo unfazed by nuke claim (Taro Karasaki)

Although caught off-guard, Tokyo reacted fairly calmly to North Korea's announcement Thursday that it possesses nuclear weapons and is pulling out of six-nation talks on its nuclear ambitions. Officials tried to play down the ramifications of the declaration and braced for the likelihood of a new round of calls within Japan to impose economic sanctions against North Korea over the abduction issue. Tokyo officials had placed high hopes on a resumption of the six-way talks, stalled since last June, in hopes of gaining ground in the abduction issue. "We must calmly assess North Korea's intentions," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda told a news conference. Hosoda noted that Pyongyang often makes provocative statements only to backtrack later in hopes of striking concessions.

The New York Times, 11 February 2005

The North Korean Challenge

North Korea put all of its worst instincts on display yesterday, announcing that it had produced nuclear weapons, intends to go on producing them and has no further interest in talking. Experts already knew the North was probably producing nuclear bombs, and it has been painfully obvious for months that diplomacy was getting nowhere. But by waving its nukes around so contemptuously and then kicking over the negotiating table, North Korea has managed to make a terrible situation even worse. The world cannot simply resign itself to the prospect of a nuclear-armed North Korea. It directly threatens South Korea, Japan and China. It raises the risk of nuclear blackmail against the United States, and only strengthens concerns that North Korea may be exporting nuclear ingredients and technology.

Daily Yomiuri, 11 February 2005

Stay cool in face of DPRK bluster

The Foreign Ministry of North Korea has issued a statement saying the reclusive state is suspending its participation in six-nation talks aimed at scrapping its nuclear development program "for an indefinite period." The six-way talks have been stalled since the last round in June. Resumption of the negotiations has been repeatedly delayed because of Pyongyang's refusal to return to the negotiating table. North Korea's latest statement came as speculation was increasing that the six-way talks could restart since U.S. President George W. Bush had launched his second-term administration. The communist state also cited Japan's attitude on the abduction issue as another reason for its decision to suspend participation in the talks. We find Pyongyang's statement extremely regrettable.

Daily Times, 12 February 2005

North Korea demands direct dialogue with US

SEOUL: North Korea has demanded bilateral talks with the United States to defuse the tension created by its announcement that it is a nuclear power, the communist state's UN envoy said in a South Korean newspaper interview published Friday. Han Sung Ryol, a senior diplomat at North Korea's UN delegation in New York, was the first North Korean official to speak to outside news media since Pyongyang's Foreign Ministry defied the United States and its allies by declaring Thursday that it has nuclear weapons as a deterrent against a US invasion and doesn't intend to join six-nation disarmament talks any time soon. "We will return to the six-nation talks when we see a reason to do so and the conditions are ripe," Han told Seoul's Hankyoreh newspaper in a Thursday interview in New York. "If the United States moves to have direct dialogue with us, we can take that as a signal that the United States is changing its hostile policy toward us." Han's suggestion came as the two-year-old standoff over North Korea's nuclear weapons programmes plummeted to a new chill with Pyongyang's statement Thursday.

People's Daily, 12 February 2005

US rejects to hold direct talks with DPRK

The United States on Friday rejected the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s demands for direct talks over its

nuclear weapons program and insisted on six-party negotiations. "It's not an issue between North Korea and the United States; it's a regional issue," said White House spokesman Scott McClellan. "There's plenty of opportunities for North Korea to speak directly with us in the context of the six-party talks," he said. The DPRK has demanded bilateral talks with Washington to defuse the tension created by its announcement that it is a nuclear power, Pyongyang's UN envoy said in a South Korean newspaper Friday. "We will return to the six-nation talks when we see a reason to do so and the conditions are ripe," Han told Seoul's Hankyoreh newspaper in an interview published Friday.

Reuters, 12 February 2005

Iran greater threat than N. Korea: US

PARIS: The United States believes that the threat posed by Iran's nuclear programme outstrips bellicose statements by North Korea that it possessed nuclear weapons, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in remarks published yesterday. We believe the North Korean problem still can be solved through diplomatic means," Rice told the French newspaper Le Figaro. "Iran poses a direct threat to the peace process in the Middle East through its support of terrorist groups." Persuading Iran to abide by terms agreed to internationally for its nuclear programme poses "a difficult and urgent problem," said Rice. Iran has been locked in negotiations with three European powers and the International Atomic Energy Agency with the aim of ensuring the Teheran government's nuclear programme only serves peaceful purposes.

The Korean Herald, 12 February 2005

Rice says Washington has long assumed Pyongyang had nukes

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said North Korea should return to disarmament talks and avoid further international isolation, and world leaders echoed her call for the Stalinist state to abandon its nuclear weapons. "The world has given them a way out," and North Korea should take it, she told a news conference following talks with European Union leaders in Luxembourg hours after Pyongyang announced it had nuclear weapons and needed them as protection against an increasingly hostile United States. "The North Koreans have been told by the president of the United States that the United States has no intention of attacking or invading North Korea," Rice said. "There is a path for the North Koreans that would put them in a more reasonable relationship with the rest of the world." Asked to further analyze the thinking in Pyongyang, she said, "I'm not sure anyone ever gets very far by trying to second-guess the motivation of the North Korean regime.

Tehrantimes.com, 12 February 2005

EU, U.S. playing 'good cop/bad cop' in regard to Iran's nuclear program: Shamkhani

YAZD: Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani on Thursday lumped the Europeans with the U.S. government as 'enemies' of Iran's nuclear program, saying they were playing the 'good cop' role in a game, in which the Bush regime was acting as the heavy. "The enemies are talking to us in both polite and threatening languages," he told demonstrators in this central desert city to mark the 26th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. "One side is playing a good cop role, while the other side is playing the bad cop in order to put Iran in the throes of the good cop from fear of the bad cop," Shamkhani added. His statements were the early signs of unease in Iran which is watching U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's ongoing tour of Europe with increased suspicion. Iran and the Europeans, represented by Germany, France and Britain, are in the midst of crucial talks aimed at finding a long-term solution to Tehran's nuclear program.

The Indian Express, 12 February 2005

US welcomes Indian N-experts (Pranab Dhal Samanta)

NEW DELHI, Feb. 11: In a positive turn to the Indo-US dialogue on civilian nuclear issues, Washington has offered to accept an Indian representative from the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) to spend six months with the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). There is no strict bar on the number of representatives. The offer was made by Jeffrey S. Merrifield, a visiting Commissioner of the NRC, who has been in the country for the past week and has held discussions with AERB officials and even toured some of India's nuclear reactor sites. "We have proposed that a representative of the AERB come to the US for about six months. This will be a valuable tool in learning and exchanging information on how the reactors work and the care being taken to maintain these reactors," he told The Indian Express in an exclusive interaction.

The New York Times, 12 February 2005

Japan Urges North Korea to Rejoin Disarmament Talks (James Brooke and David E. Sanger)

TOKYO, Feb. 11: The day after North Korea declared that it possessed nuclear weapons, Japan's prime minister urged his bellicose neighbor to re-engage in disarmament talks. He spoke as the clock was running down toward a new law that will put economic pressure on North Korea by barring most of its ships from Japanese ports starting March 1. In Washington, Vice President Dick Cheney met South Korea's foreign minister Friday and pressed him not to reward the North by pursuing trade deals with the country - a point on which the United States and South Korea have increasingly been divided. According to officials close to the discussion, Mr. Cheney specifically urged the South not to fill a North Korean request for hundreds of thousands of tons of fertilizer, saying that the nations trying to disarm the North had to take a common approach if they hoped to force its president, Kim Jong Il, to choose between nuclear arms and deeper isolation.

The News, 12 February 2005

EU wants mission to help Iran get light-water N-reactor: diplomat

GENEVA: EU negotiators offered to send a mission to help Iran obtain a nuclear light-water research reactor, in what would be the first concrete move towards rewarding Tehran for abandoning uranium enrichment, diplomats said as four days of EU-Iranian talks ended on Friday. Iran's reaction was not immediately known in talks that have been deadlocked since beginning

in December. The trio of Britain, France and Germany, representing the European Union, is trying to convince Iran to dismantle an enrichment program that the United States says is part of secret nuclear weapons development. In return, Iran would get economic and political rewards. In Geneva, the European trio and Iran discussed having the trio send a mission to help Iran get a light-water research reactor that would be less of a proliferation risk than a heavy-water reactor the Iranians want to build, a diplomat close to the talks told AFP.

Daily Times, 12 February 2005

Russia and Iran may sign nuclear deal this month

MOSCOW: Russia is preparing to sign a deal with Iran this month to start atomic fuel shipments for a Moscow-built nuclear reactor, a Russian nuclear source said on Monday. The move is certain to enrage the United States which says Iran can use Russian fuel to secretly make a nuclear bomb. Washington has long called on Russia to drop the plans. The source in Russia's Atomic Energy Agency said Moscow and Tehran had largely settled all remaining technicalities and were preparing to sign the accord when Alexander Rumyantsev, the agency's head, travels to Iran at the end of February. "This time the deal will be signed. Of course you can't be 100 percent certain about anything but the probability of that is very high," said the source. The comments confirmed earlier hints by Moscow-based diplomats that Russia and Tehran had overcome disagreement over the deal's terms and were moving closer to signing it after years of talks.

Dawn, 12 February 2005

Iran nuclear row could spiral out of control (Alistair Lyon)

LONDON: Nobody sees military action as the best way to tame Iran's suspected nuclear weapons ambitions, but as the rhetoric heats up, mutual miscalculation could suck Tehran and Washington into an unpredictable showdown. European-sponsored talks have yet to resolve the dispute over Iran's nuclear enrichment programme, which could help it build a bomb. With post-war Iraq in turmoil, the world is jittery about any fresh instability in the oil-supplying Gulf region. While US President George W. Bush has emphasised diplomacy in dealing with Iran, he has not ruled out a military option and Vice President Dick Cheney has said Israel might act alone. "There's a 50-50 chance of an air strike," said Ali Ansari, an Iran expert at Scotland's St Andrew's University. "This not because of deliberate policy in the Pentagon or Iran, but the tensions, the sensitivities, the paranoia are so high that the potential for slip sliding into something is very high," he said, noting the absence of direct communication between the diplomatically estranged protagonists.

Daily Times, 12 February 2005

North Korea voices support for Iran

SEOUL: North Korea has sent a message of solidarity to Iran amid suspicions the reclusive communist state had boasted of having nuclear weapons to raise the stakes while US attention is focused on Iran's nuclear programmes. North Korea declared on Thursday for the first time it possessed nuclear weapons and pulled out indefinitely from six-party talks on its weapons programme, saying it needed a defence against a hostile United States. The North's official news agency reported on Friday that two top officials had sent messages of congratulations to Tehran on the 26th anniversary of the Islamic Republic, which took power after the fall of the Shah's US-backed government. "The Iranian government and people have gained a great success in their work for defending the gains of the Islamic revolution and building independent and prosperous Iran, bravely shattering all sorts of trials and challenges in the past 26 years," said a message from the number two in North Korea's hierarchy, head of parliament Kim Yong-nam.

The News, 12 February 2005

Iran will continue with nuclear fuel cycle: Rafsanjani

TEHRAN: Iran intends to hold on to its sensitive nuclear fuel cycle technology but is committed to make confidence building measures to reassure the world it is not seeking nuclear weapons, top cleric Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said on Friday. It is not right that 70 to 80 per cent of developed countries have nuclear power as their electrical energy resource while Iran, which has acquired the technology on its own, cannot: Nobody would accept that, and Iran will absolutely not accept that," the powerful former president said in the Friday prayer sermon. "We will guard this technology. You will see in the future that Iran will have all the achievements of nuclear science at its disposal," he added. "Iran has not hesitated for a moment about its decision to continue enrichment." His comments come in the midst of crucial diplomatic efforts by the European Union's three main powers-Britain, France and Germany-to convince Iran to give up its fuel cycle technology in return for security, trade, technology and diplomatic incentives.

The Washington Post, 12 February 2005

North Korea's Threat

If North Korea's declaration of itself as a nuclear power was intended, as it seems to have been, to shock the world and thereby pressure the United States into making unwarranted concessions, then the Bush administration responded well by playing it down. The erratic Pyongyang regime, officials pointed out, has made similar statements before. U.S. intelligence has credited the North with a couple of bombs for a decade, and in the absence of a nuclear test, there's no way to know whether it has workable warheads. The administration is also right to dismiss, again, North Korea's attempt to insist on bilateral negotiations with the United States. The Bush administration's recruitment of China, South Korea, Japan and Russia for "six-party" talks was its sole success on the Korean front in the past four years and should be preserved. The latest declaration nevertheless underlined the distressing truth that as the threat from North Korea grows steadily worse, the administration lacks an effective strategy to counter it.

Asahi Shimbun, 12 February 2005

EDITORIAL/ N. Korea's nuclear claim

Pyongyang must stop making threats and talk seriously. North Korea declared Thursday that it was withdrawing "indefinitely" from six-nation talks on its nuclear development programs. Pyongyang said that as long as the Bush administration pursues its "hostile policy," there was no reason for it to continue with the process. It also announced it has "manufactured nuclear weapons for self-defense." North Korea has dropped hints before about its nuclear capability, but this was the first official announcement that the country has developed nuclear weapons. At this time, it is impossible to determine the extent of North Korea's nuclear development. But the announcement unquestionably is a form of brinkmanship diplomacy aimed at raising the crisis level and trying to take advantage. A nuclear-armed North Korea is utterly unacceptable. The six-party talks were set up in an effort to end the nuclear standoff.

The News, 12 February 2005

North Korean nukes

America's commitment to ending tyranny and bringing democracy to the world has delivered its first child: North Korea publicly announced Thursday that it has nuclear weapons which it needs as protection against an increasingly hostile United States. The North Korean foreign ministry stated that the decision to make public the country's nuclear weapons was made after studying US President Bush's inaugural and State of the Union speeches in which he categorically declared that Washington would do all it could to remove dictatorships worldwide. The announcement has put a full stop to the process the United States was pursuing with South Korea, China, Japan and Russia, to bring North Korea back to the table to discuss an end to its nuclear programme. The six-party talks snapped last September when North Korea refused to attend a scheduled meeting, citing 'hostile' US policy. The talks started in 2003 when North Korea pulled out of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and refused to honour a 1994 agreement with the US, which offered the communist state incentives in terms of technology transfers and food aid in exchange for ending its nuclear ambitions.

The News, 13 February 2004

UN blames US, N Korea for nuclear war of words

UNITED NATIONS: A top UN envoy late Friday blamed both the United States and North Korea for what he called an unhelpful war of words over Pyongyang's nuclear weapons programme. The comments by Maurice Strong, special advisor to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, came after North Korea said publicly that it had nuclear weapons and that it would pull out of six-party talks about its programme. "It does elevate the climate of hostility and misunderstanding that has been the main impediment, a major impediment at least, to the continued discussions," Strong told a press briefing at UN headquarters in New York. "There's no question when the dialogue is conducted at the level of bellicose rhetoric, which we have heard from both sides," he said, referring to Pyongyang and Washington. "This kind of thing may satisfy their desire to make their positions respectively known as strongly as possible, but they really don't help in setting the stage for real good constructive negotiations," he said. Strong played down concern over Pyongyang's announcement, saying the secretive Stalinist state had already privately indicated it had developed nuclear weapons. "Very few people who are close to the situation are surprised at anything but the timing, perhaps," he said, indicating it may be related to the second term of the administration of US President George W Bush, which started last month.

The Hindu, 13 February 2004

U.S. not for direct talks with North Korea (Sridhar Krishnaswami)

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12: The U.S. has ruled out one-on-one talks with North Korea but has assured Pyongyang that it has no intention to attack it because of its nuclear programme. "We've made it very clear that no one has an interest in attacking North Korea," said the White House spokesman, Scott McClellan. But Pyongyang must engage in talks with regional neighbours if it had the desire to communicate with Washington. "I think all parties in the region recognise that they have a stake in North Korea ending its nuclear weapons programme. We made very clear our view - it is a view shared by other parties to the talks - [that] the six-party talks are the way to resolve this matter in a peaceful and diplomatic way," he said. A State Department spokesman repeated Washington's stand on talks. "We do speak directly to the North Koreans in the context of the six-party discussions. We have a New York channel that we use occasionally to communicate with the North Koreans".

Dawn, 13 February 2005

EU serious in nuclear talks but differences remain: Iran

TEHRAN: EU negotiators showed themselves to be more serious in the latest round of talks with Iran over its nuclear program but considerable differences remain, Tehran's senior negotiator said on Saturday. "This time the European side was more serious. That's why we consider the negotiations process more positive," Hossein Mousavian told state television. "Both sides have begun practical talks, but there are still considerable differences between what we are demanding and the European position," he added. "The Iranian delegation made it known to the Europeans that if the talks proceed with the same seriousness, cooperation is likely to continue beyond the initial three months," he said. Britain, France and Germany are trying to convince Iran to dismantle an enrichment program the United States says is part of a covert atomic weapons development, in return for economic and political rewards. Mousavian told state radio that the most taxing part of the talks was the guarantees demanded by the EU powers that Iran will not manipulate its fuel cycle in order to develop nuclear weapons. "The most difficult part of the nuclear negotiations is the objective guarantees to ensure that Iran's fuel cycle does not deviate towards making an atomic bomb," Mousavian told state radio. "There is a possibility that Iran reach an agreement with the Europeans, though the opposite could also happen," he added.

China Daily, 13 February 2005

China will push for N.Korea 6-party talks

China has told the United States it would push for another round of six-way talks on the North Korean nuclear crisis as soon as possible, saying it would be in touch with Pyongyang and the other players. "China will stay in touch with all relevant parties and strive to make the situation develop in a positive direction so that the six-party talks could be resumed as soon as possible," a Foreign Ministry statement quoted Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing as telling Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice by telephone. North Korea announced on Thursday that it had nuclear weapons and was pulling out of multilateral talks. The move presented a major challenge to South Korea, the United States, and China, which has played a lead role in the disarmament effort. "Li reiterated China's stand in supporting the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula," the Foreign Ministry said on its Web site (www.fmprc.gov.cn) seen on Sunday. In the Saturday night phone call, Li also said that maintaining the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula was in the interests of all the involved parties.

Reuters, 14 February 2005

North Korea Nuclear Statement Proves Nothing - Seoul

SEOUL: North Korea's declaration that it possesses nuclear weapons does not make it a nuclear weapons state, South Korea's unification minister said on Monday, clearly skeptical about the veracity and timing of Pyongyang's statement. Last week, North Korea explicitly said for the first time that it possessed nuclear weapons in a serious challenge to South Korea, the United States and China, which have all played lead roles in trying to curb the communist state's atomic ambitions. Pyongyang also said it was pulling out of so-called six-party talks on its nuclear programs because of what it called U.S. hostility. Minister Chung Dong-young said there was no evidence of nuclear testing by the North and it was premature to conclude North Korea possessed nuclear weapons. "There is no doubt that North Korea has 10 to 14 kg (22 lb to 31 lb) of plutonium, but there is no evidence that the North has turned it into plutonium bombs," Chung told parliament.

The New York Times, 14 February 2005

U.S. Is Shaping Plan to Pressure North Koreans (David E. Sanger)

WASHINGTON, Feb. 13: In the months before North Korea announced that it possessed nuclear weapons, the Bush administration began developing new strategies to choke off its few remaining sources of income, based on techniques in use against Al Qaeda, intelligence officials and policy makers involved in the planning say. The initial steps are contained in a classified "tool kit" of techniques to pressure North Korea that has been refined in recent weeks by the National Security Council. The new strategies would intensify and coordinate efforts to track and freeze financial transactions that officials say enable the government of Kim Jong Il to profit from counterfeiting, drug trafficking and the sale of missile and other weapons technology. Some officials describe the steps as building blocks for what could turn into a broader quarantine if American allies in Asia - particularly China and South Korea - can be convinced that Mr. Kim's declaration on nuclear weapons last week means he must finally be forced to choose between disarmament and even deeper isolation. China and South Korea have been reluctant to impose penalties on the North.

The News, 14 February 2005

Iran refuses to give up heavy water plant

TEHRAN: Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi rejected a European demand to stop building a heavy water nuclear reactor in return for a light-water reactor, hardening Iran's position on a key part of its nuclear facilities that critics claim is part of a weapons programme. The statement indicates the unresolved differences between Iranian and European negotiators, who continue their talks on Iran's nuclear program as the United States escalates its criticism of Iran. Asefi also said Iran plans to become a major nuclear fuel supplier in 15 years. "We intend to turn into an important and a major player in the nuclear fuel supply market in the next 15 years because there will be (an) energy shortage in the future," Asefi said, rejecting a proposal by European negotiators to stop building a 40-megawatt heavy water nuclear reactor near Arak, in central Iran. "We welcome the European offer," he said, "but this won't replace the heavy water research reactor at all. That (heavy water project) will continue. We will pursue that." Asefi said Iran had long and intensive talks with Europeans this week where negotiators explained Iran's insistence on its nuclear fuel programme. "During the talks, we tried to make it clear that the nuclear fuel cycle has economic justification and that we will continue our activities in this field," Asefi told reporters.

Daily Times, 14 February 2005

Pakistan admits Khan sold secrets to Iran: UK paper

LONDON: Pakistan has reportedly 'admitted' for the first time that Dr A Q Khan passed nuclear secrets and equipment to Iranian officials, says The Sunday Telegraph, a respected British newspaper. The paper's report yesterday said that an investigation by Pakistan's premier intelligence agency, details of which were disclosed to The Telegraph according to the paper, confirmed that Khan and his associates sold nuclear codes, materials, components and plans that left his "signature" at the core of the Iranian nuclear programme. The newspaper claims that the admission came during private talks in Brussels at the end of last month between European Union officials and senior ministers from Pakistan and India. The EU officials were told that cooperation between Teheran and Khan, 68, and associates from his Khan Research Laboratories began in the mid-1990s and included more than a dozen meetings over several years. Most of these meetings were between Mohammad Farooq, a centrifuge expert from KRL, and Iranians in Karachi, Kuala Lumpur and Teheran. Pakistani investigators have told the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that centrifuge drawings acquired by Iran closely resemble the design of the first-generation Pakistan-1 centrifuge.

Dawn, 14 February 2005

US flying secret missions over Iran: Report

WASHINGTON, Feb 13: The US has been flying surveillance drones over Iran for nearly a year to seek evidence of nuclear weapons programs, The Washington Post reported on Sunday. Besides looking for nuclear sites, the US spy planes are also trying to detect weaknesses in Iran's air defence, the report added. The small, pilotless planes enter Iranian airspace from US military facilities in Iraq. They use radar, video, still photography and air filters designed to pick up traces of nuclear activity to gather information that is not accessible by satellites, the report said. US, European and Iranian officials told the Post that the Iranian government is aware of this surveillance and has formally protested the incursions as illegal. Since Iran does not have diplomatic relations with the US, the Iranian government used Swiss channels for conveying their protest.

The News, 14 February 2005

Not yet a nuke state, says N Korea

SEOUL: North Korea's declaration that it possesses nuclear weapons does not make it a nuclear weapons state, South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-young said on Monday. North Korea declared for the first time on Thursday that it possessed nuclear weapons and said it was pulling out of six-party talks in the face of what it called US hostility. "We see it as a claim to own nuclear weapons, not an official statement of being a nuclear weapons state," Chung told parliament.

The Guardian, 14 February 2005

Iran row clouds defence summit (Richard Norton-Taylor)

MUNICH: Tensions between the US and Europe over the conduct of the "war on terror" - in particular, how to stop Iran building nuclear weapons - spilled over yesterday at a high-level security conference. Sharp differences were exposed and even the usefulness of Nato, the US-dominated institution at the heart of the transatlantic relationship, was questioned. Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister, urged America yesterday to embrace the EU's diplomatic efforts to ensure Iran did not develop nuclear weapons. "If the United States were to engage positively, and I'm aware of how difficult that is, it would substantially strengthen the European drive," he told the annual Munich security conference. "If the whole process collapsed then we would have to go to the [UN] security council," he said. But Mr Fischer suggested that sanctions could strengthen hardline elements in the Iranian government and weaken democrats.

The News, 14 February 2005

30 more countries are potential nuclear powers: Annan

MUNICH: UN Secretary General Kofi Annan warned on Sunday of the danger of a "cascade" of nuclear proliferation unless new steps are taken to prevent it and called for help to stop killings in Darfur. Annan told a conference of defence ministers and security experts that "the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has helped prevent a cascade of nuclear proliferation. "But unless new steps are taken now, we might face such a cascade very soon," he said. Annan said a high-level panel which has proposed far-reaching reforms of the United Nations has also made "many forward-looking recommendations" to beef up the system to prevent states from developing nuclear weapons. Without making direct reference to the current nuclear standoffs with Iran and North Korea, Annan said: "Member states must summon the will to act to strengthen the non-proliferation regime." The UN chief believes that up to 30 countries could seek to develop a nuclear weapons capability. "Those who have the nuclear weapons are quite well known, we have about seven (or) eight of them," Annan told the BBC in a pre-recorded interview broadcast on Sunday. "But there are estimates that about 30 countries can have it (and) have the capacity to have it," he said

Dawn, 14 February 2005

Iran rejects EU offer on nuclear issue

TEHRAN, Feb 13: Iran on Sunday rejected a European offer aimed at limiting its nuclear fuel activities and warned the United States against "playing with fire" in an increasingly bellicose stand off between Tehran and the international community. Foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi insisted that Iran would not give up construction of a heavy-water reactor, which can be used to make nuclear weapons material, in exchange for a light-water reactor offered by the Europeans. "We welcome such proposals but we will not under any circumstances replace our heavy-water research reactor," Mr Asefi said at a press conference. "We will continue working on our heavy-water reactor," under construction at Arak south west of Tehran. "We have told the Europeans to tell their American allies not to play with fire and the Europeans received that message perfectly well," he said. Britain, France and Germany are trying to convince Iran to dismantle an enrichment programme the United States says is part of a covert atomic weapons development, in return for economic and political rewards.

Newindpress, 14 February 2005

Reading the future in Tehran (K Subrahmanyam)

Even as the US and Western European countries (UK, Germany and France) are discussing with Iran the need for Tehran to completely abjure its uranium fuel cycle activities, it is ironic that neither side raises in public the question why Iran insists on the need to keep its nuclear fuel cycle option (nuclear weapon option) open. Iran was attacked with weapons of mass destruction (chemical weapons) during the Iraq-Iran war in the '80s and at that time the US and European powers and all Sunni-ruled Islamic nations not only kept quiet but shielded Saddam Hussein at the UN. Iran was subjected to seven years of war and attacks by hundreds of missiles financed by Sunni money from oil-exporting Arab countries, particularly Wahabi Saudi Arabia. The Shia-Sunni animosity goes back more than 12 centuries. Even today in Pakistan Shias, while praying in mosques, are often attacked by Sunni extremists. The recent elections in Iraq will inevitably lead to the emergence of a second Shia power in the Gulf. The democratic spirit which the US wants to promote in the area is likely to lead to greater assertion of Shia autonomy in various Gulf states (such as UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and eastern areas of Saudi Arabia where most of the oil

fields are). The Iranians have every reason to be worried about possible Sunni animosity against this rising Shia influence.

The Tribune, 14 February 2005

The Korean bomb

The Bush administration may have to redraw its strategy after the North Korean announcement that it has "manufactured nukes" to face the US "undisguised policy to isolate" Pyongyang. The news from what Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice described as an "outpost of tyranny" has come at a time when the US was getting more focussed on forcing Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions. Perhaps, the White House strategists thought that any success on the Iranian front would help them in getting the North Korean nuclear issue resolved through dialogue. But the situation has become too complicated with Pyongyang saying that it has no intention of participating in the six-nation talks three rounds of which have already been held. Interestingly, President George W. Bush was unexpectedly soft on the Korean nuclear issue in his State of the Union Address. He did not use expressions like the "axis of evil" as he did in 2001 when he entered the White House for the first time. But Mr Bush did talk of arresting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction quite forcefully without saying much about his policy direction and methodology. He, at the same time, promised to "work closely with governments in Asia to convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions".

The Times of India, 15 February 2005

'Pak importer told Qaida to buy 50 nukes'

NEW YORK: US investigators have charged a Pakistani businessman, who ran an import business here, with urging al-Qaida to acquire 50 nuclear weapons for use against American troops. Saifullah Paracha, 57, who was arrested 19 months ago and is now being held in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, told the al-Qaida operatives that he knew where to get nuclear weapons, according to documents filed with the US District Court in Washington. The papers filed in the court identify Paracha as a participant in a plot to smuggle explosives into the US and to help al-Qaida hide large amounts of money. A media report quoted Paracha as vigorously denying to a review tribunal in November at the US Naval base in Cuba any ties with al-Qaida. "Is a nuclear weapon something I could buy off the shelf? Can you buy it from Tony Blair?" he was quoted to have said referring to the British Prime Minister. His son Uzair, 25, was also arrested in New York in 2003 on the charges of trying to help an al-Qaida operative get into the United States and his trial is set for March 21.

Dawn, 15 February 2005

Pakistan's N-arms can be stolen: CIA (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, Feb 14: Use of stolen or purchased nuclear weapons from Pakistan or Russia by terrorists cannot be ruled out within the next 15 years, says the latest CIA report. Prepared by the prestigious nerve centre of strategic thinking in the US intelligence community, the National Intelligence Council, the report says that most terrorist attacks will continue to employ primarily conventional weapons, incorporating new twists to keep counter terrorist planners off balance. The 119-page report, issued every five years, warns that terrorists probably will be most original not in the technologies or weapons they employ but rather in their operational concepts. One such concept that is likely to continue is a large number of simultaneous attacks, possibly in widely separated locations. While vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices will remain popular as asymmetric weapons, terrorists are likely to move up the technology ladder to employ advanced explosives and unmanned aerial vehicles, the report says.

People's Daily, 15 February 2005

Chinese, Russian FM's exchange views on six-party talks

Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov exchanged views on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue during their telephone conversation Monday afternoon, according to sources with the Foreign Ministry. Lavrov was quoted as saying that Russia showed great concern over the latest development of issue and held the issue should be resolved within the framework of the six-party talks. Russia was willing to keep in touch and coordinate with China in this regard, he said. Li told Lavrov that China firmly stood for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the maintenance of peace and stability on the Peninsula. China was ready to make joint efforts with all relevant parties including Russia to push forward the process of the six-party talks, Li was quoted as saying.

The News, 15 February 2005

Straw backs Pakistan on Dr Khan issue (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: Britain on Monday expressed full confidence in the leadership of President Pervez Musharraf and the government of Pakistan in dealing with the highly controversial nuclear proliferation case. Not raising the issue directly with the Pakistani leadership, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw told reporters: "We have very substantial confidence in President Musharraf and the government of Pakistan about the way in which they are dealing with the issue in the aftermath of the revelations in respect of Dr AQ Khan." Straw made these comments after holding wide-ranging talks with President Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri at the start of a three-country South Asian tour. Pakistan and the United Kingdom also discussed regional and international situation, bilateral political and economic matters, Indo-Pak dialogue, counter-terrorism, and the impasse over Iran's nuclear programme.

The News, 15 February 2005

Egypt failed to report nuclear activities: IAEA

VIENNA: The UN nuclear agency said on Monday that Egypt was guilty of repeated failures to report nuclear activities but downplayed any suggestion this could be related to secret atomic weapons development, in a confidential report obtained by

AFP. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) also found traces of plutonium, a potential atomic weapons material, in "hot cells" used to handle radioactive material, the report said, with Egypt saying this was due to contamination rather than plutonium production. The report said that Egypt's failures to comply with international nuclear safeguards agreements, including not reporting the building of a plutonium reprocessing facility, were "a matter of concern" but that Cairo was now cooperating and had claimed it had erred as it had not understood its reporting obligations. The Egypt report will be submitted to a meeting that opens in Vienna February 28 of the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors. The board decides whether to take nations that violate safeguards to the Security Council but this is unlikely for Egypt as its reporting failures were in some cases decades ago and Cairo has been forthcoming about them.

The News, 15 February 2005

'Iran has no nukes'

BUDAPEST: Iran has no programme to manufacture nuclear weapons but is exercising its right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, Iran's foreign minister said Monday. "Iran does not have any program to produce weapons," Kamel Kharrazi told a news conference after a meeting with his Hungarian counterpart, Ferenc Somogyi. "Iran is a promoter of the elimination of nuclear weapons around the world, and based on our ideology, on our Islamic thinking, it is forbidden to produce and use nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction," Kharrazi said. During his two-day visit to Budapest, Kharrazi also is expected to meet with Hungarian President Ferenc Madl and sign a cooperation agreement with the Hungarian government to fight illegal drug trafficking. Foreign ministers of the two countries last met almost four years ago, when then-Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi visited Teheran in April 2001.

The New York Times, 15 February 2005

Rice Assures South Korean of U.S. Pressure on North (Joel Brinkley and James Brooke)

WASHINGTON, Feb. 14: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in a meeting with the South Korean foreign minister on Monday, pledged to continue using diplomatic means to pressure North Korea to end its nuclear program and give up the nuclear weapons it claimed last week that it possesses. For his part, the foreign minister, Ban Ki Moon, told Ms. Rice that his country believed that North Korea might be bluffing, an administration official said. That contention was amplified in Seoul on Monday by Chung Dong Young, South Korea's minister of unification, in a speech to the National Assembly in which he noted that the North had made similar claims at least 10 times since 2003. "We see it as a claim to own nuclear weapons, not an official statement of being a nuclear weapons state," Mr. Chung said. Along with the nuclear weapons announcement last week, North Korea also said it was pulling out of the six-party talks on ending its nuclear weapons program in exchange for security and economic considerations. No talks have been held since last June. North Korea wants direct negotiations with Washington, an idea the Bush administration rejects.

Khaleej Times, 15 February 2005

Iran adamant over N-power

BUDAPEST: Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi reaffirmed yesterday Teheran's right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes, despite a fresh warning from Germany that Iran could face sanctions in the UN Security Council over its nuclear programme. "It is the right of Iran to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes," Kharrazi told a news conference here after meeting his Hungarian counterpart Ferenc Somogyi. "Only this should remain under the supervision of the (UN nuclear) watchdog organization IAEA, which is responsible for inspections wherever they wish, any time they want," he said. German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, who will meet Kharrazi on Wednesday in Berlin, said over the weekend that if Iran restarted its uranium enrichment programme, Teheran would have to face sanctions at the Security Council. The pressure by Germany is part of a mix of "carrots and sticks" from the international community to convince Iran to give up uranium enrichment - which the US believes Teheran is using as a cover for an atomic weapons programme. Iran insists the nuclear programme is purely for civilian energy needs.

Daily Yomiuri, 15 February 2005

Sanctions on N. Korea now the only option

Japan now has no option but to take steps toward imposing sanctions on North Korea—a situation that North Korea has brought about with its own words and deeds. The government presented its case in a document Thursday rebutting North Korea's recent assertion that it fabricated DNA test results on the cremated remains Pyongyang said belonged to Megumi Yokota, one of the Japanese abducted to North Korea. In the document, the government also stated clearly that it might have no choice but to take "tough measures" against North Korea unless that nation provided sincere responses to Japan's inquiries on the unresolved abductions of Japanese. On the same day the government presented its case, North Korea, in a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, referred to the abduction issue and defiantly reiterated its claim that the government had fabricated the DNA test results, saying Japan was not upholding the spirit of the Pyongyang Declaration, signed by the leaders of both countries in 2002. The North Korean Foreign Ministry statement also officially declared that North Korea possessed nuclear weapons.

The Associated Press, 15 February 2005

S. Korea Proposes Talks With N. Korea

SEOUL: South Korea has proposed high-level military talks with North Korea, the Defense Ministry said Tuesday, as tensions on the divided peninsula reached new heights over the North's announcement that it has built nuclear weapons. The military talks would discuss ways to prevent accidental clashes along the disputed sea border between the two sides and other issues, the ministry said. The two-way talks would be a way of engaging the communist North even as it refuses to return to six-nation

disarmament negotiations. "North Korea has yet to respond to our proposal, but we are expecting the North side to make a sincere and positive response," the ministry said. Seoul officials have said it's too early to declare the North a nuclear power, saying the alleged weapons haven't been tested or confirmed, and Pyongyang should return to talks aimed at getting it to give up any nuclear weapons development in return for economic benefits. South Korean intelligence officials said Tuesday that North Korea lacks technology to load nuclear weapons on missiles but could place them aboard an aircraft for delivery to targets, according to a report by South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

The Asahi Shimbun, 15 February 2005

Mohamed ElBaradei: 7 steps for preventing nuclear proliferation

Four months from now, in New York, the world will have a rare opportunity to make significant improvements in international security. The question is whether we will be smart enough to use it. In recent years, three phenomena have radically altered the security landscape. They are the emergence of a nuclear black market, the determined efforts by more countries to acquire technology to produce the fissile material useable in nuclear weapons and the clear desire of terrorists to acquire weapons of mass destruction. We have been trying to solve these new problems with existing tools. But for every step forward, we have exposed vulnerabilities in the system. The system itself-the regime that implements the treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT)-needs reinforcement. Some of the necessary remedies can be taken in May, but only if governments are ready to act.

Tehrantimes.com, 15 February 2005

Slightest mistake by U.S. would spark conflagration in Middle East: analyst

TEHRAN: Political analyst Alireza Davari said here on Monday that the U.S. is trying to pursue its plans against Iran's nuclear program by politicizing the atmosphere around the Iran-European Union nuclear talks and suggesting that the talks are futile. Davari told the Mehr News Agency that Iran should resist the U.S. diplomacy of pressure through extensive cooperation with internationally respected countries and stressed the necessity of continuing the current process of talks with the EU. Iran should emphasize the significance of Europe's independent role and present reports exposing the deception of the U.S. allegations in order to obtain Europe's support, he added. Referring to the remarks of EU foreign policy and security chief Javier Solana, who had asked Iran to halt some of its nuclear activities, Davari said that Solana had also recognized Iran's right to make use of nuclear technology meant for peaceful purposes in statements he made at a recent security conference in Munich, Germany.

The News, 15 February 2005

US prepares strategy against N Korea as Rice consults allies

WASHINGTON: The United States is reportedly preparing strategies to choke off North Korea's few remaining sources of income as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice launched talks on Monday with allies to step up pressure against the nuclear-armed Stalinist state. As Washington pondered the next month after North Korea's public declaration last week that it possessed nuclear weapons and was staying away from multilateral talks to end a two-year standoff with the United States, Rice met her South Korean counterpart Ban Ki-Moon in Washington on Monday. She told reporters before the talks at the State Department that South Korea was a "very, very strong alliance" partner and that she looked forward to discussions with him on a broad range of issues. North Korea's nuclear threat and US military presence in South Korea are expected to top the agenda of talks between the two leaders, diplomats said.

Dawn, 15 February 2005

US working on new assessments of Iran's nuclear programme (Dafna Linzer and Walter Pincus)

WASHINGTON: The intelligence community is conducting a broad review of its Iran assessments, including a new look at the country's nuclear programme, the future of its ruling clerics and the impact of the Iraqi war on Tehran's powerful position in the region, according to administration officials and congressional sources. Two separate reports - a wide-ranging National Intelligence Estimate and a second memo focusing exclusively on Tehran's chemical, biological and nuclear capabilities - will reflect an updated consensus within the intelligence community. The documents are meant to guide the Bush administration as it continues to deliberate on a policy for dealing with Iran and its nuclear ambitions. The review, which began last month, comes after several weeks in which President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have challenged Iran to halt an alleged nuclear weapons programme. The pattern and tone of the administration's comments have struck some as similar to claims made in 2002 about then-Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction programmes.

Reuters, 15 February 2005

U.N. Nuclear Watchdog Chides Egypt

VIENNA, Feb. 14: The United Nations' nuclear monitoring agency chided Egypt in a confidential report on Monday for failing to declare nuclear sites and materials but said its inspections had so far found no evidence that Egypt was seeking nuclear weapons. The International Atomic Energy Agency said in the report that Egypt had not understood that it had to declare some nuclear sites and materials, including a plant for separating plutonium, which can be used in an atomic weapon. "The repeated failures by Egypt to report nuclear material and facilities to the agency in a timely manner are a matter of concern," the I.A.E.A. said in the report, which was circulated to diplomats ahead of its Feb. 28 board of governors meeting and was obtained by news agencies. The agency said it was still investigating, but added, "The nuclear material and facilities seen by the agency to date are consistent with the activities described by Egypt." Egypt says its nuclear work is for peaceful purposes only.

The Korean Herald, 15 February 2005

N.K. may not yet be nuclear state: Chung (Lee Joo-hee)

Unification Minister Chung Dong-young said yesterday there is no reason to change policy toward North Korea immediately because there is no clear proof it is a nuclear weapons state. But the main opposition Grand National Party criticized North Korea as reckless and demanded measures by the Roh administration to counter Pyongyang's announcement on Thursday that it possesses nuclear weapons and will stay away indefinitely from six-party disarmament talks. "There is a difference between possessing nuclear weapons and claiming to possess nuclear weapons," Minister Chung told the National Assembly. "It is too early for us to claim North Korea as a nuclear state ... there is no reason to immediately change our policies toward North Korea that have been consistent until now," he said. Chung, who also heads the National Security Council, said the North's Thursday announcement may just be an effort to increase its bargaining chip in the multilateral negotiations.

The Korean Herald, 15 February 2005

China's diplomacy put to test amid N.K. threat (Seo Hyun-jin)

With North Korea adopting a new bull-headed stance on its nuclear standoff, China's diplomatic power over the reclusive North is being tested since it has so far played a lead role in bringing the North to three rounds of multilateral nuclear talks in Beijing. The closest ally of and key food supplier to the impoverished North, China has served as a diplomatic channel between concerned countries and the North during the whole process of the six-party talks on the North's nuclear ambitions. Foreign affairs analysts say China will combine friendly diplomacy and pressure to turn around the North's bombshell statement on Thursday that it has already manufactured nuclear weapons and will boycott the nuclear talks indefinitely. "Even though it is angry at the North's recent threat, China will not express such sentiment publicly," said professor Yun Duk-min at the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security. "But China may put pressure on the North behind the doors, for example, indicating the issue can be referred to the U.N. Security Council."

The News, 16 February 2005

North Korea lacks technology to deliver nuclear weapons: report

SEOUL: South Korea's intelligence agency said on Tuesday that North Korea may possess nuclear weapons but probably lacks the technical know-how to mount them on missiles. The National Intelligence Service (NIS) said in a report to parliament that North Korea's claim last week that it possessed nuclear weapons could be true. Pyongyang's announcement came as no surprise to Washington, which has for years believed that North Korea has developed one or two crude nuclear devices. But the NIS report maintained that North Korea's nuclear technology falls short of allowing it to launch a nuclear-tipped missile, Yonhap news agency quoted the confidential report as saying. "North Korea might have developed one or two nuclear bombs, but if it did, it may not have the technology to launch them on a missile," the NIS report said, according to Yonhap. The intelligence agency dismissed an earlier claim by Pakistan's disgraced nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan that he witnessed a North Korean missile carrying a nuclear warhead during a visit to the Stalinist country. A year ago Khan, the godfather of Pakistan's atomic programme, admitted passing on nuclear technology to North Korea and other countries.

Daily Times, 16 February 2005

North Korea's nuclear vow brings embarrassment to China (Antoaneta Bezlova)

BEIJING: North Korea's bold statement that it has nuclear weapons - in order to thwart a possible US strike - puts Beijing in an uncomfortable position. This is because it exposes China's ambiguous position on the primacy of the United Nations when it comes to dealing with the communist country. As North Korea's oldest and staunchest ally and a UN Security Council member with veto-yielding power, China's stance on Pyongyang's nuclear threat is crucial to resolving the crisis on the Korean peninsula. But ever since Pyongyang expelled the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) inspectors in 2003, Beijing has blocked all efforts to censure North Korea at the UN Security Council. Instead, Beijing has chosen to host nuclear talks between the North and South Korea, Japan, Russia and the United States. China's willingness to act as a mediator is considered a marked departure from Beijing's low-key diplomatic profile in the past and regarded as a sign of a new, more mature and pro-active diplomacy.

Daily Times, 16 February 2005

Iran and EU both hopeful of N-agreement

BUDAPEST: Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi and Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, whose country holds the European Union's (EU) rotating presidency, each said on Tuesday they were hopeful Iran-EU talks would lead to an agreement on Tehran's contested nuclear programme. Kharazi said the key was for Iran to find a "mechanism" to reassure the EU it is not trying to make nuclear weapons and "we are hopeful it would lead to a very fruitful agreement," the Iranian foreign minister told a press conference. In a separate press conference, also in Budapest, Juncker said the key was for "Iran to step away from direct access to nuclear weapons." The EU thinks it can "convince Iran... via the channels of negotiations in the next couple of weeks," Juncker said. Kharazi is to visit Luxembourg later Tuesday.

Dawn, 16 February 2005

Learning from Hiroshima (Zubeida Mustafa)

The India-Pakistan dialogue has had many ups and downs since it was launched last year. The fact is that every time there is a "down" there are many who wait with bated breath and keep their fingers crossed. Is there need for this over-reaction - if one may call it so? Yes, if one remembers that both India and Pakistan now have nuclear capability and could use nuclear weapons if war breaks out between them. They have threatened to do so, at least on one occasion. A war fought with conventional weapons is bad enough. A nuclear war is a catastrophe. But the world - especially the leaders who decide the

destiny of nations - seem to be blissfully unaware of the devastation and horrors atomic weapons can unleash. After all, 60 years have passed since the Hiroshima tragedy and people, most of whom were not even born then, feel they can put it all behind them and move on. But not the people of Hiroshima who still carry the scars of that fateful day in August 1945 when nuclear terror rained down upon them from the skies killing 70,000 people instantaneously, injuring 140,000 and causing painful radiation effects on another 100,000.

The Associated Press, 16 February 2005

Iran Minister Warns EU on Nuke Activities

LUXEMBOURG: Iran's foreign minister on Tuesday warned Britain, France and Germany that they must make more economic and technological concessions to meet a deadline next month for agreement on Tehran's nuclear activities. The three European Union powers are trying to persuade Iran to abandon its uranium enrichment program, which Washington fears could be used to manufacture nuclear weapons. Iran insisted again Tuesday that its nuclear activities are peaceful. But the talks still need much progress to reach a fruitful conclusion, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamel Kharrazi said after discussions with the Luxembourg government, which holds the EU presidency. "It needs more efforts, more seriousness, more confidence building to be evaluated as a fruitful and positive process," he added. "So we have to try harder and be more serious." Kharrazi called for the 25-nation bloc to be more open on economic and political issues. Iran suspended its uranium enrichment program last year under a deal struck with France, Britain and Germany and it plans to decide soon whether to continue the suspension, which is monitored by U.N. nuclear inspectors.

The Washington Post, 16 February 2005

IAEA Head Disputes Claims on Iran Arms (Dafna Linzer and Glenn Kessler)

VIENNA, Feb. 15: The head of the U.N. agency responsible for investigating Iran's nuclear program said Tuesday that there had been no discoveries in the last six months to substantiate claims that the Islamic state is secretly working toward building a nuclear bomb. In a wide-ranging interview with four U.S. newspapers, Mohamed ElBaradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency also described White House policies on Iran and North Korea as inconsistent. Without greater U.S. participation in diplomacy, ElBaradei said, confrontation could increase. "North Korea and Iran are still the two 800-pound gorillas in the room and not much is happening," he said in his office overlooking Vienna. U.S. officials have attended joint meetings with the North Koreans and envoys from four other countries, but the talks have produced little and have been on hold for almost eight months. The White House has said repeatedly that it wants those talks to resume but recently ruled out a similar arrangement with Iran, arguing that it didn't want to give legitimacy to the country's ruling clerics.

Nuclear Guide, 16 February 2005

Straw says Israel too will be disarmed: Nuclear arsenal

LAHORE, Feb 14: Israel will be the last country to be disarmed (of its nuclear arsenal), says British Secretary of State Jack Straw. Tel Aviv was facing threat to its very existence (from its Arab neighbours) , so it would be the last state to be disarmed, Straw told a select gathering at a local hotel on Monday. He was responding to a question by Col Ikramullah (retired) that why Islamabad was being singled out in expressing fears that its nuclear assets might fall into the hands of extremists, ignoring the cases of New Delhi and Tel Aviv. Mr Straw, however, said that the question of Tel Aviv disarmament would become insignificant if, like Egypt and Jordan, other Arab neighbours struck peace deals with Israel. CM's adviser Mowahid Husain Shah asked as occupation of Kashmir, Chechnya and Palestine was causing militancy in the regions, why this basic reason was not being eliminated, the foreign minister said the conflict in Kashmir could not be presented as an excuse for 'terrorism' in the area.

Daily Yomiuri, 16 February 2005

Govt in diplomatic impasse with N. Korea (Masanobu Takagi)

Monday's debate in the Diet on North Korea showed the government was unable to make any effective move in dealing with the isolated nation, which has announced it will no longer take part in six-country talks and that it has produced nuclear weapons. "North Korea wants to solve the problem by peaceful means," Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said at the House of Representatives Budget Committee session for intensive debate on diplomatic and economic issues. But he stopped short of presenting specific measures against North Korea, while ruling and opposition lawmakers appeared to be unsure about how to deal with the reclusive state as they posed questions to the prime minister. Lawmakers took turns asking if the government would impose economic sanctions against North Korea, but the government gave no clear answer. Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura said: "We'll come up with a specific response at the right time in the right method, taking Pyongyang's attitude into consideration. But we're not in a position to impose sanctions immediately."

The Korean Herald, 16 February 2005

Options on N.K. nukes

After North Korea declared it has nuclear weapons, the government of President Roh Moo-hyun must feel it hard to swallow domestic criticism of its inability to find a breakthrough when it actually has few ways and means to do so. The broad conservative-opposition nexus is pressing the government to present a "grand strategy" to cope with the new development. Further, the government in Seoul is urged to clarify whether it believes that the North Koreans are telling the truth about their nuclear capability or if it has determined that Pyongyang is bluffing with its untested bomb just one more time. What good effect is there if President Roh or any of his senior aides express their belief concerning Pyongyang's potential and intention in one way or another? Should they accept that North Korea does have nuclear bombs and take the blame for scaring people? Can a responsible government produce a "grand strategy" to cope with its adversary's decades-old nuclear program in just a

week's time?

Dawn, 16 February 2005

US-Iran nuclear stand off (Tayyab Siddiqui)

Ominous developments threatening the peace and security of our region are following an inexorable course. The denouement of these developments could be more sinister than the US invasion of Iraq. The main protagonist in the evolving drama is again the US. The script is also a familiar one, except that this time the villain of the piece is Iran. US-Iran relations, or rather their absence, since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran has always had the potential of reaching a flash point, with both countries seen as the arch villain to the other. While Iran regards the US as the "Great Satan", Washington has declared Iran as part of the 'axis of evil'. President Bush's policies in the wake of 9/11 have been reminiscent of gunboat diplomacy with little regard for international law conventions or legality. In pursuit of its national interest, the Bush administration has launched military adventures in brazen defiance of international opinion and protests.

Dawn, 16 February 2005

N-assets in safe hands, says FO (Hasan Akhtar)

ISLAMABAD, Feb 15: Pakistan on Tuesday described as total fabrication a recent American news report citing a CIA document which alleged that Pakistani nuclear assets were not in safe hands and they were liable to be stolen. Referring to the report at his weekly news briefing, foreign office spokesman Masood Khan asserted that Pakistan's nuclear assets and programme were completely secured by an elaborate, viable, dependable and infallible command and control system. In addition, the custodial controls were stringent. He said the security system comprised four areas - command, control and communication system; credible information, reliable intelligence and finally, reconnaissance installations. A national command authority was in place and "we have a strategic plans commission and strategic forces command". The spokesman elaborated that Pakistan had constituted a National Command Authority, the apex body ensuring the safety and security of nuclear weapons, which was headed by the president and the prime minister was its vice-chairman. Any speculation as reported in the report quoting the CIA was irresponsible, he said.

The News, 16 February 2005

India, Pakistan 'potential threats': US committee

WASHINGTON: The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, in one of its rare open hearings, identified Asia and specifically India and Pakistan as well as China as potential threats and sources of instability. Hearing testimony from experts, Peter Hoedstra, chair of the House of Representatives' Intelligence Committee, said Washington spends a significant amount of money on understanding threats from all sources, not just from nuclear capable states. Kurt M Campbell, senior Vice-President and Director of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies' International Security Programme, discussed the challenges posed by Asia and in particular the rapid increase in the power and influence of China. "Indeed, every major traditional challenge to peace and stability is currently found in Asia, from the continuing dangerous stalemate on the Korean peninsula, the increasingly dangerous undertones in the China-Taiwan relationship and the tinderbox quality of the nuclear competition between India and Pakistan," Campbell said in written remarks submitted to the committee.

The New York Times, 16 February 2005

U.S. Official Says North Korea Could Be Bluffing on Nuclear Arms (Joel Brinkley)

WASHINGTON, Feb. 15: Robert B. Zoellick, a senior government official nominated to be deputy secretary of state, suggested Tuesday that North Korea's recent announcement that it now possesses nuclear weapons might have been a bluff. "I would be careful about reading too much into the North Koreans' most recent statement," Mr. Zoellick, the United States trade representative, said during his Senate confirmation hearing for the second-ranking position in the State Department. He then listed several possible political motivations for the statement, including "pounding one's chest" for the benefit of North Korean citizens. His remark represented a subtle shift in tone on Tuesday by Bush administration officials, who had previously focused their response on urging the North Koreans to return to the regional negotiations intended to persuade them to dismantle their nuclear program. The White House spokesman, Scott McClellan, echoed Mr. Zoellick's assessment, saying at a news briefing on Tuesday that "North Korea has frequently used that rhetoric in the past."

The News, 17 February 2005

Iran top security risk to US: CIA director

WASHINGTON: Iran remains a potent US security threat, the director of the CIA told US a Senate panel, as he outlined potential dangers to US interests around the globe. In his first public comments since assuming the post of CIA director in September, Porter Goss depicted a world fraught with peril for US citizens and interests, particularly from radical Islamist groups in the Middle East and Asia. "Al-Qaeda besides Iran is intent on finding ways to circumvent US security enhancements to strike Americans and the homeland," Goss told the Senate Intelligence Committee at a hearing on threats to US security worldwide. While the radical Islamist group has succeeded in the past delivering severe blows to the United States via conventional weapons, "it may only be a matter of time before Al-Qaeda or another group attempts to use chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons," Goss said.

The News, 17 February 2005

US to support EU efforts on Iran: Schroeder

BERLIN: German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder will urge US President George W Bush to work more closely with the European nations who are trying to persuade Iran to abandon efforts to develop nuclear fuel, he said in an interview on

Wednesday. Schroeder told the Wall Street Journal Europe he will use his meeting with Bush in Germany next Wednesday to ask Bush to narrow the gap between the Europeans' approach to the Iranian issue and the hardline position of the United States "We share the same goals here and in the United States," Schroeder told the paper. "The discussion is only about the means we are using to achieve the goal." France, Britain and Germany are currently trying to persuade Iran to permanently give up its nuclear enrichment program to produce weapons-grade uranium in return for a package of political and economic benefits. The United States meanwhile suspects Iran is secretly developing an atomic bomb and is refusing to negotiate with the Iranian authorities. Schroeder added: "The European powers rely on negotiations, which I believe is right. "In order to negotiate successfully one has to offer something on the other side. "In this case, what's specifically on offer is economic cooperation and security. "Naturally both can be guaranteed best by Europe and US together. "As a result, I hope the European approach is emphatically supported by everyone."

The New York Times, 17 February 2005

U.S. Envoy to Japan Assails North Korea's Arms Program (James Brooke)

TOKYO, Feb. 16: The United States ambassador to Japan criticized North Korea on Wednesday for proliferating nuclear weapons materials and called its nuclear program "a deadly threat." "The thing I worry most about with the North Koreans, to tell you the truth, is not that they're going to bomb Tokyo, but rather that they have a demonstrated record of selling any military device they own," Howard H. Baker Jr. said in a press briefing as he prepared to leave Japan. "A regime such as the North Koreans, with that record, selling nuclear material to all comers, is a very serious issue." Mr. Baker said the world should not have any doubts that North Korea had nuclear weapons. "They have said now, more than once, that they have nuclear weapons, and I accept that at face value," Mr. Baker, a former Republican senator from Tennessee, told American reporters. "What is the upside of not believing them?" As Mr. Baker spoke, North Korea was celebrating Wednesday the 63rd birthday of Kim Jong Il, the nation's hereditary leader.

The New York Times, 17 February 2005

Iran Says Pilotless U.S. Jets Are Spying on Nuclear Sites (Nazila Fathi)

TEHRAN, Feb. 16: Iran said Wednesday that American pilotless spy planes had been seen over its nuclear sites and threatened to shoot them down if they came within range. Information Minister Ali Yunessi, speaking after a meeting with members of Parliament, said the American spying over Iran had been going on for "a long time." "Most of the shining objects that our people see in Iran's airspace are American spying equipment used to spy on Iran's nuclear and military facilities," Mr. Yunessi said on state television. "If any of the bright objects come close, they will definitely meet our fire and will be shot down," he said. "We possess the necessary equipment to confront them." Iran's Foreign Ministry would not comment on Sunday on a Washington Post report that American pilotless planes had been flying over Iran for nearly a year, looking for evidence of a nuclear weapons program. "I cannot make comments about it," said the spokesman for the ministry, Hamid Reza Assefi. "The subject is related to the security and information apparatus." The White House spokesman, Scott McClellan, asked about the reports on Monday, said he could not confirm or deny "matters related to intelligence." Questioned again by reporters on Wednesday, Mr. McClellan said he had nothing to add.

People's Daily, 17 February 2005

Chinese, ROK FMs appeal for resumption of 6-party talks

The foreign ministers of China and the Republic of Korea (ROK) said Wednesday that both nations hoped that all parties involved in the six-party talks could step up their diplomatic efforts, avoid complicating the situation on the Korean Peninsula and push for the earliest resumption of the talks. Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and his ROK counterpart Ban Ki-moon made the remark during a telephone conversation while they exchanged views on the peninsula's nuclear issue. Both stood for a peaceful solution through dialogue and a nuclear-weapon free peninsula. The two also said they were pleased at the progress of bilateral relationships in the past year. They said both foreign ministries would cooperate more closely to implement the consensus of Chinese President Hu Jintao and ROK President Roh Moo-hyun on developing ties, going on advancing for progress of the all-round cooperation partnership of the two nations.

Daily Times, 17 February 2005

Pakistan can handle AQ Khan inquiry: Straw

ISLAMABAD: British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said on Monday he was confident Pakistan was properly investigating nuclear scientist Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan and his international nuclear black market. "I have not directly raised the matter with the Pakistanis but we have very substantial confidence in President Musharraf and the Pakistani government about the way in which they are dealing with the issue in the aftermath of Dr Khan," Straw told a press conference in Islamabad with Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri. Straw also met General Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Monday and discussed international and regional issues with them. Kasuri said that Pakistan would continue to cooperate with the United States, Britain and the International Atomic Energy Agency over the nuclear issue. "The United States has, on many occasions, expressed its appreciation for the support Pakistan has given on the nuclear issue," he said.

The News, 17 February 2005

Blast near Iranian nuclear site causes jitters

TEHRAN: A powerful blast occurred near Iran's Gulf port of Daylam on Wednesday and a government television said the explosion could have been the result of a fuel tank falling from an Iranian plane. Daylam is about 150 kms from Bushehr, where a nuclear plant is being built with Russian help. The United States has been warning of possible military action over Iran's nuclear activities, charging that its efforts to develop nuclear fuel are a cover for an atomic weapons programme. A local

television earlier reported that witnesses saw a missile being fired from an unidentified plane. But the state television reported that an explosion might have been caused by a fuel tank dropping from an Iranian plane. A government spokesman also said the blast may have been caused by friendly fire. However, a top security official said the blast was caused during the construction of a dam, state-run television reported. "The explosion that occurred in Deylam region was the result of detonating a path for dam-building operations," Ali Agha Mohammadi, a spokesman for the Supreme National Security Council, was quoted as saying by the television.

The Washington Post, 17 February 2005

IAEA Digs Into Past Of Iranian Program (Dafna Linzer)

VIENNA, Feb. 16: Despite a lack of fresh leads, U.N. inspectors continue to probe how Iran's nuclear program obtained equipment, material and know-how from abroad, questions that raise suspicions in Washington and Europe, diplomats with detailed knowledge of the investigation said Wednesday. None of these lines of inquiry addresses whether Iran is currently working on nuclear weapons. Rather, diplomats say, the International Atomic Energy Agency hopes to obtain greater insight into the international black market that supplied Iran and get a more definitive account of the country's past programs. Under arrangements still being worked out, Pakistan has agreed to lend the IAEA equipment from its nuclear weapons program that could help clear up one of the largest mysteries surrounding the two-year investigation of Iran -- why certain equipment in Iran has been found to contain traces of enriched uranium. Western governments have suggested that the uranium's presence could indicate that Iran was manufacturing a key ingredient for nuclear weapons. But Iranian officials are hoping that test results will show that equipment it bought from Pakistan years ago arrived contaminated with the uranium from that country's nuclear program.

The Associated Press, 17 February 2005

Probe Finds Nuke Guards Mishandled Guns

LAS VEGAS: Federal and private guards entrusted with monitoring the transport of nuclear and conventional weapons "systematically" violated policies governing the handling and inventory of their own weapons, a report released Wednesday stated. In one case, a private guard gave a government handgun to his wife to store overnight in her car, the report by the Energy Department inspector general found. In another, guards improperly took government and personal handguns to a Nevada nuclear test site. The report noted inadequate record-keeping exposed the weapons to theft, loss or misuse. Officials with the National Nuclear Security Administration and Wackenhut Services Inc. downplayed the findings as paperwork slip-ups, not performance flaws. They said weapons inventory procedures had been stepped up, and guards had been disciplined. "We don't believe this indicates a systematic problem," said Al Stotts, a National Nuclear Security Administration spokesman in Albuquerque, N.M.

Tehrantimes.com, 17 February 2005

Iran will not accept monopolization of nuclear fuel: Rowhani

ALGIERS: The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), Hassan Rowhani, met Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in Algiers on Tuesday to discuss the various challenges facing the Islamic world and the Middle East. During the meeting, Rowhani stressed that the Islamic Republic would not accept the monopolization of nuclear fuel among a few countries "since it would mean depriving other (nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) NPT members of their legal and legitimate rights." If Iran does not diversify its sources of energy, it will soon be forced to use a significant amount of its oil production for domestic energy needs, he added. Therefore, the Islamic Republic will pursue its plan to construct seven nuclear power plants with determination, Rowhani asserted. Elsewhere in his remarks, the SNSC secretary said the Iraqi crisis is a great problem for the Middle East and Persian Gulf regions, but the elections in Iraq served as the first step toward establishing peace and security in the country.

Tehrantimes.com, 17 February 2005

Intelligence, inspections show Iran not seeking nuclear arms: EIBaradei

WASHINGTON: There is no evidence to support the claim that Iran is developing nuclear weapons, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog Mohamed ElBaradei said in an interview published Wednesday by The Washington Post. "On Iran, there really hasn't been much development, neither as a result of our inspections or as a result of intelligence," said the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director general. ElBaradei called for greater U.S. participation in diplomatic efforts to engage Iran and North Korea in talks about their nuclear programs. "North Korea and Iran are still the two 800-pound gorillas in the room and not much is happening," ElBaradei told The Washington Post at his IAEA office in Vienna. The daily said the interview was with four US newspapers.

Tehrantimes.com, 17 February 2005

Iran says needs practical results in EU nuclear talks

LUXEMBOURG: Iran told the European Union on Tuesday their negotiations must show clear progress and practical results by mid-March if it was to prolong negotiations on EU demands that it suspend to enrich uranium. "We have not lost all hope. We are doing our best," Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told a news conference after talks with Luxembourg, the current EU president. Kharrazi said he was looking for movement in three separate sets of talks on nuclear, political and economic issues. "Both sides have to be more serious to arrive at conclusions that would be taken as concrete and tangible results by mid-March." Iran suspended uranium enrichment in November as a goodwill gesture in the run-up to the talks with EU nations, but said the suspension would be a matter of months rather than years. Iran says it will review the progress of its talks with the three EU powers in mid-March, and may resume enrichment if it is not satisfied with the results achieved by

then. Kharrazi said the EU and Tehran had to negotiate in a way that would lead to practical measures, "otherwise they may sit down and they may talk in generalities without any tangible movement."

The Japan Times, 17 February 2005

Pyongyang ups the ante

North Korea has announced that it has nuclear weapons and that it is abandoning multilateral talks designed to keep the Korean Peninsula free of them. Still, there is less to Pyongyang's declaration than meets the eye. North Korea has indicated in the past that it possessed nuclear arms, and its disdain for the multilateral six-party talks has long been apparent. Nonetheless, the world cannot afford to dismiss Pyongyang's announcement as mere brinkmanship. The other five members of the six-party negotiations must work harder to convince North Korea to honor its obligations and find a peaceful solution to the crisis brewing in Northeast Asia. That does not mean offering Pyongyang yet more enticements to keep talking; it means showing the North that its negotiating partners mean business. North Korea has pledged several times not to develop nuclear weapons: when it signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), when it and South Korea released their North-South Declaration in the early 1990s, when it created the Agreed Framework with the United States in 1994, and when North Korean leader Kim Jong Il and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi made the Pyongyang Declaration in 2002.

The Hindu, 17 February 2005

Pyongyang Talks Tough

While North Korea has not tested a nuclear weapon, the international community for several reasons has not dismissed out of hand its claim that it possesses atomic bombs. Pyongyang never hid its intent to develop a nuclear weapon capability; its nuclear facilities were not monitored over the past three years; and it is believed to have had a long association with the proliferation network associated with Abdul Qadeer Khan. With the circumstantial evidence tending to substantiate the claim, international attention has focussed on other aspects of the issue after North Korea declared its status as a nuclear weapon power on February 10. Two questions have come to the fore. What led Pyongyang to make the declaration now? And, can this particular genie be put back into the bottle through the revival of the six-party talks devoted to the issue or by other means? The Democratic People's Republic maintains it was provoked into declaring its nuclear status and simultaneously announcing its withdrawal from the stalled talks because the United States was pursuing an "ever-more undisguised policy" to isolate and stifle it.

The Nation, 17 February 2005

Questioning the smear

The Pakistani Foreign Office has rightly snubbed two CIA reports, the first for implying that Pakistan's nuclear assets are unsafe and the second, prepared jointly with the US Intelligence National Council, for portraying Pakistan as likely to become a Yugoslavia-like failed state by 2015. Despite extending numerous assurances to the international community, the credibility of Pakistan's nuclear programme's security continues to be questioned by western security agencies. Since the highest echelons of government have guaranteed foolproof security checks similar to those implemented by other nuclear powers, the CIA's insistence to the contrary shows it has probably been influenced by powerful lobbies advocating constant pressure on the world's only Muslim nuclear state. It cannot be believed that any government would in any way compromise its most vital national security assets.

People's Daily, 18 February 2005

Seoul seeks law to ban nuclear weapon development

South Korean Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) said on Thursday it plans to establish a law aimed at banning any attempts to develop nuclear weapons, reported local English newspaper The Korea Times on Friday. The ministry said the draft of the law, which also is aiming to better controlling use of the nuclear power, will be available in March for presentation to the National Assembly, the newspaper reported. If the bill passes, it would be implemented in September. The new act will contain all regulations related to nuclear security, which until now have been scattered in different laws. "We decided to beef up nuclear regulations to prevent awkward situations like that of last year from recurring. We also want to express our commitment to the non-proliferation of nuclear arms and transparency in nuclear technology," MOST official Ahn Sang-joon was quoted by The Korea Times as saying.

The News, 18 February 2005

Iran supports efforts for peace: N Korea

SEOUL: Iran has praised Pyongyang for preserving the peace, North Korea said on Friday, amid suspicions the North has boasted of having nuclear arms to raise the stakes in talks while US attention is focused on Iran's atomic programmes. "The government and the people of Iran fully support the government and the people of the DPRK (North Korea) in their efforts to preserve the peace and security of the country," the official Korean news agency quoted Khatami as telling the North Korean ambassador on Feb. 9.

Khaleej Times, 18 February 2005

Russia, Iran to sign N-accord

MOSCOW: Russia and Iran this month will sign an agreement on the return of spent nuclear fuel, paving the way for startup of the country's first nuclear reactor, the RIA Novosti news agency reported. The agreement will be signed on February 26 during a visit to Iran by the Russian nuclear agency's chief, Alexander Rumyantsev. An agreement on return to Russia of spent nuclear fuel has remained the key impediment to the \$800 million Bushehr project.

Dawn, 18 February 2005

OIC wants talks to settle Iran N-row: Badawi

ISLAMABAD, Feb 17: Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmed Badawi said here on Thursday that the Organization of Islamic Conference desired a negotiated settlement of the US-Iran stand off over nuclear issue and was opposed to the repeat of an Iraq-like situation in another Muslim country. Answering a question at a news conference, the visiting Malaysian leader said that as far as the OIC role was concerned he would like all member states to voice their concern over any escalation of hostilities between the United States and Iran. Mr Badawi, who is the current chairman of the OIC, said he was alive to the situation and was using his good offices to resolve the issue. About a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Pakistan and Malaysia, he said intensive talks were being held on a Preferential Trade Agreement which hopefully would lead to the FTA between the two countries. "FTA will come later as we have started talks for PTA between ourselves as the first step," he said. In reply to a question, he said the Malaysian investment in Pakistan was negligible at the moment, but both countries had realised it and pledged to enhance bilateral trade and business cooperation to the benefit of their peoples.

The Hindu, 18 February 2005

Plutonium missing

LONDON, Feb. 17: About 30 kilograms of plutonium, enough to make seven or eight nuclear bombs, has apparently disappeared from Britain's largest nuclear plant at Sellafield, a media report said today.

The Hindu, 18 February 2005

Moves to resolve N. Korea issue (P. S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE, Feb. 17: Fresh diplomatic efforts to bring North Korea back to the negotiating table began in Beijing today, with South Korea and the United States sending their envoys to the Chinese capital for "talks on talks" about Pyongyang's nuclear weapons programme. There was no authoritative word until nightfall on the progress of these new moves or who these two envoys were talking to. The U.S. envoy, Christopher Hill, said the idea was to hold "initial consultations" with China, host to the now-stalled six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear issue, in the new situation of Pyongyang's announcement that it had indeed "manufactured nukes" to face the American threats. South Korea said its negotiator, Song Min-soon, had arrived in Beijing to ask China to play a greater role to break the latest impasse. The South Korean Foreign Minister, Ban Ki-moon, said "China has informed us of its plan to take other initiatives in addition to sending an envoy to North Korea."

Haaretz.com, 18 February 2005

When will Iran be a nuclear power? (Patrick Clawson)

When will Iran achieve "nuclear status"? When other states form their own policies on the assumption that Iran has nuclear weapons - whether or not it has declared or tested a nuclear bomb. The earliest warning will probably come from Iran acting in a more assertive manner. Despite all the concern in Israel about Iranian action against Middle East peace, and despite the speculation about Iranian action in Iraq or Afghanistan, the most likely place for Iran to flex its muscle is the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. Iran has several territorial and natural resource disputes with those countries, and Tehran could become more active in destabilizing Arab Gulf governments; the Islamic Republic has a long history of working with terrorists aiming to overthrow the Arab Gulf monarchies. Another sign that Iran has made a nuclear breakthrough would be if its neighbors start to proliferate themselves. Already there are the first signs of a debate about nuclear reaction in Iran's two largest neighbors, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. And Egypt's nationalist sensitivities and security perceptions may combine to oblige it to pursue some nuclear capabilities once several others in the region have gone that route.

The Korean Herald, 18 February 2005

N. Korea, U.S. swing diplomacy to China (Choi Soung-ah)

Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon and U.S. Ambassador Christopher Hill made separate diplomatic swings into Beijing yesterday to try to revive the stalled six-nation disarmament talks but some officials cautioned against pinning high hopes on any immediate breakthrough. "This is a procedural trip for both the envoys to individually discuss ideas that can become a cornerstone to coerce North Korea back to the discussion table without preconditions," a Foreign Ministry official here said. "The trip should not be looked upon to immediately bring about tangible progress, but more in the sense that all nations are serious to get North Korea to change its stance." Song left for the Chinese capital yesterday morning on a previously scheduled two-day visit to meet China's Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei, his counterpart in the disarmament talks. Hill, who is to take over as head of Washington's team to the six-party talks, traveled to Beijing on a last-minute day-trip unrelated to Song's visit.

Reuters, 18 February 2005

U.S. Diplomat Says N.Korea Nuclear Path 'Dead End' (Jon Herskovitz)

SEOUL: The newly appointed lead U.S. negotiator to North Korean nuclear disarmament talks on Friday called Pyongyang's pursuit of atomic weapons a dead end and urged the reclusive state to return to the bargaining table. U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Christopher Hill told a breakfast meeting it was in the best interest of North Korea to give up its nuclear ambitions and return to six-party nuclear disarmament talks, or risk even deeper isolation. Hill was in Beijing on Thursday for meetings with his Chinese counterparts on the North Korean nuclear issue. In his first substantive comments since those talks, he said North Korea made a huge mistake in pursuing nuclear weapons because its economy had suffered and relations with leading powers had worsened. "Holding nuclear weapons is a dead end for North Korea. They cannot make progress if they continue on this road," Hill said. Pyongyang last week said explicitly for the first time it had nuclear weapons, arguing it needed them to deter what it saw as an increasingly hostile policy from the United States.

Khaleej Times, 18 February 2005

US to support Israel against Iranian threat

WASHINGTON: President George W. Bush said yesterday that the US would support Israel if its security came under threat from Iran. "Iran has made it clear they don't like Israel, to put it bluntly. And the Israelis are concerned about whether or not Iran develops a nuclear weapon, as are we, as should everybody," Bush told a Press conference after naming a new national intelligence director. The US leader said the main aim was to support diplomatic attempts to solve the crisis over Iran's nuclear programme. But he added: "Clearly, if I was the leader of Israel and I'd listened to some of the statements by the Iranian ayatollahs that regarded the security of my country, I'd be concerned about Iran having a nuclear weapon as well. "And in that Israel is our ally and in that we've made a very strong commitment to support Israel, we will support Israel if her security is threatened," Bush said. Britain, France and Germany have led attempts to persuade Iran against nuclear weapons development and Bush said this would figure strongly in his talks during a visit to Europe next week.

The News, 18 February 2005

US pressed Pakistan for access to Khan: CIA (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, Feb 17: The director of the Central Intelligence Agency on Wednesday told the US Senate that the Bush administration had 'pressed' Pakistan to allow an American representative direct access to Dr A.Q. Khan but he would not say if the access was given or denied. Director Porter Goss, who was testifying before the Senate select committee on intelligence along with the heads of other US intelligence agencies, said he would be careful not to use the word 'pressed' in a general term. "I want to be very careful how I answer your question," Mr Goss told Olympia Snowe, a Republican senator from Maine who wanted to know if the US administration had 'pressed' Pakistan to allow a US representative to directly question Dr Khan for determining the extent of his network's activities. "I can tell you that there is continuous attention to this matter, and I believe that it is being done with the necessary urgency and fortitude to make sure our interests are completely understood," Mr Goss replied.

The News, 19 February 2005

Iran has no plan to make nukes: Putin

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday that he is convinced Iran does not intend to develop nuclear weapons and said he plans to visit Iran. Putin, at a meeting with Iranian National Security Council chief Hassan Rowhani, also said Russia would continue its nuclear cooperation with Iran. Moscow has helped Iran build a nuclear reactor, a project that has been heavily criticized by the United States which fears it could be used to help Tehran develop nuclear weapons. Iran's nuclear program is likely to be one of the top issues when the Russian leader and US President George W Bush meet next Thursday in Slovakia and Putin's statement indicated that the chance of agreement with Washington is minimal. "The spread of nuclear weapons on the planet does not aid security, it does not strengthen security. The latest steps from Iran confirm that Iran does not intend to produce nuclear weapons and we will continue to develop relations in all spheres, including the peaceful use of nuclear energy," Putin said. "We hope that Iran will strictly adhere to all international agreements, in relation to Russia and the international community," he said. "We will continue to develop relations in all spheres, including the peaceful use of nuclear energy." He also said that Iran's leadership had invited him to visit, and he accepted. Russian news agencies said that no date has been set.

People's Daily, 19 February 2005

Russia to continue nuclear cooperation with Iran: Putin

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Friday that his country will continue cooperation with Iran in nuclear power generation and has no intention to change its position on the Iranian nuclear issue, the Itar-Tass news agency reported. "Iran's latest moves convince us that Iran indeed does not intend to produce nuclear weapons, and it means that we'll continue cooperation in all spheres, including in nuclear power generation," Putin said at a meeting with Iran's National Security Council Secretary Hassan Rowhani on Friday. Meanwhile, Putin expressed the hope that "Iran will adhere to the obligations it has taken both in bilateral relations with Russia and in the international agreement." Putin said Russia and Iran have a number of joint projects with mutual interests in the economic and security fields. "We support some of Iran's initiatives and count on Iran's reciprocity," he was quoted by Itar-Tass as saying. Russia is currently helping Iran build its first nuclear power plant in Bushehr. Both Iran and Russia have denied Western accusations that the 800-million-dollar project could be used to develop nuclear weapons, stressing that it is being built for peaceful and civil purposes.

The Hindu, 19 February 2005

Putin backs Iran in nuclear row with U.S.

MOSCOW, Feb. 18: The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, vowed to continue all-round cooperation with Iran, including the nuclear and defence spheres, in a demonstrative show of support for Teheran in its row with the United States over Iran's nuclear programme. "Recent moves by Iran have convinced us that it has no intention to build nuclear weapons," Mr. Putin told the visiting head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Hassan Rowhani, in the Kremlin today. "This means that we will continue our cooperation in all spheres, including nuclear power generation and defence." Russia's Atomic Energy Agency chief, Alexander Rumyantsev, said on Thursday he will travel to Iran next week to sign a protocol on returning spent nuclear fuel to Russia, which will pave the way to the launch of a Russian-built nuclear reactor in Iran at the end of the current year. The U.S. says the 1,000-MW reactor could help Teheran build nuclear weapons, the charge Russia has brushed away. The Russian President confirmed plans to visit Iran, saying the two sides are "actively discussing the dates" for his visit. In another snub to Washington two days ago Moscow announced plans to sell air-defence missiles to Syria even as Syria and Iran this week vowed to form a "common front to face threats" from the U.S. and Israel.

The News, 19 February 2005

Bush doesn't rule out military action against Iran

BRUSSELS: US President George W Bush does not rule out military action against Iran but prefers a diplomatic solution, he said on Friday in an interview with Belgian television. "You never want a president to say never. But military action is... never the president's first choice," he said, adding: "Diplomacy is always the president's first choice, at least my first choice." Britain, France and Germany have been spearheading diplomatic efforts to get Iran to abandon processes, which could be used to make nuclear weapons, while top US officials have brandished the threat of force if diplomacy fails. Bush insisted that the United States and its European partners had a "common mission". "We have a common goal Iran should not have a nuclear weapon, that's what we have said, America's said, the Brits have said, the French have said, the Germans have said when they send their foreign ministers in to talk with the Iranians," he said. In an interview with German public television station ARD on Friday, President Bush warned Iran not to try to divide Europe and the United States over its suspected nuclear programme.

The New York Times, 19 February 2005

Doubting U.S., China Is Wary of Korea Role (Howard W. French)

SHANGHAI, Feb. 18: The dispatch by China of a high-level envoy this weekend to persuade the North Koreans to return to talks on their nuclear weapons would seem to present it with an ideal opportunity. China's economy is growing enormously, casting shadows in every direction. Its fast-modernizing military has the attention of every power, regional or global. No other country, meanwhile, enjoys the kind of long, unbroken friendship that China has nurtured for over five decades with North Korea. In short, all the pieces would seem to be in place for Beijing to score its first big coup in global diplomacy, brokering an end to the nuclear threat on the Korean peninsula. The only problem with this optimistic scenario is that it is shared by almost no one in China. For now, the Chinese remain reluctant to take major diplomatic risks on North Korea, convinced that this longtime ally, a country that Chinese soldiers shed blood in large numbers to defend, will never turn against them. Analysts say that Beijing's top priority is to maintain quiet on its frontier, and that it would take a more aggressive tack only if tensions between Washington and North Korea were to increase seriously.

The Associated Press, 19 February 2005

Bush: U.S. Not Planning to Attack Iran

WASHINGTON: President Bush says speculation that the United States might attack Iraq to end its nuclear program is "just not the truth," although he refuses to rule out the possibility entirely. "Listen, first of all, you never want a president to say 'never.' But military action is certainly not -- it's never the president's first choice," Bush said Friday. "Diplomacy is always the president's first -- at least my first choice." Bush sat down for a series of broadcast and newspaper interviews with correspondents from Russia, France, Belgium, Slovakia and Germany in connection with his five-day trip to Europe next week to repair relations damaged by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. "We have a tendency in Europe and in America to talk past each other," Bush said. He said he wanted to "invigorate a relationship that is a vital relationship for our own security" Asked what it would take to mend relations with French President Jacques Chirac, one of his toughest critics, Bush said: "Obviously nice words are nice, but deeds are more important than words. I personally don't feel bitter." He said the United States and France had big differences over Iraq, "but now is the time for us to set aside that difference and to move forward in areas where we can work together." Bush said he would talk with Russian President Vladimir Putin about actions widely viewed as a retreat from democracy. "I mean, he's done some things that (have) concerned people," he said.

The Korean Herald, 19 February 2005

U.S. envoy says nukes 'a dead end' (Choi Soung-ah)

Ambassador Christopher Hill, newly-named U.S. chief negotiator to the nuclear six-party talks, cautioned North Korea yesterday that holding nuclear weapons is a "dead end" and called for a coordinated approach by concerned parties to get Pyongyang back to the negotiating table. Amid mounting pressure on North Korea that includes a trip by senior Chinese official Wang Jiarui to Pyongyang, Hill also underscored the need for South Korea to coordinate its policy on inter-Korean economic cooperation with the United States. In Washington, President George W. Bush said the United States will work with other countries to the six-party talks to discuss measures to counter the North's declaration Feb. 10 that it possesses nuclear weapons and intends to boycott the six-party talks indefinitely. Ambassador Christopher Hill, chief U.S. delegate to the six-party disarmament talks on North Korea, gestures during a meeting with a group of senior journalists in Seoul yesterday.

The Asahi Shimbun, 19 February 2005

Japan, U.S. to mull strategy on N. Korea (Taro Karasaki)

Tokyo and Washington over the weekend will discuss how to bring Pyongyang back to talks on its nuclear program, but possible plans for tougher measures might put the allies at odds with another key player-South Korea. Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura and Defense Agency Director-General Yoshinori Ono departed Friday evening for Washington. They will meet with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in "two-plus-two" talks on Saturday. Ministerial talks will also be held on the sidelines. The key topics in the original agenda were the planned realignment of U.S. forces in Japan and the roles of the two partners in East Asia. But that agenda quickly changed after Pyongyang on Feb. 10 declared that it possesses nuclear weapons and has withdrawn indefinitely from the six-nation talks on its nuclear program. "North Korea has been a topic of concern for the two-plus-two talks in the broad context of regional security, but owing to the Feb. 10 statement, it will be a topic of discussion" at the weekend talks, Machimura told a news conference Friday.

The News, 20 February 2005

US warns 'other measures' if N Korea doesn't return to talks

WASHINGTON: The United States has threatened North Korea with "other measures" if North Korea does not return to the six-party talks on its nuclear weapons. After a meeting in which US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and their Japanese counterparts participated, Rice made it clear to North Korea that it must return to the talks. "The North Koreans do have a better path to a better relationship with the international community and I would hope they would take it," Rice said. "We will, of course, have to look beyond if that day comes, but at this point, we believe the international community is united in saying to the North Koreans that they should return to the talks." Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura joined in the warning. He said, ". But should we let time slip by, then I think it will only worsen the situation".

The News, 20 February 2005

EI Baradei asks US to join nuclear talks with Iran

BERLIN: The head of the UN's nuclear watchdog, Mohamed ElBaradei, called on the United States to join European countries attempting to ensure Iran does not build atomic weapons. In an interview to Germany's weekly Der Spiegel, ElBaradei said the efforts of Britain, France and Germany to persuade Tehran to stop enriching uranium in exchange for technical, commercial and political advantages from Europe can only succeed if the United States joins in. He said, "Progress is difficult to conceive without Washington. We need a common front." He warned that if Iran was determined to have nuclear weapons they could be available within two to three years, as Tehran had the know-how and the industrial capability. The IAEA chief also voiced alarm at the prospect of a US military attack on Iran, which President Bush has not ruled out. "After such an attack, the Iranians would certainly set themselves in earnest to making a bomb in secret," he said.

The News, 20 February 2005

Pak-India nuclear weapons pose no threat: US official

WASHINGTON: India and Pakistan have nuclear weapons and the capability to deliver them to targets in the region, but both nations are "friends of the United States and don't threaten" its territory, according to a senior US official. This was stated by US Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research Thomasingar to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Fingar said there was a broad consensus in the international community that concurred with the judgement that terrorism was the single greatest threat to Americans, both at home and abroad, and that proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missiles and certain types of advanced conventional weapons was a close and dangerous second. Diplomacy, he said, was critical to US efforts to contain, counter and diminish the threats the country faces. The normalisation of relations with China and demise of the Soviet Union, he said, dramatically reduced the danger of nuclear war and eliminated or transformed fundamentally a wide variety of associated threats.

The News, 20 February 2005

North Korea rules out bilateral nuclear talks with US

BEIJING: North Korea reiterated that it had pulled out of six-nation talks on its nuclear drive indefinitely and ruled out a bilateral meeting with the United States, Chinese state media said on Saturday. An unnamed North Korean foreign ministry spokesman, in comments to Xinhua news agency, said that because Washington had "insisted on a hostile policy" toward Pyongyang and persisted in trying to change the North Korean regime, there was "no justification" for undertaking "bilateral one-to-one talks on the nuclear issue with the United States." However, the spokesman repeated Pyongyang's commitment to solving the impasse through negotiation and dialogue. The comments follow Pyongyang's announcement last week that it was pulling out of the six-nation talks and that it had developed nuclear weapons. The statement prompted widespread concern and a flurry of diplomacy between South Korea, China, the United States. Senior Chinese envoy Wang Jiarui arrived in Pyongyang late on Saturday for talks expected to focus on the nuclear row.

The News, 20 February 2005

Pakistani-US relations and non-proliferation (Farrukh Saleem)

First, a short personal note that may actually have national law and order implications. On February 8, at around 1 p.m. my 11-year-old Mitsubishi Pajero was stolen in broad daylight. My old road companion was parked alongside Islamabad's principal thoroughfare in Blue Area hardly a couple of miles from the President House, the Prime Minister Secretariat and the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Now, the topic of the week. The 9/11 Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States has recommended President Bush to formulate a "clear, strong, and long-term commitment to support the military dominated government of Pakistan despite serious concerns about the country's nuclear proliferation activities". The Commission Report specifically "identified the government of President Musharraf as the best hope for stability in Pakistan and Afghanistan..." Democracy can wait. The Bush White House needs a stable Pakistan -- a military dominated stability in order to first, extract maximum cooperation on the nuclear front and, second, unbridled collaboration against terrorism.

The New York Times, 20 February 2005

U.S. and Japan Declare Concern Over North Korea (Joel Brinkley)

WASHINGTON, Feb. 19: Senior American and Japanese officials issued a joint declaration on Saturday expressing "deep concern" over North Korea's withdrawal from multilateral negotiations on its nuclear weapons program, while the North declared itself unwilling to participate in talks of any kind. The tough talk in Washington and Pyongyang stiffened even further their tense standoff over how to resolve the weapons dispute. The joint Japanese-American statement followed security talks on North Korea and other issues between Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and

their two Japanese counterparts. The annual talks carried unusual urgency, they said, following North Korea's statement on Feb. 10 that it would not participate in six-party disarmament talks and that it already possessed nuclear weapons. North Korea said Saturday that it would not even talk directly with the United States alone, something it has sought in the past and the Bush administration has refused.

The Associated Press, 20 February 2005

New Nuclear Sub Is Said to Have Special Eavesdropping Ability

WASHINGTON, Feb. 19: The submarine Jimmy Carter, which joined the Navy's fleet on Saturday, has a special capability, intelligence experts say: it is able to tap undersea cables and eavesdrop on the communications passing through them. The Navy does not acknowledge that the submarine has this capability. "That's going to be classified in nature," said Kevin Sykes, a Navy spokesman. "You're not going to get anybody to talk to you about that." But intelligence community watchdogs have little doubt. The previous spy submarine, the Parche, was retired last fall. That would only happen if a new one was on the way, they say. The \$3.2 billion Carter was extensively modified from its basic design, given a hull extension that allows it to house technicians and gear to perform the cable-tapping and other secret missions, experts say. The Carter's hull, at 453 feet, is 100 feet longer than the other two submarines in the Seawolf class. "The submarine is basically going to have as its major function intelligence gathering," said James Bamford, author of two books on the National Security Agency.

The New York Times, 20 February 2005

Nuclear Reality: America Loses Bite (David E. Sanger)

WASHINGTON: Not so long ago, the terrifying rules of nuclear chicken were clear. When only superpowers and their allies held nuclear arsenals, deterrence worked, because all sides understood the horrific consequences of a misstep. Even during the most unnerving confrontations, like the Cuban missile crisis, there were clear "red lines" beyond which no sane leader would intentionally step. And as nuclear technology spread, new red lines emerged. Israel enforced one 24 years ago, when it destroyed Saddam Hussein's nuclear reactor rather than let him get near a bomb. But the lesson of the past few years is that red lines have blurred, to the point where they are now little more than pink smudges. And now, no one seems to know the rules. Not the Bush administration, as it sends conflicting signals about what it and its allies will do if diplomacy fails to disarm Iran and North Korea. Not Kim Jong Il, or the Iranian mullahs, as they test new and undefined limits. And why not test them?

Reuters, 21 February 2005

China Envoy May Have Met N.Korean Leader Kim

BEIJING: A top Chinese Communist party official held high-level talks in North Korea and may even have met its reclusive leader, Kim Jong-il, to try to draw the country back to talks on its nuclear programs, Chinese media said. Wang Jiarui, head of the international liaison department of China's ruling Communist Party, flew to North Korea on Saturday on a scheduled visit that came after North Korea declared for the first time that it had atomic weapons and had no intention of re-joining stalled six-party talks on its nuclear programs. Before leaving for Pyongyang, Wang said the fate of the talks, which include South Korea, the United States, Japan and Russia, would be up for discussion. On Sunday, Wang held a second day of talks with North Korea's number two leader, parliament chief Kim Yong-nam, the North's official news agency KCNA reported.

Daily Times, 21 February 2005

N Korea sets conditions for nuclear talks

SEOUL: North Korea will return to talks on ending its nuclear programmes "in any form" if the United States pledges "coexistence and non-interference," the North's envoy to the United Nations told a South Korean newspaper. Deputy Ambassador Han Song-ryol also told the JoongAng Ilbo newspaper that the North wanted an assurance by the United States that there would be substantive results from negotiations in order to return to stalled nuclear talks. North Korea dealt a blow to an already complicated diplomatic process on its nuclear programmes by declaring on Feb. 10 that it had nuclear arms and was pulling out indefinitely from six-country talks set up to negotiate an end to the standoff. "We need some kind of justification if we were to return to the talks," Han said in the article published on Saturday. He said recent statements by US President George W Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice undermined the position of those in Pyongyang who advocated dialogue because they indicated a plan to overturn the North's government by force. Chinese diplomat: A senior Chinese Communist Party official flew to North Korea on Saturday, joining a flurry of jet-setting diplomats seeking to salvage talks aimed at ending the nuclear crisis surrounding the isolated state.

Daily Times, 21 February 2005

Senate examining US intelligence on nuclear threats

WASHINGTON: The Senate has begun taking a harder look at US intelligence on nuclear threats facing the United States, including revelations of missing nuclear materials in Russia, congressional officials said on Friday. The Republican-led Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which held a closed-door hearing on nuclear issues earlier this month, has come to view nuclear proliferation as a threat that overshadows other dangers posed by terrorist groups. "We're going to be following it very, very closely," said Sen. John Rockefeller of West Virginia, ranking Democrat on the Senate oversight panel. He said the nuclear threat against the United States was posed "not just from North Korea, but most dangerously from unaccounted for weapons that could be black-marketed to terrorists." Sen. Pat Roberts of Kansas, who chairs the Senate panel, first referred to the committee's deepened focus on nuclear terrorism this week when CIA Director Porter Goss presented his agency's annual report on world threats to the committee.

The Hindu, 21 February 2005

'Nuclear threat'

NEW DELHI, Feb. 20. Pakistan could use nuclear weapons to counter India's larger conventional forces if a war breaks out, a threat assessment report of the CIA has said. The report was brought out by the National Intelligence Council and the CIA.

The Japan Times, 21 February 2005

Pyongyang toeing 'red line' (Keizo Nabeshima)

North Korea shocked the world with its announcement Feb. 10 that it will "indefinitely" stay away from the six-party talks on its nuclear arms program and that it already has nuclear weapons. Resorting to its notorious brinkmanship for raising the stakes when negotiations are stalled, North Korea has strengthened its "nuclear card" in an effort to force concessions from the United States. But the move is likely to cause further isolation for the reclusive state. Japan, the U.S., South Korea, China and Russia must cooperate closely to get North Korea to return to negotiations. Otherwise, North Korea will progress further in its nuclear arms program and stockpile more nuclear weapons and materials, increasing the risk of nuclear proliferation to other countries and terrorist groups. North Korea has played its nuclear card often. In 1993, it announced its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. After it signed, with the United States, the 1994 Agreed Framework for freezing its nuclear arms development, it continued clandestine efforts to build nuclear weapons. In March 2003, Pyongyang officially withdrew from the NPT.

People's Daily, 22 February 2005

DPRK ready to return to six-party talks if conditions met: Kim Jong-il

Kim Jong-il, top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), said Monday that Pyongyang is ready to resume the six-party talks at any time if conditions are met. Kim made the remarks when he met with visiting Chinese senior official Wang Jiarui. The DPRK's stance on a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and peaceful settlement of the issue through dialogue remain unchanged, Kim told Wang, head of the International Department of CPC Central Committee. Kim said that the DPRK never opposes the six-party talks, let alone withdraws from the talks. If the conditions for the fourth round of six-party talks are met, the DPRK will return to the negotiating table at any time, he said, adding that he hopes the relevant parties show their adequate sincerity and take concrete actions. During the meeting, Wang conveyed Chinese President Hu Jintao's oral message to Kim. Hu, also general secretary of the Central Committee of the CPC, said that China and the DPRK stick to a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and safeguard peace and stability on the peninsula. Both countries have maintained that peaceful settlement of the nuclear issue through the six-party talks and the DPRK's justified concerns are in the fundamental interests of both sides.

The News, 22 February 2005

Tehran rejects 'sell out' of its nuclear programme

TEHRAN: Iran has rejected an EU call for Tehran to draw up a compromise formula on uranium enrichment, saying it will not "sell out" its nuclear capabilities, a top negotiator said on Monday. "The Europeans want to get from Iran a total halt to enrichment, but in the face of our strong opposition they insisted in the negotiations that Iran propose an alternative which also covers enrichment," Sirus Nasserli told the state news agency IRNA. France, Britain and Germany are leading diplomatic efforts to persuade Iran to permanently abandon its nuclear enrichment programme in return for a package of political and economic benefits. "The Europeans are progressively learning that Iran will not sell out on its nuclear capacities," Nasserli said. "Iran will not propose an alternative until Europe stops asking it to halt enrichment and no longer talks about it," he said, adding that "a final agreement in these negotiations will be based on the resumption of enrichment by Iran". "We are going to give the European a chance to come" to an accord but "this possibility will not be eternal," said Nasserli. He insisted Tehran would complete the fuel cycle, adding: "Iran in the next 30 years will possess the necessary equipment to feed several power plants and export nuclear fuel." He dismissed US threats of force against Iran, saying they were more aimed at putting pressure on Europe than on Iran.

The News, 22 February 2005

'Israel must prepare for air strike on Iran's N-programme'

JERUSALEM: Israel must be prepared to carry out an air strike against Iran's nuclear programme, air force commander Maj-Gen Eliezer Shaked said on Monday. But in a meeting with reporters, Shaked would not say whether he thought Israel was capable of carrying out such a mission alone, as it did when it bombed an unfinished Iraqi nuclear reactor near Baghdad in 1981. Asked whether Israel has a plan for the Iranian nuclear programme, Shaked replied, "You know that for obvious reasons, I won't say even a word." But when asked whether he was confident the air force could provide the answer to the threat, Shaked replied, "I must be prepared for everything." The Israeli air force commander also discussed situation in Lebanon. The assassination last week of Rafik Hariri "can create a new picture in Lebanon," Shaked said. Asked whether the Israeli air force has changed its deployment since the assassination, he replied, "Of course we won't let the other side hit us."

Dawn, 22 February 2005

Kasuri in Japan for talks

TOKYO, Feb 21: Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri arrived in Japan on Monday on a three-day visit for talks expected to touch on nuclear non-proliferation. Mr Kasuri met after his arrival with Shoichi Nakagawa, Japan's economy, trade and industry minister, who visited Pakistan last month and announced a resumption of yen loans. He was due to hold talks with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura on Tuesday. Japan, which had been Pakistan's biggest bilateral aid donor, suspended yen loans in May 1998 after Pakistan and India carried out nuclear tests. But Japan agreed last month to resume loans to Pakistan.

Daily Times, 22 February 2005

Iran will be nuclear power if trends continue: panel (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: A panel of experts has concluded that if the present trends continue, Iran is likely to succeed in its quest for nuclear weapons. The Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control assembled a panel of experts last year to study the question which, according to its 'Iran Watch Bulletin' for February-March, has come up with a "distressing" answer. The experts ruled out any immediate action by the United Nations to "punish" Iran as "impracticable" because economic sanctions or the use of force would require unity among UN Security Council members, which does not exist currently. The only hope of convincing Iran to abandon its nuclear ambitions, they found, is through vigorous international diplomacy. None of the experts was optimistic about the chances of diplomatic success. They believed that for diplomacy to have a chance to succeed, the US will have to add its weight to the negotiations between Iran and Europe, which will mean not only threatening Iran with punitive measures if it fails to cooperate but offering the country inducements if it does. Secondly, Russia and China will have to support the European effort and pressure Iran to accept the bargain on offer; and thirdly, Iran's neighbours will need to warn it that they might follow its nuclear example, which could escalate the conventional arms race in the region to a nuclear level.

Daily Times, 22 February 2005

Military 'stick' backs Iran N-talks: Belgian

BRUSSELS: Iran may yet be persuaded to curb its nuclear plans - but only because diplomatic efforts are backed by the threat of US military action, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht was quoted as saying on Monday. "I think the negotiations have a serious chance of succeeding but only because of the American threat," De Gucht told Belgian daily De Morgen. "Those talks only have a chance if you maintain a strategy of sticks and carrots. And we have to be willing to admit that the United States are the stick." Iran will be high on the agenda during US President George W. Bush's visit to Europe this week. The five-day trip aims to foster a friendly atmosphere early in his second term and deal with problems including Iran, Syria and NATO's future. Europe and the United States are divided on the debate over Iran's nuclear programme, which Tehran insists is for power generation but which Washington says is aimed at building a nuclear weapon. The European Union, led by France, Germany and Britain, has offered trade and political benefits if Iran gives up uranium enrichment, and believes it would bolster the EU's leverage if the United States got involved in the bargaining.

Reuters, 22 February 2005

N.Korea Indicates Return to Stalled Nuke Talks

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong-il said his country would return to six-party nuclear disarmament talks if conditions were right and the United States showed sincerity, his official KCNA news agency said on Tuesday. It was the first statement by the reclusive Kim since North Korea explicitly declared for the first time on Feb. 10 that it had atomic weapons and was also pulling out of the talks with South Korea, China, Russia, the United States and Japan. Analysts and officials said Kim's pledge may be a sign the North is backing down from its high-stakes brinkmanship in the face of unified international pressure, including a push by its main benefactor China to restart the stalled talks. China sent Wang Jiarui, head of the Communist Party's liaison department, to Pyongyang on Saturday to try to revive the talks. "We will go to the negotiating table anytime if there are mature conditions for the six-party talks thanks to the concerted efforts of the parties concerned in the future," KCNA quoted Kim as telling the Chinese envoy. Kim said he hoped the United States would show "trustworthy sincerity and move," KCNA said.

The Indian Express, 22 February 2005

Next Steps in missile defence (C. Raja Mohan)

With India committed to nuclear no-first-use, it needs a viable system

As India enters talks with the United States today on acquiring Patriot missiles, it needs clarity on the elements that form an effective strategy to develop missile defence capabilities within the nation. Even as India enters these very important negotiations, there are residual doubts in New Delhi on whether India needs missile defence in the first place. Although India had intuitively decided on the need for missile defence a few years ago, there are many voices of caution raising questions on relevance and effectiveness. For some time now, missile defence has been one of the four items in the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership initiative with the US. Well before missile defence came onto the agenda of Indo-US dialogue, New Delhi had been exploring a variety of options on acquiring related technologies and systems from Israel. India has already purchased advanced radars, which form an important component of any missile defence system, from Israel. It has also been interested in the Arrow missile system developed by Tel Aviv in collaboration with the US. While Washington is yet to clear the Arrow sale to India, it has offered to discuss the sale of Patriot II system.

The Times of India, 22 February 2005

Iran seeks India's support on nuclear issue (Indrani Bagchi)

NEW DELHI: Even as George W Bush set foot in Europe with his latest attack against Iran developing nuclear weapons, Iranian foreign minister Kamal Kharazmi was here requesting for Indian 'cooperation' in Iran's ordeals with the world nuclear community. During his hour-long delegation meeting followed by a one-on-one interaction with foreign minister Natwar Singh on Monday, Kharazmi reiterated Iran's view that it would continue with developing its capabilities in nuclear technology. Iran is also playing the developing country card, opposing what it calls the 'targeting' of developing countries through the review of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty scheduled for later this year. Iran is well aware that India is not a member of the NPT. But it is a clear way of gathering friends and supporters on this issue particularly as there is a general belief that the forthcoming review would come down hard on members like Iran and North Korea which have violated the treaty.

Khaleej Times, 22 February 2005

Iran must not develop N-arms, warns Bush

BRUSSELS: US President George W. Bush said yesterday that Iran must not develop nuclear weapons and halt support for terrorism in a major policy speech kicking off a four-day European trip. Bush said he was "working closely" with Britain, France and Germany which are seeking a diplomatic deal offering Teheran trade and aid in exchange for giving up its alleged bid to build a nuclear bomb. But as expected, Bush did not announce any plans for the US formally to join the European diplomatic bid. Meanwhile, Bush said Russia must renew its commitment to democracy and urged that Washington and the European Union put reform at the heart of their dialogue with Moscow.

Dawn, 22 February 2005

The nuclear domino effect (Katherine Stapp)

NEW YORK: Even as the United States leans on North Korea and Iran to renounce any nuclear objectives, peace activists say it has stepped up spending on its own arsenal, including investments in a new generation of longer lasting and sturdier "bunker buster" weapons. The "quiet effort", first reported by the New York Times last week, involves a relatively modest budget of nine million dollars for engineers at the nation's three nuclear weapons laboratories, Los Alamos, Livermore and Sandia. Its goal is to produce new warhead prototypes in the next decade. According to the Western States Legal Foundation, an anti-proliferation group, US nuclear weapons spending has swelled by 84 percent since 1995, now amounting to 40 billion dollars annually. This budget supports the maintenance of some 10,000 nuclear warheads - 2,000 on hair-trigger alert. Some experts say the "Reliable Replacement Warhead Programme", approved by Congress in November, marks a disturbing evolution of the former policy introduced under President Bill Clinton of "stockpile stewardship", in which the labs concentrated on maintaining the safety and reliability of the nation's existing nuclear arsenal.

Dawn, 22 February 2005

Pakistan likely to take up Patriot issue with US (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, Feb 21: Pakistan is expected to take up with the US administration the expected sale of Patriot missile defence system to India, diplomatic sources told Dawn on Monday. A US defence team began briefing Indian officials in New Delhi on Monday on the Patriot missiles. In Washington's diplomatic circles the visit is seen as a prelude to the sale of the advanced anti-ballistic missiles to India. "It's a serious development and comes into conflict with the existing nuclear deterrence in the Subcontinent," said a South Asian defence expert familiar with the system. Since the May 1998, when both India and Pakistan tested their nuclear devices, there existed an undeclared balance of power in the Subcontinent based on the fear that a clash between the two nuclear-armed neighbours could lead to the destruction of both. But the Patriots, which could bring down an incoming missile, could seriously tip the balance in India's favour, making Pakistan vulnerable. "If the Patriots are delivered to India, it will seriously imbalance Pakistan's strategic capabilities and can trigger an arms race in the Subcontinent," said the South Asian defence expert.

The News, 22 February 2005

N-export control tie-up with US under way (Nadeem Malik)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan started technical nuclear export control cooperation with the United States in 2003, says a report of the US State Department that also outlines need for an accountable political government. The report is part of the budget performance for the US Fiscal Year 2006 (beginning October 2005). It contains several Pakistan-specific references. "Pakistan is committed to work with the US-aided international efforts to shut down the network (of AQ Khan), and vowed never again to be a source of nuclear proliferation. It says that Pakistan adopted an export control law and vowed to bring its controls and regulations in line with international standards. The export controls programme of the US provides assistance to the governments to raise their laws and regulations to international standards, improve licensing, border control and investigative capabilities. The report mentions that by 2006 seven countries would have developed and instituted export control system and practices that meet international standards. It also stated that India prosecuted the owner of an Indian company engaged in WMD-related transfers to Iraq.

People's Daily, 23 February 2005

China, DPRK stick to nuclear-free Korean Peninsula stance

Both China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) want a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan Tuesday at a regular press conference. Kong made the remark when commenting on Chinese senior official Wang Jiarui's visit to the DPRK, which began Saturday. Kim Jong-il, the DPRK's top leader, met with Wang, head of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, on Monday. During the meeting, Wang conveyed Chinese President Hu Jintao's oral message to Kim. Hu, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, expressed his desire to enhance China-DPRK relations and reiterated China's stance and concern on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, Kong said. "The DPRK never opposes the six-party talks, let alone withdrew from the talks, and if the conditions for the fourth round of the six-party talks are met, the DPRK will return to the negotiating table at any time," Kong quoted Kim as saying.

Dawn, 23 February 2005

Indian army confesses to over-estimating N-prowess (Jawed Naqvi)

NEW DELHI, Feb 22: The Indian army had falsely believed that its new found nuclear prowess would guarantee perpetual peace with Pakistan, the army's newly released secret assessment of the Kargil fiasco says, according to excerpts published in the Outlook magazine on Monday. In its cover story headlined "War Against Error," the magazine says that the Indian army

"was shocked and awed by the Kargil war." Five years later, the army's internal report lists the blunders it made, and steps to avert them in the future. "The battle fought on the icy heights of Kargil between May and July 1999 is one that will not be easily forgotten by India," the magazine says. "Five years after a war in which 474 officers and men lost their lives, there has been much introspection in the country's security establishment on what went right, and what went wrong, in Operation Vijay." The peace process, kicked off by the Lahore bus ride of Prime Minister Vajpayee, and the fact that both India and Pakistan had gone "overtly nuclear" led the army top brass to believe that war was a distant possibility," the army assessment admits.

China Daily, 23 February 2005

Goliaths compete for nuclear plant pact

Fu Jing Three global nuclear power heavyweights now competing for designing and building four nuclear units in China will submit their proposals next Monday, a national nuclear technology company said yesterday. US-based Westinghouse, France's Areva and Russia's AtomStroyExport (ASE) are busy with finishing touches on their plans for four nuclear reactors in Zhejiang and Guangdong provinces. The Preparatory Office of the State Nuclear Power Technology Corporation told China Daily that a ceremony will be organized on Monday to accept finished bids from the three competitors. "We will soon organize assessments," the preparatory office official said. He did not reveal when an announcement would come on a winner of the contract for the four 1,000-megawatt, pressurized-water nuclear power facilities. Two of the four units will be located in Sanmen, East China's Zhejiang Province, and the other two in Yangjiang, South China's Guangdong Province. The preparatory office, which started work last September under the direct authority of the State Nuclear Power Self-reliance Leading Committee, is to set up the nuclear power corporation, organize tenders, carry out technology transfers and negotiate contracts for nuclear power projects. Having been buried in aggressive competition, the three companies all boasted firm support from their own governments and are confident their companies will stand out.

The News, 23 February 2005

Japan presses N Korea to return to nuclear talks with no conditions

TOKYO: Japan Tuesday pressed North Korea to return to six-nation talks on its nuclear program with no conditions and said it was baffled by a Chinese report that Pyongyang had denied pulling out of dialogue. "I believe it is most beneficial for North Korea to participate in the six-nation talks," Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told reporters at his office. "I think the best condition is that they take part without conditions," Koizumi added. He was commenting on Chinese state media reports that North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il denied withdrawing from the multilateral talks on his country's nuclear drive and said they could resume "at any time" if conditions were right. Koizumi said Kim's new statement was "inevitable" as he was thinking for North Korea's benefit. Kim's comments were the first from the reclusive leader since the Stalinist state's foreign ministry via official media announced nearly two weeks ago that it was suspending talks indefinitely and had nuclear weapons. "If the conditions for the fourth round of six-party talks are met, the DPRK (North Korea) will return to the negotiating table at any time," Kim was quoted by Xinhua news agency as telling Chinese envoy Wang Jiarui in Pyongyang. Kim did not specify what the conditions were. Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura said North Korea must return to the talks "without asking for conditions." "We would welcome it if they would return to six-way talks immediately," Machimura told reporters. "We want them to take concrete actions."

Dawn, 23 February 2005

Japan, Brazil oppose proposal: Nuclear moratorium

VIENNA, Feb 22: A plan by the UN's atomic watchdog aimed partly at helping to persuade Iran to forsake its nuclear ambitions is opposed not only by Tehran but a group of countries including Japan and Brazil, diplomats said. Even the United States, which accuses Iran of trying to make an atomic bomb under the guise of a civilian nuclear programme, has reservations about the proposed five-year moratorium on new nuclear production facilities, they added. Major uranium suppliers Canada and Australia also have objections. Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), proposed the plan last year, hoping a global moratorium would give the world time to patch up loopholes in the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The scheme also offered Iran a way of saving face while acceding to a European Union demand that it scrap its uranium enrichment programme, the UN diplomats said. "The idea is that it would be easier for Iran to give up enrichment as part of an international movement," a diplomat involved in EU discussions with Iran on its atomic fuel programme said on condition of anonymity.

Daily Times, 23 February 2005

Iran finds allies against UN plan to halt N-plan

VIENNA: A plan by the UN's atomic watchdog aimed partly at helping to persuade Iran to forsake its nuclear ambitions is opposed not only by Tehran but a group of countries including Japan and Brazil, diplomats said. Even the United States, which accuses Iran of trying to make an atomic bomb under the guise of a civilian nuclear programme, has reservations about the proposed five-year moratorium on new nuclear production facilities, they added. Major uranium suppliers Canada and Australia also have objections. Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), proposed the plan last year, hoping a global moratorium would give the world time to patch up loopholes in the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The scheme also offered Iran a way of saving face while acceding to a European Union demand that it scrap its uranium enrichment programme, the UN diplomats said. "The idea is that it would be easier for Iran to give up enrichment as part of an international movement," a diplomat involved in EU discussions with Iran on its atomic fuel programme said on condition of anonymity. Iran, which denies seeking to make an atomic bomb and says its programme is peaceful to generate electricity, has rejected both the EU demand and the moratorium.

The Washington Post, 23 February 2005

Bush Tries To Allay E.U. Worry Over Iran (Michael A. Fletcher and Keith B. Richburg)

BRUSSELS, Feb. 22: President Bush said Tuesday that concern about possible U.S. military action against Iran "is simply ridiculous," but he added at a news conference that "all options are on the table" in dealing with suspected Iranian attempts to acquire nuclear weapons. After meeting with NATO and European Union officials, Bush welcomed modest pledges from opponents of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq to help train and equip security forces there. While U.S. and European officials said there was an improved tone in their discussions, serious divisions remained over U.S. policy toward Iran and the Bush administration's objection to European plans to lift an arms embargo against China. U.S. charges that Iran wants to build nuclear weapons have raised concern in Europe about U.S. military planning. Bush has repeatedly said he wants diplomacy with Tehran's theocratic government to work.

Khaleej Times, 23 February 2005

SOS from Pyongyang

There appears to be no end to 'dear leader' Kim Jong-il's histrionics. A week after North Korea walked out of the six party talks declaring it possessed nuclear weapons, the 'dear leader' has expressed willingness to return to the talks. Characteristically, the latest Pyongyang turnaround comes with strings attached: That US must demonstrate 'trustworthy sincerity' if negotiations have to begin. For all you know, the softening of Pyongyang's stance may be a desperate SOS to the international community. It's hardly a secret that the Stalinist state Korea has been in crisis mode for the past few years. Over the past few months, there have been plenty of signs to suggest that all is not well in the North. The country's economy has been in doldrums for over a decade. As many as a million people perished in a famine during the '90s. Hunger and poverty have been driving tens of thousands of people into neighbouring China and South Korea. And the regime is said to be losing its grip on power. This is why Western analysts have been painting many a fearsome scenario of imminent collapse of the country. No wonder, the world has been uneasy over the future of North. The scenario of nuclear weapons or other WMDs falling into the hands of a more demented junta is not really pleasant to countenance.

Hindustan Times, 23 February 2005

War risk in S Asia to remain high: NIC

WASHINGTON: The risk of war in South Asia would remain "fairly high" over the next 15 years where the threat of a major conflict between India and Pakistan would "overshadow" all other regional issues, America's National Intelligence Council (NIC) has warned. In its forecast of global trends over the next 15 years, the NIC, representing 15 spy agencies of the US, including the CIA, said that continued turmoil in Afghanistan and Pakistan will spill over into Kashmir and other areas of the subcontinent, prompting Indian leaders to take more "aggressive pre-emptive and retaliatory actions." "India's conventional military advantage over Pakistan will widen as a result of New Delhi's superior economic position. India will also continue to build up its ocean-going navy to dominate the Indian Ocean transit routes used for delivery of Persian Gulf oil to Asia. The decisive shift in conventional military power in India's favour over the coming years potentially will make the region more volatile and unstable," it said. The council said both India and Pakistan will see weapons of mass destruction as a strategic imperative and will continue to amass nuclear warheads and build a variety of missile delivery systems.

BBC, 23 February 2005

UN proposes nuclear fuel controls

VIENNA: A UN report has called for tougher controls over sensitive parts of the world's civilian nuclear fuel cycle in order to stop weapons proliferation. The report commissioned by UN atomic agency head, Mohamed ElBaradei, says multi-lateral groups should take responsibility for making nuclear fuel. Talks are due in May to review the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. International concerns over the nuclear programmes in Iran and North Korea have highlighted loopholes in the treaty. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty allows countries to make nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes through enriching uranium or separating plutonium. But these technologies also have the potential to be used to make nuclear weapons.

BBC, 23 February 2005

US cautious at N Korea talks hint

The United States has reacted cautiously to hints that North Korea may reconsider its withdrawal from six-nation talks on its nuclear plans. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said only Pyongyang had thought current conditions were "unfavourable". He said US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had spoken to her Chinese counterpart on the issue. Kim Jong-il reportedly told a Chinese envoy Pyongyang was ready to negotiate "if there are mature conditions". The envoy, Wang Jiarui, had been sent to persuade Pyongyang to rejoin the stalled talks. North Korea abruptly withdrew from the six-nation talks earlier this month, claiming it possessed nuclear weapons.

Korea Times, 23 February 2005

Kim Jong-il Conditional on 6-Way Talks (Ryu Jin)

North Korean leader Kim Jong-il said his country would return to the six-party talks on its nuclear weapons program if certain "conditions" are met, urging the United States to show "sincerity," the North Korean and Chinese media reported on Tuesday. Officials of South Korea and the U.S. dismissed the news report as "nothing new," calling on the reclusive country once again to come back to the negotiation table "immediately and unconditionally." Kim's remarks, made in a meeting with a high-ranking Chinese official on Monday, appear to be in line with North Korea's basic stance in its announcement of Feb. 10 in which it said it has developed nuclear weapons and decided to delay the talks indefinitely. "We will return to the negotiating table as soon as conditions for the six-party talks are met," Kim was quoted as telling Wang Jiarui, the Chinese envoy, by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), Pyongyang's official news agency.

The Asahi Shimbun, 23 February 2005

'No conditions' on N. Korea rejoining talks

Tokyo, reacting to signals that Pyongyang will rejoin six-nation talks to resolve the nuclear standoff, says North Korea should be encouraged with no strings attached. "Naturally, North Korea should unconditionally accept a resumption of the six-nation talks at an early date," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda told reporters Tuesday. Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura also said Tuesday: "If North Korea really returns to the talks swiftly, it should be welcomed. I would like to see North Korea actually act on what it says." Machimura said Pyongyang's return should be "unconditional." Tokyo's reaction followed reports that Kim Jong Il had told a senior Chinese official that Pyongyang will return to the negotiating table if Washington eases its hard-line attitude toward Pyongyang. The Foreign Ministry plans to consult this week in Seoul with U.S. and South Korean officials represented in the six-party talks about Pyongyang's return.

Daily Yomiuri, 23 February 2005

N. Korea must return to N-talks

North Korean leader Kim Jong Il has said his country could return to six-party talks on its nuclear program provided conditions are right. The statement was made in response to a message conveyed to him from Chinese President Hu Jintao by a senior Chinese Communist Party official visiting the reclusive state. The message stated that China "hopes to see the six-country talks resume as soon as possible." Kim's statement came after the North Korean Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Feb. 10 saying Pyongyang would suspend participation in the talks "for an indefinite period" until "there are ample conditions...to expect positive results." In his talks with the Chinese official, Kim reportedly said, "We will return to the negotiating table anytime there are mature conditions for the six-party talks." But Kim's statement cannot be taken as a positive response to calls from the five other nations participating in the talks for Pyongyang to retake its seat at the bargaining table. Neither did his remark signal a definite intention to resume talks. In our opinion, North Korea should agree to unconditionally resume the talks as soon as possible.

The Korean Herald, 23 February 2005

Pyongyang is playing out poker hand

The Feb. 10 North Korean announcement pulling out of the six-way nuclear talks sent shock waves throughout the international community. So what exactly is Pyongyang's rationale for doing this seemingly irrational act (even though it has since signaled it will return to the table if the conditions are right)? The short answer is that Pyongyang's Feb. 10 action is but one in a series of several strategic rounds of poker playing to maximize its strategic interests of securing the "Big Three" ticket items of food, money, and security guarantees. In effect, from a DPRK purview, this poker strategy is being used to gain an agreement that will most benefit the interests and continuity of the leadership in North Korea. In an analogous case, in the classic book, "Liar's Poker," author Michael Lewis tells a colorful autobiographical story of his pursuit of a financially lucrative investment banking career. Despite the fact he was a graduate of Princeton and the London School of Economics (my own alma mater), Lewis found it difficult to secure a job with a leading bank. But, finally, a series of personal connections led him to join the New York-based investment bank of Salomon Brothers (also a former employer of mine) as a sales trader.

Tehran Times, 23 February 2005

Solana calls on U.S. to adopt a transparent position on Iran nuclear issue

PARIS: European Union High representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana called on the U.S. here on Monday to adopt a more transparent policy in support of EU's efforts in nuclear talks with Iran. In an interview with the French Television Network LCI, he added "We should strive to move ahead with the diplomacy marked by the European countries vis-à-vis Iran." He referred to the U.S. president George Bush's statements in Belgium saying that "I hope that Bush will tackle the issue from a more open-minded position." "Iran has the right to use nuclear energy for production of electricity," he said. He further said "We should increase pressure on Syria to leave Lebanon." While, international probes into the killing of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Harriri should be carried out, "but recalling of ambassador from Syria on the part of certain countries is a rash move." He also expressed hope that the Middle East peace negotiations will proceed "constructively." Leaders of the 25-member European Union (EU) are expected to urge U.S. President George W. Bush when they meet him in Brussels on Tuesday to actively support the EU's policy of engagement and dialogue with Iran.

The News, 23 February 2005

N-threat to the US (Burhanuddin Hasan)

Two countries that the US President Mr. Bush declared as partners in the "axis of evil" besides Iraq, are now posing a serious threat to America's security. North Korea has announced for the first time that it possesses nuclear weapons, while Iran is on the threshold of acquiring them. Mr. Bush, in his state of the union address to Congress issued a strong warning both to North Korea and Iran against acquiring atomic weapons, to which North Korea has already replied; Iran is likely to do so in the near future. North Korea has pulled out from protracted six party talks and has declared that it has manufactured nukes to cope with the Bush administration's undisguised policy to isolate and stifle the DPRK, but these weapons will remain deterrents for self-defence. The theory of "nuclear deterrence" has been the theme song of all nuclear nations during the second half of the 20th century. The argument was that if two enemies had the bomb, neither of them could use it against the other because they would both be destroyed. This may have saved the world from atomic holocausts on several occasions, but smaller countries like North Korea and Iran, which are threatened not only by the US, but also by its protégé South Korea and the mini atomic powers like Israel, India, Pakistan and China, have a justifiable right to join the nuclear club for their own protection.

The News, 23 February 2005

No mediation in Iran-US nuclear row: Shaukat

TEHRAN: Visiting Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Tuesday held talks with Iran's President Syed Muhammad Khatami on regional and international issues of common interest including Kashmir, Iraq and Afghanistan. Matters relating to boosting economic and trade cooperation between the two brotherly countries also came under discussion. The two leaders who met at Saadabad Palace in Tehran exchanged views on composite dialogue process between Pakistan and India to resolve their outstanding issues and emphasised that resolution of lingering disputes between the two countries will usher in an era of prosperity and development in the region. They expressed the resolve to increase cooperation in political, economic and trade avenues for mutual benefit. Later talking to newsmen, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said the talks covered a whole gamut of bilateral relations, exploring new vistas of cooperation. He said they also discussed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project and emphasised that it would improve atmosphere in the region and generate economic activities. Shaukat said the "pipeline diplomacy" would improve the atmosphere in the region and contribute to peace. Prime Minister Shaukat came to Tehran with high expectations of "substantial progress" on the scheme, while Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi was in New Delhi, expecting to sign a memorandum of understanding with India.

Daily Times, 23 February 2005

US should think outside the box on Iran

Mohammed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN nuclear watchdog, says that if Iran is determined to press ahead with its nuclear programme, it could have nuclear weapons in the next two to three years. Mr ElBaradei, who was speaking to the German weekly newspaper Der Spiegel, also called upon the United States to join the diplomatic effort by Euro-3 (France, England and Germany) to dissuade Tehran from going further down the nuclear route. Iran is in contact with the Euro-3 that are trying to prevail upon it to stop enriching uranium as quid pro quo for technical, commercial (trade) and other political advantages. ElBaradei told Der Spiegel: "Progress is difficult to conceive without Washington. We need a common front." He rejected talk of a military option to take out Iran's nuclear assets saying: "After such an attack, the Iranians would certainly set themselves in earnest to making a bomb in secret." For its part the United States has recently signalled that it is not planning a military option against Iran, President George Bush calling it "just not the truth".

Dawn, 23 February 2005

France seeks US incentives for Iran

BRUSSELS, Feb 22: French President Jacques Chirac said on Tuesday he had urged US President George Bush to help European negotiations to curb Iran's nuclear programme by offering incentives on trade and aviation. "It seems to me legitimate to make a gesture in the area of Iran's bid for WTO membership and wish to buy civil aircraft engines," Mr Chirac told a news conference after talks with Mr Bush. "I don't see why that shouldn't be done and I said so to the president of the United States," he added. France, Britain and Germany are trying to coax Iran to end uranium enrichment activities, which the United States says are part of a covert drive to build a bomb. Mr Chirac said they had achieved a positive first step by persuading Iran to suspend those activities while they negotiate a long-term agreement on trade and nuclear cooperation. He said Europe and the United States stood united against the spread of nuclear weapons, and the EU3 diplomatic initiative with Tehran was being carried out in "perfect transparency" with Washington and Moscow.

Daily Times, 24 February 2005

'Theft of Russian nuclear material has occurred'

WASHINGTON: US intelligence agencies have concluded that theft of radioactive materials from Russia's nuclear complex "has occurred" and the country's atomic power plants remain vulnerable to terrorist attack, according to a new intelligence report obtained late Tuesday. The unpublished analysis by the National Intelligence Council, a CIA-based think tank that serves the entire US intelligence community, came as US President George W Bush prepared for a potentially contentious meeting Thursday with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin. The two leaders are expected to discuss in Bratislava what is seen here as flaws in the Russian democratic process as well as non-proliferation issues, including the security of Moscow's nuclear stockpile. Russian officials have repeatedly denied terrorist groups could get access to either Russian nuclear weapons or weapons-grade materials. But in its report to Congress, an unclassified version of which was obtained by AFP, the council cast doubt on these assurances. "We assess that undetected smuggling has occurred, and we are concerned about the total amount of material that could have been diverted or stolen in the last 13 years," the report said.

The News, 24 February 2005

Bush, Schroeder step up pressure on Iran, Syria

MAINZ: US President George W Bush and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder put aside their dispute over Iraq on Wednesday and united in warning Iran against developing a nuclear weapon. "It's vital that the Iranians hear the world speak with one voice that they shouldn't have a nuclear weapon," Bush said on the second leg of a visit aimed at definitively repairing transatlantic ties damaged by the Iraq war. "We absolutely agree that Iran must say no to any kind of nuclear weapon, full stop," Schroeder said during a joint news conference. "They must waive any right to the production of them." At the same time, Bush sought to soothe European worries that he plans to use military force against Iran, saying that "all options are on the table," but stressing that "diplomacy is just beginning" and that "Iran is not Iraq". "We'll continue to talk tactics." On Syria, Bush said Damascus must withdraw its "secret services" and roughly 14,000 troops from Lebanon and keep out of upcoming Lebanese parliamentary elections. "We will see how they respond before there's any further discussions about going back to the United Nations," the US president said.

The News, 24 February 2005

'Sanctions threat against N Korea not linked to nuke talks'

TOKYO: Japan's ruling party said on Wednesday that threats to impose sanctions against North Korea had no link to Pyongyang's nuclear program after the communist state's leader reportedly blamed Tokyo for the breakdown in weapons talks. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) said it will send missions to South Korea and to a key Japanese port to consider economic sanctions aimed at forcing the North to come clean on its kidnappings of Japanese citizens. Russia's ITAR-TASS news agency reported Tuesday that Japan's unyielding stance on the abduction issue was one of the key stumbling blocks to the resumption of the six-nation nuclear disarmament talks with North Korea. Tokyo's position "created serious problems for resumption of the six-party talks," a Chinese source quoted North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il as telling an envoy from Beijing.

Daily Times, 24 February 2005

US, South Korea, Japan envoys to meet on North Korea

SEOUL: South Korean, Japanese and US negotiators will meet on Saturday in Seoul to coax North Korea back to talks on its nuclear programmes but ruled out meeting new conditions, South Korea's foreign minister said on Wednesday. The meeting comes after North Korean leader Kim Jong-il told a visiting Chinese envoy this week that Pyongyang would return to six-party nuclear talks if conditions were right and Washington showed sincerity, the North's official media reported. It was the first statement by the reclusive Kim since North Korea explicitly declared on Feb. 10 that it had atomic weapons and was also pulling out of the talks with South Korea, China, Russia, the United States and Japan. "The government agreed to hold a three-way meeting between South Korea, the United States and China in Seoul on February 26 to discuss the result of the visit by China's Wang Jiarui to the North and the early resumption of the six-party talks," South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon told reporters. "There should be no conditions for returning to the talks because we are already in the process of negotiations," he said.

The Washington Post, 24 February 2005

U.S.-Russia Pact Aimed At Nuclear Terrorism (Peter Baker and Walter Pincus)

President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin plan to announce a package of measures today to counter the threat of nuclear terrorism, a threat highlighted in a new U.S. intelligence report warning that Russian nuclear material could still fall into terrorist hands, according to U.S. officials familiar with the accord. Under the planned agreement, U.S. and Russian officials would accelerate long-delayed security upgrades at Russia's many poorly protected nuclear facilities, jointly develop emergency responses to a nuclear or radiological terrorist attack, and establish a program to replace highly enriched uranium in research reactors around the world to prevent it from being used for weapons, the U.S. officials said. Although details were still being negotiated last night, the joint statement to be released at the presidential summit in Bratislava, Slovakia, could be used as a counterpoint to the rising tension in U.S.-Russian relations over Putin's crackdown on domestic dissent. Bush has promised to challenge Putin on Russia's retreat from democracy during their meeting but has also stressed his continuing friendship for the Russian president and their ability to work together on mutual security issues.

The Hindu, 24 February 2005

Japan, U.S. to develop missile defence system (P. S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE, Feb. 23: Japan and the U.S. have agreed to intensify research on ballistic missile defence (BMD) for "cooperative development" of deployable systems in this sensitive sphere. While the joint statement issued after a meeting of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee in Washington has not set a timeline, Japan is understood to have favoured the fiscal year 2006 for this purpose. Tokyo's sense of urgency is related to the CIA's take that North Korea could be ready at any time to test-fire a long-range ballistic missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. The Japanese Defence Agency Director-General, Yoshinori Ono, and the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, met ahead of the committee's sessions that were also attended by the Japanese Foreign Minister, Nobutaka Machimura, and the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. Reacting to the Japan-U.S. move of identifying the resolution of the Taiwan issue as one of their "common strategic objectives," the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Kong Quan, has said in Beijing that "their action is not right."

The New York Times, 24 February 2005

Chinese Envoy Returns from North Korea Saying It Is Open to Talks (Chris Buckley)

BEIJING, Feb. 23: China and the United States have agreed that multiparty talks aimed at halting North Korea's nuclear weapons program should resume as early as possible, and North Korea is open to the negotiations, Chinese officials said Wednesday. China's foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice agreed to work toward an early resumption of negotiations during a telephone call on Tuesday night, according to an announcement on the Foreign Ministry's Web site. The brief announcement said Mr. Li and Ms. Rice, who is visiting Europe with President Bush, had had a "thorough exchange of views" about North Korea, but it offered no details. A Chinese official who visited Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, said Wednesday that North Korea was willing to return to negotiations. The statement on the ministry Web site and Mr. Li's phone call to Ms. Rice appear to be the latest steps in China's efforts to ease tensions over North Korea's nuclear ambitions by emphasizing hopes of renewed talks and highlighting points of agreement, however tenuous, among the parties.

Hindustan Times, 24 February 2005

No foreigner to question scientist Khan: Kasuri

TOKYO, Feb. 23: Pakistan will not let any foreigner question Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of the country's nuclear bomb who has admitted leaking secrets to states including North Korea, Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri said on Wednesday. "We have refused direct interrogations by anyone. The reason is national sensitivity," Kasuri told a press conference at the

end of a three-day visit to Tokyo. Kasuri said Pakistan had acted against Khan even though the Pakistani opposition had accused the Government of "succumbing to international pressure" against the local hero. "Actions have been taken (against Khan) and they are very strict. We are prepared... to investigate and share information," Kasuri said. He noted that Khan, who is effectively under house arrest, had interacted with foreigners when he leaked information of the country's nuclear technology. "In fact, there were some foreigners involved. Pakistan has taken actions. Other foreigners, we hope actions will be taken against them by their governments," Kasuri said. Khan, who is credited with making Pakistan a nuclear power, confessed in February 2004 to leaking nuclear know-how to Iran, Libya and North Korea.

The Indian Express, 24 February 2005

Diplomacy on Iran just starting: Bush

MAINZ, Feb 23: US President George W. Bush said on Wednesday that European diplomatic efforts to rein in Iran's nuclear programme were only just beginning and that comparisons with Iraq were wrong. "Iran is not Iraq. We just started the diplomatic efforts and I want to thank our friends for taking the lead. We will work with them to convince the mullahs that they need to give up their nuclear ambitions," Bush told a news conference. Bush has repeatedly said the US launched its war on Iraq only after then leader Saddam Hussein had failed to comply with a series of UN resolutions over a number of years. Mindful of past divisions in the lead-up to the Iraq war, Bush said after talks with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder it was vital for Iran to hear the world speak with one voice. Bush repeated on Wednesday his verbal support to efforts by Britain, France and Germany to negotiate a deal under which Iran would abandon uranium enrichment that could be used to make a bomb in return for trade benefits and security guarantees. "You know yesterday I was asked about a US decision and I said all options are on the table. That's part of our position. But I also reminded people that diplomacy is just beginning." Bush said on Tuesday the idea that he was preparing to bomb Iran was "ridiculous" but also added that "all options are on the table", a clear reference to possible military action.

Reuters, 24 February 2005

US, Russia Plan Pact Aimed at Nuclear Terrorism

WASHINGTON: President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin plan to announce a joint security agreement to address the threat of nuclear terrorism amid concern over Russia's poorly protected nuclear facilities, The Washington Post reported on Thursday. Citing U.S. officials familiar with the agreement, the report said the pact would commit both countries to speeding up long-delayed security upgrades at Russian nuclear facilities and to work together on developing an emergency response to a nuclear or radiological terrorist attack. The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the pact also calls for the United States and Russia to develop a plan to replace highly enriched uranium at research reactors in other countries to prevent it from being processed into weapons grade fuel, the newspaper reported. According to the report, details of the pact were still being negotiated late on Wednesday, but Bush and Putin were expected to release a joint statement at their summit in Bratislava, Slovakia on Thursday.

Dawn, 24 February 2005

Patriot sale to India will fuel arms race: FO - Concern conveyed to US (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, Feb 23: Pakistan on Wednesday expressed concern over reports of Indian bid to purchase the Patriot anti-missile system from the US and warned the move would trigger an arms race in the region and threaten the ongoing peace process. Speaking at his weekly press briefing here, Foreign Office spokesman Masood Khan said any plans to sell Patriots to India would be counter-productive. "This would erode deterrence...this would send the entire region into a crisis mode." "You will have an arms race, an unintended arms race here which nobody wants and finally it would induce higher risk-taking. This we think is not in sync with goals of peace and security that we have in this region." Mr Khan said Islamabad had conveyed its concern to Washington over New Delhi's interest in the anti-ballistic missile system and added that Pakistan had been talking to the Americans about it at all levels and on all occasions.

The Korean Herald, 24 February 2005

S. Korea, U.S., Japan envoys to discuss N.K. nuke issues (Choi Sung-ah)

South Korean, U.S. and Japanese envoys will meet on Saturday in Seoul to try to coax North Korea back to talks on its nuclear weapons after leader Kim Jong-il signaled his isolationist country is ready to return to the negotiating table under certain conditions. South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon said the envoys will discuss the recent visit of top Chinese official Wang Jiarui to the North and how to arrange an early resumption of the six-party talks to curb North Korean nuclear ambitions. "They will also hold in-depth discussions on ways to tackle the current nuclear crisis," he told reporters. Participants in Saturday's meeting will be South Korea's Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State-designate Christopher Hill and Kenichiro Sasae, chief of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asia-Oceania bureau. The three men are the top negotiators from their countries to the six-party talks, which also involve North Korea, China and Russia. Pyongyang's official media reported on Tuesday that Kim Jong-il had told Wang his country would return to the talks if conditions were right and the United States showed sincerity.

The Japan Times, 24 February 2005

China can't use its leverage (John Park)

CAMBRIDGE: In the North Korean nuclear crisis, there is a major difference between having leverage and the ability to use it. China has the former, but not the latter. North Korea has both. On paper, China has the political, military and economic leverage to effect significant change in the North Korean regime's behavior and the regime itself. The international community saw glimpses of this leverage when Beijing temporarily shut off an oil pipeline to North Korea in early 2003. At present,

however, China is significantly constrained by three factors that North Korea is aware of and uses to its advantage: China's concern about a North Korean refugee crisis. North Korea is keenly aware of China's extreme sensitivity to the refugee issue. For Beijing, the prospect of growing numbers of North Koreans roaming around China's northeastern provinces is a major concern. As these refugees settle in China, the message to those remaining in impoverished North Korea would be one of exodus. Should that message spread throughout the country, a collapse of the Kim Jong Il regime could occur resulting in a massive influx of refugees into China.

The Nation, 24 February 2005

A welcome change

From earlier reports in the US press that Pakistan was willing to act as the USA's catspaw in trying to persuade Iran to close down its uranium enrichment programme even though it was designed to serve peaceful purposes, to Mr Aziz's categorical statement at Tehran that Islamabad has no intention of mediating in its stand-off with Washington, is a welcome change. Mr Aziz assured the media that he was not carrying any message to that effect either. There would hardly be anything more that Iran would like Pakistan to do on its behalf in this respect, than Mr Aziz has promised, should it wish to seek Pakistan's help. His view that our friendly neighbour was fully capable of handling the situation is appropriate. Iran has adopted an unambiguous position rejecting the US accusation that it is secretly working on nuclear weapons or has any intention of doing so, while refusing, under any circumstances, to surrender its right to enrich uranium for peaceful uses. That means Iran has no plan to violate the NPT to which it is a signatory.

Daily Yomiuri, 24 February 2005

Govt seeks to read Kim's mind on 6-way talks

In the wake of reports Tuesday that North Korean leader Kim Jong Il has been hinting at returning to the stalled six-nation talks, the government is keen to gauge Kim's real intentions, sources said Wednesday. In a meeting in Pyongyang with a visiting senior Chinese official, Kim reportedly said North Korea might rejoin the negotiations on its nuclear weapons program "if certain conditions are met," without elaborating further. Japan's basic position remains unchanged, according to the sources, and is based on continuing to work with the United States, South Korea and other concerned parties to persuade North Korea to return to the table unconditionally. The government is especially interested in whether Kim's remarks can be interpreted as indicating a change of mind from the Feb. 10 Pyongyang declaration to "boycott the six-way nuclear negotiations indefinitely." His latest remarks concerning the stalled talks among China, Japan, North and South Korea, Russia and the United States have encouraged those in the government and ruling coalition parties who favor imposing pressure on Pyongyang in preference to dialogue.

The News, 25 February 2005

US, Russia to boost nuke security cooperation

BRATISLAVA: The United States and Russia agreed on Thursday to enhance nuclear security cooperation and to try to complete negotiations on Russia's entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) this year. In a joint statement issued by US President George W Bush and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, the two leaders said that the goal of the agreement was to "counter the evolving terrorist threats". They vowed to work together on international measures to protect nuclear material and to share information on how to best improve security at nuclear facilities. "Building on our earlier work, we announce today our intention to expand and deepen cooperation on nuclear security with the goal of enhancing the security of nuclear facilities in our two countries and, together with our friends and allies, around the globe," they added. They said they would convene this year a senior-level nuclear security workshop to foster disciplined, well-trained and responsible custodians and security personnel and well-maintained security systems.

Daily Times, 25 February 2005

Iran, Korea, should not have N-arms, say Putin and Bush

BRATISLAVA: US President George W Bush said on Thursday that he and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed at a summit here that Iran and North Korea should not develop nuclear weapons. "We agreed that Iran should not have a nuclear weapon and I appreciate Vladimir's understanding on that issue. We had a very constructive dialogue about how to achieve that common goal," Bush said at a joint press conference after a summit in a castle overlooking the Danube River. "We agree that North Korea should not have a nuclear weapon," said the US president, who said Washington and Moscow were "working closely together" on the issue. Meanwhile, Putin gave little ground to his US counterpart's stated concerns about a series of decisions widely seen in the West as undermining Russian democracy. Putin said there could be "no return" to Soviet-style government but that Moscow would develop democracy at its own pace and in its own image. "We are not going to make up, to invent any kind of special Russian democracy. We're going to remain committed to the fundamental principles of democracy that have been established in the world," Putin said. "But, of course, all the modern institutions of democracy, the principles of democracy, should be adequate to the current status of the development of Russia, to our history and our traditions," he said through an interpreter. Putin said, "Any kind of turn to totalitarianism would be impossible due to the condition of Russian society."

Dawn, 25 February 2005

Bush & Putin oppose Iran going nuclear

BRATISLAVA, Feb 24: US President George Bush said on Thursday he had agreed with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin at a brief summit that Iran and North Korea should not have nuclear weapons. "We agreed that Iran should not have a nuclear weapon," Mr Bush said at a joint news conference with Mr Putin. The United States believes Iran is trying to acquire a

nuclear bomb under the cover of developing nuclear energy capability with Russian help. Mr Bush also said he frankly told Mr Putin about Western concerns over the course of Russian democracy, but that the United States and Russia had more in common than what they disagreed on. "It is in my country's interest that Russia be a strong and viable partner with the United States," Mr Bush said. Asked what response he got from Mr Putin about democracy, Mr Bush said: "All I can tell you is he said 'yes meant yes' when we talked about values that we share." Mr Putin responded by saying Russia made a decision to become a democratic state 14 years ago and would never return from that path. "Russia has made its choice in favour of democracy," he said. "This is our final choice and we have no way back. There can be no return to what we used to have before." Western and Russian civil rights campaigners accuse Mr Putin of restricting democracy by abolishing the election of provincial governors, pursuing a legal vendetta against the Yukos oil company and tightening the Kremlin's grip on the media.

International Herald Tribune, 25 February 2005

The real threat to Kim (Young Howard)

SEOUL North Korea's announcement that it possesses nuclear weapons is actually a sign of the regime's internal weakness and Kim Jong Il's need to maintain the military's support in the face of eroding loyalty. New information coming from inside North Korea shows how nuclear weapons may relate to the regime's internal politics. The iron curtain on North Korea has been lifted little by little in recent years by hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled across the border to China. With their increasing use of Chinese cell phones, they are providing near-instantaneous news to the outside. Based on the accounts of these refugees and other defectors, significant changes in North Korea are visible that may weaken Kim's horrific regime. Most important is the freer flow of people. Before the food shortages of the mid-1990s, people could not move from city to city without travel permits, which were issued only for events such as marriages or funerals. Now, due to the collapse of the food distribution system and rampant corruption, people can easily bribe police officers to procure travel permits. Last winter, \$2 was enough for passage from one province to another, and \$5 got you to Pyongyang and the Chinese border district. For \$30, you could cross the Tumen and Yalu rivers into China, and for \$70, you could get an official passport.

Daily Times, 25 February 2005

'N Korea has no working facility for enrichment'

SEOUL: North Korea has some components of an atomic program but is unlikely to be able to produce nuclear weapons, South Korea's intelligence agency said Thursday in a report to parliament. The National Intelligence Service (NIS) said Pyongyang probably purchased materials in 2000 to produce the prototypes for centrifuges needed for an enriched uranium program that would be the first step towards building a nuclear arsenal. But tight international surveillance had prevented the Stalinist state from obtaining other key equipment, the report said. "We believe North Korea has not reached the stage of building a HEU (highly enriched uranium) plant because of enhanced efforts by the international community to stop it from securing key equipment," Yonhap news agency quoted the NIS report as saying. Two weeks ago, Pyongyang said it had made atomic weapons as it pulled out of six-party nuclear talks. Pyongyang has made similar assertions in the past, and analysts say its latest boasts conform with Washington's assessment that North Korea has developed one or two crude bombs.

Khaleej Times, 24 February 2005

Iran rejects US role in N-dialogue

TEHERAN: Iran said yesterday it opposed a US role in nuclear talks alongside the European Union, just two days after a government-linked think-tank floated the idea of talking to an administration that still refuses to rule out military action. "The Islamic republic sees no reason for US participation in the discussions between Iran and Europe," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told the official Irna news agency. "If the Americans joined the talks, the best that could happen is that they would bring nothing to the negotiations and in the worst case scenario they would sabotage everything." "We hope that the Europeans will continue to act independently," he said, charging that it was Washington's aim to convince them that they could not hope to deal alone with Iran on an issue as sensitive as nuclear technology. On Tuesday, the deputy director of a foreign ministry-affiliated think-tank had suggested that, despite the absence of diplomatic relations, Teheran was ready to talk with Washington in a bid to disprove US-led accusations that its nuclear programme was a cover for efforts to develop the bomb.

Khaleej Times, 25 February 2005

Diplomacy and Iran's nukes (Henry A. Kissinger)

If the first term of President George W. Bush was dominated by the war against terrorism, the second will be preoccupied with the effort to stem the spread of nuclear weapons. This challenge is more ambiguous and complex than the first. Do we oppose proliferation of nuclear weapons because of the rogue quality of the two regimes furthest advanced on the road towards acquiring nuclear weapons - Iran and North Korea? Or is our opposition generic - does it extend even to fully democratic countries? How far are we prepared to go in resisting proliferation? And is it possible for one country alone, no matter how powerful, to become the sole custodian of the task of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons? And, if not alone, with what combination of powers should the United States act? Iran brings home the complexity of these issues with particular urgency. North Korea is an isolated country that makes no significant contribution to the economy of any other; it is, if anything, a drain on any associate seeking to sustain its fragile and oppressive economy. North Korea's neighbours - with the possible exception of South Korea - agree that a nuclear North Korea presents a major, and perhaps unacceptable, security risk. By contrast, Iran is a large oil producer, with a growing, diverse and capable population and a serious industrial potential. By 2050, its population is projected to exceed that of Russia.

People's Daily Times, 25 February 2005

S.Korean president reiterates pledge to address nuclear issue

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun reaffirmed Friday his commitment to resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula during his tenure. Roh made the commitment in his address at the South Korean National Assembly commemorating the second anniversary of his inauguration and offering his policy agenda for the remaining three years of his single five-year term. "Although there is an unforeseen situation happening, the basic structure of the nuclear issue has not changed much," Roh said in the televised speech. "I will deal with the nuclear issue composedly according to our persistent principles without being swayed by one incident after another. And I will try to make (our policies) have some plasticity but not depart from our principles," added Roh. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) announced on Feb. 10 it was suspending participation in the six-party talks aimed at peacefully resolving the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. For the first time, the DPRK also claimed it has nuclear arms for self-defense. Since then, the South Korean government has started a new round diplomatic efforts to persuade the DPRK back to the negotiating table. It reiterated its stance that the nuclear issue should be resolved through negotiations peacefully and the Korean Peninsula should be nuclear-free, and urged the DPRK to return the six-party nuclear talks as soon as possible.

The News, 26 February 2005

Iran makes EU new offer in N-talks

TEHRAN: Tehran has made a new offer in talks with the European Union over its controversial nuclear activities that would allow Iran to continue its civilian atomic energy programme, a top official said on Friday. Chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani put forward the offer, which was "widely welcomed", during talks in Paris and Berlin, a fellow member of his team, Hossein Moussavian, told state television. "The idea is to seek technical assistance from the IAEA, which is responsible for guaranteeing that countries do not deviate towards building an atomic bomb," Moussavian said. "If the three countries agree, I have high hopes that our work will get somewhere more quickly," added Moussavian. Rowhani had given French and German officials "very concrete guarantees that Iran will not seek in any way to produce nuclear armaments", he added. "On this point, Iran is ready to be fully flexible on all points of cooperation to create trust," said Moussavian.

Dawn, 26 February 2005

North Korea ready for nuclear talks: China

ASTANA, Feb 25: North Korea is committed to a nuclear-free status of the Korean peninsula and is prepared to resume its participation in six-party negotiations on this issue, Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said here on Friday. "I believe the conditions are there for continuing the negotiations," Li said following talks in the capital of Kazakhstan with his counterparts of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a regional forum which also comprises Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Chinese President Hu Jintao had recently transmitted a message to the North Korean leadership stressing the need for nuclear-free status, security and peace on the Korean peninsula and calling on Pyongyang to return to the six-party talks as soon as possible, Li said. "In its response," North Korea "said it fully accepts that the Korean peninsula must be free of nuclear weapons and is ready to take part in the six-party talks," he added.

People's Daily, 26 February 2005

S.Korea, Japan, US meet on nuclear talks

Chief negotiators of South Korea, the United States and Japan to the six-party talks aimed to resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula kicked off a one-day meeting Saturday for discussion to find a breakthrough in the stalled diplomatic process. "The three countries will analyze the outcome of Pyongyang visit by the Chinese senior official Wang Jiarui and discuss how to persuade North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) to return to the six-way talks as early as possible," South Korean Yonhap News Agency quoted a source at the South Korean Foreign Ministry as saying. The three countries have usually met for such a strategy session to coordinate their standings during the diplomatic process aimed to find solution for the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. The trilateral talks were held by South Korea's Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon, US Ambassador to South Korea Christopher Hill and Kenichiro Sasae, chief of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asia-Oceania bureau.

Daily Times, 26 February 2005

Iran will welcome US help in nuclear talks

BERLIN: Talks between Iran and Europe on Iran's nuclear programme should yield positive results in March and US help in those negotiations would be welcome, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rohani said on Friday. "We are confident that with effective measures from all four sides, we can see a positive result in March," Rohani said, referring to the talks with Britain, France and Germany. "Our negotiating partners are the three European countries. We would welcome it, see it as positive, if the Americans offered help here," he added, following talks with German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. The remarks come after US President George W. Bush welcomed, during his three-nation European tour this week, diplomatic efforts by Europe to curb Iran's nuclear programme, but refused requests to join the talks. Britain, France and Germany are leading European diplomatic efforts to persuade Iran to scrap uranium enrichment, a process which can be used to make fuel for nuclear power plants or bomb-grade material. Rohani said both sides in the talks were convinced that more dynamism was needed. "The results of these talks don't just affect the Iranian nuclear programme, but also the strengthening of relations between Iran and Europe and the removal of many problems in the region," he said, according to comments translated into German.

Dawn, 26 February 2005

Bush ready to consider EU idea of incentives : Tehran's N-programme

BRATISLAVA, Feb 25: US President George Bush said on Thursday he and European leaders were "on the same page" when it came to keeping Iran from developing nuclear weapons and he would consider their suggestions for economic incentives. This could mark a change of course for his administration, which accuses Tehran of aiming to build such weapons and which, instead of incentives for Iran, has been pushing to bring the dispute to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions. "The most effective way to achieve that goal is to have our partners - Great Britain and France and Germany - represent not only the EU, not only NATO, but the United States," he said after talks with Slovak leaders in Bratislava, rebuffing suggestions Washington join directly in the nuclear talks. Wrapping up a fence-mending trip to Europe and eager to stress transatlantic cooperation after bitter differences over the Iraq invasion, Mr Bush said that for the first time he would consider European proposals to offer incentives to Iran in return for scrapping some atomic work.

The Associated Press, 27 February 2005

Russia to Deliver Nuclear Fuel to Iran

BUSHEHR: Iran and Russia ignored U.S. objections and signed a nuclear fuel agreement Sunday that is key to bringing Tehran's first reactor online by mid-2006. The long-delayed deal, signed at the heavily guarded Bushehr nuclear facility in southern Iran, came on the eve of a meeting of the board of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency to discuss concerns about Iran's nuclear program. The U.N. nuclear watchdog meeting takes place amid revelations that members of a black market network had handed Iran all the basic knowledge the Middle Eastern country needed to set up technology that can be used to make atomic weapons by the late 1980s. Signed by Iranian Vice President Gholamreza Aghazadeh and Russian Federal Atomic Energy Agency chief Alexander Rumyantsev, the fuel agreement dramatized President Bush's failure to persuade the Russians to curtail support for the Iranian nuclear program during his summit with Vladimir Putin on Thursday in Slovakia. Russia will provide nuclear fuel to Iran, then take back the spent fuel, a step meant as a safeguard to ensure it cannot be diverted into a weapons program. Iran has also agreed to allow the IAEA to monitor Bushehr and the fuel deliveries.

Dawn, 27 February 2005

Iran-Russia N-deal hits snags

TEHRAN, Feb 26: Russia and Iran on Saturday again delayed the signing of a controversial contract to supply the Islamic republic with fuel for its first nuclear power station, amid a new dispute over the plant's opening date. Iranian officials said more talks were needed after they rejected a proposal from Moscow to delay the opening of the plant in the Gulf port of Bushehr until June next year. "The Russians are proposing bringing the Bushehr power station on line in June 2006. We rejected this proposal," Iranian Atomic Energy Organization vice-president Mohammad Saidi told state television. "Discussions will need to continue in Bushehr tomorrow for us to reach agreement." Russia's top atomic energy official Alexander Rumyantsev and his Iranian counterpart Gholamreza Aghazadeh had been poised to sign the agreement earlier on Saturday, but reporters were told that instead negotiations were still "dragging on". "We do not know when they will conclude," said a spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organisation, Yaghoub Jabarian. He added that a rescheduled press conference would "maybe" take place on Sunday.

The News, 27 February 2005

Hillary for system to allow India, Pakistan help stop N-proliferation

NEW DELHI: The United States and India must work together to keep nuclear materials away from terrorists and rogue states despite New Delhi's refusal to sign an international treaty, aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, US Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton said on Saturday. India says that it won't sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) because New Delhi believes it would distort the global power balance by allowing just a few countries to possess nuclear weapons. It also fears a possible attack by Pakistan. Hillary said Washington must find ways to reconcile its commitment to nuclear non-proliferation with India's stance on the issue, but added that New Delhi must take on more responsibilities as it aims for a greater say in global affairs. "In the post-9/11 world we have a shared interest in working together to prevent the transfer of nuclear material and know-how to states with terrorists and irresponsible states," Hillary said at a meeting of business and political leaders here. She said a system must be created that allows countries like India and Pakistan to help stop nuclear proliferation while remaining nuclear powers.

The News, 27 February 2005

US, S Korea, Japan reject N Korea's conditions

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Il was snubbed on Saturday when the United States, Japan and South Korea told the communist state they would discuss its concerns only if it returns to the negotiating table. Kim told a visiting Chinese envoy on Monday that his government would rejoin six-nation nuclear disarmament talks if certain conditions are met and the United States shows sincerity and take concrete actions. Top negotiators from the United States and its two Asian allies met in Seoul on Saturday to discuss Kim's comments and North Korea's Feb. 10 announcement that it has nuclear weapons and was boycotting any further talks aimed at ending its nuclear ambitions. "We agreed that it is important for North Korea to return to six-nation talks without any conditions in order to realize a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula," said Kenichiro Sasae, director-general of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asia-Oceania bureau. Saturday's meeting, the first of its kind since the North's Feb. 10 announcement, was also attended by South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon; and Christopher Hill, the US ambassador to Seoul who has been named Washington's top negotiator in the North Korean nuclear dispute.

The Associated Press, 27 February 2005

Diplomats: Iran Got Nuke Know - How in '80s

VIENNA: By the late 1980s, members of a black market network had handed Iran all the basic knowledge the Middle Eastern

country needed to set up technology that can be used to make atomic weapons, diplomats familiar with an investigation of Iran's nuclear ambitions said Sunday. The officials, who are familiar with the work of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, spoke to The Associated Press on the eve of a board meeting of the U.N. nuclear watchdog that will discuss Iran and other potential world nuclear concerns. An agency probe over the past two years had earlier established that Iran ran a clandestine nuclear program for nearly two decades, including working on uranium enrichment -- which can be used to make weapons. Diplomats, who requested anonymity, said Saturday that the new revelations were significant because they indicated Iran had full possession of enrichment know-how from the black market network run by Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's atomic bomb, earlier than previously believed.

Reuters, 27 February 2005

N.Korea Will Rejoin 6 - Way Talks in June - Paper

TOKYO: North Korea has told officials in South Korea it is willing to take part in six-party talks on its nuclear arms program in June, a Japanese newspaper reported. Pyongyang also said in its message, which was conveyed to South Korea by unofficial routes and then to Japan by Seoul, that it was willing to sign a treaty with the United States by October, the conservative Sankei Shimbun said on Monday. North Korea declared on Feb. 10 that it had nuclear weapons and that it was pulling out of the talks, which include Japan, Russia, China and the United States as well as the two Koreas. The report cited a government source, but a Japanese Foreign Ministry official told Reuters he was unaware of the report. South Korean, Japanese and U.S. negotiators met in Seoul on Saturday and urged the North to return to talks without delay. They said they were ready to discuss all issues of concern to Pyongyang but stopped short of offering concessions.

Reuters, 27 February 2005

Report: Khan Network Offered Iran Nuclear Kit

WASHINGTON: Investigators have found evidence of a meeting 18 years ago between Iranian officials and associates of the scientist dubbed the father of Pakistan's nuclear program that resulted in a written offer to supply Tehran with the makings of a nuclear weapons program, The Washington Post reported in its Sunday edition. Citing unnamed foreign diplomats and U.S. officials, The Post said the secret 1987 meeting in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, between Iranian officials and Abdul Qadeer Khan's associates started both Iran's nuclear efforts and Khan's black market. Iran, according to the newspaper, bought centrifuge designs and a starter kit for uranium enrichment. While Iran recently told the International Atomic Energy Agency it turned down the chance to buy the more sensitive equipment required for building the core of a bomb, there is evidence the country used Khan's offer as a guide to acquire some of the pricier items elsewhere, the newspaper said.

Asahi Shimbun, 28 February 2005

Clinton: N. Korea able to make 2 nukes a year (Taro Karasaki)

North Korea may be capable of building one or two nuclear warheads a year, says former U.S. President Bill Clinton. Even so, he said frank negotiations with Washington within six-party talks and fool-proof inspections are key to prodding Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear program. Clinton said over the weekend that the North's clandestine uranium-enrichment program, begun in 1998, could provide "enough fuel, at most, to make two weapons a year-probably, more likely one." Clinton was in Japan to promote the Japanese edition of his memoirs "My Life" at a forum sponsored by The Asahi Shimbun. He responded to questions from Asahi Shimbun columnist Yoichi Funabashi before an audience of about 1,000 people at a Tokyo hotel. The former president blasted the North's nuclear program saying it "violated the spirit" of the 1994 Agreed Framework with the United States to stop Pyongyang from producing plutonium for weapons. Clinton expressed support for the six-nation process to bring North Korea to task over its nuclear ambitions, but acknowledged Washington may have to do more to win Pyongyang's trust.

The Asahi Shimbun, 28 February 2005

China now in sync with U.S. on N. Korea (Nobuyoshi Sakajiri)

WASHINGTON: China, initially skeptical, now agrees with U.S. assessments that North Korea has a uranium enrichment program to develop nuclear weapons, according to well-placed sources. Chinese delegates to the third round of six-nation talks in June first hinted at the change in attitude. Until then, Beijing had accepted Pyongyang's denials and had questioned U.S. view on the matter. Just prior to the third round of six-nation talks in Beijing last June, Zhou Wenzhong, China's vice foreign minister, was quoted by a U.S. newspaper as saying that China was unaware of North Korea having a uranium enrichment program and that Washington failed to offer any evidence to support its allegation. In June, Chinese delegates unofficially told their U.S. counterparts during a working dinner at the third six-nation talks, and in August at a seminar in New York, that Beijing knew of Pyongyang's uranium enrichment program but did not consider it a matter of concern. Later, Chinese officials informed Washington through official channels that Beijing shared Washington's view of North Korea's uranium enrichment program.

Reuters, 28 February 2005

Iran, Russia Sign Nuclear Fuel Deal Opposed by U.S.

TEHRAN: Russia and Iran signed a nuclear fuel supply deal long opposed by Washington Sunday, paving the way for Iran to start up its first atomic reactor next year. The agreement, inked by the two countries' nuclear energy chiefs at the Bushehr atomic plant in southern Iran, came as Tehran faced heightened pressure from the United States, which accuses it of secretly developing nuclear weapons. Iran, OPEC's second largest oil producer, denies the charge and has received strong backing from Moscow, which is keen to play a major role in expanding Iran's nuclear energy program. "This is a very important incident in the ties between the two countries and in the near future a number of Russian experts will be sent to Bushehr to

equip the power station," Iranian state television quoted Alexander Rumyantsev, head of Russia's Federal Atomic Energy Agency, as saying. A key part of the agreement obliges Tehran to repatriate all spent nuclear fuel to Russia. Moscow hopes this will allay U.S. worries that Iran may use the spent fuel, which could be reprocessed into bomb-grade plutonium, to develop arms.

Daily Times, 28 February 2005

Pakistan rejects US press report Khan offered Iran nuclear material in 1987

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Sunday dismissed a report in the Washington Post that international investigators have produced evidence about a secret meeting between Iranian officials and associates of Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan, founder of the country's nuclear programme. "The report is unfounded and no evidence has been produced to Pakistan about any meeting," the Foreign Office spokesman said in a statement, state-run television reported. He said there is no new evidence in the report. The spokesman said that Pakistan's investigations into the alleged transfer of nuclear technology were satisfactory and that the world community accepted this. According to the Post report, the secret meeting in Dubai in 1987 resulted in a written offer to supply Tehran with the makings of a nuclear weapons programme. The meeting resulted in a five-point phased plan to furnish Iran with nuclear materials including 2,000 centrifuges and equipment for building the core of a bomb, according to the newspaper. While Iran recently told the International Atomic Energy Agency it turned down the chance to buy the more sensitive equipment required for building the core of a bomb, there is evidence the country used Khan's offer as a guide to acquire some of the pricier items elsewhere, the newspaper said.

The New York Times, 28 February 2005

Pressed, Iran Admits It Discussed Acquiring Nuclear Technology (Elaine Sciolino and David E. Sanger)

As the International Atomic Energy Agency prepares to open a meeting today to review Tehran's nuclear program, Iranian officials have reluctantly turned over new evidence strongly suggesting that Iran discussed acquiring technologies central to making nuclear arms and hid that fact for 18 years, according to American and European officials. The officials said the evidence, a document dated 1987, was handed over after I.A.E.A. investigators confronted Iranian officials with evidence gathered in interviews with members of the network run by Pakistan's top nuclear expert, A. Q. Khan. The document, according to officials who have seen it, includes an offer by Mr. Khan's representatives to provide a package of technologies - for a price that ran from tens of millions to hundreds of millions of dollars, according to a European diplomat - including the difficult-to-master process of casting uranium metal. That is a critical step toward making the core of a nuclear warhead, though investigators note that Iran could come up with other explanations for why it wanted to fabricate uranium in a metal form.

International Herald Tribune, 28 February 2005

U.S. backs bid to build 4 reactors in China (Matthew L. Wald)

WASHINGTON: Westinghouse Electric will present a bid to China for building four huge nuclear reactors, backed by a pledge of nearly \$5 billion in financial assistance from the U.S. government that Washington hopes will give the company an edge over competitors from France, Germany and other countries. Approved on a preliminary basis by the Export-Import Bank on Feb. 18, the deal is almost three times larger than anything the bank has offered before. And while it would stimulate employment in the United States, the price would amount to about \$1 million per job, raising objections from some critics. The package also appears to benefit the British government, which owns Westinghouse through BNFL, the company formerly known as British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. The bid was scheduled to be presented Monday. "If the risk were not falling on the Ex-Im bank, it would be falling on the British government," said Peter Bradford, a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission from 1977 to 1982. Bradford said he opposed what he called a subsidy to a foreign company and what he said was support by the commission for Westinghouse's sales efforts.

The Guardian, 28 February 2005

It's time for us to give up the nukes (Roy Hattersley)

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament enjoys a special place in modern history. No other recent protest movement has been proved so conclusively - diametrically, demonstrably - wrong. Not so long ago, its members made regular predictions that Armageddon would soon follow the Soviet early-warning system mistaking a flock of geese for a cruise missile, or a crazy American general pressing the doomsday button just to see if it worked. Their righteousness was beyond dispute but their judgment was hopeless. The deterrent deterred. It kept Europe at peace - or at least free from a major war - for half a century. What the marchers on the road to Aldermaston called "the balance of terror" held the power blocs apart. It meant that the west could not go to the assistance of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, but it also ensured that west Berlin and Austria remained free from Soviet imperialism.

Dawn, 28 February 2005

'N-powers should adhere to NPT'

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 27: Pakistan's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Maleeha Lodhi has asked the United Nations to urge the five recognized nuclear states to adhere to their disarmament obligations under provisions of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty. Ms Lodhi, who was in New York over the weekend to attend meetings of the UN's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, called for eventual recognition of three 'de facto nuclear states' - Pakistan, Israel and India - saying that the cooperation of all these states was essential to achieve the objectives of non-proliferation. In a meeting with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, she reportedly expressed the opinion that action was also required to avoid the "nightmare scenario" of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists.

The Asahi Shimbun, 28 February 2005

Beijing urged to prod N. Korea back to talks (Hayami Ichikawa)

SEOUL: Senior diplomats from Japan, the United States and South Korea who met here over the weekend affirmed their resolve to urge Pyongyang to resume six-party talks unconditionally, and expressed hope that Beijing will use a firmer hand to persuade the North, sources said. The diplomats said that since China is chairing the six-party talks aimed at getting Pyongyang to scrap its nuclear program, it would be helpful if Beijing were more forceful in pressing the North to return to the table, sources said. The Saturday meeting between the three parties was the first since North Korea snubbed the talks "indefinitely" on Feb. 10. It has since indicated its willingness to resume talks, but no date has been set. Kenichiro Sasae, director-general of the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, met Sunday in Beijing with Wu Dawei, China's foreign affairs vice minister, and asked for additional diplomatic efforts. The three parties also are of one mind regarding North Korean leader Kim Jong Il's earlier statement to senior Chinese official Wang Jiarui that the North would return to the talks only if certain conditions were met. They firmly agreed not to allow attendance to the six-party talks itself to become a diplomatic card, Japanese sources said.

The News, 28 February 2005

Iran on top of IAEA moot agenda

VIENNA: The UN atomic agency begins a meeting on Monday with just about everybody from Washington to Tehran wanting to reach a decision about whether Iran is secretly developing nuclear weapons but no one expecting it to come this week. The United States, which is convinced Iran has a covert program to build the bomb, would like to see the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency bring the Islamic Republic before the UN Security Council for possible sanctions but has little backing for this on the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors which is meeting in Vienna. Iran would like to see the IAEA drop its two-year-old inquest into Tehran's nuclear program and certify that Iran's atomic intentions are strictly peaceful but the IAEA will continue to investigate, diplomats said. Britain, France and Germany, which are holding talks on behalf of the European Union with Iran, want more time to work out a deal for Tehran to abandon uranium enrichment, the key part of the nuclear fuel cycle, in return for trade and regional security benefits. All this leaves room for political maneuvering, with the crunch time possibly coming at the next IAEA board meeting in June.

Dawn, 28 February 2005

Enrichment not for bargain, says Iran

TEHRAN, Feb 27: Iran's capacity to enrich uranium is "not negotiable", a top national security official said on Sunday in a fresh rejection of European efforts to persuade Tehran to give up its sensitive nuclear technology. "There is a belief among the European negotiators that if they give Iran political, security and economic incentives, Iran will give up enrichment," nuclear negotiator and top cleric Hassan Rowhani told state media. "So during this trip we made it quite clear that enrichment is not negotiable," added Rowhani, who was speaking upon his return to Tehran from a visit to Paris and Berlin. Britain, France and Germany have been trying to persuade Tehran to permanently abandon its capacity to produce enriched uranium - which can be directed to both civil and military uses - in return for a package of incentives. The diplomatic effort is aimed at securing "objective guarantees" that Iran will not produce nuclear weapons. Following talks in Paris last year, Iran pledged to suspend its fuel cycle work while the negotiations are in progress, but has also consistently warned that the freeze on enrichment is only temporary.

Dawn, 28 February 2005

N. Korea seeks hefty price to undo nukes (Jon Herskovitz)

SEOUL: All North Korea probably wants in return for giving up its nuclear weapons is a little respect, some peace of mind and a whole lot of money. Analysts said Pyongyang had raised the stakes in the diplomatic push to coax it back to the bargaining table when it announced for the first time on Feb 10 it had nuclear weapons. The North has played brinkmanship before. In 1994 it found it could receive aid worth possibly billions of dollars in return for backing down from its nuclear ambitions. North Korea is a poor and isolated country that has trouble feeding its people and keeping the lights on at night. Despite its dire needs, leader Kim Jong-il has spent heavily to develop nuclear weapons and he expects a hefty return on the investment. "Their number one priority is survival, regime survival and Kim Jong-il's survival," said Ralph Cossa, president of the Pacific Forum CSIS, a prominent think tank on Asian affairs. Analysts say one of Pyongyang's long-term goals is to establish diplomatic ties with the United States, a breakthrough which it hopes would open the door for international investment and aid from bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Dawn, 28 February 2005

Truth about Israeli nukes (Jamaluddin Naqvi)

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw was recently in Pakistan where he expressed satisfaction at the defusing of tension between Pakistan and India and at the progress of the composite dialogue. But his remark about Israel was quite surprising. He said that it would be the last country in the world that would dismantle its nuclear capability, the reason being that Israel is threatened by the Arab states. Here it must be noted that Straw is the first leader of the Coalition of the Willing who has acknowledged that Israel has a nuclear arsenal. Jack Straw remembers Arab threats to Israel but has clearly forgotten that Israel has been invading Arab lands again and again. He does not even remember that once Israel invaded Egypt (Suez) in collusion with France and Britain. The birth of the Israeli state is an interesting and instructive story. The Jewish diaspora carved out a trading niche for itself in feudal Europe. At that time, the European nobility looked down on trade.

Khaleej Times, 28 February 2005

UN atomic agency to meet with Iran on top of the agenda

VIENNA: The UN atomic agency begins a meeting Monday that will focus on Iran and comes as Tehran has signed an agreement with Russia that paves the way for the firing up of the country's first atomic power station. The landmark agreement is sure to add to tension at the meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) 35-nation board of governors as the United States charges that Tehran is using its civilian program to hide development of nuclear weapons. Under the deal, which would cap an 800-million-dollar contract to build and bring the Bushehr nuclear power plant on line, Russia will fuel the reactor on condition that Iran sends back spent fuel, which could potentially be upgraded to weapons use. The condition that spent fuel be returned was built into the deal as a concession to Western concerns. Russia's top atomic energy official Alexander Rumyantsev said the plant would go online at the end of 2006.

The New York Times, 28 February 2005

U.S. Reviewing European Proposal for Iran (Steven R. Weisman)

WASHINGTON, Feb. 27: The Bush administration is considering a proposal by Britain, France and Germany to offer Iran trade benefits, commercial aircraft and aircraft spare parts in return for dismantling what is suspected of being a nuclear weapons program, European and American officials said Sunday. The officials provided details of the proposal on a day when Russia agreed to supply Iran with fuel for a civilian nuclear power plant in exchange for its promise to return the spent fuel. Russia maintained the step would help keep Iran from making nuclear weapons. The United States has led a worldwide campaign to persuade both Russia and its European allies to ensure that Iran does not proceed with what it charges are plans to turn its civilian nuclear energy program into a cover for making nuclear bombs. Iran denies that it has a weapons program, but the International Atomic Energy Agency has found that it has failed to disclose elements of what it maintains is a civilian program. Under an agreement signed in Tehran, Iran and Russia agreed that Russia would supply fuel for Iran's first nuclear power plant, at Bushehr in southern Iran, which is to become operational later this year or early next year. The accord would provide fuel for 10 years, after which Iran plans to make its own fuel.