

The Telegraph, 1 January 2005

Delhi uneasy over US visit (Pranay Sharma)

New Delhi, Dec.31. The official word is not out yet but the Indian establishment seems a little uneasy about the likely visit of a high-level team from Washington to the country and its neighbourhood to assess the tsunami aftermath and the relief needed. The team - led by secretary of state Colin Powell and including Florida governor Jeb Bush, brother of President George W. Bush - is scheduled to leave on January 2 for a tour of the worst affected countries. It is not yet clear whether the team will also visit India and Sri Lanka but if it does, it will take some of the shine off India's relief operations not only within the country but also in South Asia, where it has been playing the lead role so far.

The Telegraph, 3 January 2005

India keeps eye on US textile petition (K.P.Nayar)

Washington, Jan.2. For the first time since Independence, India is at odds with developing countries, thanks to globalisation, economic reforms and the country's rise towards becoming an economic power. Textile producers from 51 developing countries have joined their American counterparts in a petition filed by the US textiles industry to limit the imports of textiles and apparel into America after a global textile quota regime ended on Friday. The petition, filed before the Bush administration, seeks to limit the import of textiles and apparel from China in nine categories. Although the restrictions are sought to be imposed on China, the petition is of tremendous interest to India: 26 per cent of India's exports to the US is made up of textiles and the figure is expected to rise this year following an end to textile quotas. China will be India's major competition for the US and other markets.

Times of India, 4 January 2005

Bush's praises India's 'strong leadership' on tsunami tragedy (Chidanand Rajghatta)

Washington, Jan.3. Appreciating India's "strong leadership" in the tsunami rescue and rehabilitation efforts, US President George Bush said on Monday that he has requested former presidents George Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton to lead the effort to raise funds for the disaster victims. In an unprecedented gesture, Bush, accompanied by the two former presidents, visited the embassies of tsunami-affected countries, including the Indian Chancery, to express sympathy for the victims. "I want to thank the Indian government for taking the lead in the matter...the Indian government has been especially strong (in its response to the tsunami)," President Bush said in brief remarks to reporters after he signed the condolence book in the embassy.

Indian Express, 5 January 2005

US not stingy: Mulford talks of cooperation

New Delhi, Jan.4. India's inclusion in the core group on tsunami relief reflects the significance Washington attaches to it, US Ambassador to India David Mulford said today and noted this has provided an occasion for the Navies of both countries to operationalise the programmes they had rehearsed together. Mulford said he had spoken to late J.N. Dixit a day after the tsunami struck and suggested naval cooperation for relief. "Within five minutes your Naval officers had got in touch with our Naval guys here. Both sides indicated the naval resources available and it was felt that what we had enough to cope with the task," said Mulford.

The Hindu, 5 January 2005

"Tsunami core group to be disbanded" (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi, Jan.4. The tsunami "core group" comprising the United States, India, Japan and Australia will be "dispersing very soon," the U.S. Ambassador to India, David Mulford, told presspersons today. Describing this "core group" as a temporary working arrangement, Mr. Mulford clarified that this was not a "permanent diplomatic group". It may disassemble as its utility decreases, he stressed. It was put together since the member nations had significant resources in the region and could perform effectively and rapidly in the wake of the tsunami tragedy. India's presence in the group showed how important it was for the U. S. This was a concrete example of what India and the U.S. could do together and described it as a "barometer" of Indo-U.S. relations.

Hindustan Times, 5 January 2005

Bush hopes to visit India this year (S.Rajagopalan)

Washington, Jan.4. President George W Bush has said that he hopes to visit India sometime this year, disclosing that he has assured Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of his "intentions" on this score. In reply to a reporter's query on the subject at the Indian Embassy in Washington on Monday, Bush said: "I appreciate that very much. I was just telling the Ambassador (Ronen Sen), when I spoke to the Prime Minister I assured him that my intentions were to make it this year to India." He, however, did not elaborate. White House spokesman Scott McLellan said later that there was no update to announce on the president's schedule at this point.

The Telegraph, 6 January 2005

Delhi takes pains to deny tension with US (Pranay Sharma)

New Delhi, Jan. 5: India today clarified that refusing outside help for the tsunami-hit did not stem from a "dogmatic position" and scotched rumours that it was unhappy with the US presence in the neighbourhood. "We do not have a dogmatic position in denying assistance from outside," foreign secretary Shyam Saran said this afternoon at a crowded news conference. India, Saran pointed out, has the resources and the capability to handle the situation and thus told countries offering financial and technical help to give it to nations which are more in need. "At any point of time, if we feel we can benefit from the help being offered by friendly countries, we will certainly review our stand," he added.

Hindustan Times, 6 January 2005

US considering participation in Indian moon mission

Ahmedabad, Jan.5. The US is mulling participation in India's moon mission and collaborating in the telemedicine sector. "India is working on a mission to moon. We are looking at collaborations with India in this," Dr Lee Morin, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Science at the US Department of State, Bureau of Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs and a NASA astronaut, told reporters in Ahmedabad at the 92nd session of the Indian Science Congress. "US is also looking at collaboration in the area of telemedicine," he said.

China Daily, 6 January 2005

U.S. wants North Korea reply on nuke talks by February

The United States is setting a deadline of early February for a reply from North Korea on whether the state will return to six-party talks on its nuclear arms program, a Japanese newspaper said on Thursday. If Pyongyang does not reply positively by the time US President Bush gives his State of the Union address, the United States will prepare to bring the matter to the U.N. Security Council, the conservative Sankei Shimbun said, quoting an unidentified diplomatic source familiar with the talks. The president usually gives his speech to Congress in late January but this year it looks likely to be around Feb. 2 after his inauguration ceremony on Jan. 20, the newspaper added.

The News, 6 January 2005

North Korea issues wartime guidelines

SEOUL: North Korea has ordered its people to be ready for a protracted war against the United States, issuing guidelines on evacuating to underground bunkers with weapons, food and portraits of leader Kim Jong Il. The 33-page "Detailed Wartime Guidelines," published in South Korea's Kyunghyang newspaper on Wednesday and verified by Seoul, was issued April 7, 2004, at a time when the communist regime was claiming that it was Washington's next target following the Iraq war. The manual, the first such North Korean document made public in the outside world, was signed by Kim Jong Il in his capacity as chairman of the Central Military Committee of the ruling Workers' Party. That ended speculation over whether Kim has assumed the top military post following the 1994 death of his father, President Kim Il Sung.

Daily Times, 6 January 2005

EI Baradei warns US against spying on IAEA

VIENNA: IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei on Wednesday warned the United States against spying on the UN atomic agency saying it would be a blow to "multilateralism and the United Nations system as we know it." Bush administration has listened in on phone calls between ElBaradei and Iranian diplomats, seeking ammunition to oust him as head of IAEA, The Washington Post had reported in December. The US wants ElBaradei replaced at the crucial Vienna-based agency believing he is not being tough enough on Iran accused by Washington of hiding a covert nuclear weapons program, diplomats said. ElBaradei said he had only read the press reports and knew no more about the reported eavesdropping but "if it were true of course it would bother me a lot."

Daily Times, 6 January 2005

US to look into reports that Egypt got nuclear tech from AQ Khan

WASHINGTON: The United States has said it will discuss with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) press reports that Cairo has a secret uranium research programme and that detained Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan might have supplied nuclear technology to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria. "We've seen the press reports. We don't have anything definitive or authoritative from the IAEA. I expect we'll be discussing these press reports with them," State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli told a press briefing in Washington.

Times of India, 7 January 2005

US plans to increase H1B visas for Indians

New Delhi, Jan.6. The United States has said outsourcing to India was 'unavoidable' as the latter had earned its place as the world's knowledge capital in the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector and that it was actively considering increasing the H1B visas for Indian workers. "Several appeals were made by the US citizens to put a stop to outsourcing to India but were outright rejected as the US felt that outsourcing to India, the knowledge capital of the world in BPO sector, was unavoidable," an ASSOCHAM statement said in New Delhi, quoting US Deputy Chief of Mission Robert O Blake. Speaking at an interactive session organised by the industry body, he said the US was now thinking about increasing the number of H1B visas to Indian professionals. "This decision is based on the fact that the US recognises India's contribution in the fields like accounts, software, engineering and law," he said.

People's Daily, 7 January 2005

US urges DPRK to return to six-party talks

The United States on Thursday urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to return to the six-party talks "as soon as possible." "It is in North Korea's interest to come back to the six-party talks as soon as possible," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said at a news briefing. "The president wants to see a peaceful, diplomatic resolution to the situation in North Korea. North Korea needs to stop its pursuit of nuclear weapons, and then it can realize better relations with the rest of the international community," he said. "We will continue to work with all nations in the region who are sending one unified message to North Korea: We want a non-nuclear peninsula, and you need to abandon your ambitions for nuclear weapons. That is the message that is being sent to North Korea," McClellan said.

The Korean Herald, 8 January 2005

[EDITORIAL] Restarting six-way talks

It takes little imagination to assume that North Korea will continue to be at the top of the U.S. foreign policy agenda during President George W. Bush's second term in office. It has been one of his national security goals to stop Pyongyang from pursuing its nuclear weapons program.

Daily Times, 9 January 2005

US Congressman flies to North Korea for talks

BEIJING: A US Congressman began a four-day visit to North Korea on Saturday, with talks to focus on the North's nuclear plans and human rights. "I anticipate meeting with North Korean officials, discussing the issue of their nuclear program, and hopefully, their reintegration into the international community and human rights matters," Democratic Representative Tom Lantos of California told reporters in Beijing before flying to North Korea. A separate group of US lawmakers led by Republican Curt Weldon will also visit North Korea next week. While the visits are not part of official efforts aimed at dismantling the North's nuclear programmes, they are supported by the White House, which had stopped lawmakers from visiting Pyongyang last year.

Reuters, 9 January 2005

Sailor Dies After Nuclear Submarine Mishap

HONOLULU: A nuclear submarine that ran aground about 350 miles south of Guam, killing one crewman and injuring 23 others, was due back at its home port in Guam on Monday, according to a Navy spokesman. There were no reports of damage to the USS San Francisco's reactor plant, but the extent of damage to the 360-foot submarine would be determined when it gets to port, said Jon Yoshishige, spokesman for the U.S. Pacific Fleet. The vessel was moving under its own power. Officials said they still don't know what the Los Angeles-class submarine hit Saturday, but Lt. j.g. Adam Clampitt of the Pacific Fleet said it had been conducting operations underwater at the time. The incident is under investigation, said Yoshishige.

People's Daily, 10 January 2005

US says no deadline set for Pyongyang on six-party talks

The United States has not set a deadline for the resumption of six-party talks designed to solve nuclear issues on the Korean peninsula, State Department spokeswoman Darla Jordan said on Saturday. The spokesman said that Washington remained committed to a diplomatic solution, noting that the six-party process is "the best way to resolve our differences." He declined to answer further questions such as whether a deadline was under consideration, but said "there's been no such decision" to set a deadline. Jordan made the remarks after some senior US officials said they expect President George W. Bush to reappraise his approach in his second term to deal with this issue.

People's Daily, 11 January 2005

US decides to develop missile interceptor with Japan

The U.S. Defense Department has decided to embark on the development of an interceptor missile and will seek to begin talks with Japan this year to move the joint research of the missile defense system to the development phase, Pentagon officials said Monday. Japan eased its arms export ban in December to enable sales of missile components to the United States ahead of a planned upgrading of the joint research. The United States has independently developed the Standard Missile 3 interceptor with a diameter of 34 centimeters. The U.S. Navy has pressed for building a bigger missile with 53 cm in diameter. The Navy says it would provide longer range and higher interception capability, but some experts doubt its effectiveness.

Indian Express, 11 January 2005

US team meets leaders, talks Indo-US cooperation

New Delhi, Jan.10. A delegation of US Congressmen led by Senate majority leader Bill Frist, who is also part of the India Caucus, took stock of Indo-US relations and the extent of cooperation - to deal with the aftermath of the tsunami disaster - during a meeting with the Indian leadership today. "We got to hear in Sri Lanka the efforts made by India to help out its neighbours affected by the disaster," said Frist. He also made special mention of the cooperation between India and US soon after the disaster. According to Frist, Indo-US ties are on a strong footing and US President George W. Bush has the "complete support" to carry forward the process of the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership.

The Hindu, 11 January 2005

"Permanent seat for India in Security Council unlikely" (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi, Jan.10. "I don't think its going to happen," the former United States' Ambassador to India, Robert Blackwill, said about India's entry into the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member. Mr. Blackwill put India's non-entry in the context of fundamental Security Council reforms which, he said, were not going to take place. While conceding that the Security Council did not reflect today's world, he said that there were other candidates, along with India, who would have to be made permanent members. The number of permanent members would then go up to about 14. Mr. Blackwill said that the world wanted a Security Council that worked and such a large number would not serve the purpose. Mr. Blackwill felt there were some in the U.S. Government who were not comfortable with India's nuclear weapon status.

The Washington Post, 12 January 2005

N. Korea Hesitant To Resume Talks

BEIJING, Jan. 11: A U.S. congressman who traveled to North Korea for talks with senior leaders said Tuesday that the

discussions were "serious and substantive" but that he was told the North was not ready to resume negotiations about dismantling its nuclear weapons program. Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), briefing reporters after three days of meetings in Pyongyang, said the officials indicated they were "waiting to see the shape of the second Bush administration" before resuming six-nation talks that began in 2003. Lantos said he told them that Bush's new foreign policy team was in place, that its approach to North Korea would not change and that Congress supported the approach. The North Koreans did not specify what would persuade them to resume the talks, he said.

Reuters, 13 January 2005

S. Korea's Roh Sees North Talks When Bush Team Set

SEOUL: Stalled six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program could resume as soon as President Bush finishes putting together his new diplomatic team, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun said on Thursday. Conditions were ripe for those talks but not yet for a summit between himself and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, Roh told a televised 80-minute New Year news conference at his presidential Blue House compound. On the economy, the key concern for most South Koreans, Roh said depressed private consumption and investment would begin to pick up from the second half of this year, bolstered by government efforts to stimulate Asia's third-largest economy. He also said South Korean troops would stay in Iraq until allies were satisfied their mission was complete.

The Korean Herald, 13 January 2005

Ambassador Hill may head U.S. team on nuke negotiation (Choi Sung-ah)

U.S. Ambassador Christopher Hill may be Washington's next top nuclear negotiator, according to reports circulating here, and South Korean officials signaled it as "highly probable." The latest information out of Washington indicates Hill is likely to succeed Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly, who currently heads Washington's delegation to the six-nation disarmament talks on North Korea's nuclear standoff. The Foreign Ministry took a cautious line. It made no presumptions about the veracity of the reports, although it noted Hill is a "Korea expert." At his weekly news conference yesterday, Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon welcomed the possibility of Hill being designated as the chief nuclear negotiator for the second Bush administration - a comment interpreted by many as implying the reports may be true.

Hindustan Times, 14 January 2005

India, US to ink open skies deal (S.Rajagopalan)

Washington, Jan.13.India and the US are poised to hammer out a far-reaching 'open skies'agreement that will liberalise air travel between the two countries.Civil aviation minister Praful Patel had talks here with US transportation secretary Norman Y Mineta to replace a nearly half-century-old agreement that restricts flight frequencies, destinations and pricing.Patel told reporters he expected the pact to be ready within a couple of months. But Mineta felt it would be in place by the end of this month. The agreement will not need congressional approval.The Indo-US civil aviation sector is reckoned to be a fast-growing market that already handles 1.5 million travellers a year.

The Pioneer, 14 January 2005

Lockheed hawks C-130s, F-16s to India

New Delhi.The US fighter jet manufacturer Lockheed Martin, which manufactures the F-16s, is trying to sell its C-130 transport aircraft for the Indian special forces and is willing to offer the F-16s to India.Stating this here on Thursday, senior executive of the company Michael Kelly said the Lockheed Martin was making a bid to sell at least seven to eight medium capacity C-130s as a fast-reaction carrier for the Special Forces.The C-130 has the capability to fly without navigational aids and take off and land at short and unprepared runways and was therefore ideal for counter-terrorist, counter-hijacks and specialised missions, he said. India and the US had held discussions at the government level over the issue of the proposed sale of P3C-Orions over the last two years.

The New York Times, 15 January 2005

Submarine Crash Shows Navy Had Gaps in Mapping System (Christopher Drew)

Sailors on the San Francisco, a nuclear-powered attack submarine, had just finished cleaning the vessel last Saturday as it sped along 500 feet beneath the surface of the South Pacific. Submarines run blind, just listening for sounds of danger. And to the captain and other officers relying on undersea navigation charts, everything seemed clear. Suddenly, there was a horrible screeching. And according to an e-mail message written by a crew member, the inside of the submarine quickly resembled a scene from the movie "The Matrix." He wrote, "Everything slowed down and levitated and then went flying forward faster than the brain can process." The submarine had crashed head-on into an undersea mountain that was not on the charts. One sailor was killed, and about 60 others were injured. Now, Defense Department officials say they have found a satellite image taken in 1999 that indicates an undersea mountain rising to perhaps within 100 feet below the surface there.

International Herald Tribune, 15 January 2005

North Korea Reports It's Ready to Resume Nuclear Arms Talks

SEOUL, Jan. 14: North Korea announced Friday that it was ready to return to six-party talks on its nuclear weapons programs and other "outstanding issues," while proclaiming its desire to become a "friend" of the United States. The announcement followed a four-day visit by an American Congressional delegation led by Representative Curt Weldon, Republican of Pennsylvania and vice chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Members of the delegation, speaking Friday at a news conference in Seoul, said the talks among South and North Korea, the United States, Japan, China and Russia, which have been stalled since September, could restart "within weeks."

The Korean Herald, 15 January 2005

N. Korea ready to rejoin six-way talks, shows conciliatory gesture (Choi Sung-ah)

North Korea is ready to rejoin the six-nation talks on its nuclear ambitions, according to a U.S. Congressional delegation which arrived in Seoul yesterday after a four-day trip to the communist country. Pennsylvania Republican Curt Weldon, who headed the six-member delegation said they met with several top Pyongyang officials who all agreed that the nuclear issue needs to be resolved peacefully. "Our unanimous impression is that DPRK is ready to rejoin the six-party process," Weldon told reporters in a news conference at the Foreign Ministry yesterday. He added that there are two things the North is watching closely; the lineup in the second Bush administration and comments out of Washington that are perceived to be negative.

Indian Express, 15 January 2005

Open skies pact with US as early as next month, says Patel (Pranab Dhal Samanta)

New Delhi, Jan.14. As his team was wrapping up talks on an open skies agreement with the US, Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel today indicated that the pact may be inked as early as next month. Speaking to The Indian Express from Washington, Patel said he hoped to sign the agreement next month when US Transportation Secretary Norman Y Mineta visits New Delhi. As an interim measure, India has been seeking an increase in the number of US cities to which its carriers can operate. The open skies agreement, proposed by the US more than six months ago, is a far-reaching arrangement that removes all restrictions on number of cities, aircraft or airlines. US has signed such an agreement with 66 countries and hopes to add India to its list at the earliest.

Deccan Chronicle, 16 January 2005

US envoy hints at UN seat

New Delhi, Jan.15. The US will consider supporting India for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council after examining a second report on reforming the world body, the American envoy said on Thursday. Ambassador David Mulford told reporters in New Delhi that the US administration would consider the issue after UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued his own report on the issue in March. "The administration will also take into account the views of the US Congress," he said. Mulford's remarks came shortly after a four-member US congressional delegation, currently touring India, expressed support for India being given permanent membership of the Security Council with veto power.

Times of India, 16 January 2005

Bush may visit India in October

New Delhi, Jan.15. Preliminary discussions have begun looking at possibilities of a visit by US President George W Bush to India in September-October this year. Although visit logistics would start getting discussed only after the inauguration of Bush's second term January 20, discussions have centred on a visit here in fall by Bush who has said more than once that he would like to visit India in 2005. Recently, when Bush visited the Indian Embassy in Washington to express sympathies over the tsunami disaster, he said he assured Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, with whom he spoke on telephone, that "my intentions are to make it this year to India." US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who was here last month, discussed with Indian officials the likely dates for a presidential visit this year, according to highly placed sources

The Pioneer, 16 January 2005

US textile, shrimp industries oppose concessions to India

Washington. The US textile and shrimp industries have opposed any concessions on imports from countries, including India, saying both the industries have been hit hard and lost jobs due to imports. "We have been bled white (by imports). We have lost 363,200 jobs since January 2001. That's 34.7 per cent of the industry, and now you've got people looking for relief where the cost is going to be concentrated on an industry and group of workers that have been significantly damaged already," Lloyd Wood, spokesman for the American Manufacturing Trade Action Coalition, said. Apart from India, they also oppose extending import concessions to Thailand and Sri Lanka. Both the industries also oppose demanding donations from them for tsunami victims.

Reuters, 16 January 2005

U.S. Conducting Secret Missions Inside Iran

WASHINGTON: The United States has been conducting secret reconnaissance missions inside Iran to help identify potential nuclear, chemical and missile targets, The New Yorker magazine reported Sunday. The article, by award-winning reporter Seymour Hersh, said the secret missions have been going on at least since last summer with the goal of identifying target information for three dozen or more suspected sites. Hersh quotes one government consultant with close ties to the Pentagon as saying, "The civilians in the Pentagon want to go into Iran and destroy as much of the military infrastructure as possible." One former high-level intelligence official told The New Yorker, "This is a war against terrorism, and Iraq is just one campaign. The Bush administration is looking at this as a huge war zone. Next, we're going to have the Iranian campaign." The White House said Iran is a concern and a threat that needs to be taken seriously. But it disputed the report by Hersh, who last year exposed the extent of prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

The News, 16 January 2005

North Korea ready to resume nuclear talks

SEOUL: North Korea told a visiting US congressional delegation that it is ready to return to six-party nuclear talks and offered to become a "friend" of the United States if Washington doesn't slander the rule of totalitarian leader Kim Jong Il. The overture Friday was highly unusual. North Korean propagandists have turned anti-Americanism into a near religion and regularly exhort

their people to prepare for a possible war with "US imperialists." The offer came shortly after the six-member bipartisan US congressional delegation concluded talks with senior communist officials in Pyongyang. Republican Rep. Curt Weldon, who led the group, called the trip an "overwhelming success," and said in Seoul that North Korea appeared ready to negotiate "in a matter of weeks."

The Associated Press, 16 January 2005

Iran: Samples Will Prove Nukes Peaceful

TEHRAN: Iran said Sunday that environmental samples taken from a military complex this weekend by U.N. nuclear inspectors will prove that the country's atomic program is for peaceful purposes and not making weapons, as the United States alleges. Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency took samples from landscaped areas of the huge Parchin complex, which Washington believes may be involved in nuclear weapons research. "We know what the result will be. Since we have never done any illegal activity, definitely the result will prove our declarations," Asefi told reporters.

Daily Times, 16 January 2005

Lack of nuclear security in subcontinent matter of concern: experts (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: Participants at a discussion session devoted to nuclear security in South Asia here this week expressed concern at the lack of progress in the India-Pakistan peace process in view of the last two rounds having ended inconclusively. The session was organised by the South Asia programme of the Brookings Institution for an exchange of views on a recent publication on South Asian nuclear security co-authored by Michael Krepon and Pakistan's Ziad Haider, to name two of the three. Krepon is the founder president of Stimson, a leading Washington think tank with a special interest in South Asia, especially in relation to nuclear capabilities and proliferation.

Hindustan Times, 17 January 2005

FBI will seek India's help to nab JeM chief

New Delhi, Jan.16. A team of US-based Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) will arrive in New Delhi shortly to gather more evidence against Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar and his alleged involvement in the kidnapping of American tourists in Jammu and Kashmir in 1995 and his links with the hijackers of an Indian Airlines plane in 1999. The move comes close on the heels of denial by Pakistani authorities to handover Masood Azhar to FBI, which has also registered a case in the hijacking of Indian Airlines plane IC-814 on December 24, 1999. The hardcore terrorist, who was among the three released in exchange of the prisoners, has also been booked in the case.

Daily Times, 17 January 2005

North Korea denies having uranium

SEOUL: North Korea denied that it has a secret uranium-enrichment programme and accused Washington of double standards, a day after it indicated a willingness to rejoin six-nation nuclear disarmament talks. Calling the United States a "nuclear criminal," North Korea's state-run newspaper Rodong Sinmun accused Washington on Saturday of "conniving at, patronising and cooperating with the pro-American forces" in Israel, Japan and South Korea to develop nuclear arms "The US accusation against the (North) over its nonexistent 'uranium enrichment issue' clearly proves that the US policy of double standards assumes extremely partial and aggressive nature," the newspaper said.

The News, 18 January 2005

Pakistan denies providing Iran N-sites data to US (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan categorically denied on Monday that it had provided any data to the United States regarding Iran's nuclear programme. As pressure increased on Iran's nuke plan with reports being leaked to the American media, a future scary scenario is being built which suggests that after Iraq, the United States is preparing to strike inside Iran to destroy its nuclear infrastructure. "There is no such collaboration though Pakistan is cooperating with the international community. We do not have much information on Iran's nuclear programme. These reports are exaggerated and there appears to be no substance in these news reports", Foreign Office spokesman Masood Khan told the weekly press briefing.

The New York Times, 18 January 2005

U.S. Is Punishing 8 Chinese Firms for Aiding Iran (David E. Sanger)

WASHINGTON, Jan. 17: The Bush administration imposed penalties this month against some of China's largest companies for aiding Iran's efforts to improve its ballistic missiles. The move is part of an effort by the White House and American intelligence agencies to identify and slow important elements of Iran's weapons programs. The White House made no public announcement of the penalties, and the State Department placed a one-page notice on page 133 of The Federal Register early this month listing eight Chinese companies affected. The notice kept classified the nature of the technology they had exported. Since the Federal Register announcement, the penalties have been noted on some Web sites that concentrate on China and proliferation issues.

Khaleej Times, 18 January 2005

Bush won't rule out action against Iran over nukes

WASHINGTON: US President George W. Bush said on Monday he would not rule out military action against Iran if that country was not more forthcoming about its suspected nuclear weapons program. "I hope we can solve it diplomatically, but I will never take any option off the table," Bush said in an interview with NBC News when asked if he would rule out the potential

for military action against Iran "if it continues to stonewall the international community about the existence of its nuclear weapons program." Iran denies it has been trying to make nuclear weapons and says its nuclear program is geared solely to producing electricity. Bush's comments followed Pentagon criticism on Monday of a published report that it was mounting reconnaissance missions inside Iran to identify potential nuclear and other targets.

People's Daily, 18 January 2005

US denies alleged reconnaissance in Iran

The Pentagon on Monday vehemently denied a report by The New Yorker magazine over alleged US reconnaissance missions inside Iran to identify nuclear, chemical and missile sites for possible air-strikes as soon as this summer. Pentagon spokesman Larry Di Rita, in a written statement, said the report by award-winning investigative reporter Seymour Hersh was "so riddled with errors of fundamental fact that the credibility of his entire piece is destroyed." Hersh said secret missions have been going on at least since last summer with the goal of identifying target information for at least three dozen targets in Iran. Those targets "could be destroyed by precision strikes and short-term commando raids," the report said.

The Hindu, 18 January 2005

U.S. operatives in Iran?

WASHINGTON, JAN. 17. Teams of U.S. commandos have entered Iran searching for hidden sites that could be working on developing nuclear weapons, The New Yorker magazine reports in today's edition. The Government of the President, George W Bush, has authorised secret military missions inside Iran at least since mid-2004, the magazine reports. Their goal is to identify target information for up to 26 suspected nuclear, chemical and missile sites, according to the magazine. "This is a war against terrorism, and Iraq, is just one campaign," a former high-level government intelligence official told the magazine.

The Times of India, 18 January 2005

Now, a 'Khan-for-Iran' deal (Chidanand Rajghatta)

WASHINGTON: Pakistan and United States have struck a "Khan-for-Iran" deal. According to well-known investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, Washington has agreed to wink at Pakistan's nuclear transgressions and spare its nuclear proliferator A Q Khan in return for Islamabad's cooperation in neutralizing Iran's nuclear program. Pakistan has readily obliged U.S and betrayed Iran, and Hersh cites U.S intelligence sources as saying an American commando task force in South Asia is now working closely with a group of Pakistani scientists and technicians who had previously helped Iran's nuclear quest. Pakistan, expectedly, has denied this.

The Times of India, 18 January 2005

US plans to attack Iran: Report

WASHINGTON: Teams of US commandos have been operating inside Iran since last summer, identifying suspected weapons sites for possible air strikes, The New Yorker reported on Monday. However, criticising the report written by award-winning reporter Seymour Hersh, Pentagon's spokesman Lawrence DiRita said in a statement that the article "is so riddled with errors of fundamental fact that credibility of his (Hersh) entire piece is destroyed". Hersh, who exposed the extent of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, wrote that he was repeatedly told by US intelligence and military sources that "the next strategic target was Iran." US government has authorised spying missions inside Iran at least since mid-2004 to gather intelligence on declared and suspected nuclear, chemical and missile sites, the magazine said.

Dawn, 19 January 2005

Iran says it has military might to deter attack

TEHRAN, Jan 18: Iran has the military might to deter attacks against it, Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani said on Tuesday, after US President George Bush said he would not rule out military force against Iran over its nuclear programme. "We are able to say that we have strength such that no country can attack us because they do not have precise information about our military capabilities due to our ability to implement flexible strategies," the semi-official Mehr news agency quoted Mr Shamkhani as saying. "We can claim that we have rapidly produced equipment that has resulted in the greatest deterrent," he said, without elaborating. In October, Iran announced successful trials of its Shahab-3 ballistic missile with a range of 2,000kms, putting parts of Europe, as well as Israel and US bases in the Gulf, within reach.

Daily Times, 19 January 2005

Action against Iran won't be ruled out: Bush

WASHINGTON: US President George W Bush said on Monday he would not rule out military action against Iran if that country was not more forthcoming about its suspected nuclear weapons programme. "I hope we can solve it diplomatically, but I will never take any option off the table," Bush said in an interview with NBC News when asked if he would rule out the potential for military action against Iran "if it continues to stonewall the international community about the existence of its nuclear weapons programme". However, in a separate interview with ABC News, Bush said that "our policy toward Iran is to deal with them diplomatically". Iran says its nuclear programme is geared solely to producing energy.

People's Daily, 19 January 2005

China asks DPRK, US to maintain contact

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the United States should continue all kinds of contact and exchanges with goodwill and flexibility to convene the next round of six-party talks on the Korean Peninsular nuclear issue as early as possible. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan made this remark at a routine news conference in Beijing

Tuesday, when commenting on US Congressman Curt Weldon's recent visit to China and DPRK. Weldon headed a six-member US congressional delegation to visit Pyongyang from Jan. 11-14. After that, his delegation came to China at the invitation of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs.

The News, 19 January 2005

Weapons of mass delusion

After two years of claiming that Saddam's weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) were reason enough to invade Iraq, the USA and her quislings have had to officially call off the search for what could be more appropriately called Weapons of Mass Delusion. A search that, while ridding Iraq of a hated dictator, has also caused the people of that country immeasurable pain in terms of lives lost, limbs maimed and any little security dissipated. The people of Iraq have suffered before - not least from the crippling US-imposed sanctions after the First Gulf War of 1991 that resulted in the deaths of over a million infants over the next decade. In 2003, Saddam's WMDs became the pretext for this devastating war on Iraq, while the actual motives are more likely to establish a stranglehold over the second largest known oil reserves, and to provide strategic bases for US forces in the region.

The New York Times, 19 January 2005

Iran, Calling Bush's Words 'Threats,' Says It Is Not Intimidated (Nazila Fathi)

TEHRAN, Jan. 18: A number of Iranian officials declared Tuesday that Iran would not be intimidated by threats, a day after President Bush refused to rule out military action against Iran if it continued to pursue nuclear weapons. "We are not afraid of foreign enemies' threats and sanctions, since they know well that throughout its Islamic and ancient history, Iran has been no place for adventurism," Iran's former president, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, told the state news agency, IRNA. Iran's defense minister, Ali Shamkhani, made some vague threats of his own, saying, "We have developed a might that no country can attack us because they do not have accurate information about our military capabilities," according to the Mehr news agency. "We have produced equipment at a rapid pace with the minimum investment that has resulted in the greatest deterrent force."

Daily Times, 19 January 2005

US lawmaker sees Korean nuclear talks maybe in February

TOKYO: Talks on North Korea's nuclear arms programmes could resume in early February if the United States refrains from "inflammatory rhetoric", a US congressman said on Tuesday after talks with Pyongyang's number two leader last week. Republican Curt Weldon of Pennsylvania said Pyongyang was serious about abandoning its nuclear programmes if Washington would give security and other assurances sought by the North. Weldon led a bipartisan delegation of lawmakers who met North Korea's parliament president Kim Yong-nam, second only to top leader Kim Jong-il, and other North Korean officials last week. Speaking at the American Center in Tokyo, Weldon said the timing of Pyongyang's return to stalled talks depended on two factors.

Hindustan Times, 20 January 2005

Bush praises India's response to tsunami

Washington, Jan.19.US President George W Bush on Wednesday spoke with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and praised India's "impressive response" to the Tsunami disaster that killed about a quarter of a million people in several countries. The leaders discussed the "good cooperation between India and the United States in coordinating the response in conjunction with other countries in the region that were affected and the cooperation (that) "exemplifies the bilateral relationship that continues to grow stronger," White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan said in Washington on Wednesday.

Daily Times, 20 January 2005

US trying to disrupt EU talks, says Iran

TEHRAN: Iran accused the United States on Wednesday of trying to disrupt its nuclear negotiations with the European Union by evoking the threat of a military strike, and warned Washington it would respond to any "unwise measure." "With reliance on enormous popular support, diplomatic capacity and full military capability, the Islamic Republic of Iran will firmly respond to any unwise measure or plan," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said in a statement responding to "recent comments by US officials". On Monday US President George W Bush said he could not rule out a resort to military action if the United States failed to persuade Iran to abandon a nuclear energy programme it charges is a cover for developing the bomb.

The Hindu, 20 January 2005

U.S. aware of Pakistan's nuclear plan dangers: Rice (Sridhar Krishnaswami)

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19: The Secretary of State designate, Condoleezza Rice, has said the U.S. is "very aware" of the danger of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into the hands of radicals and that Washington has a contingency plan to prevent it. She did not disclose the plan at the open hearings session at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. She faced some tough questioning over three sessions on the first day. The former Democratic presidential nominee, Senator John Kerry, asked her about the fail-safe procedures in the event of a coup in Pakistan. "If you were to have a successful coup in Pakistan, you could have conceivably, nuclear weapons in the hand of a radical Islamic state automatically, overnight," he said. To which Dr. Rice replied: "...we have noted this problem and we are prepared to try to deal with it. I would prefer not in open session to talk about this particular issue.

Deccan Chronicle, 22 January 2005

US hints at strong ties

New Delhi, Jan.21. As the Bush administration assumed charge for the second consecutive term, the United States has envisioned a substantial growth in strategic and economic relations with India. "During the first term of the Bush administration, the relations with India saw an all-time high. During the second term, it is going to get better," American Ambassador to India David C Mulford said on Tonight at 10 programme telecast on CNBC TV on Thursday night. Asked whether the US was concerned about terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan not being dismantled, the envoy replied in the affirmative. When India's concern over possible US sale of nuclear-capable F-16 fighters to Pakistan was pointed out, he said there has been no decision on it so far as the "matter is still under consideration".

The New York Times, 23 January 2005

Danger Zone That Wasn't, and a Sub's Hidden Peril (Christopher Drew)

Satellite images of the area where a nuclear submarine grounded two weeks ago clearly show a wedge-shaped undersea mountain that stretches across more than a mile of a desolate expanse of the South Pacific. Military officials have said the mountain, which rises within 100 feet of the surface, was not on the navigation charts that the Navy uses. One sailor was killed and 60 were injured when the submarine, the San Francisco, smashed into the mountain, or a reef jutting out from it, at high speed on Jan. 8. The satellite images, taken in 1999 and early 2004, suggest that the mountain is part of a larger range of undersea volcanoes and reefs. And they show that it sits more than three miles to the northwest of the nearest possible hazard on the charts. Scientists who have studied the images say it is likely that the submarine's officers believed they had safely skirted the danger zone - with the vessel about 500 feet below the surface - only to crash head-on into the mountain.

Reuters, 23 January 2005

Iran Says U.S. Attack Would Be a Strategic Error

TEHRAN: Iran, responding to comments by senior U.S. officials, said Sunday any U.S. military attack on the country would be a strategic mistake and dismissed the U.S. remarks as "psychological warfare." President Bush last week said military action against Iran's nuclear program had not been ruled out and Vice President Dick Cheney said Iran topped the list of world trouble spots and Israel could decide to bomb its nuclear facilities. But Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said: "We think the chance (of a U.S. military attack) is very low unless someone wants to make a major strategic mistake." "Logically speaking, we don't think this is going to happen," he told a weekly news conference. Iranian officials, including President Mohammad Khatami, said last week Iran would respond vigorously to any attack.

The Korean Times, 23 January 2005

NK Uses Nuke Claim as Bargaining Chip (Ryu Jin)

North Korea recently declared it possessed nuclear arms to U.S. congressional delegates who visited there, a U.S. radio station said Saturday. But experts said the claim seems aimed at enhancing the North's leverage ahead of the upcoming negotiations. Radio Free Asia said Curt Weldon, vice chairman of the U.S. House Armed Services Committee, delivered the North's claim to Washington last week while briefing the U.S. administration on the outcome of his trip to Pyongyang Jan. 11-14. The radio station said Kim Kye-gwan, North Korea's vice foreign minister and chief nuclear negotiator, told the U.S. delegation that his country possessed nuclear weapons, stressing they are "only for defense" and that Pyongyang had "no intention to possess them forever." North Koreans have sometimes claimed in vaguely worded statements to possess a nuclear deterrent, but they have never officially announced the North's status as a nuclear-armed country.

Daily Times, 24 January 2005

N Korea tells US lawmaker it has atom bombs

SEOUL: A top North Korean official has told US legislators that the communist state possessed nuclear weapons, Radio Free Asia reported on Friday. North Korea's Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan said the country was a nuclear weapons state but its nuclear arsenal was defensive in nature and Pyongyang did not intend to possess it forever, Radio Free Asia quoted U.S. Rep. Curt Weldon as saying. Weldon, Republican of Pennsylvania, led a six-member congressional delegation to North Korea last week and met with its senior officials. North Korea aimed to denuclearise itself and it was willing to move toward that end in a transparent manner, Weldon quoted the North's Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun as saying.

The Hindu, 24 January 2005

Britain, U.S. differ over Iran? (Hasan Suroor)

LONDON, JAN. 23: Britain and America are reported to be heading for a diplomatic standoff over Iran as the British Government is said to be determined not to back any Iraq-like U.S. military adventure against Teheran. The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, has prepared a detailed and closely-argued document setting out the case for a negotiated solution to the controversy over Iran's nuclear programme. The document, extensively quoted in a Sunday newspaper, describes the efforts being made by Britain, France and Germany to resolve the issue as being "in the best interests of Iran and the international community." Making clear that an "imposed solution" was not the answer, it says: "We have worked hard to achieve agreement with Iran on the way in which this issue is handled, to give the international community the reassurance we seek, while safeguarding Iran's right to the peaceful use of nuclear technology."

The Telegraph, 25 January 2005

Americans on terror law recce (Basant Rawat)

Ahmedabad, Jan.24. American legal experts are in Gujarat to find fodder for their campaign against a draconian anti-terror law enacted in their country after 9/11. A five-member team from the Bar Association of New York City that is spearheading a

campaign against the USA Patriot Act arrived here on Saturday to study the "misuse" of the now-repealed Prevention of Terrorism Act. Gujarat police have booked 217 people under the anti-terror law - 50 of them are from Hyderabad, arrested in connection with the tiffin bomb blast, Haren Pandya's murder and the Akshardham temple attack. All 94 Godhra train carnage accused have been booked under the anti-terror law.

The News, 25 January 2005

Iran rules out direct talks with US on N-issue

TEHRAN: Iran ruled out direct talks with Washington on Monday as Israel urged the world to take action against the Islamic republic's nuclear programme, warning it could destabilise the Middle East. US President George W Bush, just into his second term of office, has warned Tehran not to develop nuclear weapons or risk possible military action. "We have said before that if anyone wants to talk to us in a threatening language, we will adopt the same tone," Iranian government spokesman and cabinet secretary Abdollah Ramazan-zadeh told reporters. While Iran insists its nuclear activities are strictly for peaceful energy purposes, the European Union's "big three", Britain, France and Germany, are engaged in a diplomatic effort aimed at securing long-term guarantees the clerical regime will not seek the bomb.

The Associated Press, 26 January 2005

Energy Dept. Issues Nuke Safety Rules

WASHINGTON: The government would be able to fine contractors who violate worker safety standards at federal nuclear facilities under rules proposed Wednesday by the Energy Department. The proposal comes a year after withdrawal of a much-criticized draft rule that failed to set minimum safety standards for all department sites. The old proposal would have allowed contractors to pick and choose which safety rules they should be required to follow, something that was criticized by lawmakers, workers and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, an advisory board that oversees safety throughout the Energy Department weapons complex. "We felt there was too much leeway given to contractors rather than requiring the government to set the standards," John Conway, chairman of the advisory board, said of the old rule.

Dawn, 27 January 2005

Iran warns US, Israel of retaliation

TEHRAN, Jan 26: Iran will carry out an "astonishing" retaliation to any attack against the Iran by Israel or the United States, Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned in comments published on Wednesday. It also responded to Israeli allegations that it was closer to developing a nuclear weapon, saying the latest accusations were designed to shift attention away from Israel's own weapons and its "terror" against Palestinians. "We will counter any stupid action by Israel and its master with firmness and in an astonishing way," Brig-Gen Mohammad-Ali Jafari was quoted as saying by the Shargh newspaper.

Daily Times, 27 January 2005

Analysts believe US should focus on North Korea talks (Paul Eckert)

Secretary of State-designate Condoleezza Rice and her new Asia policy team will have their work cut out for them coaxing North Korea back to nuclear talks after a long stalemate, analysts said. But as Rice moved through her Senate confirmation on Tuesday, North Korea watchers said the United States also must dispel the impression that it doesn't want to negotiate seriously with North Korea to halt Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions. North Korea has joined the United States, China, South Korea, Japan and Russia for three rounds of nuclear talks since August 2003. North Korea scuttled a fourth round scheduled in September, saying it would not meet again until the United States dropped its hostility toward Pyongyang.

Daily Times, 28 January 2005

North Korea bought complete: nuclear bomb from Pakistan?

SEOUL: North Korea appears to have bought a complete nuclear weapon from either Pakistan or a former Soviet Union state, a South Korean newspaper said on Thursday quoting a source in Washington. Seoul Shinmun quoted the source as saying the US was checking the intelligence. The purchase was apparently intended to avoid nuclear weapons testing that could be detected from the outside, the source was quoted as saying. US Congressman Curt Weldon said after a visit to the North this month that its second-ranked leader had told his delegation that it possessed nuclear weapons. Pyongyang has declared that a nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, sealed under a 1994 agreement with the US, had been restarted. Spent nuclear fuel from that reactor could be converted to weapons-grade material.

The Washington Post, 28 January 2005

Korea Talks May Hinge on Bush (Glenn Kessler)

A bipartisan group of lawmakers that recently traveled to North Korea has written President Bush to urge him not to make provocative statements about the reclusive nation in next week's State of the Union address, on the grounds that it will hurt the prospects for resumed talks on North Korea's nuclear programs. Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.), who led the six-member delegation, said senior North Korean leaders had told him they were ready to return to the talks but would be listening closely to statements from top administration officials. North Korea has accused the Bush administration of having a "hostile policy," dating from Bush's first State of the Union address in 2002. In that speech, he labeled North Korea as part of an "axis of evil" that included Iran and Saddam Hussein's government in Iraq.

The New York Times, 28 January 2005

NYT warns against US strikes in Iran

WASHINGTON: The New York Times editorial board warned the US administration on Wednesday against military

intervention in Iran, insisting it would do "more harm than good." In an editorial entitled "Military Rumbblings on Iran," the daily expressed concern over seemingly bellicose remarks by various administration officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney, who last week placed Iran at the top of a list of issues that concern the United States. "These hawkish rumbblings eerily recall the months before the American invasion of Iraq, when some of the same officials pressed hardest for military action, while the president remained publicly uncommitted," The New York Times said.

Hindustan Times, 28 January 2005

Shekhawat to attend India Day parade in US

New York, Jan.27. Vice President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat has confirmed his participation for the India Day Parade in Manhattan slated for August 21. Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) president Sudhir Parikh said on Wednesday that Shekhawat would be one of the chief guests at the Silver Jubilee India Day parade, according to a press release in New York. India's Independence Day celebration and the parade through Manhattan, which attracts many international stars, is the largest outside India. It is considered the signature programme for Indians in New York.

Indian Express, 29 January 2005

Before FBI, IC-814 hijack accused retracts his statement (Yogindra Mohan)

Patiala, Jan.28. A three-member FBI team today quizzed three of the accused in the IC-814 hijacking, currently lodged in Patiala Central Jail. One of them, Dilip K. Bhujal, retracted a quasi-confessional statement made before an earlier FBI team that visited India one-and-a-half years ago. The Indian Airlines plane was hijacked from Kathmandu and taken to Kandahar on December 24, 1999. The three accused were arrested within a few days of the hijacking and have been lodged in the Patiala jail since. The FBI's role in the investigation is primarily due to the fact that a US national was among the hostages.

Dawn, 29 January 2005

US should help EU on Iran: IAEA

DAVOS, Jan 28: The head of the UN nuclear watchdog urged the United States on Friday to join forces with the EU to persuade Iran to give up atomic processes that could be used to make weapons. He drew a mixed response from US politicians attending the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, with Democrats favouring engagement with Tehran while Republicans were more sceptical about any dealing with Iran's religious hard liners. France, Britain and Germany are leading a European Union initiative to push Tehran to abandon its work on producing nuclear fuel in exchange for economic and political incentives. Washington, which accuses Iran of developing nuclear weapons under cover of a civilian atomic energy programme, has given arm's-length support to the EU effort, but some US officials say it is doomed. The United States has called for Iran to be referred to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

The New York Times, 29 January 2005

United States and Europe Differ Over Strategy on Iran (Elaine Sciolino)

PARIS, Jan. 28: President Bush's second term has barely begun, and Iran is already shaping up as its most serious diplomatic challenge. But conflicting pronouncements by Mr. Bush and his national security team have left Iran frustrated and angry about the direction of American policy, and the Europeans more determined than ever to push Washington to embrace their engagement strategy. To the outside world, the administration seems divided over whether to promote the overthrow of Iran's Islamic Republic - perhaps by force - or to tacitly support the approach embraced by the Europeans, which favors negotiations and a series of incentives that would ultimately require American participation. "You need to get everybody to read from the same page, the Europeans and the Americans," said Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in an interview in Davos on Friday.

The News, 29 January 2005

Clinton urges diplomacy on Iran nuclear issue

DAVOS: Former US President Bill Clinton urged the US administration to step up diplomatic efforts towards resolving a stand-off on Iran's nuclear programme. "I personally believe we ought to give some final vigorous push to diplomacy to try to deal with this," Clinton told the World Economic Forum, lending implicit support to European Union efforts at engaging Tehran on the issue. "I am not entirely convinced that what our British and German and French and other friends are trying to do would not work," he said, in reference to the negotiations by the three major EU powers over Iran's nuclear programme. Clinton said he did not think Tehran would use any nuclear weapons that it developed because it would trigger a destructive retaliatory strike, but that radioactive material could fall into the hands of terror networks. "If Iran had a nuclear weapon, the main thing it would do would be to cast a pall over the Middle East, but it would take a long time before they used it because they'd be toast if they used it," he said.

Daily Times, 30 January 2005

Russian scientists ready to help proliferators, claims US expert (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: Russia's 600 nuclear scientists are a danger to the world since, according to a survey, 21 percent of them are willing to work for anyone if paid the right price, including North Korea, Iran and Syria. This was stated by Prof Michael Nacht of the University of California, Berkeley, at a meeting organised by the Woodrow Wilson Centre on Thursday. According to the professor, who worked for the Clinton administration in a senior advisory capacity, the motives of some Russian nuclear scientists may not be entirely monetary, since they believe that by contributing to nuclear proliferation, they would weaken the unchallenged power of the United States. Russia still considers itself a major player in world affairs and would like to regain the position it had before the collapse of the communist state. Some Russians believe that to make the world safe from

proliferation is to make it safe for the United States.

Daily Times, 30 January 2005

Anti-proliferation initiative: India open to joining America (Iftikhar Gilani)

NEW DELHI: India indicated on Saturday that it is willing to join the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) group to stop nuclear proliferation activity in the India Ocean. Also for the first time, India revealed that it was sharing "information on military matters" with China under the new Sino-India strategic dialogue. In his concluding address to the seventh Asian Security Conference here, Indian Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said maritime security has emerged as a common challenge for East Asian nations. He said the PSI proposal needs to be "examined in greater detail".

The Associated Press, 30 January 2005

U.S. Official Consults Arabs on Iran Nukes

MANAMA: A senior U.S. official said Monday he was consulting Arab states in the Persian Gulf to coordinate policies in light of the perceived threat of Iran's nuclear ambitions. John Bolton, the State Department's top international security official, said countries in the region were "well aware" of the threat posed by Iran, which maintains its nuclear activities are for peaceful energy purposes. "Their repeated support for terrorism makes it particularly dangerous if they were to acquire a nuclear weapon," Bolton told reporters. "Whether they would use it directly as the government of Iran or whether they would transfer it to a terrorist group leaves us very concerned," said Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security.

The Associated Press, 30 January 2005

Iranian: 'No Rapprochement' With U.S.

DAVOS: Iran's foreign minister said Saturday that friendly relations with the United States were impossible for the time being but suggested informal contacts through European intermediaries were possible. Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told The Associated Press that even if Washington were interested in improving ties with his country "there can be no rapprochement" in the current climate of animosity. European countries have been negotiating with Iran, but there are no official contacts between Washington and Tehran. President Bush has labeled Iran part of the "axis of evil," and has accused it of trying to build nuclear weapons -- something Iran denies. "I understand that in Europe, there is interest to engage the Americans," Kharrazi said at the World Economic Forum. "So far, our policy has been to engage the Europeans, who can coordinate matters as they wish on the American side."

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Indian Express, 31 January 2005

India soon to join a US-led security group (Pranab Dhal Samanta)

New Delhi, Jan.30. Decks have been cleared for India to join the US-led Container Security Initiative (CSI) - a programme which envisages an exchange of Customs personnel and technology to screen containers at foreign ports before they can reach the destination. A team is slated to leave for the US soon to discuss the modalities for firming up Indian participation and its composition will be decided at an inter-ministerial meeting in February first week. As the first major step towards strengthening the strategic partnership with the US in George W Bush's second term, India plans to start its partnership with a pilot project at the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and will gradually replicate it at other ports depending on the programme's success.