

Hindustan Times, 1 January 2006

American businesses back nuke deal with India

Washington, Jan 1: American industry has started hectic lobbying with the US administration to create legislation to push ahead the civilian nuclear pact with India so that it can sell nuclear technology to meet New Delhi's burgeoning energy needs. American firms have launched a campaign for the administration to table legislation in Congress on the nuclear pact with India, and to get Congress then to ratify the change to the 1954 Atomic Energy Act, that prohibits trade in nuclear technologies with non-members of NPT. On Dec 13, USIBC announced twin initiatives to promote enactment of legislation needed to implement the landmark July 18 agreement between India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and US President George W. Bush for the transfer of civilian nuclear technology to India. On one hand, USIBC employed the leading lobbying firm of Patton Boggs to pursue the ultimate objective of full-scale civilian nuclear cooperation with India, "recognizing that India is a secular and stable democracy that has earned trust on non-proliferation". To complement its advocacy effort on Capitol Hill, the US Chamber of Commerce, the umbrella organization for some three million American companies, has agreed to host the Coalition for Partnership with India (CPI). CPI will coordinate the efforts of parties that strongly support a positive outcome of civilian nuclear technology transfer legislation.

Hindustan Times, 3 January 2006

We're cooperating with India on Iran policy: US

Washington, Jan 1: The US is coordinating its Iran policy with India and other countries and is hopeful of convincing Tehran to give up its nuclear ambitions, a senior Bush administration official has said. "The United States is working closely with the Europeans, Russia, India, China and other countries with the hope of forming one increasingly united and purposeful coalition to deter Iran's efforts," Under Secretary for Political Affairs R Nicholas Burns said. "This circle of countries is widening. Iran should listen to the call for it to return to active and sustained negotiations with Europe," he said while speaking at Johns Hopkins University Paul H Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. "If Iran does not do so," Burns warned, "...then it will face, at a time of our choosing, a UN Security Council debate to support and reinforce the work of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency). Our patience is not unlimited." Washington recently relented on bringing Iran to the UN Security Council during the IAEA meeting held in Vienna November 24. It did so in the hope that Tehran would agree to a Russian offer to refine reactor grade uranium.

The Times of India, 4 January 2006

Pak nuclear shopping spree in response to US-India deal?

LONDON: According to remarks attributed to unnamed senior western diplomats, Pakistan 's latest round of nuclear negotiations with China may be a reaction to a recent American offer to sell reactors to India. But according to the Financial Times, Lieutenant General (retd) Talat Masood, a Pakistani commentator on security affairs, insisted the discussions with China were long-standing and of greater vintage than the Indo-US talks. Masood is quoted as saying, "Pakistan has a long-term relationship with China and there is a great trust factor." The agreement to buy a series of reactors from Beijing is understood to have been reached on December 28, during a meeting between Aziz and Chinese Minister for Science and Technology National Defense and Chairman of China's Atomic Energy Authority Sun Qin at Chashma. At the time, Aziz declared that Pakistan's nuclear technology had a history testifying to its inherently peaceful nature, something that also categorised the nuclear cooperation between Pakistan and China. Aziz said that the Chinese reactors would help Pakistan build larger reactors to meet its growing energy needs. But Western commentators said they feared a growing trade in nuclear wares, considering Pakistan's father of nuclear technology, Dr AQ Khan, had increasingly been revealed as one of the world's top proliferators, with his clients scattered dangerously far afield, including North Korea, Libya and Iran.

The Japan Times, 5 January 2006

Deal harms Indian interests (Brahma Chellaney)

NEW DELHI: A real problem of an ever-shifting goal post has cast a cloud over America's current negotiations with India to implement a much-heralded nuclear deal that is supposed to showcase the emerging global partnership between the world's most powerful and most populous democracies. Seeking to formally close their past disputes over nuclear issues, the two concluded an accord whose intent is bold but that operationally will constrain India's ability to deter the larger of its two nuclear-armed neighbors, China. The July agreement represented only a statement of joint intent. Now negotiations are under way to give effect to the July commitments. Armed with leverage from the July accord, America is using the ongoing negotiations to try to limit the size of India's nuclear deterrent, control its fast-breeder program and bring a maximum number of Indian nuclear facilities under international inspections. The negotiations also demonstrate America's shifting goal post in relation to what all India needs to do and what Washington is willing to grant. For Washington, the accord is an astute move. It profitably panders to India's craving for status and helps buy Indian silence on widening U.S. support to military-ruled Pakistan. But is it in U.S. interests to limit India's nuclear-deterrent capability against

China, an opaque, rising empire of common concern?

The Indian Express, 5 January 2006

In 2006, watch this space... (K Subrahmanyam)

The year 2006 is likely to see a radical change in India's foreign policy posture and status. From now on India is likely to be seen as one of the six balancers of power in the emerging global system, comprising the US, the European Union, China, Japan, Russia and India. This country will be a strategic partner of US, EU and Russia and have strategic relationships with China and Japan. It will be free from the shackles of the Non-proliferation Treaty. In India, the objections raised by the non-proliferation advocates in US think-tanks, with respect to the proposed exceptionalisation of India from the provisions of the Non-proliferation Treaty, are treated as reflecting the views of the US Congress and sections of the US administration. Under-Secretary Burns said on October 18, in his talk to the Asia Society "India is a rising global power. While the US administration looks at India as a partner in economic, technological and security fields, the one-dimensional non-proliferation specialists look at the Indo-US nuclear deal as a concession to be extended to a client state. Crucial strategic considerations are bound to prevail over other subordinate considerations. The US administration has concluded that India is a responsible nuclear power and a valuable partner in fields vital to US interests. Therefore the non-proliferation lobby is unlikely to significantly influence either the the US administration or the Congress, which will decide the issue on the basis of US strategic, economic and technological interests.

Daily Times, 5 January 2006

Controversy over India's CIRUS reactor heats up (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: Canadian government files do not specify that the CIRUS reactor, which helped India detonate its first nuclear bomb in 1974 was intended for civilian use only, it has been claimed. According to Prof Ashok Kapur, an Indian-Canadian academic who has published extensively on nuclear issues, CIRUS "was in fact a gift to India given under the Colombo Plan, and it was meant to be for (a) dual purpose". He said the nuclear agreement between the two countries talks about "cooperation in the area of nuclear safety" which, asserted the academic, "has nothing to do with declaring CIRUS a civilian reactor nuclear facility". According to him, Homi Bhabha, the founder of India's nuclear programme, had at the time of the original negotiations made clear to officials in Ottawa that "at some point he will have to go the military way. So there was no deception when India conducted its first test in 1974", Kapur added. This is the first time such an assertion has been made, the overwhelming view both in Canada and the US being that CIRUS was only meant for peaceful not military use. Kapur said were CIRUS to be declared a civilian reactor, it would have serious implications, because it would then become subject to international inspection and its dual purpose would end immediately.

The Hindu, 6 January 2006

Nuclear plan presented to Washington (Amit Baruah)

A top External Affairs Ministry official told The Hindu that the United States' response was expected when Under-Secretary of State Nicholas Burns came to New Delhi later this month. The official said India's nuclear fast-breeder reactor programme was not included in the list of civilian facilities presented to the U.S. According to the official, India will have no problem if the U.S. side shares the separation plans with the U.S. Congress since it is a "transparent" exercise. However, details of the facilities to be classified as "civilian" are still to be made public in India. During his visit to Washington, the Foreign Secretary made it clear that India could not accept safeguards on the non-nuclear state model. "The objective of the safeguards is not to address India's strategic programme; it is to give our partners the assurance they legitimately expect, that, one, civil nuclear cooperation with India would not be diverted to assist India's strategic programme, and, two, it would not result in diversion to third countries." On the issue of safeguards in perpetuity, Mr. Saran stressed on December 21: "Let me put it this way. As long as there is a guarantee of lifetime supply of fuel, I don't think India would have a problem with lifetime safeguards on such fuel."

The Tribune, 9 January 2006

Indo-US deal on track

It is heartening to learn that the US Administration remains determined to implement the July 2005 civilian nuclear deal it entered into with India. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made it clear on Thursday once again that the US was committed to helping India with advanced technology and equipment to produce sufficient nuclear energy for its fast growing economy. She obviously wanted to tell the sceptics in the US that India's search for nuclear energy, which is cheaper and cleaner, deserves all-out American support as India has a clean track record so far as nuclear non-proliferation is concerned despite not being a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. What Dr Rice said in Washington while interacting with journalists should also convince the detractors of the Indo-US nuclear agreement in India that there is nothing sinister in the deal.

The Telegraph, 9 January 2006

Between Two Stools (Pratap Bhanu Mehta)

If you want to play the chess of power politics on a global scale, the first rule is this: you have to consider the position and the moves of every single piece on the chessboard. The big worry about making the United States of America central to India's orientation to the world was that it would render other power games being played invisible. India was pretending as if the Indo-US nuclear pact was a bilateral pact that would facilitate the development of India's civilian nuclear programme by easing restrictions on the import of uranium and nuclear technology. This was somehow supposed to facilitate India's further rise as a global power. But many of us had suggested that one of the consequences of this pact would be to make the subcontinent a frontline area in the global tussle between the US and China. India's great virtue was to have avoided becoming a frontline state in the last conflict between two global powers during Cold War. Every state that, like Pakistan, lets itself become a frontline state in that global conflict brought itself to the brink of ruin.

The Indian Express, 10 January 2006

Working to close N-deal, UPA fights last-minute jitters from within (Shishir Gupta)

NEW DELHI, Jan 9: With US Under-Secretary of State Nicholas Burns arriving in India on January 19 for talks with his counterpart Shyam Saran, the top UPA leadership is working overtime to arrive at a political decision to close the July 18 nuclear deal before President George W Bush visits in March. Hectic behind-the-scene consultations, including with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, have acquired urgency after Majority Leader in House of Representatives Tom DeLay, a Texas Republican and a staunch supporter of the deal, stepped down following charges of improper campaign funding. One fallout of this has been the cancellation of the January 10 visit of Dennis Hastert, Speaker, House of Representatives. Even Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, a Republican from Tennessee, has come under a cloud and has only one more year to go. With key Republican leaders mired in domestic crises, the UPA leadership is aware of the shrinking window of opportunity. With the Left and BJP opposing the deal, last-minute doubts have cropped up within the UPA leadership as well. Although the BJP is still to take an official position on the deal, Atal Behari Vajpayee's key aide Brajesh Mishra, who is not in the party, is driving the opposition against separation. The Indian nuclear establishment, used to secrecy and resentful of scrutiny, is also said to be dragging its feet. But efforts are on at the highest levels to clinch the deal with diplomats briefing the leadership on the need to clinch the agreement during Bush's visit.

The Tribune, 11 January 2006

Focus on N-energy (Shubha Singh)

After years of isolation in the nuclear power generation front, civilian nuclear power cooperation has come up in discussions with about half a dozen countries in the past six months. After the US it was France, Canada, Russia and, more recently, Japan and South Korea, who conveyed their willingness to cooperate in the nuclear power generation sector once the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) relaxes its guidelines. This is sudden change in the state of affairs for India which has struggled for years to keep its nuclear power generators functioning. India is in the process of identifying its civilian nuclear facilities to place under additional International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards as a part of the July 18 Indo-US agreement on civilian nuclear power cooperation. Nuclear power generation in India is barely 3 per cent of its total power generation, but nuclear power provides about 16 per cent of the world's electricity production. France built 60 nuclear power reactors after the oil shock of the mid-1970s and now about 78 per cent of its electricity production is from nuclear fuel. Japan, another country without substantial oil and coal reserves, obtains almost 30 per cent of its energy from nuclear reactors. America has about 103 nuclear reactors which provide about 20 per cent of its electricity production, the second largest source after coal.

The Telegraph, 11 January 2006

The Washington Rot (K.P. Nayar)

In the six years since Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared, in the presence of Bill Clinton, that India and the United States of America were "natural allies", America is increasingly looking like India. In 2000, when Clinton made his high-profile visit to New Delhi, transforming Indo-US relations from minimal ties between two estranged democracies to a love-fest of potential strategic partners, terrorism was not something that Americans worried much about. But India had already been bleeding from terrorism at that time for at least 15 years. Within a year, the US was obsessed by the threat of terrorism. Similarly, India had been putting up with Enron for several years before the country decided that it was going to be a natural ally of the US. Within two years, Enron had acquired household notoriety in the US too, a symbol of corporate greed and boardroom shenanigans. And now there is the nauseating stench of corruption in Washington. These days, America's capital has the appearance and atmosphere of Patna in 1997 after the Rs 950 crore fodder scam was unearthed, unseating Lalu Prasad as Bihar's chief minister; or of Gandhinagar under Chimambhai Patel, who became so notorious that Jayaprakash Narayan began his navnirman movement in Gujarat. There is no forgiveness for political corruption, but the toll it takes on people is sometimes sad to watch.

The Korean Herald, 13 January 2006

'Deeper U.S.-China relations benefit Korea'

Samuel R. Berger, a longtime foreign policy adviser to former U.S. President Bill Clinton, said deeper economic ties and political cooperation between the United States and China would also overwhelmingly benefit Korea. Berger, now chairman of Stonebridge International, LLC, an international strategic advisory firm based in Washington, talked about U.S.-China relations and their significance to Korea at a forum hosted by the Council on East Asian Affairs in Seoul yesterday. "Both the U.S. and China share a stronger common interest in a stable peninsula, one in which a reformed North takes its place alongside an increasingly prosperous South," he said. Discrediting the notion that the United States and China are competing for influence on the peninsula, he said a confrontation between the United States and China on the peninsula "such as we saw in the 1950s is the remotest of prospects." He said policymakers in Washington, Beijing and Seoul should pay particular attention to eliminating misunderstandings that may worsen hostilities, so that the real benefits of commitment can be enjoyed by the people of all three countries.

Hindustan Times, 12 January 2006

US nuke negotiator to arrive in China for talks

Beijing: The chief US negotiator to the six-party North Korean nuclear talks, Christopher Hill, was due to arrive in Beijing on Thursday for talks with his Chinese counterpart, the US embassy said. "In Tokyo, Seoul and Beijing, Secretary Hill will meet his counterparts on the six-party talks to discuss those talks and other matters of mutual concern," an embassy spokeswoman said. Hill, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, met his Japanese counterpart, Kenichiro Sasae, in Tokyo on Wednesday and was scheduled to meet South Korea's Song Min-Soon in Seoul on Thursday morning. China's delegation for the six-party talks is led by Deputy Foreign Minister Wu Dawei. Hill's visit to Beijing, expected to last less than a day, comes as North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il is reportedly in China on a clandestine trip. The US embassy declined to comment on whether Hill was to meet with any North Korean officials. Six-party talks, aimed at dismantling North Korea's nuclear arms programs, opened in 2003 and are currently stalled over Pyongyang's demand that the United States lifts financial sanctions before a new round can take place.

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People's Daily, 12 January 2006

Senior legislator meets U.S. senator

Sheng Huaren, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress (NPC), the country's top legislature, met in Beijing Thursday with Lisa Murkowski, chairwoman of the Asia-Pacific group of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The two sides had candid and friendly discussions on bilateral relations and other issues of common concern. Murkowski said it is her first visit to China, regarding it as a trip to enhance mutual understanding and friendship. She said in the future she will actively participate in regular exchanges between the U.S. Senate and the NPC.

Daily Times, 11 January 2006

PM to visit US

WASHINGTON: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz will visit the United States from January 17 to 24, unofficial sources have told Daily Times. The Embassy of Pakistan has not so far shared this information and a call to the State Department on Tuesday morning showed that while US officials were aware of the Pakistani prime minister's visit to New York "later this month", they were not in a position to say whether he would be meeting President George Bush or even coming to Washington. Daily Times has learnt that Aziz would be visiting Washington as well as Boston. A call to the embassy had not produced an answer till the filing of this report.

Daily Times, 11 January 2006

Bush senior to arrive in Pakistan on 15th

ISLAMABAD: Former United States president George Bush Senior will arrive in Pakistan on January 15 to visit the earthquake-devastated areas of Pakistan as a special attaché on behalf of the secretary general of the United Nations. According to Foreign Office Spokeswoman Tasneem Aslam, Bush will arrive in Pakistan on the night of January 15 or the next day. Sources said he would be briefed about the donations given by the international community for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the earthquake survivors. He will also be briefed on the rehabilitation efforts by the government of Pakistan and international organisations. Sources said that Bush would also meet Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and President Pervez Musharraf but dates for the meeting were yet to be finalised.

The Nation, 11 January 2006

Unacceptable

ISLAMABAD has finally lodged a protest with the US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan over a serious incident of intrusion in North Waziristan on Saturday. Eight tribesmen were killed, including two women and a child, and nine wounded when an American helicopter fired on the house of a religious leader inside North Waziristan. The local residents charged that earlier US troops mounted on five vehicles had conducted a search operation in the village and carried away two local tribesmen. While US troops have made several incursions inside Pakistan's tribal areas in the past, this is perhaps the worst incident of its type. Once more we have been reminded that the US and allied troops have scant respect for international borders, even with allies. This also strengthens the perception that they have been emboldened by the rather weak protests from Islamabad on previous incursions.

The Hindu, 13 January 2006

US-India civilian nuclear deal a gamble: Weiss

Washington, Jan. 13 (PTI): US President George W Bush is taking on a "nuclear gamble" and sending a wrong message to the world by agreeing to provide civilian atomic energy assistance to India, an American lawmaker known as the 'architect' of the 1978 Non-Proliferation Act has claimed. One of the risks, according to Leonar Weiss, is of terrorists being able to buy or steal nuclear bombs. Weiss also claimed that the proposed cooperation with India could also unravel the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty. "India's nuclear history reveals why the proposed deal would weaken US national security. In 1974, India exploded a secret nuclear device using plutonium from a Canadian-supplied reactor containing US heavy water. Both the reactor and the heavy water were sold to India under agreements with a 'peaceful use' requirement, which India violated," he claimed in an opinion piece in The Dallas Morning News. Weiss alleged that now the President has put forth a plan that "caves in" to India. Weiss compared what India will be allowed by the Republican administration and what has been denied or is being denied to Tehran, one of which he claimed was that New Delhi can build as many nuclear weapons as it wishes with its own nuclear supplies and Iran cannot. The other comparison, according to him, is that India is being allowed to build and operate un-safeguarded facilities for producing and stockpiling unlimited amounts of fissible materials to weapons programme whereas Iran cannot, even if safeguarded and even if the NPT did not prohibit those activities.

The Telegraph, 13 January 2006

Of Faith and Distrust (Swapan Dasgupta)

Non-proliferation faithfuls are worried about the Indo-US deal. The winter vacation on Capitol Hill is the moment for senators and congressmen to familiarize themselves with a world outside the Beltway and their constituencies. India being a flavour of the season, New Delhi has hosted a stream of visitors anxious to find out what is making this erstwhile exporter of communicable diseases - the parting comment of a former US ambassador - suddenly tick. John Kerry, a senator and the unsuccessful Democratic candidate in the 2004 US presidential election, was among the more prominent of the visitors. The senator's contention was couched in the vocabulary of practical and pragmatic politics. The Indo-US nuclear deal, he argued, is a principle worth supporting but there are concerns of people who see non-proliferation as an article of faith. These concerns, he feels, must be met more than halfway by India being accommodating on the details of the understanding. Only then will the agreement pass muster in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Although Kerry made it clear that he was not necessarily speaking for himself but merely alerting India to the concerns of his colleagues, it is apparent that the assumptions that guided the Bush administration into sponsoring India's membership of the nuclear high table aren't universally shared in Washington DC.

People's Daily, 13 January 2006

Hill visits Beijing to push for nuke talks

Vice-Foreign Minister Wu Dawei met his US counterpart Christopher Hill yesterday afternoon in Beijing and once again called on all the involved parties to make joint efforts to resolve the six-party nuclear talks. Hill, the chief US negotiator on the issue, was in Beijing for several hours to discuss ways to push talks forward after stopovers in Seoul and Tokyo. During the talks, Wu reiterated China's longstanding position on the nuclear issue, which is the

adherence to a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and a peaceful solution through dialogues. Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan told reporters in yesterday's press conference that China hoped all parties would continue to work closely together. "All parties must show goodwill and sincerity to push forward developments," Kong said. On his arrival in China, Hill told reporters in the airport that the date for the resumption of the negotiations would be a major theme of the discussions and Washington remains committed to the six-party process.

Xinhua, 13 January 2006

US House group in China for visit

BEIJING, Jan 13: Founders of the United States House of Representatives' China Working Group are in China for their first visit since the establishment of the group last June. Mark Kirk, a Republican from Illinois, and Rick Larsen, a Democrat from Washington State, said they will discuss with their Chinese hosts economic and other issues including possible co-operation on space programmes. Kirk said the US and China could investigate possible co-operation opportunities to enable their astronauts to help each other in emergencies. Kirk and Larsen and their entourage began their visit on Monday in Beijing, they will also visit Shanghai and the satellite-launching centre in Jiuquan in Northwest China's Gansu Province during their 10-day stay. They have met Wu Bangguo, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, Defence Minister Cao Gangchuan, and senior economic officials. Kirk said the tour would also be an educational opportunity for them.

The Indian Express, 14 January 2006

N-deal with India: US can't afford to fail, says ex-envoy (Lalit K Jha)

WASHINGTON, Jan 13: The Former United States Ambassador to India, Robert D Blackwill, has said the US and its Congress "can't afford" an unsuccessful nuclear deal with India, as this would harm vital American strategic interests for many years. Signed in July last year during the visit of the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, the nuclear agreement calls for the separation of India's civilian and military nuclear facilities. Since then it has been a matter of debate and controversies, he said. "If this (Indo-US nuclear deal) was a failure, my own believe, my personal judgment is that it would be a set back for the evolution of US-India strategic partnership for many years to come," Blackwill said. Making a strong case for the passage of the appropriate legislation by the Congress that would approve what he said as the historic Indo-US nuclear deal, Blackwill said India was an emerging global power- saw in this agreement a "litmus test" for the US foreign relationship towards India. With respect to foreign countries carrying out without dwelling into past and giving specific examples, Blackwill said India had a long history of suspicion (against the US foreign policy). Blackwill felt that things would move at a good pace in the next couple of months: India coming out with detailed plan for its separation of civilian and military nuclear facilities and the legislation being placed before the Congress.

The Asian age, 14 January 2006

A question of Nuclear separation (Dr A. Gopalakrishnan)

One of the major objectives of the United States in entering into the Indo-US nuclear cooperation agreement is to bring about an early freezing of the Indian weapon-usable nuclear materials stock at the minimum possible level. India, in turn, obviously wants to retain all the accumulated inventory of such materials, as well as the facilities to produce the additional material we consider essential for a minimum deterrence, out of IAEA safeguards. Obviously, each country wants to manoeuvre the separation plan to suit its specific objective. Despite the façade that the deal is progressing well, it is clear that most of the originally perceived differences between the two sides are very much present even now. It appears that the US side feels that certain facilities, especially reactors, which India has proposed to retain in the strategic group, really belong in the civilian list. In addition, it is clear that the US considers India's time schedule for bringing these facilities in phases into the civilian list as too stretched out, and that we should indeed place them under safeguards at a more rapid pace.

The Tribune, 14 January 2006

US experts visit Tarapore station

Mumbai, Jan 13: The first Indo-US high-level meeting on civilian nuclear programmes after the July 18 landmark agreement between the two countries concluded here yesterday, according to the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE). The meeting in the form of a workshop was held between January 9 and 12. The on-going cooperation in various areas, including high energy nuclear physics and regulatory agencies of the two countries, was endorsed by the workshop, a DAE spokesperson, Dr S.K. Malhotra, said. The 18-member US delegation was led by Acting Director of the office of Nuclear Energy Science and Technology, US Department of Energy, R. Shane Johnson. The 12-member Indian delegation was led by Dr R.B. Grover, Director, Strategic Planning Group, DAE. The Indo-US group also visited the Tarapore Atomic Power Station units 3 and 4 of 500MW each and "this was an exercise undertaken by the DAE to show India's latest indigenous capability," Mr Malhotra said.

Hindustan Times, 14 January 2006

Reversal on nuke deal will hurt US: Blackwill (S Rajagopalan)

Washington: Any failure to implement the civil nuclear pact could hurt the US's vital interests and set the clock back on its strategic relations with India, former US Ambassador to India Robert Blackwill has warned. Blackwill's remarks, made during a talk at the US India Business Council in Washington, were clearly directed at Washington's non-proliferation lobby that is continuing its all-out efforts to thwart the deal. "We are at a historic intersection in our relationship. Indians see this (the nuke deal) as a litmus test of American seriousness about developing a strategic partnership," he said adding that the Indians have "a long history of suspicion" on this score. As for the critics who have come out with their own radical suggestions to "improve" the agreement, Blackwill cited Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran's recent arguments that the proposed changes would only prove to be "deal breakers".

Hindustan Times, 14 January 2006

India's vote on Iran holds key to Indo-US nuke deal (Carol Giacomo)

Washington: A landmark US-Indian nuclear cooperation deal could be hampered by India's reluctance to refer Iran's nuclear programme to the UN Security Council and to open enough of its own atomic facilities to inspection, according to US officials and experts. Both issues will be discussed when Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Nicholas Burns, visits New Delhi for talks on January 19. US President George Bush, in a controversial policy shift on July 18, 2005, promised nuclear-armed India full cooperation in developing its civilian atomic power industry in return for New Delhi's commitment to international non-proliferation standards. The deal, which would lift a 30-year ban on nuclear commerce between the two countries, must be approved by the US Congress. The 45-nation Nuclear Suppliers Groups is also being asked to change its rules. India sided with the United States and major European powers when the UN watchdog agency last September declared Iran had failed to comply with its international obligations. The West accuses Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons, but Tehran says it wants nuclear technology to produce electricity. The vote in the International Atomic Energy Agency came after US congressmen warned the US-India agreement could be at risk if New Delhi did not work with Washington to punish Tehran for nuclear-weapons related activities.

The Washington Post, 14 January 2006

Bush Warns Against Nuclear-Armed Iran (Peter Baker)

President Bush declared yesterday that a nuclear-armed Iran would pose "a grave threat to the security of the world" as he tried to rally support from other major powers for U.N. Security Council action unless a defiant Tehran abandons any aspirations for nuclear weapons. In using the phrase "grave threat," Bush invoked the same language he used before launching the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and he highlighted in particular the danger to Israel. But during a White House appearance with visiting German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Bush stressed that he hopes to forge a "common consensus" with other world leaders for a diplomatic resolution of the escalating confrontation with Iran. The joint front presented by Bush and Merkel contrasted with the schism between the United States and major European allies in the months leading up to the Iraq war and underscored the more multilateral strategy pursued by the White House in trying to prevent Iran from building nuclear bombs. Not only do Germany, France and Britain now support taking Iran to the United Nations, but Russia has also indicated to Washington that it would permit the matter to go before the Security Council.

The Telegraph, 14 January 2006

US missiles hit Pak

Islamabad, Jan. 13 (Reuters): A Pakistani security official and residents of a border region said US aircraft from Afghanistan killed 18 people, including women and children, when they fired missiles at pro-Taliban Islamists early today. Pakistani military spokesman Major-General Shaukat Sultan said up to 14 people had been killed in several blasts in the Bajaur tribal region but said he did not know the cause. A US military spokesman in Afghanistan, Lieutenant-Colonel Jerry Hara, said there were no reports of US forces operating in the area. The blasts came days after Pakistan, a key ally in the US-led war on terrorism, lodged a strong protest with US-led forces in Afghanistan, saying cross-border firing in the nearby Waziristan area last weekend killed eight people. Residents of Bajaur, opposite Afghanistan's insurgent-troubled Kunar province, said the explosions were caused by firing from unidentified aircraft on the village of Damadola at about 2200 GMT yesterday.

Hindustan Times, 14 January 2006

No joint session for Bush (Nilova Roy Chaudhury)

New Delhi, Jan 13: US President George W Bush is expected to visit India in the first week of March but there are indications that -- unlike his predecessor Bill Clinton -- he will not address the joint session of Parliament. The reason: the Left allies of the UPA have threatened to raise objections and Washington does not want any "embarrassment" during the visit. The Left parties have problems with the US policies on Iraq and Iran and have indicated that they would not welcome Bush in Parliament. However, sources said Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee, despite his political affiliation, has "no problem" if the government requests Bush to address the joint session. Negotiations are still going on to fine-tune the details of the visit. Among the dates being spoken of are

March 1 and March 4 and 5.

Daily Times, 14 January 2006

Editorial: Closer cooperation needed between American and Pakistan military commanders in borderlands

On January 7, some troops of the US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan crossed over into North Waziristan and conducted a search operation on Pakistani territory. They arrested two tribesmen and took them away. Later, a US helicopter also fired on the house of a religious leader in the area, killing eight tribesmen, including two women and a child. Nine other people were wounded in the firing. We are now informed that Pakistan has lodged a protest with the US government over the incident, though we have no information about how the US government has responded to the protest or what internal action, if any, it plans to take with regard to its local commanders to ensure that this sort of thing doesn't happen again. This is not the first time that the US or US-led troops have violated Pakistani territory. Such incidents used to happen quite frequently in 2002 and 2003 until the two sides created a mechanism to deal with them. A couple of times US and Pakistani troops also fired on each other. Then the two sides realised that they needed a military commission to deal with such eventualities. It was presumably the task of the commission to effectively coordinate between troops on both sides of the border and to delineate the border itself, which is disputed at various places.

Hindustan Times, 13 January 2006

Now here's some rich advice

Jan 12: In the latest edition of its 'State of the World' report, the US think-tank Worldwatch Institute warns growing economies like India and China not to try too hard to attain 'Western living standards', since that might consume too much of the planet's resources. "Earth lacks the water, energy and agricultural land," says the report, to sustain "the ambitions of China, India, Japan, Europe and the US, as well as the aspirations of the rest of the world, in a sustainable way." As if to neon the notice, the report adds that any wrong choices made by India and China in the next few years "could lead to political and economic instability" in the world. This is preposterous for more than one reason. Nobody can redraw the planet's balance sheet based on the statistics used to back up its unsolicited civilisational advice. Even the best computer projections must reckon with phenomena like volcanoes and shifting tectonic plates that will influence human activities in the long run. In any case, it's an open secret that the richest countries are responsible for the galloping depletion of a disproportionate share of the planet's resources. Unfortunately, despite having the technology to introduce fundamental changes needed to save millions from hunger and disease, these countries lack the incentive to apply it. Farming, for instance, has already produced the biggest global imprint of humanity, affecting half the planet's habitable land. And the challenge now is to increase agricultural productivity without using substantially more land. But the developed countries have yet to abandon the current industrial model of agriculture in favour of a more 'biological' one, based on ecological processes like using minimal fertiliser and water.

The Tribune, 15 January 2006

18 die as US jets target Al-Qaida leader in Pak

Islamabad/Washington, Jan 14: A US airstrike in Pakistan targeted Al-Qaida's second-in-command, Ayman Al Zawahri, but it was unclear if he had been killed, US sources knowledgeable about the strike said in Washington. CNN quoted sources as saying the CIA had ordered the airstrike on buildings after receiving intelligence that Zawahri was in a village near the border with Afghanistan. "At this time, there is nothing in the operational reporting to suggest that this attack or incident occurred from a US Central Command perspective," said Major Chris Karns. Al-Qaida's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahri, was not in a village near the Afghan border that was hit by a US airstrike, a senior Pakistani Government official said today. A Pakistani security official and residents of the region said earlier that U.S. aircraft from Afghanistan had killed 18 people, including women and children, when they fired missiles at pro-Taliban Islamists in the Bajaur tribal region. Residents of Bajaur, opposite Afghanistan's insurgent-troubled Kunar province, said aircraft had fired on the village of Damadola at about 3.30 am IST yesterday.

The New York Times, 15 January 2006

Airstrike by U.S. Draws Protests From Pakistanis (Carlotta Gall)

PESHAWAR, Jan. 14: Pakistan's government on Saturday condemned a deadly American airstrike on a village in the northwestern tribal region, and a senior Pakistani security official said he was confident that Ayman al-Zawahiri, the No. 2 leader of Al Qaeda and the target of the strike, had not been in the village when it was hit. In a statement, the Foreign Ministry condemned the loss of civilian lives and said it had delivered an official protest to the American ambassador in Islamabad. The information minister, Sheik Rashid Ahmed, said in Islamabad that the government wanted "to assure the people we will not allow such incidents to reoccur," The Associated Press reported. Local officials in the Bajaur district, where the airstrike happened, said 18 civilians had been killed in the attack, including six children. But the senior Pakistani official who spoke of Mr. Zawahiri suggested that the death

toll was higher, and he said that at least 11 militants had been killed in the attack. Seven of the dead were Arab fighters, and another four were Pakistani militants from Punjab Province, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief the news media.

The Indian Express, 15 January 2006

Zawahri not among dead in US airstrike

ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 14 : Pakistan condemned on Saturday an airstrike on a village near the Afghan border that US Intelligence sources say was aimed at killing al Qaeda second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahri. The government regretted the loss of civilian lives, Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said. Tribesmen in Damadola village in the Bajaur tribal agency said 18 of their kinfolk were killed by the airstrike early on Friday morning, while a senior Pakistani government official said Zawahri was not in the village at the time. "We want to assure the people we will not allow such an incident to reoccur," Ahmed said, reading a statement which termed the attack as "highly condemnable." Pakistan also summoned the US Ambassador to protest against the airstrike. "The US Ambassador will be called to the foreign office," said Ahmed, adding a protest would be lodged over the attack on Friday in which, according to residents, 18 civilians were killed. Meanwhile, Zawahri is alive, Al Arabiya television reported, quoting a source which it said has contact with al Qaeda. Source with contacts with al Qaeda reiterated to Arabiya that Zawahri is alive," Al Arabiya said.

The News, 15 January 2006

Kerry backs Pak quest for civil N-tech (Asim Yasin)

ISLAMABAD: Former US presidential candidate Senator John Kerry has said his country and Pakistan could explore common grounds for cooperation in civil nuclear technology on the pattern of US-India agreement. He was talking to newsmen after his two-hour meeting with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz at the Prime Minister House here on Saturday. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and the US lawmaker held extensive discussions covering bilateral relations, prospects of cooperation in civil nuclear technology, Pak-India peace process and the need to resolve the lingering Kashmir dispute. The prime minister said he told the US lawmaker that Pakistan is a declared nuclear power and it needs more electricity for sustained economic development and in this connection it is also pursuing a programme to generate over 8,000 megawatts of nuclear energy by 2020. He said Islamabad wants cooperation with the world in nuclear technology for electricity generation. "I would also discuss this matter with US authorities during my upcoming visit to Washington," he added. Kerry told newsmen he supports the proposal of US-Pakistan agreement on pattern of US-India agreement on civilian nuclear technology but it needs to be studied in detail.

Daily Times, 15 January 2006

Kerry for equality between India, Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Former US presidential candidate Senator John Kerry advocated that the US accord equal treatment to Pakistan and India in providing nuclear technology for civilian use, if Pakistan fulfils certain requirements. "I support a nuclear deal with India, in principle. There is a strong democracy in India and they abide by the principles of non-proliferation," he said, adding, "I hope things with Pakistan are moving in the right direction and Pakistan too is given equal treatment, if it meets certain standards." The senator said that while he backed the India-US nuclear deal "in principle," details of the deal were yet to be sorted out. He, however, did not specify what measures would help Pakistan in getting a similar deal with the US. He hoped that during his upcoming visit to India and Pakistan, President George W Bush would take up the issue with the Pakistan government. Later, the PM told reporters that he had informed Senator Kerry that Pakistan would seek to obtain civilian nuclear technology from anywhere in the world to meet its energy requirements.

Daily Times, 15 January 2006

Burns on his way to India and Pakistan (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: US Undersecretary for Political Affairs R Nicholas Burns will be visiting India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka from January 16-25. An official announcement on Friday said: "On his inaugural trip to Pakistan, Burns will meet senior Pakistani officials and opinion leaders to discuss broadening the US-Pakistan bilateral relationship, review Pakistan's progress towards full democracy, explore ways to foster greater regional cooperation and express the United States' continued support for earthquake relief and reconstruction efforts." According to State Department spokesman Sean McCormack, the trip was originally planned as primarily focused on US-India relations. In India, he would talk about how the July 2005 US-India agreement on civil nuclear affairs is to be implemented. He would also discuss Iran with his Indian counterparts. "Last time around at the (International Atomic Energy Agency) Board of Governors, they (India) voted with other countries to find Iran in non-compliance. At the upcoming emergency session of the Board of Governors, we'll see how these other countries vote. We're not going to prejudge how any particular country is going to vote at this time, but ... we believe we have the votes in the IAEA Board of Governors to send this matter to the Security Council." The two sides will discuss how to strengthen their strategic partnership.

Japan Times, 15 January 2006

Japan, U.S. to meld missile shield data

MOSCOW (Kyodo) Japan and the United States will integrate their information networks on missile defense by the end of fiscal 2006, Defense Agency chief Fukushima Nukaga said Friday night. After working out details such as the roles of the Self-Defense Forces and the U.S. military in the initiative, the two countries are expected to sign an agreement possibly this summer, according to Nukaga, who is currently visiting Russia. Speaking to reporters in Moscow, Nukaga noted the importance of having the capability to detect a missile launch quickly and to track it accurately to effectively counter such an attack. He cited the need for linking the Air Self-Defense Force's radar warning system and U.S. satellites and radars. The defense chief stressed that so long as the information given to the U.S. side is part of general information exchange between the two countries, "there is no problem vis-a-vis the Constitution even if the information results in the use of military force" by the U.S. or other parties. The government's interpretation of the Constitution is that Japan cannot exercise its right to collective defense.

Dawn, 15 January 2006

Kerry links N-deal with democracy (Iftikhar A. Khan)

ISLAMABAD, Jan 14: US Senator John Kerry said on Saturday that a civilian nuclear cooperation pact with his country was "an appropriate goal" for Pakistan but linked the same with democracy and nuclear non-proliferation. "India is a democracy and it has adhered to the non-proliferation agreement in all the years of its involvement with nuclear facilities. This is not yet true of Pakistan, though Pakistan is moving in that direction," he told reporters after a marathon meeting with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Saturday. Mr Kerry, a former Democratic presidential candidate, said Pakistan and the United States could explore a common ground for cooperation in civilian nuclear technology. He said during his meeting with President General Pervez Musharraf he would discuss things that Pakistan needed to do to qualify for equal treatment in this regard - a subject which he had also discussed with the prime minister. He said that when President Bush comes to the region there would be discussions on it. "In the meantime, we can find ways for common ground to make it possible. It is an appropriate goal. We need to work together and, hopefully, we can get there," he said.

The Telegraph, 15 January 2006

Iran creeps into US Delhi brief (K.P. Nayar)

Washington, Jan. 14: A visit by the third-ranking US state department official to New Delhi on January 19-20, which would have finalised the dates and itinerary for President George W. Bush's travel to India, has come under a cloud with Iran once again taking the centre stage of diplomacy in Washington. Nicholas Burns, the under-secretary of state for political affairs, was to have spent two days in New Delhi, primarily ironing out the Bush visit and the next steps in the Indo-US nuclear deal of July 18, 2005, with foreign secretary Shyam Saran. But with Iran suddenly raising the stakes on its nuclear programme, Burns now hopes to arrive in India with a mandate from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P-5) plus Germany for international action against Iran for advancing its nuclear programme. The Burns trip to South Asia was pre-arranged, but a new dimension to it was added yesterday when it was announced here that prior to his arrival in New Delhi, the under-secretary will meet his counterparts from the P-5 and Germany in London on Monday to discuss the possibility of referring Iran to the UN Security Council. India's vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) last year in favour of such a referral became a hot potato for the Manmohan Singh government and pitted the Left parties against their friends in the ruling UPA.

The Telegraph, 15 January 2006

N-armed Iran a grave threat, says Bush (Ashish Kumar Sen)

Washington: President George W. Bush said on Friday a Nuclear-armed Iran posed a "grave threat" and insisted it was "logical" that the regime be dealt with by the United Nations Security Council. Presenting a united front with German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the White House, Mr Bush said he was not going to prejudge what the Security Council should do, but added, "I recognise that it's logical that a country which has rejected diplomatic entreaties be sent to the United Nations Security Council." Mr Bush said Iran's decision to resume Nuclear research was "unacceptable," and warned that Iran, armed with Nuclear weapon, "poses a grave threat to the security of the world." Earlier this week, Iran broke the UN seals at its nuclear plant in Natanz and announced it was restarting "small-scale" research. Iran insists its Nuclear programme has peaceful intentions. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Friday dismissed the threat of the UN sanctions saying Iran "is not frightened by threats from any country, and it will continue the path of production of Nuclear energy." Mr Bush noted that the USA and its allies had an obligation to send a "common message to the Iranians that it was their behaviour -- trying to clandestinely develop a nuclear weapon, or using the guise of a civilian nuclear weapon programme to get the know-how to develop a Nuclear weapon - was unacceptable."

The Times of India, 16 January 2006

Pak N-deal like India's, but changes first

ISLAMABAD: US Senator and leading Democrat John Kerry on Saturday said Pakistan ought eventually to have the same access as rival India to civilian nuclear technology, but indicated changes were needed first. A landmark US-India accord, agreed in principle last July but still to be negotiated in detail, would grant New Delhi access to nuclear technology it has been denied for three decades, provided it separates civilian and military facilities. But critics in the US Congress and elsewhere say the plan undermines non-proliferation goals and should be tightened up. Kerry, a member of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, told reporters in Pakistan he had backed 'in principle' the plan for India during a visit to New Delhi this week, but stressed it still needed to be fleshed out, especially with respect to separation of civilian and military facilities. After talks with Pakistani prime minister Shaukat Aziz in Islamabad, he said he had discussed steps Pakistan needed to think about as it moved toward equal treatment with India.

The Indian Express, 15 January 2006

Sanctions could drive up oil prices: Iran

Tehran, January 15: Any sanctions imposed on Iran because of its disputed nuclear programme could drive up world oil prices, Economy Minister Davoud Danesh-Jafari told state radio on Sunday. "Any possible sanctions on Iran from the West could possibly, by disturbing Iran's political and economic situation, raise oil prices beyond levels the West expects," he said. Iran is the world's fourth biggest exporter of crude oil and the second biggest in the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. The United States and European Union want Iran referred to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions over a nuclear programme they suspect is aimed at developing weapons rather than fuel for power stations. Iran denies the charge. China, a key crude buyer from Iran and permanent member of the Security Council, has said it would prefer the case to be solved outside the world body. Germany, the biggest exporter to Iran, has also warned economic sanctions could be 'a very dangerous path', preferring travel restrictions on Iranian politicians.

The New York Times, 15 January 2006

Senators Say Military Strike on Iran Must Be Option

WASHINGTON: Republican and Democratic senators said on Sunday the United States may ultimately have to undertake a military strike to deter Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, but that should be the last resort. "That is the last option. Everything else has to be exhausted. But to say under no circumstances would we exercise a military option, that would be crazy," Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona said on CBS's "Face the Nation." Democratic Sen. Evan Bayh of Indiana, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said there are sensitive elements of Iran's nuclear program, which, if attacked, "would dramatically delay its development." "But that should not be an option at this point. We ought to use everything else possible keep from getting to that juncture," he said on CNN's "Late Edition." Iran says it aims only to make power for an energy-needy economy, not build atom bombs. But it hid nuclear work from the UN nuclear watchdog agency for almost 20 years before exiled dissidents exposed it in 2002.

Xinhua, 16 January 2006

China's interest in Africa no "threat": US

BEIJING, Jan. 16: China's moves to secure crude oil supplies in Africa for its growing economy do not threaten U.S. energy needs, a senior U.S. State Department official said Friday, the Reuters reported. The United States and China are both looking to Africa to help diversify their oil supplies. China's foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, is visiting six African nations to increase China's diplomatic and economic presence in the region. China's top offshore oil producer agreed recently to pay \$2.3 billion for a stake in a Nigerian oil and gas field, its largest-ever overseas acquisition. "I don't think China seeking oil in Africa is a threat to the United States' interests," said Jendayi Frazer, U.S. assistant secretary of state for African affairs. Cooperation helps realize sustainable development in Africa. Resources cooperation between China and Africa will help Africa realize sustainable development, Chinese experts on African studies were quoted by the Xinhua News Agency as saying. In China's first-ever African Policy Paper released Thursday, China highlighted its readiness to facilitate information sharing and cooperation with Africa in resources development. Despite their remarkable economic growth in recent years, African countries are still vulnerable in their economy as the majority of their exports are unprocessed raw materials, Wang said. China has helped African countries build processing factories and provided technical and management training courses in a bid to increase the added value of their exported commodities, thus increasing the competitiveness of their products.

Daily Times, 16 January 2006

I can't say that we wouldn't do the same thing again: US Senator

WASHINGTON: A leading Republican lawmaker has defended a purported US air strike on a Pakistani village that Islamabad says killed innocent civilians. Senator John McCain said Americans regretted the loss of life in an attack that was apparently meant to kill Ayman al-Zawahri, al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden's top lieutenant.

But "this war on terror has no boundaries", said McCain, who challenged US President George W Bush for the Republican nomination in 2000. "We have to go where these people are, and we have to take them out." Anger has mounted in Pakistan over Friday's attack in the hamlet of Damadola, an ethnic Pashtun hamlet about 6 km from the border with Afghanistan. Islamic groups held nationwide protests today, with 10,000 people rallying in Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city, chanting "Death to America" and "Stop bombing against innocent people". A senior Pakistani intelligence official said 12 bodies, including seven foreigners, had been taken from the village. McCain said Americans "understand the anger people feel" in Pakistan, but the United States would continue to target al-Qaeda's top operatives in the region. "The United States' priorities are to get rid of al-Qaeda, and this was an effort to do so," he said on the TV program, Face the Nation. "I can't tell you that we wouldn't do the same thing again."

Daily Times, 16 January 2006

US should not do action in Pakistani territory: Jahangir Karamat

WASHINGTON: Pakistani ambassador in USA Jahangir Karamat has said that foreign forces should not carry out any action within Pakistani territory, as Pakistan was a part of the team fighting against terrorism. While talking to Geo News he said that the air strike in Bajor Agency was the responsibility of Pakistani Government and if there were any report about availability of suspects the foreign forces should exchange it with Pakistan. He declared Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz scheduled visit to US as an important and hinted that US president may visit Pakistan following Pakistani Prime Minister's visit.

Daily Times, 16 January 2006

US military releases 500 Iraqi prisoners, including journalists

DUBAI: The US military released on Sunday some 500 prisoners cleared of ties to the Iraqi insurgency, including a pair of journalists, US military officials said. They said that the journalists had been held in Iraqi prisons for months. Majed Hameed, an Iraqi reporter for the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya network and the Reuters news agency, was released on Sunday after four months in US custody, US Army Brig Gen Mark Kimmitt said during a visit to Al-Arabiya's headquarters in Dubai. In Baghdad, US military spokesman Lt Col Barry Johnson confirmed that the two journalists were among those released after being cleared by the Iraqi and US Combined Review and Release Board. Kimmitt was greeted in Dubai by protesters carrying placards decrying the US military's arrest of Hameed and other reporters. Kimmitt said that Hameed had been a suspected threat and was held until he was cleared. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said that US troops had detained Hameed on September 15 in Iraq's Anbar province, and al-Mashhadani was held since being taken on August 8 by US Marines in a raid on his home.

The Asian Age, 17 January 2006

Desperate for a nuclear deal (Bharat Karnad)

With the state visit by President George W. Bush looming, the Congress Party-led coalition government seems to be getting increasingly desperate to obtain a deal, any nuclear deal, as long as there is some paper for the US leader and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to sign. And, apparently, US under-secretary of state Nicholas Burns' trip offers a last-gasp chance to firm up this transaction. That this will "transform Indo-US relations and consolidate India's standing as one of the world's major powers" as a media trumpeter breathlessly put it, is doubtful. What it is guaranteed to do, however, is begin firming up India's reputation as a tamed nuclear outlier state, one shorn off its Samson's locks of options and therefore denuded of its political and military leverage. Ideally, India should be able to fully safeguard both its sources of civilian nuclear energy and its freedom to design and develop its nuclear arsenal and weapons-mix to any qualitative and quantitative specifications necessary to enable it to deal with any conceivable crisis or contingency in the future. But assessments of the future are notoriously tricky. Because these are dogged by uncertainty and risk, it requires a country like India to exercise abundant caution, especially when it comes to negotiating deals, like the one the July 18 Joint Statement promises, which will limit the country's strategic choices.

Newindpress, 17 January 2006

India points to NPT as Iran pulls up Indo-US nuke deal

NEW DELHI: Upset over Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani's reference to the Indo-US nuclear deal as a case of US "dual standards" compared to Tehran's nuclear programme, India today said as a "responsible nuclear power", it adhered to "international obligations" and other countries should do the same. Iran's nuclear programme has been referred to the United Nations Security Council for alleged violation of commitments as per the Non-Proliferation Treaty that it has signed. The inspections by IAEA were triggered on this count. However, in an interview, Ali Larijani, also the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said: "Compare that to India, it does have nuclear weapons but they (US) have extensive relations in the nuclear field (with India). This dual standard is detrimental to international security." He argued that international laws were equal and that actions cannot be taken on the basis of "intentions". He pointed to some IAEA observations that Tehran was 10

years away from making the bomb and in that context, mentioned India as a country possessing nuclear weapons but being able to get Washington's cooperation in the field. India, unlike Iran, is not a signatory to the NPT and has maintained that having signed the treaty, Iran must abide by its conditions. "We have consistently maintained that it is a state's sovereign right to enter into treaties and international agreements. Every state must fully comply with its international obligations and commitments and in a transparent manner," the MEA spokesperson said in response to a query on Larijani's remarks.

The Washington Post, 17 January 2006

U.S. Wins Support In Iran Dispute (Mary Jordan and Dafna Linzer)

LONDON, Jan. 16: China and Russia agreed with the United States, Britain, Germany and France on Monday that Iran must completely suspend its nuclear program, the British Foreign Office said. Although the countries failed to agree on whether Iran's case should be referred to the U.N. Security Council, the Europeans applied new pressure on the Iranian government by calling for an emergency meeting of the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency on Feb. 2. With all six nations declaring that they sought a diplomatic solution to the escalating confrontation with Iran, Russian President Vladimir Putin offered a glimmer of hope for a compromise. Putin said the Iranian government was considering a proposal from Moscow that Russia would produce enriched uranium for Iran, to ensure the material could be used only for peaceful purposes. Iran has adamantly reserved the right to develop its nuclear program, stating that its intention is to produce peaceful nuclear energy. But many world leaders are increasingly alarmed by the attitude of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad -- who has called for Israel to be "wiped off the map" -- and fear he could be trying to build nuclear bombs. Intense deliberations began last week after the Iranian government ordered the removal of seals on equipment at an enrichment plant where it had ceased operations two years ago. On the issue of referral to the Security Council, another government official said that China remained "slightly hesitant" but that Russia was "coming around" on the issue. Still, neither the Bush administration nor the Europeans were able to wrangle any guarantee from Russia or China for support once the issue gets to the Security Council, and Western diplomats said they doubted whether Moscow or Beijing would be willing to impose any sanctions on a major trading partner.

Daily Times, 17 January 2006

'US knew all about Khan network' (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: Washington was keeping a close watch on Dr AQ Khan all through the years but finds it "politically inconvenient" to admit that now, according to a report in an American magazine. William Langewiesche of Atlantic Monthly quotes a US source as saying somewhere in the 1980s, "We have a very strong interest in Dr Khan and the Khan Research Laboratories. We pay very close attention to his work. In fact, our interest in this man is so intense that you can assume if he takes a toilet break and goes to the john, we know about it. We know where he is." Langewiesche writes, "Though it would be politically inconvenient to admit this now, the United States was aware not only of Khan's peddling of nuclear wares to Iran but also of the likely involvement of the army and the government of Pakistan. For political reasons more than for reasons of national security, these are some of the most closely held secrets in the United States. For the same reasons, the apparent lack of good information is pointed to as yet another US intelligence failure ... when in reality the CIA knew fairly well what was happening." Langewiesche says of the offer allegedly made on behalf of Dr Khan to Iraq that it was not taken up because "the Iraqis suspected that the offer might be a scam or a trap; they asked for a sample of the goods - possibly a component or blueprints. They never received the sample, because the Gulf War then erupted."

Daily Times, 17 January 2006

Musharraf meets Bush Sr

ISLAMABAD: George Bush Sr, former US president and UN special envoy for earthquake relief aid to Pakistan, met President Pervez Musharraf at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Monday and discussed relief activities in the quake-hit areas and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the quake victims' lives. Musharraf told Bush Sr that Pakistan wanted continuous world assistance in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the October 8 quake-hit areas. The Pakistani president also thanked to the UN for helping Pakistan. He hoped that the international community would continue assisting Pakistani efforts in the quake-hit areas. Bush Sr expressed grief over the loss of lives in the earthquake. Sources told Online that both men also discussed the ongoing war on terror and the campaign against Taliban and Al Qaeda militants in Afghanistan and the Pak-Afghan border areas. The deaths of innocent civilians in a missile attack by US forces in Bajaur Agency were also discussed. Musharraf said regional security and respect of the borders of allied countries should be ensured. He also emphasised on the need to make the process of information exchange between allies more effective. He reiterated that fighting the war on terror was in Pakistan's interest, as the country faced the menace internally.

The News, 17 January 2006

PM leaves for US today (Salim Bokhari)

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz will discuss vital international, regional and bilateral issues with US President George W Bush in a one-on-one meeting fixed for Jan 24 at the White House. The meeting will be followed by formal discussions between the two sides. The focus of the parleys would be civil nuclear cooperation agreement reached between Washington and New Delhi. Prime Minister Aziz will insist on similar arrangement between Washington and Islamabad and argue with the American leadership that being an old ally and frontline state in war against international terrorism Pakistan deserves rather better treatment. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz will Tuesday embark upon his maiden journey to the United States for a weeklong official visit since he assumed his office. He will return to Pakistan on Jan 25. Official sources say that a whole range of issues would come for review and the prime minister will update President Bush on the outcome of on-going composite dialogue with India. The prime minister will also share with the US president his perceptions of Indian leadership's response and some unguarded statements issued by leaders of the ruling elite in New Delhi. He will also explain the significance of President Pervez Musharraf's initiative of making different proposals to India for the resolution of the long-standing Kashmir dispute. These proposals include demilitarisation of the Valley and self-governance by the Kashmiri people.

The Hindu, 17 January 2006

Protests simmer over U.S. attack in Waziristan (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: Even as U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Monday justified the Friday air attacks on a village in the restive Waziristan bordering Afghanistan, Opposition parties have threatened to intensify protests against it. Dr. Rice has been quoted as telling reporters accompanying her en-route to Monrovia that Washington could not deal "lightly" with Al-Qaeda and is ready to address Islamabad's concerns after the U.S. attack which led to 18 deaths. The attack - denounced by the Government - has been roundly condemned by political parties and civil society as infringement on the sovereignty of Pakistan. A group of Opposition parties has moved a motion for adjournment of the Senate to discuss the situation arising out the attack. On Sunday the religious parties organised a nation wide protest. The air strike is purported to have been carried out at the behest of the CIA on the basis of intelligence that Osama bin Laden's trusted aide and number two in the Al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was sheltered in the village. Pakistan has maintained that it is neither in a position to confirm or deny the report. Even President Musharraf backed ruling Pakistan Muslim League party organised a protest meeting.

Daily Times, 17 January 2006

Islamists vow more anti-US protests

ISLAMABAD: Hardline Pakistani Islamic groups pledged on Monday to keep up their protests against a failed air strike targeting Al Qaeda's number two which Islamabad said led to the deaths of 18 civilians. Newspapers and television channels devoted massive coverage to angry street protests on Sunday by thousands of people in major cities and ran vehemently critical editorials. "The protest against the US air strike in Bajur will continue," said Shahid Shamsi, spokesman for the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, an alliance of Islamic parties that forms part of Pakistan's opposition. Pakistani officials have said that Zawahiri was probably not killed in the strike blamed by officials and in reports on a Predator drone of the US Central Intelligence Agency which hit Damadola village in the Bajur tribal district Friday. Even the ruling Pakistan Muslim League party - which backs military ruler President Pervez Musharraf and normally supports his pro-US stance - took the rare step of calling a protest meeting Monday over the missile raid. Musharraf faces a difficult balancing act between key ally Washington and domestic political parties, particularly hardline, anti-US Muslim parties that led the weekend protests. Islamabad lodged a formal protest with the United States on Saturday and summoned the US ambassador to the foreign ministry.

Dawn, 17 January 2006

US defends tactics against militants

MONROVIA, Jan 16: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Monday defended tough US tactics to root out Al Qaeda militants on Pakistan's border after a deadly air strike on a village sparked a wave of angry street protests. Ms Rice would not comment on the reported deaths of 18 villagers in a raid said to target Osama bin Laden's deputy. She only said, "We'll continue to work with the Pakistanis and we'll try to address their concerns." But speaking to reporters en route to Liberia for the inauguration of president-elect Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Rice made no apologies for US actions against suspected Al Qaeda forces near the border with Afghanistan. "It's obviously difficult at this time for the Pakistani government," she said of the attack that sent thousands of Pakistanis into the streets in at least five cities and prompted an official protest from Islamabad. "But I think I would just say, to both the Pakistani government and the Pakistani people, we're allies in the war on terror," Ms Rice said, adding Al Qaeda and its Taliban allies "are not people who can be dealt with lightly." "The biggest threat to Pakistan, of course, is what Al-Qaeda has done in trying to radicalize the country, the extremist elements that really occupy ... parts of the country in important ways, (and) tried twice to assassinate President Musharraf."

The Hindu, 18 January 2006

Bush Sr. hopes air strike will not hit ties (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: The former U.S. President and Special Envoy of the United Nations on earthquake relief, George Bush Senior, on Tuesday said the American air strike in Pakistan's tribal belt bordering Afghanistan - which led to 18 deaths - would not affect bilateral relations. At the end of his two-day trip to Pakistan for a first hand assessment of the relief and rehabilitation efforts in the October 8 earthquake, Mr. Bush Sr. hoped that Pakistanis would continue to see Washington as a helper despite the January 14 air strike. "No I don't," he said to a question on whether it would have an impact on the image of the U.S. in Pakistan. "I am here as a representative of the [U.N.] Secretary-General to try to help with the relief and reconstruction effort. I think the feeling generally is that the U.S. has been trying to help the people of Pakistan and I hope that's what prevails," he said. He visited earthquake survivors at a tent camp near Islamabad on Tuesday but was unable to visit the quake zone itself because of poor weather. Mr. Bush said his role would be to encourage those who have pledged relief and reconstruction aid to deliver. On Monday night, President Pervez Musharraf met him and stressed on his country's commitment to rebuilding the quake-ravaged areas of the NWFP and the Pak occupied Kashmir on modern lines and in a transparent manner. He said he looked forward to continued international support for the relief efforts. Gen. Musharraf thanked the U.N. for its efforts and sustained focus on assistance for the survivors. Expressing gratitude for international community's prompt assistance, he hoped that the generous pledges would materialize in time.

BBC News, 18 January 2006

Pakistan warns US over air strike

Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz says his country cannot accept a repetition of a US air strike on a village that killed at least 18 people. His government also insist it did not share intelligence with the US before Friday's attack, which local officials say also killed four foreign militants. US reports said the attack targeted al-Qaeda number two Ayman al-Zawahiri. The US insists relations with Pakistan remain good, and says it will continue to target militants. "The US clearly values innocent human life, and that is why we're fighting the war on terror," the AFP news agency reported State Department spokesman Sean McCormack as saying. Mr McCormack added that despite the attack, the US maintained an "atmosphere of co-operation" with the Pakistani government. The US says it believes al-Zawahiri and Osama Bin Laden are living in the Afghan-Pakistan border region. "We cannot accept any action within our country which results in what happened over the weekend," Prime Minister Aziz told journalists in the capital, Islamabad. I think and hope al-Qaeda are more concerned about staying alive than plotting the next 9/11. A government spokesman said Mr Aziz would raise the issue with President Bush when he meets him in Washington next week. The BBC's Zaffar Abbas in Islamabad says the US action has led to fresh domestic pressure on Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf, who has been widely criticised for forging a close relationship with Washington.

The Tribune, 18 January 2006

US strike damages Musharraf's image (James Rupert)

Friday's U.S. airstrike on a Pakistani village has disrupted America's efforts to improve its image in this country, one of its most important Muslim allies, and has turned glaring publicity on a part of the "global war on terror" that the United States and Pakistan have tried to keep hidden. In both ways, it has weakened one of Washington's main backers in the Muslim world, President Pervez Musharraf. Since October's earthquake here, both governments have played up the role of U.S. troops and helicopters in rushing relief supplies to millions of homeless villagers in the mountains of Kashmir. That imagery has helped counter a three-year wave of public relations disasters for the United States in Pakistan and the Muslim world, including the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the abuse and humiliation of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and other military prisons abroad. But since Saturday, positive images of American relief work have been swept aside here by pictures and stories about the U.S. missile attack that killed between 13 and 18 Pakistanis in an attempt to hit al-Qaida leaders in a village near the border with Afghanistan. "American soldiers have been acting as brothers to Pakistanis, and we are all happy about this," said Hussain Javed, a Pakistani businessman who was taking a flight Sunday at Islamabad's airport. "But now they are killing us, too, and so maybe they are our enemies instead."

Daily Times, 18 January 2006

US team arrives for investment treaty negotiations (Umer Farooq)

ISLAMABAD: A US delegation arrived in Islamabad on Tuesday to participate in the fourth round of negotiations starting today (Wednesday) on a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT), US officials said. The negotiations between the US team and Pakistan's Commerce Ministry officials on the BIT will continue for three days. Both countries are working to broaden and strengthen their bilateral economic relations. "We believe that the agreement will help Pakistan in its efforts to attract private investment, boost economic growth and create new jobs," said the US officials. Pakistani officials said the BIT was likely to be concluded during Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's visit to Washington. The US administration on Tuesday announced Mr Aziz would visit Washington on January 24, where he will meet US President George W Bush and discuss with him bilateral trade and economic relations. They will also discuss various other issues, including reconstruction in Pakistan's earthquake-hit areas and the war against terrorism.

The Tribune, 18 January 2006

Sikh American woman is Republican whip (Ashish Kumar Sen)

Washington: Nikki Randhawa Haley, a Sikh American woman, has been named a majority whip for the House Republican Caucus in the South Carolina General Assembly. The Republican whips are the party leaders on the floor of the legislature, responsible for lining up votes in support of caucus priorities and setting the direction of the 74-member Republican majority in the state. "Rep Randhawa Haley was selected because of her proven leadership skills," said Republican Chief Whip Shirley Hinson. "She is always prepared when we go to the floor and she's passionate about issues of concern to her constituents." In addition to serving her constituents from Lexington County, Ms Haley serves as secretary of the Medical, Military, Public and Municipal Affairs Committee and was elected chairman of the Freshman Caucus before the last session. "I'm honoured to be recognised again by my peers and I know this new position helps me serve my constituents," Ms Haley said. "This position will help me drive legislation that will benefit Lexington County and the entire state." Ms Haley is the only freshman serving as a whip for the Republican Caucus. "Republican Randhawa Haley proved throughout her first year that she is a leader," said Majority Leader Jim Merrill. "Her hard work and enthusiasm, day in and day out, will be a valuable addition to our leadership team."

The Nation, 18 January 2006

PM in the US

Now that Mr Aziz has gone ahead with his US visit despite advice from some circles to reconsider going in the wake of the across-the-border strike in Bajaur, it is important that he raises some important questions with the American leadership. It cannot be denied that substantial progress in the economic field should rightly be at the top of the agenda, but the politics of the USA's so-called War on Terror, and Islamabad's all out support for it, has led to an increasingly precarious situation at home. Furthermore, if the US administration's decision to carry out the Bajaur strike was not bad enough, its refusal to either apologise or desist, coupled with the government's limp response, has only furthered already intense anti-US and anti-government resentment in much of the country. Washington's decision to carry out the strike and inform Islamabad later of its intention to continue such action in future cannot be seen as less than a snub for a government offering "unstinted support" since 9/11, betraying a lack of trust for which Islamabad has only itself to blame. Concerned quarters will be excused for fearing an oft-repeated situation of the US leaving Pakistan in the lurch once the latter's immediate usefulness has subsided.

Daily Times, 18 January 2006

Comment: Strobe Talbott on Pakistan (Ijaz Hussain)

The most revealing part of the book is the strategy devised by the Americans to force Nawaz Sharif to agree to the joint statement issued at the end of his meeting with Clinton to get out of the Kargil mess. The Americans believed that Nawaz Sharif's aides would stop him from "making concessions or pull him back from ones he had already made" Strobe Talbott, currently president of the Brookings Institution, was deputy secretary of state when India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests in 1998. For two and half years in that capacity he held talks with the leaders of the two countries for accession to the CTBT. On the basis of negotiations on these and other matters, he wrote a book entitled Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy and the Bomb, which came out around the middle of 2004. Though the book's focus is on India, Talbott makes some perceptive comments on Pakistan, its diplomats and leaders. After nuclear tests by India, Talbott visited Pakistan to stop it from following India "down a foolish, backward looking and dangerous path". He met Pakistan's top civil and military brass. The first thing in his account that strikes the reader is the inferiority of the civil leaders to the military ones. This is how he describes his first encounter with the foreign minister: "Gohar Ayub fidgeted during my opening courtesies, then unleashed a broadside that went on for nearly half an hour". He records that in the history lesson India was painted as "a habitual aggressor and hegemon" and the US as a "fair-weather friend".

The Hindu, 19 January 2006

Make the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal more transparent (Siddharth Varadarajan)

If the civil-military separation plan is good enough to share with a foreign power, it is certainly good enough to share with the Indian public. The Indo-U.S. working group on civilian nuclear cooperation will meet for the third time on Thursday with the American response to the Indian separation plan topping the agenda for discussion. During the last round of technical talks in Washington in December, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran - who heads the Indian side - handed over a document specifying the underlying principles that will cover the proposed separation of India's civil and military nuclear facilities. The U.S. side, led by Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns, chose not to respond to the Indian document at that time and is likely to present to India this week a detailed response and, possibly, a counter-plan. Though the Manmohan Singh Government has kept its separation plan under tight wraps in India, the document has been circulated among select U.S. Senators and Representatives. Indeed, feedback of sorts has already started coming. At a seminar at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington DC last week, Sharon Squassoni of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) suggested that the Indian plan would not pass muster on the Hill.

Times of India, 19 January 2006

George Bush to visit Delhi, Agra in March (Chidanand Rajghatta)

WASHINGTON: An advance team of US officials and security personnel left for the Indian sub-continent on Wednesday to prepare ground for President Bush's much-anticipated visit to the region in the first week of March. Bush is expected to be in India from March 1 to March 3 on a landmark visit to the region that will also include a foray into Pakistan and a possible stopover in Afghanistan. In India, Bush will arrive in Delhi along with First Lady Laura Bush, and is expected to make a brief sortie to the famed Taj Mahal in Agra. The President is also slated to visit Hyderabad, where the US intends to announce the opening of a new consulate. The plans are still up in the air and subject to a confirmation by the advance team. Bush's three-day visit to India will be tightly choreographed and nothing like the five-day Clinton trip in 2000 that involved bursts of spontaneity, including dancing with village belles in Rajasthan and being mobbed by Indian lawmakers after his address to the joint sessions of Parliament. Bush, in fact, is not expected to address the joint session, in part because of the pathology of left MPs towards the United States.

The Indian Express, 19 January 2006

US visa route change may help Indians

WASHINGTON, Jan 18: In moves that may benefit Indians applying for business visas to visit the United States, the US State Department and Department of Homeland have announced a number of steps to expedite the processing time for visas. According to the state department, overseas American diplomatic posts are now working closely with local US chambers of commerce in over 100 countries "to expedite the visa process for bonafide business travellers". It has also established a business visa centre to lessen the waiting time for visa appointments and consulates have established procedures to expedite the processing of business visas. The departments of state and homeland security have also announced changes to the length of time foreign students may be issued student visas and arrive in the US before their academic session begins. Now, student visas will be issued up to 120 days ahead and holders will be allowed entry 45 days in advance of studies. Earlier, student visas were issued in advance of 90 days and a student was allowed a 30-day window for entry ahead of the start of academic studies. The two federal departments have also announced they will align travel document application processes by creating a global enrollment network, so that the data first captured of an applicant can be viewed by both the homeland security and state department officials.

Deccan Herald, 19 January 2006

George Bush's Indian controversy (Punyapriya Dasgupta)

Bush's diminishing popularity and cultural boorishness have raised questions about the necessity of his visit. The event is only being expected or threatened, depending on who is talking about it. A visit to India by President Bush, at the planning stage still, is mired in myriad controversies. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had no option but to invite him last July after signing their strategic nuclear deal because President Bush had been talking of his hope for a trip to India. He told Prime Minister Vajpayee earlier how much he had been looking forward to visiting India. Mr Bush embroidered his longing with a statement - true or false - that every time he ran into Indian Americans "they kept on urging me" to visit India. He had therefore marked an India visit as a foreign policy priority early in his then-expected second term. Prime Minister Singh's embarrassment at his inability to invite President Bush to address a joint session of parliament - as Presidents Eisenhower, Carter and Clinton had done - is nothing serious or even unprecedented. A far more powerful prime minister, Margaret Thatcher too, had failed to deliver an offer for President Reagan to address the British parliament. If indeed the Americans were not keen on a parliamentary event, the Indian organisers of a Bush visit must have been, and they failed to foresee the loud and clear warning of an insurmountable leftist opposition. Otherwise this whole question would not have arisen in the media and the idea of a group of selected MPs meeting the US President mooted as an alternative, supposedly by the American side.

The New York Times, 19 January 2006

U.S. Raid Killed Qaeda Leaders, Pakistanis Say (Carlotta Gall and Douglas Jehl)

Pakistan, Jan. 18: Two senior members of Al Qaeda and the son-in-law of its No. 2 leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, were among those killed in the American airstrikes in remote northeastern Pakistan last week, two Pakistani officials said here on Wednesday. The bodies of the men have not been recovered, but the two officials said the Pakistani authorities had been able to establish through intelligence sources the names of three of those killed in the strikes, and maybe a fourth. Both of the officials have provided reliable information in the past, but neither would be identified because they were not authorized to speak to the news media. American counterterrorism officials declined to say whether the four Qaeda members were in fact killed in the raid, or whether the men were among those who were the targets of it. But one American official said, "These are the kinds of people we would have expected to have been there." If any or all were indeed killed, it would be a stinging blow to Al Qaeda's operations, said the American officials, who were granted anonymity because they were not authorized by their agencies to speak for attribution. They said all four men named by the Pakistani officials were among the top level

of Al Qaeda's inner circle of leadership.

Dawn, 19 January 2006

US urged to help meet security needs (Masood Haider)

NEW YORK, Jan 18: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Wednesday urged the United States to help Pakistan meet its legitimate security needs and called for a robust and sustainable relationship between the two countries to meet the challenges of the 21st century. He was addressing the joint session of Council on Foreign Relations and Asia Society on "Pakistan-US relations: Building a Strategic Partnership in the 21st Century." Mr Aziz said by working together the two sides could successfully realize the vision of a strategic partnership which served the interests of the two nations in meeting the future challenges. In this regard he said Pakistan's legitimate security needs must be met to build a long term relationship. Even as the US and the European Union threaten sanctions against Iran, the prime minister urged them to resolved the crisis over Iranian nuclear programme peacefully. Mr Aziz expressed hope that "this matter would be settled amicably without resort to use of force." "Towards this end a useful and constructive role can also be played by countries such as Russia and China," he added.

Boston.com News, 18 January 2006

US aims to set aside India reactor controversy (Carol Giacomo)

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration, confronting a potential threat to its 2005 nuclear deal with India, has signaled it will set aside concerns that New Delhi violated a previous agreement with the United States. In documents released by a Senate panel, the State Department said it could not determine whether the project in question -- a 40 megawatt nuclear reactor called Cirus -- had violated a 1956 U.S.-India contract. Some experts say the project violated past Indian assurances that U.S. nuclear material would be used only for peaceful uses, not weapons, and this called into question India's trustworthiness as a future nuclear partner. But Undersecretary of State for Non-proliferation Robert Joseph said "a conclusive answer (on whether a violation occurred) has not been possible." Rather than spend time on Cirus, "the administration believes the most productive approach is to focus on India's new commitments under (the July 18, 2005) joint statement," he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The Indian Express, 20 January 2006

India's 'N-violation?' US puts past behind to push for N-deal (Carol Giacomo)

WASHINGTON, Jan 19: Confronting a potential threat to its 2005 nuclear deal with India, the Bush administration has signalled that it will set aside concerns that New Delhi violated a previous agreement with the US. In documents released by a Senate panel, the US State Department said it could not determine whether the project in question-a 40 megawatt nuclear reactor called Cirus-had violated a 1956 US-India contract. Some experts say the project violated past Indian assurances that US nuclear material will be used only for peaceful uses, not weapons and this called into question India's trustworthiness as a future nuclear partner. But Under Secretary of State for Non-proliferation Robert Joseph said, "a conclusive answer (on whether a violation occurred) has not been possible". Rather than spend time on Cirus, "the administration believes the most productive approach is to focus on India's new commitments under (the July 18, 2005) joint statement," he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The controversy revolves around a Canada-supplied nuclear reactor located north of Mumbai, which produces a significant amount of weapons grade plutonium.

The Tribune, 20 January 2006

Saran, Burns talk of separating N-facilities

New Delhi, Jan 19: The visiting US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns today told the Government of India that US President George W. Bush would visit India in early March and the exact dates would be formally announced by the White House in due course. India and the USA today held their third round of talks on the implementation of the nuclear agreement between the two countries on July 18 last and had an intensive discussion on the Indian plan for separation of civil and military nuclear facilities. The focus of the day-long talks between the US delegation led by Mr Burns and Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran was the separation exercise, which would be completed towards the end of this year. Mr Burns went on record at his press conference in Mumbai yesterday that the separation exercise was a long and complicated affair. "This is not easy, it is actually quite challenging, it is quite complex, but it is an agreement that is going to be in the interests of both countries," he said. "There are a number of complications, but I have confidence that we will reach this agreement and I think that there has been consensus on both sides as well," he added. Discussions on this would continue tomorrow.

The Statesman, 20 January 2006

More US diplomats for India

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19: India will see the presence of more US diplomats this year as the Bush administration is planning to shift 100 diplomatic posts from Europe and Washington to various emerging nations to advance its

"transformational diplomacy." India and China are among those shaping the course of history in the 21st century, secretary of state Ms Condoleezza Rice said yesterday, while explaining the new move. "In the 21st century, emerging nations like India, China, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia and South Africa are increasingly shaping the course of history," Ms Rice told the students of Georgetown University. Ms Rice added: "We will begin this year by moving 100 positions from Europe and Washington to countries like China, India, Nigeria and Lebanon, where additional staff will make an essential difference."

The Tribune, 20 January 2006

Bin Laden threatens USA

Dubai, Jan 19: Osama bin Laden warned that Al-Qaida was preparing new attacks inside the USA, but said the group was open to a conditional truce with Americans, according to an audio tape attributed to him today. "The operations are under preparation and you will see them in your houses as soon as they are complete, God willing," said the speaker on the audio tape, who sounded like Osama. In the tape, broadcast by Al Jazeera television, Osama said Al-Qaida was willing to respond to public US opinion in favour of withdrawing troops from Iraq. "We have no objection to responding to this with a long-term truce based on fair conditions." It was not immediately known when the tape was recorded. A US counter-terrorism official said the intelligence was assessing the tape in an effort to determine its authenticity. Analysts saw the move at the time as an attempt to drive a wedge between the USA and its allies and to scare wavering coalition members out of Iraq. Osama's last audio tape was in December 2004. The interval between then and now was by far his longest public silence since the September 11 attacks on the USA in 2001. Meanwhile, Al Jazeera said the audio tape was dated in the Muslim month which corresponds to the month of December.

Hindustan Times, 20 January 2006

US rejects Osama bin Laden's truce offer

Washington: The United States has vowed an all-out campaign against Osama bin Laden, rejecting the Al-Qaeda leader's offer of a truce but also warning that his threats of new attacks must be taken seriously. US Vice-President Dick Cheney said as bin Laden's latest message was broadcast on Thursday that the group which carried out the September 11, 2001 attacks had been weakened by the US "war on terror" but remains a "lethal" threat. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) said its analysts had confirmed that the voice on an audiotape, broadcast by the Al-Jazeera Arabic television network, was bin Laden. In the tape, bin Laden said that new attacks against the United States were being prepared but also offered a "long term truce" if US troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan and Iraq. The White House gave an immediate rejection. "We do not negotiate with terrorists. We put them out of business. We must not stop until they are defeated," said US presidential spokesman Scott McClellan. The spokesman went on: "We must act on all fronts and use every tool within our disposal to defeat the terrorists and keep them from carrying out their attacks." Cheney, who gave a speech in New York as the message was broadcast, stressed the need for vigilance over the terrorist threat. "The enemy that struck on 9/11 is weakened and fractured, it is still lethal," he said.

Daily Times, 20 January 2006

Aziz for better Pak-US coordination in terror war

NEW YORK: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has said the deaths of 18 civilians in an American airstrike on Bajaur last week illustrated the need for better coordination between Pakistan and the United States, reports APP. Speaking to the New York Times, the prime minister said Pakistan would continue to wage the war on terror despite the incident. Aziz will hold talks with President George W Bush and other members of the US administration next week. "We cannot condone the loss of innocent lives," he said. The prime minister said there might be a communication gap between CIA and Pakistan's intelligence services. He was not hopeful of capturing or eliminating Osama bin Laden or Zawahiri however, saying that they had the resources to move about the tribal areas and beyond without being detected. aqbool Ahmed adds: In an interview with Charlie Rose of PBS Wednesday, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz termed Dr AQ Khan's issue 'a closed chapter'. Asked whether Dr Khan was selling nuclear technology, the prime minister said it was unclear what he did but whatever he did was in an individual capacity. Aziz said Dr Khan was not a nuclear expert. "He is a metallurgist and a fuel expert." Asked why he is considered a national hero, Aziz said this was an impression created by Dr Khan himself. "Friendly countries also know what he did and it is a closed chapter," Aziz said.

Daily Times, 20 January 2006

US undersecretary arrives for talks on Iran's nuclear plans (Umer Farooq)

ISLAMABAD: Iran's nuclear programme will be up for discussion when US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs R Nicholas Burns arrives here on January 22 for talks with Pakistani officials. Official sources confirmed that Iran's nuclear programme would be the prominent subject of talks. Also discussed would be regional stability, democracy and Pakistan-India relations. Burns is currently in India in the first stage of a South Asian tour that will take him also to Pakistan and Sri Lanka from January 18 to 25. He met with Indian businessmen in Mumbai on

Thursday and is due to hold talks with Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran specifically on the Iranian nuclear programme. Upon reaching Islamabad, he will hold delegation-level talks with Foreign Secretary Riaz Muhammad Khan on bilateral relations and other regional issues. Later, in a meeting with Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri, he will review the bilateral relations between the two countries. He will also call on President Pervez Musharraf. This will be Burns' first visit to Islamabad since taking over as undersecretary of state for political affairs. US officials routinely undertake such visits to their areas of responsibility after assuming office.

Dawn, 21 January 2006

Pakistan key anti-terror ally, says White House

WASHINGTON, Jan. 20: Two days before Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's scheduled arrival in Washington for a meeting with President George W. Bush, the White House expressed its confidence in the administrative setup in Pakistan, praising the country and President Pervez Musharraf as "key allies" in the war against terrorism. But when asked if President Musharraf was doing enough to be a key ally, White House spokesman Scott McClellan said: "Well, all of us can do more in the war on terrorism." In the same statement, the White House spokesman again refused to comment on the controversial air raid on a village in Bajaur earlier this month, saying that he did not intend to "get into discussing operational matters or alleged operational matters in the war on terrorism from this podium." Instead of discussing the air raid, Mr McClellan offered general comments on Pakistan's role as "a valued ally" in the global war on terrorism. "We work very closely with Pakistan to pursue Al Qaeda leaders and other terrorists and bring them to justice, and we will continue to do so," he added. This led to a reporter suggesting that while the Pakistani government may be a critical ally in the war on terror the Pakistani people may not share the same sentiments. "Does President Bush believe that without the Pakistani people's support, Osama bin Laden can be found," he asked.

Dawn, 21 January 2006

US missile attack

It is hard to say how many people would have mourned Ayman al-Zawahiri if he had indeed been killed last week by the US missiles that hit a Pashtun area near Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. That was apparently the intention of CIA officers when they dispatched a remotely piloted Predator aircraft to execute the deadly hi-tech mission. Eliminating Zawahiri would have been a significant coup for the US in its "war on terror". The incident shows, not for the first time since 9/11, that intelligence is a dangerously imprecise business. The death toll is a grim reminder of the fact that, legal and moral considerations aside, operations of this kind - like the "targeted assassinations" carried out by Israel against its Palestinian enemies - are rarely cost-free. The "collateral damage" of killing innocent people risks recruiting others to the jihadi cause, not least in the teeming madressahs that are so often identified as breeding grounds for extremism. There is also the danger of destabilising the regime of General Pervez Musharraf, who used to have a cosy relationship with the Taliban next door but who has reaped huge rewards from backing the US as a "frontline" ally - including F16 fighters and indulgence of his acquisition of nuclear weapons and of the smuggling network run by AQ Khan. The president warns his countrymen against harbouring "foreign militants", but Islamist parties, which form the main parliamentary opposition and govern two provinces on the Afghan border, accuse him of being too willing to accommodate the US.

The Indian Express, 21 January 2006

Nuke deal: India, US look forward but admit it's long haul (Pranab Dhal Samanta)

NEW DELHI, Jan 20: Faced with a tight deadline before US President George W Bush arrives in early March, Indian and US negotiators on the nuclear deal parted on a positive note today agreeing that a lot needs to be done and aware that a political push on either side could speed up matters. Another round of talks will be held ahead of Bush's visit. The key issues: India's plan to separate its military and civilian nuclear reactors, the kind of safeguards agreement Delhi will have to sign with the IAEA. And, on a broader political plane, India's stand on referring Iran to the UN Security Council at the upcoming IAEA meeting in February. Sources said Washington shared with Delhi the kind of legislation it hopes to bring before the US Congress to overturn laws which currently restrict full civil nuclear cooperation. It's learnt that India has no "major conceptual problem" with what the US has in mind. In the two-day talks between Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and Under Secretary Nicholas Burns-who was assisted by strategy analyst Ashley Tellis-India shared details of its roadmap on separation of reactors. On safeguards, both sides agreed that India will not sign the kind of agreement that non-nuclear weapon states have with the IAEA. It will have to be a new model, details of which were discussed. Burns said the two sides have a framework of the civil nuclear cooperation agreement but admitted there were difficulties.

The Tribune, 21 January 2006

US praises India's N-programme (Rajeev Sharma)

New Delhi Jan 20: The US today showered praise on India for its non-proliferation record and rubbished Iran's imputation of putting the Iranian and Indian nuclear programme in the same basket. Under Secretary of State for

Political Affairs R Nicholas Burns, who concluded his two-day talks with Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran on the implementation of the July 18 Indo-US nuclear agreement, took a dig on the Iranian National Security Adviser Ali Larijani for seeking to put Teheran's and New Delhi's nuclear programmes on the same pedestal. "But for Dr. Larijani to assert somehow of some equality between India and Iran by asserting a double standard is quite outrageous and it is quite off the mark," Mr Burns said in response to a question at a joint press conference with Mr Saran. Mr Shyam Saran was of the view that as far as India was concerned, the civil nuclear energy cooperation agreement with the US stood on its own merits and that there was a fund of goodwill for India in the US Congress. During his last visit to Washington, Mr Saran had shared with Mr Burns some preliminary ideas about the kind of separation plan of & civil and military facilities that New Delhi was contemplating. The two sides had also held preliminary discussion about safeguards and the scope of Indo-US cooperation. For the first time in six months since the Indo-US nuclear agreement was arrived at, the two sides had a much better understanding of each other's perspectives. The Indian side also shared with the US its plans for a very significant expansion of its civilian nuclear energy capability over the next few years and what kind of scope of international cooperation that India envisages for meeting its targets in the civil nuclear energy sector.

Daily Times, 21 January 2006

Iran will be taught a lesson: Burns (Iftikhar Gilani)

NEW DELHI: US Undersecretary of State R Nicolas Burns has called Iran "a threat to world peace" and vowed to "teach it a lesson". He said this in a press conference following talks with Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran on Friday. Iran has "crossed so many international red lines, that it has to know that will be a penalty to be paid," he said. The two countries, however, held divergent positions on Iran. While Burns said that Iran should be referred to the UN Security Council, Saran maintained that New Delhi would prefer the matter resolved within the purview of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Saran said that India was committed to finding an amicable solution to the Iran issue. "We have close, civilised relations with Iran, and would not like to see any confrontation. International consensus needs to be evolved on the issue," he said. Terming as "outrageous" Iran's comparison of its nuclear programme with India, Burns said that Russia, China and the EU-3 - Germany, UK and France - agreed that Iran had "crossed the line it should not have crossed", although the views of all these countries were not identical the US position on the issue. "They were outrageous remarks ... On the one hand, you have a country that has never been a proliferator while on the other, you have a regime in Iran which ... for 18 years conducted secret nuclear research," said Burns.

The News, 21 January 2006

Mediawatch: Containing Tehran (David Ignatius)

How should the United States think about Iran? What explains the fanaticism of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and what can America and its allies do to change it? These baseline questions are at the heart of an informal review of Iran policy that's taking place at the highest levels of the Bush administration. The discussions, led by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and national security adviser Stephen Hadley, are an effort to anchor America's opposition to the Iranian nuclear programme in a broader strategy. The goal is not simply to stop the Iranians from making a bomb but to change the character of a regime that under Ahmadinejad has swerved onto a new and dangerous track. In crafting their Iran policy, administration officials don't want the nuclear issue to be isolated from the more basic problem of Tehran's erratic and potentially destabilising role in the Middle East. The message to Iran is that while the United States opposes Iranian nuclear weapons, it supports a technologically advanced Iran that, as it matures, can play a leading role in the region. A shorthand for the administration's policy aim might be: No to Ahmadinejad, yes to the Iranian people and a modern Iran. The administration wants to engage key allies in these Iran discussions. In the short run, the goal is to gain agreement among European allies, Russia and China that the International Atomic Energy Agency, at its meeting next month, should refer the Iranian nuclear issue to the UN Security Council. But over the longer term, the administration hopes these allies will work with Washington to change Iranian behaviour on issues such as terrorism and regional stability. Officials don't like the Cold War term 'containment,' believing that it connotes a static policy, but the word suggests the strategic commitment they want on Iran.

The Times of India, 21 January 2006

US business finds a bounty in nuclear deal (Carol Giacomo)

Washington, Jan 20: US companies are mounting a multimillion-dollar campaign to sell to Congress a landmark civilian nuclear deal with India. The deal promises a "bounty of opportunity" for US business and strategic interests, an organiser said. The lobbying drive is the most expensive ever mounted by business, said Ron Somers, president of the US-India Business Council of the US Chamber of Commerce. He did not specify the campaign's budget. He said retired Army Lt Gen Daniel Christman, a former superintendent of the US Military Academy at West Point now working for the US Chamber of Commerce, will coordinate a broad effort as the coalition for partnership with India that groups businesses, think tanks and academics supporting the deal. This will complement the US-India Business Council, which has engaged the politically well-connected Patton Boggs

law firm to lobby lawmakers, Somers informed in an interview. The high-powered campaign reflects both the importance of the nuclear agreement and the high hurdles it faces in Congress, Somers said. Some members of Congress and experts worry the deal clinched in July undermines US efforts to stop the spread of nuclear arms. Somers said the agreement could open the door for US companies to billions of dollars in non-nuclear as well as civilian nuclear-related contracts.

The Times of India, 20 January 2006

US rubbishes Iran's N-plan comparison with India

New Delhi: The US termed Iran's comparison of its nuclear programme with India as outrageous and said that Tehran will have to face the penalty of crossing international red lines. Visiting US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns said that Iran's nuclear issue should be referred to the UN Security Council. India, on the other hand, maintained that it would prefer that the matter be resolved within the purview of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). "The US feels that there should be a vote on Iran at the IAEA Board of Governors meeting on February 2 and that the matter should be referred to the UNSC," Burns said at a joint press conference with Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran after their two-day talks on various issues, including that of the Iran crisis. Iran has "crossed so many international red lines and it should know that it will have to pay a penalty," he said. Burns said that Russia, China and the EU-3, Germany, UK and France, also shared the view that Iran had "crossed the line it should not have crossed", although the views of all these countries were not identical to that of the US on the issue.

Hindustan Times, 22 January 2006

US must not repeat airstrike: Pakistan

Islamabad: Pakistan's president told the United States it must not repeat airstrikes like the one that killed civilians in a remote mountain village, as officials sought to soothe public outrage over the incident. President General Pervez Musharraf's remarks on Saturday were his first publicized reaction to the January 13 strike on Damadola village, an attack that has spurred nationwide protests against the United States in this Muslim-dominated nation of 130 million people. The strike apparently targeted -- but missed -- Al-Qaeda's No 2 leader in the mountainous region of Bajur. Pakistani officials believe the blast wiped out four other top Al-Qaeda operatives, but also killed least 13 civilians, including women and children. On Saturday, Musharraf told visiting US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns that "what happened in Bajur must not be repeated," a Foreign Ministry official said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk on the record. Pakistan's independent GEO television reported that Musharraf also told Burns his country is "fully capable of defending its frontiers" and that repeated attacks could affect cooperation in the war on terror, in which Islamabad is a top US ally. The Foreign Ministry official said, however, that Musharraf pledged to continue backing the United States in anti-terror efforts.

Dawn, 22 January 2006

PM arrives in Washington today

WASHINGTON, Jan 21: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz arrives in Washington on Sunday for a series of meetings with the Bush administration after a turbulent week at home in which a US missile killed 18 in an attempt to take out Al Qaeda's No. 2 leader. Mr Aziz is expected to meet President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and also deliver an address on the future of US-Pakistan relations at the conservative Heritage Foundation in Washington. Although relations between the two governments have been good since Pakistan joined the US-led war on terrorism, Washington's hunt for Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders in the tribal areas has created political troubles for Islamabad. Mr Aziz's meeting with President Bush on Tuesday would give the two leaders a chance to talk about what the United States can do to help Pakistan become a better democracy, said Mr Dillon. The visit will be a step forward in the growing and maturing relationship between the United States and Pakistan, he said. "The United States must lay out what is best for us in terms of aid in war on terrorism, but must also show an interest in what is best for Pakistan, too."

Dawn, 22 January 2006

Bush's visit to boost ties, says Musharraf

ISLAMABAD, Jan 21: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Saturday that Pakistan was looking forward to a visit by US President George Bush with hopes that it would strengthen ties between the two countries. The president told the visiting US Under-Secretary for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns during a meeting that Pakistan and the United States would be working closely to prepare for the American leader's visit expected later this year. An official statement quoted Gen Musharraf as saying that the visit would lead to "further broadening and deepening of the bilateral relationship". He also thanked the US for assistance in the aftermath of the Oct 8 earthquake. Regional issues and bilateral relations also came under discussion. The president apprised the undersecretary of the status of the composite dialogue and the recent foreign secretary-level talks between Islamabad and New Delhi. While noting the importance of confidence-building measures, the president underscored the need for moving to conflict resolution. President Musharraf highlighted Pakistan's contribution to

peace, stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Pakistan would be participating in the Conference on Afghanistan being held in London later this month. Undersecretary Burns expressed appreciation for efforts by the Pakistan government in this regard. The visit of Undersecretary Burns to Pakistan is part of a regional tour.

Dawn, 22 January 2006

Pakistan stresses liaison with US

ISLAMABAD, Jan 21: Pakistan on Saturday called for more coordination with the United States to avoid any repetition of last week's US airstrike in Bajaur Agency that killed 18 people and triggered outrage across the country. Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said he expressed concern to US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns about the attack during talks with him. Mr Kasuri reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to counter terrorism "but underlined the need for the two countries to work in a manner that precludes recent incidents like Bajaur," according to a foreign ministry statement. The US official was also apprised of the public concern over Jan 13 attack in Damadola village bordering Afghanistan. The foreign minister stressed that "such incidents were counter-productive." Mr Burns conveyed the continued US commitment to provide assistance in the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction. It was agreed that in the coming weeks, the two sides would be working closely on the substantive and other aspects of President George Bush's forthcoming visit to South Asia. Regarding the Pakistan-India peace process, the foreign minister underlined Islamabad's commitment to a purposeful and result-oriented dialogue. He emphasized the need for solution of all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir.

The News, 22 January 2006

Pakistan won't endorse N-Iran: PM (Salim Bokhari)

UNITED NATIONS: All eyes are set on meetings of Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz with President George Bush and senior US administration officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the secretary finance. This will be the first encounter of Shaukat with American leaders on their home ground. Earlier, he had been meeting most of them when they visited Pakistan, most recently after the devastating earthquake on October 8 last year. The prime minister has described his discussion with the US leaders as "vital" in ensuring peace and harmony in South Asia in the wake of President Bush's visit to India in February next. He told The News that his talks with US leadership would focus five main areas - improvement of Pakistani economy, including access to American market for its goods particularly textile products; the latest developments in the ongoing India-Pakistan composite dialogue; seeking civil nuclear cooperation between the two sides; Afghanistan and issue of Iran's nuclear programme. The prime minister has conveyed to US leadership in categorical terms that Islamabad was against nuclear proliferation and would not endorse Iran producing atomic weapons.

Daily Times, 22 January 2006

Politicians complain about army, Punjab to Nicholas Burns (Shahzad Raza)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani politicians on Saturday criticised the armed forces, the Punjab province and intelligence agencies in a meeting with Nicholas Burns, the US deputy secretary of state for political affairs. Burns said he supported democracy in Pakistan but refused to comment on the country's internal matters. The visiting US official held a meeting with the leaders of opposition and ruling parties. The politicians raised internal matters like unequal distribution of resources and lack of consensus on Kalabagh Dam. "Meeting Pakistani politicians is a learning experience for me. We (the US government) want to play a role in the promotion of democracy in Asia. And Pakistan is fundamentally important to us," sources privy to meeting quoted Burns as saying. Burns described his meeting with President Pervez Musharraf as comprehensive. He said his government was looking at political stability in Pakistan, which could not be achieved without strong democracy. He called Pervez Musharraf a friend of the United States. MNA Fauzia Wahab of the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians questioned how the US could promote democracy in Pakistan when it supported a military dictator. She said political parties had been marginalised by the military regime. She told the US official that former prime minister Benazir Bhutto was being threatened with court cases if she returned to Pakistan.

The Tribune, 23 January 2006

Indo-US nuclear deal: Wrinkles remain (Ashish Kumar Sen)

A prominent Indian American is advising Mr Nicholas Burns as the US undersecretary of state works with his Indian counterparts to implement commitments made in a July 18 civilian nuclear agreement. The civilian nuclear deal has elicited sharp criticism from Democrats and Republicans in the US Congress. Congressman Ed Markey has authored an amendment that would prohibit nuclear cooperation with countries like India that are not party to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and lacking full-scope safeguards. The Congress must agree to amend US laws before the deal can be implemented. In India to work out wrinkles in the agreement, Mr Burns conceded there "are a number of differences, a number of complications" that beset the agreement, but said he was confident these would be settled. Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, on a visit to Washington in December,

said he had come with "certain ideas" for a plan to separate India's civilian and military nuclear facilities - a precondition to civilian nuclear cooperation. Officials later privately conceded that the Foreign Secretary had not been properly briefed prior to his arrival in Washington and that his visit did not achieve any breakthrough.

Deccan Herald, 23 January 2006

Glitches ahead

Leading nuclear scientists in the country were a bit skeptical of the civilian nuclear cooperation agreement that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed with US President George W Bush on July 18. As nuclear scientists have believed all along since the signing of the agreement, the problem is with regard to India's separation plan - separation of civilian nuclear facilities from military nuclear facilities. The separation condition for future American cooperation is understandable. America's global non-proliferation commitments make it incumbent upon it to isolate India's military nuclear facilities so that its future assistance to the civilian sector does not end up in helping India pile up more weapons-grade fissile material in the facilities designated as military ones for assembling nuclear bombs. However, American expectations from the separation plan seem to go far beyond this straightforward non-proliferation logic. It now seems that the American negotiators are pursuing a much broader non-proliferation agenda. The Americans not only want India to show them the separation plans, they seem to have also their own separation blueprint. The US negotiating team is believed to have told the Indian team that New Delhi should include its research and experimental fast-breeder reactors within the civilian nuclear category. That would mean two things: first, these reactors would come under IAEA safeguards. Second, scientists from other countries will have full access to the country's progress in developing fast-breeder reactors. Indian scientists are not comfortable with the prospects of exposing the fast-breeder programme to the international community.

The Indian Express, 23 January 2006

Fast breeding reactionaries (C. Raja Mohan)

With less than five weeks to go before the visit of US President George W. Bush to India, the government is about to squander the most important outcome from that visit - that of regaining India's access to the global nuclear energy market. Despite the best face that Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns put on their talks last week, it is evident that the Indo-US nuclear dialogue has entered a crisis phase. If negotiations continue to go badly, the nuclear accord signed last July by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President George W. Bush could become a mere historic footnote. Even its worst critics concede the Indo-US accord is historic. The vicious attacks that immediately greeted the pact in Washington underlined the huge importance of the controversial Bush decision to make a nuclear exception for India. That Pakistan was demanding, unsuccessfully, a similar pact with the US and that China was upset by it underlined the accord's strategic importance. For years now, Indian national security strategy sought nuclear parity with China and atomic differentiation from Pakistan. India's delayed nuclear weaponisation and the nature of the global non-proliferation regime suggested this was 'mission impossible'. Yet, Manmohan Singh delivered this objective in his talks with President Bush. Six months later, we are staring at a major diplomatic failure.

The News, 23 January 2006

Pakistan may reconcile to Indo-US nuclear deal (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is likely to reconcile with the reality that the India-United States deal on civilian nuclear technology will definitely go through, though it may require a considerable amount of time. Talking to The News after the visit of US Undersecretary of State R Nicholas Burns, a senior official said, "Yes, this issue did come under discussion on Saturday and there is no doubt that this agreement will go through. Of course it is unlikely that if President George Bush comes to the region in March this agreement would be ready. It will certainly take more time." Pakistan also feels that Pak-US bilateral relations should ensure that Pakistan is given a level playing field and such agreements in the civilian nuclear areas should be something for which Washington should consider Islamabad too. "Like New Delhi, Pakistan and others in the region are facing acute energy needs and we will ensure that we keep all our options open so that our growing economy can face the challenges of the future," he added. Burns himself while leaving New Delhi for Islamabad had said after his meeting with the Indian leadership that there were "complexities" and "difficulties" in the civilian cooperation agreement but that the Bush administration would implement the accord.

Daily Times, 23 January 2006

Pakistan won't be bullied: Aziz (Maqbool Ahmed)

NEW YORK: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has said that Pakistan has no aggressive designs against any country but cannot be bullied by anyone. Aziz was addressing a gathering of some 1,000 Pakistani-Americans in New York on Saturday. He said defence, internal security, economy, the social sector, democracy and diplomacy were the six elements of statecraft and deliberated on each of them with reference to Pakistan. He said Pakistan's strategic location was very important and it could be an "anchor of peace" in the region. He said Pakistan was a peaceful country and did not want conflict with anyone. However, he said peace is achieved through strength and

not weakness. He said Pakistan had to conduct nuclear tests after India to maintain the balance of power in the region. On internal security, the prime minister said Pakistan was a world partner in the fight against terrorism and taking part in this war out of conviction. Pakistan was waging war against terror not on anybody's dictation, but for its own benefit, he added. He said Pakistan had amended various laws and introduced police reforms. An important part of these reforms was changing the traffic police system. The motorway police will implement this programme in Islamabad first and then in other cities, he said.

The News, 23 January 2006

Bush to visit Pakistan in first week of March (Muhammad Saleh Zaafir)

ISLAMABAD: US President George W Bush will be visiting Pakistan in the first week of March after his visit to India. It will be his last visit to Asia in his second and final stint in power. He has already paid visits to China, Japan and some other Asian countries. Bangladesh and Afghanistan are trying very hard through diplomatic channels to get their capitals included in the itinerary of President Bush. Sources told The News here on Sunday that the US administration has informed Pakistani authorities of the tentative itinerary of the trip, but the details of the visit are being fine-tuned and will not be made public till an appropriate time for security considerations. Though the US administration has already delinked its ties with Pakistan from India, Washington would like to maintain some parity while finalising the details of the visits of the president to both countries, the sources said. Tasneem Aslam, spokesperson for the Foreign Office, while confirming the communication about the visit between Islamabad and Washington, declined to give any further details in this regard.

The Tribune, 23 January 2006

USA to impress Pak for religious tolerance

Washington, Jan 22: In the eve of Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's meeting with USA President W. George Bush, a US-based religious watchdog has asked the visiting leader to promote religious freedom and tolerance in Pakistan. Mr Aziz after his meetings in New York is slated to meet President Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other officials at the White House on Tuesday. In a letter, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) urged President Bush to impress upon Mr Aziz the need for Pakistan to spread religious tolerance and freedom of worship. The chairman of the commission said it had called for naming Pakistan as a "country of particular concern" for its severe violations of religious freedom, but the State Department had refrained from doing so till now. The letter said, "Sectarian and religiously-motivated violence has been committed by Sunni Muslim extremist groups against Shia Muslims, Ahmadis, Hindus, and Christians. Discriminatory legislation has fostered an atmosphere of religious intolerance and eroded the social and legal status of members of religious minorities, particularly the Ahmadi community. The commission also stressed the need to promote democratic institutions and genuine religious tolerance among all religious communities.

China Daily, 23 January 2006

President Hu to visit US in April, says report (Le Tian)

President Hu Jintao is set to visit the United States in April, Hong Kong-based Wenweipo reported yesterday, citing diplomatic sources. Both sides have reached a preliminary agreement on Hu's April visit to Washington, while negotiations on the exact date and arrangements for the visit are ongoing, the report said. President Hu Jintao is set to visit the United States in April, Hong Kong-based Wenweipo reported yesterday, citing diplomatic sources. The Chinese president had planned to visit the US last September, but his trip had to be postponed due to the impact of Hurricane Katrina. Hu accepted the second invitation offered by US president George W. Bush in November, when the latter paid an official visit to Beijing to promote bilateral ties. Analysts say Hu's visit will be one of the important topics discussed when US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick meets Chinese officials during his three-day visit starting today. Among other issues will be preparations for the third China-US strategic dialogue, as both sides have agreed to hold the dialogue in the first half of this year, Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan told reporters at a regular news briefing last week.

The Statesman, 24 January 2006

Pak House wants US envoy out

ISLAMABAD, Jan. 23: A provincial Assembly in Pakistan today passed an unanimous resolution demanding the expulsion of the US ambassador in the country, in a sign of mounting anti-US sentiment, a week after the deadly American air strike in the country's tribal region bordering Afghanistan. The Islamist alliance-dominated provincial Assembly in the conservative Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) also asked the federal government to take up the issue to the UN Security Council as well as to the OIC and demanded an apology from the USA. It also asked the USA to give compensation to the 18 civilians killed in 13 January air strike in Bajaur and Waziristan agencies, directed against Al Qaida's no. 2 leader Aymen al-Zawahri. The resolution, which asked the government to declare the US Ambassador Mr Ryan Crocker "persona non grata", comes ahead of tomorrow's meeting between Prime Minister Mr Shaukat Aziz and US President Mr George W Bush in Washington. Pakistan foreign office declined to react to the NWFP Assembly resolution seeking to expel the US Ambassador. "Pakistan has

condemned and protested the USA and had demanded investigation. President Pervez Musharraf and foreign minister Mr Khurshid Kasuri had told US under secretary Mr Nicholas Burns that this type of incidents must not be repeated in future," foreign office spokesperson Ms Tasnim Aslam said. "Pakistan will be raising this issue in the tripartite commission which is meant for coordination between Pakistan, Afghanistan and the USA," she said.

The News, 24 January 2006

Aziz, Rumsfeld discuss defence cooperation

WASHINGTON, Jan 23: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Monday discussed defence cooperation, security-related matters and procurement of equipment to avoid collateral damage with US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. The prime minister who is on a seven-day visit to the United States of America discussed a wide range of issues with a view to further strengthening ties in various areas of defence. The meeting, that lasted for around an hour, 25 minutes more than the schedule, also focused on having better coordination, cooperation and communication between the respective security forces of the two countries. They also dwelt at length on expediting the procurement of defence-related equipment and its maintenance. Prime Minister Aziz and Defence Secretary Rumsfeld also discussed the security environment in the region, the situation along the border with Afghanistan and provision of equipment to avoid collateral damage. In this context, they are also understood to have discussed the Bajaur incident in which 13 people were killed in Pakistan's frontier region near Afghanistan. The secretary defence termed the talks "important, not only for both of our countries, but also for the region". In a brief chat with reporters, he said: "We discussed a great deal about our relationship." Rumsfeld avoided answering questions about the Bajaur incident. He, however, said: "We have a great many things that we do together and we have had good successes in a number of things that we have done together." He said he was delighted to have him here at the Pentagon and said after meeting President George W. Bush the two would also talk to the press and give details of their meeting.

China Daily, 24 January 2006

China and US agree on closer cooperation

China and the United States have greatly advanced their cooperation in both bilateral and multilateral arena and are willing to further strengthen such cooperation, said top diplomats from both countries here Tuesday. Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing met with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing Tuesday afternoon. Li said cooperation in bilateral and multilateral fields has been strongly promoted since Chinese President Hu Jintao and U.S. President George W. Bush last year reached important consensus on advancing constructive cooperation between the two countries in the new century. Sino-American relations have seen a steady development since then, Li said. Zoellick said the United States attaches great importance on developing relations with China. It welcomes China to play a bigger role in maintaining world peace and promoting common development, he said. Zoellick said the U.S. side is willing to strengthen bilateral relations and step up cooperation with China in multilateral areas. Li said China is ready to join effort with the United States to actively implement the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries and push forward the constructive relations of cooperation.

Reuters, 24 January 2006

Zoellick to Raise Nuclear Stand - Offs in China

BEIJING: The nuclear stand-offs with Iran and North Korea were high on the agenda as U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick began talks on Tuesday with senior Chinese officials in Beijing. The two sides, which have often sparred over human rights, trade and China's military build-up, were also expected to discuss bilateral relations and preparations for a "strategic dialogue" later this year. "We hope to improve the bilateral strategic dialogue in order to improve mutual understanding and mutual trust," Premier Wen Jiabao said at the start of discussions with Zoellick, who also met Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing. A speech Zoellick made in September that called on China to treat itself -- and be treated by other countries -- as a key "stakeholder" in international trade and diplomatic relations has been read by Chinese analysts as a key Washington statement on often rocky relations between the two sides. "China is an important country that is emerging and we are urging (it) to try to play a role as a responsible stakeholder in the international system," Zoellick told reporters in Tokyo before leaving for Beijing. But there he also said the Beijing talks would focus on two issues where China has resisted U.S. calls to work fully in concert with Washington: Iran's nuclear plans and North Korea, whose leader Kim Jong-il visited China this month.

Reuters, 24 January 2006

US Says Hopes to Avoid Confrontation with Iran

BEIJING: The United States hopes to avoid confrontation with Iran over its nuclear program, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick said on Tuesday. "My country is trying to avoid any confrontation," he told reporters in Beijing. "That's why we've worked with the Russians and others on this process and that's why we're trying to work in the global context with our U.N. Security Council partners and others to make clear to Iran that

this would not be a positive development," Zoellick said. Britain, Germany and France have circulated a draft proposal to authorize the International Atomic Energy Agency to refer Iran to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions over suspicions it is trying to build a nuclear weapon. Zoellick said in Tokyo on Monday there was a "pretty good posture" for referring the issue to the Security Council given the composition of the IAEA board. "If you look at the countries that are members of the IAEA board, I think we are in a pretty good posture about pursuing a referral," he said.

Dawn, 24 January 2006

IAEA rejects US, EU call for report on Iran: Feb 2 meeting

VIENNA, Jan 23: The International Atomic Energy Agency chief on Monday refused EU and US requests for a broad report on Iran's atomic work in time for a Feb 2 IAEA crisis meeting, saying he needed more time to prepare one. Mohamed ElBaradei's response said he had given Iran until a regularly scheduled March 6 board session to answer questions about its nuclear programme, which the West suspects aims to make nuclear bombs. "Due process, therefore, must take its course before (we) are able to submit a detailed report," Mr ElBaradei wrote. Western leaders want a broad accounting of Iran's activities for the Feb 2 meeting to help them persuade sceptical Russia, China and developing states on the 35-nation board to agree to refer Iran to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions. After Mr ElBaradei turned down verbal requests from European Union powers and Washington to move up a full report, the US, British, French as well as Australian ambassadors to the IAEA pressed their case in letters sent to him at the weekend. A British-French letter requested a 'short progress report' on the period since the last IAEA board in November, covering verification of Iranian declarations and monitoring of voluntary suspension of uranium-enrichment work.

Daily Times, 24 January 2006

US says Iran nuclear plans may pose energy threat

TOKYO: Iran's nuclear programme may pose a danger to international energy security over time and must be halted, US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick said on Monday. But Zoellick, during a visit to Japan, said that even if the issue were referred to the UN Security Council that would not mark an end to diplomatic efforts to resolve the standoff. "Obviously we think all countries should be concerned about an Iran that has said Israel shouldn't exist, that denies the Holocaust, that is in the heart of a major energy producing region of the world ... developing that nuclear capability," Zoellick told reporters. "It poses a threat not only in terms of security terms, but in my view, given the reliance of Japan, China and others on energy from the region, it poses some danger to energy security over time," he said. Embroiled in a nuclear standoff with the West, Iran said on Friday it was moving funds out of Europe to shield them from possible UN sanctions and flexed its oil muscle with a proposal to cut OPEC output.

Hindustan Times, 25 January 2006

The energy matrix (Manoj Joshi)

Jan 24: The recent round of talks between Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and US Undersecretary Nicholas Burns, the comments appearing in the media, seem to suggest that India is finding it difficult to come up with a plan to separate its civil and military nuclear facilities that would be credible enough for the US and its Nuclear Supplier Group partners. This is surprising. The terms of the deal are generous, and India's needs are evident, and they are time-bound. As the mid-term appraisal of the 10th Five Year Plan brought out, "Given the limited indigenous uranium resources, India must seek at least 20,000 Mwe of additional nuclear power capacity on a turnkey basis... Alternatively, India must seek nuclear fuel on competitive terms for a similar level capacity to be built by NPCIL in the next 12-15 years." A former Department of Atomic Energy scientist writing on the eve of the Washington visit, too, observed that the DAE was "beginning to face a serious shortage of natural uranium, even to fuel the 18 PWRH currently under operation or construction". These, note, are Indian assessments, made by Indian specialists. Neither of the two options - getting reactors turnkey or importing nuclear fuel - are available without the successful conclusion of the deal with the US, and by extension, the Nuclear Suppliers Group. In 2001, the Russians agreed to supply India nuclear fuel for Tarapur, as well as two 1,000 MW power plants at Koodankulam, Tamil Nadu. But by 2004, they made it clear that they would not be able to provide any more fuel or reactors until India made a deal with the NSG. This is broadly the same message India has got from the French, the British, or whoever else we have approached. Fuel, or reactors - India must work out an acceptable arrangement. The key aspect of India's requirement is the status to be given to its nuclear programme. Under the deal, India, which is viewed as a nuclear outlaw, is being offered a special status in the world nuclear order. The July 18 deal cannot turn the clock back, but it does the next best thing - make an agreement that will let India keep nuclear weapons, even while permitting it to access technology and materials that have been unavailable till now. In exchange, India must separate its military and civil programme in a phased manner, and place the latter under IAEA safeguards.

Dawn, 25 January 2006

UN referral 'absolutely' necessary, says US: Iran's N-programme

WASHINGTON, Jan 24: The United States said on Monday it was 'absolutely' crucial to refer the row over Iran's nuclear program to the UN Security Council, but suggested the world body might wait before taking action. President George Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice both sought to maintain pressure on Iran 10 days before a key international meeting on Tehran's suspected plans to build a nuclear bomb. Mr Bush said that unless Iran eases concerns, referral to the UN Security Council would be the 'next logical step' when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meets in Vienna on Feb 2. Ms Rice was more blunt about US expectations for the meeting of the IAEA board of governors, which in September declared Iran in breach of its international nuclear non-proliferation obligations. "It seems to me that the case for referral is very strong and that's what we intend to seek at the IAEA board of governors meeting," Ms Rice said after talks with Italian Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini. "The Security Council can then take up the matter at a later time but the referral absolutely has to be made," Ms Rice told a joint press conference. Ms Rice did not elaborate on her comment suggesting a lag in Security Council action, but State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said it could give time for a negotiated settlement to the confrontation. "Our hope is that once Iran is referred to the Security Council that that provides a context in which a diplomatic solution can be found," McCormack told reporters at the department's daily briefing. He insisted the United States had the votes within the 35-member IAEA board for a UN referral. But White House spokesman Scott McClellan said, "We're continuing to talk to others to broaden that consensus."

The Times of India, 24 January 2006

Why The US Matters (Kanti Bajpai)

The recent visit of US undersecretary of state, Nicholas Burns, to discuss the India-US nuclear deal as well as Iran's nuclear posture raises the issue of what's at stake in the India-US relationship. Commentary in India on the nuclear deal has been technical, relating to the feasibility of separating civilian and military facilities. Or else it has been suggested that separation will harm India's deterrent. The only thing to be said here is that grand strategy is too important to be left to scientists and experts. The prime minister must recognise that most of India's nuclear plants are inefficient and unsafe. We need international help to improve them. We cannot get that help without a deal with the US. A better civilian programme will, in the long run, give our scientists the time and resources to fix the military programme. That should take care of our deterrent. On the Iran policy, we shall have to determine the relative importance of the US and Iran. Prime facie, the US appears to be crucial to India for diplomatic, strategic, and economic reasons, whereas Iran would seem to be a minor asset at best. Diplomatically, there is no avoiding the US. In multilateral settings, the US is pivotal, like it or not. This is an existential reality. On the other hand, there is no forum in which Iran has the same centrality, not even amongst oil producers. To conclude, choosing the US over Iran is by no means to endorse every American policy or perspective or, conversely, to cast Iran as a pariah. It is quite simply to do one's political calculations correctly.

Deccan Herald, 25 January 2006

In the dark?

The killing of around 18 civilians in a US missile attack on Damadola, a Pakistani village in the Bajur area near the Afghan border, is reprehensible. The attack was ostensibly aimed at killing al-Qaeda's No 2, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was believed to be in the area. The US has as usual defended the attack. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has said tough tactics are necessary in the fight against al-Qaeda and that al-Qaeda and its supporters "are not people who can be dealt with lightly." The enormous challenge of fighting terrorism does not, however, justify the killing of innocent civilians. It appears that at least five of the victims might have been foreign militants. But even if the Americans had managed to get al-Zawahiri, the targeting of a village is untenable. Not surprisingly, the US air raid on a village in Pakistan has come under fire from within the country not only because civilian lives were lost but also on account of the fact that the US attack is a violation of Pakistan's territorial sovereignty. What has added to local fury is the Pakistan government's reluctance to come clean regarding its collusion with Washington on the attack. Under domestic pressure, the Pakistani government has opted to hide behind the fig leaf of ignorance. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz condemned the attack and even warned the US over it. But few will be convinced by Mr Aziz's expression of anger. His government cannot absolve itself of some responsibility for the attack. While the US is known to act with little concern for local sensitivities over issues like sovereignty, the operation in the Bajur area would have involved exchange of information between operatives of the two countries. The US could not have kept Islamabad completely in the dark on the operation. Its attack on the village would have got the Pakistani government's green signal.

The Times of India, 25 January 2006

'India will be world's third largest economy in 2006'

HOUSTON: India will surpass Japan as the world's third largest economy in 2006 as measured in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), according to a forecast by a US professional services firm. India's economy, measured in PPP terms, will eclipse the \$4 trillion mark in 2006, making it equal to or greater than Japan's. Only the United States and China will possess larger economies, according to Keystone India's chief economist William T. Wilson.

"The results of liberalizing strategic sectors such as telecom, banking, aviation and real estate are now beginning to show. After growing at 8.5 per cent and 6.9 per cent in 2003 and 2004 respectively, India's economy is expected to grow 7.8 per cent in 2005-2006 (fiscal year ending in March) then decelerate modestly to 7 per cent in 2006-2007. Depending upon the direction of energy prices, inflation is expected to run in the 5-5.5 per cent range for 2006," said Wilson. Faster growth is expected to boost salaries by an inflation-adjusted 7 per cent this year, fueling robust consumer spending. The mobile telecom market in India, the fastest growing in the world, is growing at over two million subscribers per month, the chief economist at the Chicago-based firm said.

The New York Times, 25 January 2006

Bush Meets With Premier of Pakistan (Elisabeth Bumiller)

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24: President Bush said Tuesday that he would travel to India and Pakistan in March, but made no public comment about the American airstrikes that killed 18 civilians, including women and children, in one of Pakistan's remote tribal areas earlier this month. With Pakistan's prime minister, Shaukat Aziz, at his side, Mr. Bush spoke about areas of agreement, like trade and fighting terrorism, in four minutes of public remarks in the Oval Office. The president called the countries' relationship "vital" while Mr. Aziz called it "multifaceted." The two leaders took no questions, and afterward the White House spokesman, Scott McClellan, sidestepped queries about whether Mr. Bush had spoken in private to Mr. Aziz about the airstrikes. The airstrikes have infuriated Pakistanis, even as Pakistan's president, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, said Tuesday in Oslo that there were indications that some of those killed were members of Al Qaeda. Last week Pakistani officials said two senior Qaeda members and the son-in-law of its No. 2 leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, were among those killed. American officials have said Mr. Zawahiri was the target of the raid, but they have acknowledged that he was not killed in the attack. The Pakistani and American officials were granted anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the news media or for attribution. Mr. Bush is expected to spend several days in India, including a visit to the capital, New Delhi, as well as to a city in the south of the country. White House officials did not say how long he would visit Pakistan.

Daily Times, 25 January 2006

US N-cooperation only India-specific, Pakistan told (Zulfiqar Ghuman)

ISLAMABAD: The United States has conveyed to Pakistan that India-US civil nuclear cooperation is only specific to India, and such cooperation with Pakistan is unlikely because of its track record. Sources said that the message was conveyed to Pakistan in a two-and-a-half-hour meeting between government and opposition members of the current set up and US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, at the residence of US Ambassador to Pakistan Ryan C Crocker. "The civil nuclear cooperation between India and the US is only India-specific. Such cooperation with Pakistan is unlikely at present because of Pakistan's track record on nuclear proliferation. India, on the other hand, has maintained a record of abiding by the Non-Proliferation Treaty," sources quoted Burns as saying. The meeting was attended by former foreign secretary Riaz Khokhar, Major General (r) Jamshed Ayaz and Lt Gen (r) Imtiaz Alam, who briefed Burns on Pakistan's defence needs in the wake of the ongoing Pakistan-India confidence-building measures. Muhammad Ali Durrani, the special advisor to the prime minister, and Senator Abdullah Riar of the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians represented the government and opposition at the meeting. Ayaz and Alam urged the US to maintain the same level of cooperation with Pakistan as it had with India to maintain a strategic balance between the two South Asian neighbours.

The News, 25 January 2006

Pak-US ties vital, strategic: Bush (Salim Bokhari)

WASHINGTON: President George W Bush has praised Pakistan's role in combating international terrorism and termed Washington's ties with Islamabad as "strategic and vital" for the United States. He made a brief statement to Pakistani and American media representatives at the Oval Office and the White House on Tuesday after his one-on-one meeting with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz followed by 45-minute formal discussions between the two sides. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, who was sitting next to him, also made a brief statement. Bush thanked President Musharraf and Premier Shaukat Aziz for their role saying: "We appreciate President Musharraf's personal involvement in fight against terrorism. The two sides are working closely to fight terrorism," he said. President Bush said he and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz had wide-ranging discussions covering all important areas. "We talked importance of trade, commerce and investment and reviewed the devastation of Oct 8 earthquake which was a great tragedy. We are helping Pakistan in its reconstruction and rehabilitation of the victims," he said. He thanked the prime minister for inviting him to visit Pakistan and said: "I will be travelling to India and Pakistan in March," he said. Responding to the sentiments expressed by President Bush, the prime minister said: "Our ties are multi-faceted and historic. We deeply appreciate the American assistance for the earthquake victims and cooperation extended by the US in providing hospital, logistic support and financial assistance," he said.

The Washington Post, 25 January 2006

Bush to Visit India, Pakistan On March Trip

President Bush announced yesterday that he will travel to India and Pakistan in March in a visit likely to be dominated by discussions of terrorism, democratic governance and the recent U.S. airstrikes in Pakistani territory. Bush met with Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz at the White House yesterday to discuss the U.S.-Pakistan alliance and the strikes that killed at least 13 people, including women and children. The strikes, which U.S. officials said were aimed at suspected al Qaeda terrorists, provoked anti-American protests in Pakistan, a key U.S. ally enlisted by the Bush administration after Sept. 11, 2001, to hunt down terrorists, especially along the border with Afghanistan. Aziz, who kicked off his U.S. visit by condemning the attacks, struck a decidedly more diplomatic tone before and after meeting with Bush yesterday, highlighting the economic and military ties between the two nations. It is unclear whether the strikes killed any al Qaeda members in a region where Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman Zawahiri, are believed to be hiding.

The News, 25 January 2006

US assures it will not attack again: Musharraf

OSLO: President Pervez Musharraf said on Tuesday that Washington has assured Islamabad that it will not harm Pakistan's interests after a US missile strike aimed at suspected al-Qaeda militants killed at least 18 people. Musharraf said during a visit to Oslo that Pakistan's armed forces were capable of combating al-Qaeda militants on Pakistani territory without outside interference. He said Pakistan contacted the United States after the US strike on Jan 13 killed at least 18 people, most of them civilians, in a remote Bajaur tribal region on the border with Afghanistan. "Yes, indeed, they do assure that they will not act against Pakistan's interest," he told a seminar at the Norwegian Nobel Institute, without giving details. The strike had aimed to kill al-Qaeda deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. "We don't want interference in Pakistan ... only Pakistan forces will act," said Musharraf, wearing a dark suit rather than his military uniform. Pakistan had demanded assurances that US forces would not attack again across the border from Afghanistan. Musharraf also said that initial studies indicated that some al-Qaeda fighters were killed in the strike. "There is indication that there were also people of al-Qaeda who were killed. I'm not 100 per cent sure of that," he said without saying how many or who they were. Musharraf dismissed criticisms by some opposition politicians in Pakistan that his government was too servile in allying itself with Bush's war on terror. He said that Pakistan was acting in its own interests.

The Washington Post, 25 January 2006

U.S. Troops on Front Line Of Expanding India Ties (John Lancaster)

CHAUBATIA: More than half a century after independence, foreign soldiers have returned to this onetime colonial garrison of tin-roofed bungalows, stone churches and panoramic Himalayan views. But this time, the soldiers' accents are American, not British, and their purpose is not to subdue India but to cultivate it as an ally. In the latest of a series of such exercises, 120 U.S. combat troops have come here to train with their Indian counterparts in areas such as counterinsurgency and peacekeeping. Besides taking classroom instruction, they are firing Indian weapons, bonding with Indian soldiers over games of soccer and volleyball, and even developing a taste for vegetarian cuisine, albeit with spices toned down for sensitive American palates. The exercise is an example of the striking improvement in relations between the United States and India following decades of Cold War estrangement and more recent tensions stemming from India's nuclear tests in 1998. Spurred by the United States, the two governments have signed commercial, scientific and military agreements in the last two years and are negotiating a controversial deal that could permit the sale of civilian nuclear technology to India. The Bush administration is eager to cultivate India as a partner in counterterrorism and, some analysts say, as a strategic counterweight to China.

The Tribune, 26 January 2006

War on terror: Bush, Aziz to improve tie-up (Ashish Kumar Sen)

Washington: US President George W. Bush and Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz have agreed to improve "cooperation and coordination" in the war on terror. Mr Aziz met Mr Bush at the White House on Tuesday. A US spokesman later said the meeting "focused on our ongoing efforts to defeat Al-Qaida and to prevent attacks from happening, both against Pakistan and against the USA." Speaking with Mr Aziz Mr Bush said, "I think the relationship with Pakistan is a vital relationship for the United States." Mr Aziz raised the issue of Kashmir saying, "We want a solution of all disputes, including the Kashmir dispute". US analysts and the press have questioned the sincerity of Pakistan's efforts in the war on terror. In a scathing editorial on Wednesday, The Washington Post noted that Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and Mr Aziz boast that Pakistan has "arrested hundreds of Al-Qaida militants and deployed tens of thousands of troops in the border region near Afghanistan". "Yet Gen Musharraf has never directed his forces against the Pashtun Taliban militants who use Pakistan as a base to wage war against American and Afghan forces across the border. He has never dismantled the Islamic extremist groups that carry out terrorist attacks against India," the paper noted.

Dawn, 26 January 2006

US & South Asia

WITH President George Bush's March visit to Pakistan and India confirmed, one hopes the US will make a determined effort to stimulate international interest in a resolution of the Kashmir conflict. The bilateral normalization process that has been going on satisfactorily is in danger of losing momentum unless there is a perceptible movement towards a solution of what indeed is the core issue in the Indo-Pakistan relationship. In fact, there are already signs that Islamabad has begun to feel frustrated over the lack of a meaningful Indian response to the many constructive proposals Pakistan has made for resolving the issue. The American president's visit has aroused hopes because it will take place under completely different circumstances compared to President Bill Clinton's visit to South Asia in March 2000. His visit came five months after the military coup toppling an elected government and putting the prime minister in prison. Above all, the world had not heard of a war on terror. Even though America was still hunting for Bin Laden, and Mr Clinton had signed an order for eliminating him, 9/11 was still 18 months away. Pakistan was then a totally isolated country languishing under a military ruler, with its economy virtually bankrupt, its foreign exchange reserves plunging to less than half a billion. No wonder, Mr Clinton all but bypassed Pakistan on his South Asian tour, visiting India for five days, Bangladesh for a day and Pakistan only for five hours.

The New York Times, 26 January 2006

U.S. and China Agree on Keeping Nuclear Arms From Iran, but May Differ on How, Envoy Says (Joseph Kahn)

CHENGDU: China and the United States both want to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, but their "approach may differ" on the best tactics to achieve that result, Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick said Wednesday after a round of meetings on the subject in Beijing. His comments suggested that China, despite heavy lobbying, had left doubts as to whether it would back a proposal by Britain, France and Germany, supported by the United States, to involve the United Nations Security Council in deciding how to handle Iran's nuclear program, including whether to impose penalties. Mr. Zoellick said he emphasized that he viewed the United States and China as having a common interest in preventing Iran from developing atomic weapons, as well as a mutual concern about energy security in the Middle East, and he said he believed China shared those "core principles." But he called the diplomatic discussions fluid and said differences remained over what steps should be taken to respond to what Western powers say is a covert program by Iran to build nuclear bombs. "It would not surprise me that China would not want to take exactly the same course as the E.U.-3 and the U.S.," Mr. Zoellick said during a brief stop in Chengdu in southwestern China after meeting with Wen Jiabao, China's prime minister, and Li Zhaoxing, its foreign minister, in Beijing. The E.U.-3 refers to Britain, France and Germany. China is considered crucial if foreign powers hope to use pressure to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China could use its veto power to scuttle any penalties. Europe and the United States have argued that diplomatic steps to constrain Iran's nuclear program will have greater effect if China and Russia support them.

The Indian Express, 26 January 2006

N-deal dies if India doesn't vote against Iran: Mulford (Pranab Dhal Samanta)

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: US Ambassador to India David Mulford today played spoiler to New Delhi's delicate dealing on the Iran nuclear issue as he sought to link the fate of the Indo-US nuclear deal to the way India votes at the International Atomic Energy Agency meeting on February 2. In an interview to PTI, Mulford said that if India did not vote to send Iran to the UN Security Council, the effect on the deal would be "devastating", for the US Congress would "simply stop considering the matter" and the "initiative will die". Later on, in damage-control mode within hours of the interview, Mulford expressed "regret" at his comments and said they were "taken out of context". He pointed out that he had also said that Iran was a matter where India would vote "on the basis of its own national interest". The remarks prompted a sharp reaction from India. "The position that India will take on this issue at the IAEA will be based on India's own independent judgment," an MEA spokesperson said. "We categorically reject any attempt to link this to the proposed Indo-US agreement on civil nuclear energy cooperation, which stands on its own merits." But there is more in the interview to cast doubt on the nuclear deal. According to Mulford, the outline of the plan to separate civil and military nuclear reactors given to Washington last December did not meet the "tests" of a credible plan that could win the day in the US Congress despite the bi-partisan support expressed by members like Senator John Kerry. The remarks have been far from helpful for the government, with sources saying they have made matters difficult given the mounting pressure from the Left not to vote in favour of referring the Iran nuclear issue to the UNSC.

The Tribune, 26 January 2006

Go ahead with N-deal

The recent talks between India's Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns in New Delhi have raised some avoidable doubts among the sceptics about the implementation of the

historic Indo-US nuclear agreement signed in July 2005. Hence the time for those who have a positive view of the deal to ensure that the country does not miss new opportunities that have come its way. India should go ahead with its plans to separate civil and military nuclear facilities at the earliest to facilitate the lifting of restrictions on the supply of technology and fuel for the Tarapur nuclear reactor. The critics of the agreement include not only the people who are ideologically opposed to any such deal with the US, but also senior scientists in the Department of Atomic Energy who are just not prepared to tolerate International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors monitoring their research facilities. The scientists' view is that India's nuclear programme - both military and civilian - can sustain itself without international help. But they have no clear answer to the question related to the acute shortage of nuclear fuel and the unavailability of the latest reactor technology. It is true that India cannot afford to risk its military-related nuclear programme. But, at the same time, it has to ensure sufficient energy supplies to meet the demand of a fast growing economy. The country cannot solely depend on meagre hydel resources or the hydrocarbons when the oil prices have shot up to \$60-plus from \$4 a barrel a few years ago. This makes the agreement with the US unavoidable. The availability of the latest nuclear technology will enable India to reduce its dependence on petrol and gas considerably without jeopardising its position as a major nuclear power. The 21st century India needs looking ahead and a flexible approach to foreign policy as well as nuclear diplomacy.

The Hindu, 26 January 2006

India rejects linking Iran vote to nuclear deal with U.S.

NEW DELHI: India on Wednesday categorically rejected any attempt to link its vote on Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with the future of its civil nuclear deal with the United States. The comment came hours after the Press Trust of India quoted U.S. Ambassador to India David Mulford as saying if India did not vote against Iran, the fallout on the July 18, 2005 deal would be "devastating" and the initiative would "die." "We have seen the remarks attributed to the U.S. Ambassador concerning a possible vote on the Iran nuclear issue at the IAEA. The position India takes at the IAEA will be based on its independent judgment," the External Affairs Ministry spokesman said. "With regard to negotiations on the proposed [civil nuclear] agreement, India will proceed on the basis of its national interests, as acknowledged by the U.S. Ambassador himself," the spokesman said. Rejecting the civil-military separation plan presented by India, Mr. Mulford told PTI that it "did not meet the test" and fell short of the "minimum standards required" for the U.S. Congress to approve the deal. Putting pressure on India to vote according to American requirements, the Ambassador said an "observation" was also conveyed to New Delhi that if it decided not to vote for the resolution, "the effect on members of the U.S. Congress with regard to [Indo-U.S.] civil nuclear initiative will be devastating." He said: "I think the Congress will simply stop considering the matter. I think the initiative will die in the Congress not because the administration would want it..." This should be part of the calculations "India will have to keep in mind" while taking a decision on the Iran issue at the IAEA governing board meeting on February 2-3.

The News, 27 January 2006

'No compromise on N Korea sanctions'

WASHINGTON: The United States will not compromise on financial sanctions imposed on North Korea for alleged counterfeiting and other illicit activities in seeking to resolve the peninsula's nuclear crisis, President George W. Bush said on Thursday. "The American people, if we know people are counterfeiting our money, they expect the government to act. And there is no compromise when it comes to, hey, come back to the table so you can counterfeit our money," Bush told a news conference. North Korea has refused to return to six-party nuclear talks unless the United States lifts financial sanctions in retaliation for North Korea's alleged counterfeiting and money laundering activities. The US Treasury in September labelled a Macau-based bank, Banco Delta Asia, a "primary money laundering concern" and then blacklisted eight North Korean companies in connection with the bank that it said were involved in spreading weapons of mass destruction.

The Korean herald, 27 January 2006

Court rules U.S. firms pay Agent Orange victims (Kwon Ji-young)

A Seoul court yesterday ruled that two American chemical manufacturers must pay reparations to Korean veterans who were harmed by exposure to a toxic defoliant while fighting in the Vietnam War. Ten veterans, representing 20,615 victims, had filed a lawsuit against two American companies which had supplied the harmful defoliant - known as Agent Orange - containing dangerous amounts of dioxin. The victims said they suffered various cancers, peripheral nerve paralysis, acne and bone marrow diseases. The symptoms were said to have been passed down to the second generation. The U.S. government had sprayed 72 million liters of the chemical in Vietnam against guerrilla fighters who sought the cover of the dense jungles, official records showed. Judge Choi Byoung-deok of Seoul District Court yesterday ruled against the two companies, Dow Chemical Company based in Midland, Michigan, and Monsanto Company in St. Louis, Missouri, and ordered them to pay a total of 63.2 billion won (\$65.2 billion) in compensation to the 6,795 defendants who suffered physical handicaps from the exposure to dioxin.

The Korean Herald, 27 January 2006

Editorial: Seoul-Washington rift

It is neither new nor surprising to hear that South Korea and the United States have different views on how to deal with North Korea. But it is truly alarming to see the two allies openly criticize each other at a time when they need closer cooperation on the communist country's nuclear disarmament and other bilateral issues such as restructuring the military alliance and negotiating a free trade agreement. What is most worrisome is that distrust between Seoul and Washington seems to have reached a dangerous level. It has come to the point where the South Korean Foreign Ministry publicly finds fault with the U.S. Embassy in Seoul regarding their statements related to the North's illegal financial activities, and President Roh Moo-hyun issues a warning against hardliners in the Bush administration. In his New Year's news conference on Wednesday, Roh said his government "does not agree with the view of some in the United States who take issue with North Korea's regime, putting pressure on and sometimes wishing for its collapse." He went on to say that "if the U.S. government tries to resolve problems that way, there will be friction and disagreement between South Korea and the United States."

People's Daily, 27 January 2006

China calls for greater diplomatic effort to resume talks on Iran's nuclear issue

China expressed concern about the current situation of Iran's nuclear issue and calls for all relevant parties to assert greater diplomatic effort and restraint to avoid escalation of the situation. The Chinese side is concerned about possible escalation of the situation, State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan said. Tang expressed the wish that all parties concerned should step up diplomatic effort to create favorable conditions for the resumption of talks before the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) holds a special session of its board of governors in February. Tang made the remarks when meeting with visiting Iranian chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani in Zhongnanhai, the headquarters of the Chinese government in Beijing, Thursday afternoon. Tang explained China's views on the current situation of Iran's nuclear issue. The IAEA is to convene an emergency session of its board of governors next week, on which the United States and the European Union (EU) are likely to push for a vote on referring the issue to the UN Security Council. The meeting is to be held at the EU request earlier this month after Iran resumed uranium enrichment research following a two-and-half year halt.

The Hindu, 27 January 2006

China, world's fourth largest economy (Jonathan Watts)

Beijing: China maintained its breakneck momentum last year with a 9.9 per cent growth surge that almost certainly took it past Britain to fourth place in the world gross domestic product rankings. Despite government efforts to slow the pace of investment and cool an overheated property sector, official statistics released on Friday showed economic expansion in 2005 was only a fraction behind the 10.1 per cent notched up in 2004. China's GDP is now 18.2 trillion yuan, which - depending on a slight fluctuation in exchange rates - surpasses estimates for Britain and France last year. The U.S., Japan and Germany are considerably bigger, but China is catching up fast. While other leading economies would be happy with 4 per cent growth this year, China is expected to more than double that. Despite the spectacular numbers, analysts believe the Government has - if anything - underestimated output. Statistics in this vast, largely unregulated and often secretive country are notoriously unreliable. Last month, officials announced the economy was 16.8 per cent bigger than previously thought because of hidden consumption and unreported income.

The Nation, 27 January 2006

Bajaur attack (WAJAHAT LATIF)

Early Friday, the 13th January, four US aircraft aggressed into the Pakistan airspace. They entered Pakistan from neighbouring Afghan province Kunar and fired, according to eyewitnesses, and government officials (who would like to remain anonymous), nine missiles on houses in Damadola, Bajaur Agency. Damadola is a small village about ten-km northeast of Khar, the Agency HQ. 18 people have been killed in this attack and six injured. 14 of these eighteen people are reported to be from one family, most of them women and children. In addition to demolishing several (mud) houses, the missiles managed to kill over twenty heads of cattle. Apparently, the planes took their time over the target, reconnoitering the area for half an hour before returning for the kill in Berkandi area of the Mamund tribe. The affected area is supposed to be a stronghold of Maulana Sufi Mohammad, the head of a banned religious group who is jailed in Dera Ismail Khan, the southernmost district of the NWFP. The army spokesman was not in a position to confirm the violation of the Pakistani airspace, something that the military should have registered immediately. The official version suggested that the incident was the result of explosions within the houses.

Dawn, 27 January 2006

US-India strategic alliance (Ghayoor Ahmed)

History bears witness to the fact that the United States focused its efforts on building a close relationship with Pakistan only when it deemed it necessary to do so to achieve its limited aims in the region. It did not consider

Pakistan important enough to develop long-time relations with. In contrast, American policymakers have made sustained efforts to develop a cordial and durable relationship with India for the promotion of major US interests in South Asia. This illustrates the dichotomy in America's attitude towards Pakistan and India. However, being one of the principal exponents of the non-aligned movement, India preferred to remain politically neutral and in order to attain great power status in the international system it endeavoured to maintain a non-aligned posture. Yet, American policymakers continued to feverishly work to woo India which was seen by them to have strategic possibilities of interest to the United States. The end of the Cold War, however, brought about a perceptible change in the strategic outlook of India. To all intent and purposes it abandoned its hoary commitments to non-alignment. President Bill Clinton's visit to India in March 2000 not only opened a new chapter in US-India relations, it was also heralded as a blueprint for future ties between the two countries. Based on the conviction that US interests required strong links with New Delhi, the Bush administration has been exploring ways of creating a strategic partnership with India since 2001.

Daily Times, 27 January 2006

Musharraf wants incentive to abandon Iran gas pipeline

DAVOS: Pakistan has no plans to ditch the natural gas pipeline deal with Iran amid pressure from the US, President Pervez Musharraf said in an interview published on Thursday, AFP reported. Musharraf told the Financial Times newspaper that Pakistan needed the gas for economic development and no government had the right to oppose the project. At the same time, he signalled the possibility that the US could pay Pakistan to step away from the deal. "Our industrial growth, foreign direct investment, depends on availability of energy," Musharraf told the newspaper in the interview conducted on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in the Swiss Alpine village of Davos. "We are proceeding with the pipeline. It is in our economic interest. If somebody wants to stop us they should compensate us. But at the moment we are going ahead." Monitoring desk adds: In an interview to The Wall Street Journal on Thursday, Musharraf said Pakistan would build the planned gas pipeline from Iran without India's participation if talks among the three countries continue to produce no result. Negotiations to build a line that would run on to India had proved difficult, he said, although Pakistan remained open to "the trilateral track if it comes through". The newspaper said, "Indian government officials have expressed concern over recent attacks on existing gas and power lines in Balochistan, through which a pipeline from Iran would pass." Playing down the threat posed by Balochistan militants, Musharraf told the paper that the conflict was limited to one isolated local tribe.

Daily Times, 27 January 2006

We will follow terrorists wherever they are, Bush tells Aziz

WASHINGTON: US President George W Bush made it clear to Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz that the US would pursue the terrorist wherever they were, a white house spokesman told the press on Thursday. "President Bush and Prime Minister Aziz talked about how we're working together in the war on terrorism and how it's important to continue working together," said Spokesman Scott McClellan. He said that they "talked about continuing to work to improve cooperation and coordination". In the discussions, both at the Oval Office and the residence, "focused on our ongoing efforts to defeat al Qaeda and to prevent attacks from happening, both against Pakistan and against the US". Following the White House meeting, Prime Minister Aziz attended a luncheon at the US President's residence, hosted for him. "But there's really nothing else to add to what I just said and what the Prime Minister said earlier Tuesday," he stated. The White House Spokesman added "Pakistan is a valued ally in the global war on terrorism." "We work very closely with Pakistan and we will continue to do so," McClellan added. "This president has made it clear we're going to pursue terrorists wherever they are - wherever they are. There is no negotiation with terrorists. These are people who are determined to harm innocent civilians in Pakistan, in America, and in countries around the civilised world. And the way to defeat them is to take the fight to them and prevent them from carrying out the attacks in the first place," said the spokesman.

The Hindu, 27 January 2006

"Statement taken out of context": Mulford

In a press release by the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, Ambassador David C. Mulford states: I regret that my comments to the Press Trust of India (PTI) today have been taken out of context. As I noted to the PTI reporters, Iran is a matter where we know India will vote on the basis of its own national interest. Because of the confusion that earlier reports have sown, I have released below the full text of my comments on Iran. Can we come to Iran? Now the vote is coming up on February 2. The Indian stand so far has been non-committal on supporting referral to the Security Council. They are saying that it should be done within the framework of the IAEA. Now how does U.S. look at this? Ambassador Mulford: What's India saying? Give that to me again? They want it within the framework which they said last time also. IAEA. They want that it should be resolved amicably within the IAEA. IAEA framework. They don't want it to go to the U.N. Security Council. Well, I mean the U.S. position is, and was at the time of the September resolution, and the resolution itself found Iran in violation and it was not at that

moment immediately referred to the United Nations Security Council because it was agreed that there would be a sort of window of time provided to Iran to respond to diplomacy on the issue. That's how I understand the September vote took place. And India's vote at that time was, and I believe it's clearly demonstrable, it was a vote that was based on India's judgment of its own national interest. You know India didn't decide to vote to please the United States. They don't want Iran to have the nuclear weapon. As they put it to me, there are enough nuclear weapons in this neighbourhood, they don't need another neighbour with nuclear weapons and they are opposed to that. So, now we come to the meeting where the proposal is going to be to refer the matter to the United Nations Security Council, and India will once again have to make a determination of what its national interests are and I think that's an issue that can be left firmly in the hands of the Indian government to determine.

The Hindu, 27 January 2006

Reject the American fatwa

In publicly warning India, on Republic Day eve, to vote against Iran or else, United States Ambassador David Mulford has outrageously crossed the line of diplomatic propriety, inviting condemnation from political players ranging from the Left to Atal Bihari Vajpayee. But he has also done India a service by letting the cat out of the bag, if it was ever fully in. In his interview to the Press Trust of India, he has spotlighted the pitiful terms of the bargain struck by the Manmohan Singh Government with Washington under the signboard of civilian nuclear cooperation. Who can, after Mr. Mulford's egregious forthcomingness, doubt that the bargain requires India to behave like a marionette - forced at every turn of major international events to go against its own national instincts and interests for fear of offending Washington? Today it is a fatwa on Iran, tomorrow it will be a diktat on India's plan to separate its civil and military nuclear facilities, which Mr. Mulford has found to fall short of "minimum standards." He did issue a late night "clarification" on Wednesday claiming his remarks on India and Iran had been "taken out of context." But the verbatim transcript of the relevant portion of the interview circulated by the U.S. embassy (see text on the op-ed page) makes matters worse. The U.S. Ambassador is on record that "we have passed on [an observation]... that if they decide that they don't want to vote for this, our view is that the effect on members of Congress with regard to this civil nuclear initiative will be devastating... the initiative will die in the Congress." If this is not a threat passed on to India to abandon any idea of voting independently on the Iran nuclear issue, what is?

The Hindu, 27 January 2006

Mulford's views reflect Congress feelings

Washington: In a damage control exercise, the U.S. on Thursday said its Ambassador David C. Mulford's comments that there would be a "devastating" effect on the India-U.S. nuclear deal if India did not vote against Iran at the IAEA, reflected the "very strongly held feelings" in Congress but a final decision on the issue would be taken by New Delhi. "...We deal with the Indian Government on these two issues as separate issues. Certainly, they come up in conversations," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters at a briefing. Mr. McCormack was asked to explain comments made by Mr. Mulford in an interview to PTI on Wednesday. Mr. Mulford had said that if India did not vote against Teheran's nuclear programme at the IAEA, the fallout of it on the civilian nuclear deal would be "devastating" and the initiative would "die." "Let me be clear. Ultimately, how India votes on this matter (on Iran) is going to be a decision for the Indian Government. They voted to find Iran in non-compliance that last time around," Mr. McCormack said. "But, I think what the Ambassador was doing was talking about and reflecting the view on Capitol Hill ... there are very strongly held feelings about Iran and the need for the international community to act decisively and firmly and with a single voice concerning Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapon." Mr. McCormack said, "We continue to encourage the Indian Government to vote for referral. Ultimately, that is going to be their decision. And we have also been talking to them about the importance of making progress on their implementation plan for separating the civilian and military nuclear programmes." Asked what would happen to the civilian nuclear accord if India did not vote for referring Iran to the Security Council, Mr. McCormack said the administration would continue to work with the Government of India on the implementation of the agreement with the hope that progress could be made on the issue in time for President George W Bush's visit to India this March.

The Hindu, 27 January 2006

Mulford's comment kicks off furore, India says 'inappropriate'

New Delhi/Washington, Jan 26: As Ambassador David C Mulford's comments on Indo-US nuclear deal kicked off a furore, government on Thursday summoned the envoy and conveyed its strong displeasure, saying the remarks were "inappropriate" and "not conducive to building a strong partnership" between the two countries. India's sharp reaction prompted the Bush administration to launch a damage control exercise, with the State Department in Washington explaining that the envoy was only reflecting "very strongly-held feelings" in the Congress and that Washington would continue to engage New Delhi in the July 18 nuclear deal talks irrespective of its position on Iran. In New Delhi, Mulford was summoned by Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran who bluntly stated that "the remarks made by him in an interview to PTI were inappropriate and not conducive to building a strong partnership

between our two independent democracies," External Affairs Ministry spokesman said in a statement here. India's action came after Mulford, in an interview to PTI on Wednesday, said if New Delhi did not vote against Tehran's nuclear programme at the February 2 IAEA meeting, the fallout on the Indo-US nuclear deal in the US Congress would be "devastating" and the Indo-US nuclear initiative will "die" in the House. Mulford expressed his "sincere regrets", saying his remarks had been taken "out of context" and that "it was not his intention to question India's right to take decisions on various issues on the basis of its own national interest," the statement said. Saran told Mulford that "India's vote on any possible resolution on the Iran nuclear issue at the IAEA would be determined by India's own judgement of the merits of the case," the MEA statement said.

The Hindu, 27 January 2006

Inappropriate comments, Mulford told (Amit Baruah)

NEW DELHI: Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran on Thursday afternoon "called in" American Ambassador David Mulford and told the envoy that his comments to the Press Trust of India on Wednesday were "inappropriate and not conducive to building a strong partnership between our two independent democracies." Earlier in the day, the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, said Mr. Mulford's comments were "outrageous" and violated all diplomatic norms. Taking the unusual step of issuing a formal statement, he said the External Affairs Ministry's reaction on Wednesday was "routine." "It hardly expresses the indignation of the people of the sovereign and independent Republic of India," the former Prime Minister stressed in the two-paragraph statement. An External Affairs Ministry release said the Foreign Secretary "informed" the U.S. Ambassador that India's vote on any possible resolution on the Iran nuclear issue at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would be determined by New Delhi's own judgment of the merits of the case. "The Ambassador expressed his sincere regrets, saying that his remarks had been taken out of context. It was not at all his intention to question India's right to take decisions on various issues on the basis of its own national interests. Mr. Saran and Mr. Mulford agreed that the two sides would work closely together for a successful visit by President [George W.] Bush to India," the statement said.

The Indian Express, 27 January 2006

Mulford undermines Bush visit: Envoy Sen will tell Burns (Shishir Gupta)

NEW DELHI, Jan 26: Bristling over Ambassador David Mulford's remarks that if India didn't vote to refer Iran to the Security Council, the nuclear initiative "would die," New Delhi has decided to convey to key interlocutors in Washington that such "insensitive views" would undermine the visit of President George Bush to India later in March. Official sources said that Indian Ambassador to US Ranendra "Ronen" Sen is meeting US Under-Secretary of State Nicholas Burns later today. He is expected to convey to him in "no uncertain terms" that Ambassador Mulford's comments were uncalled for and had the potential to create hurdles in closing the Indo-US nuclear deal before Bush arrives in March. Burns will be told that Mulford's statements did not take into account that India was a democracy and disregarded the "political sensitivity" of both Iran and the nuclear agreement issue. The Indian protest was cleared at the highest level after the matter was discussed between National Security Advisor M K Narayanan, who is monitoring the implementation of the nuclear deal and the Iran nuclear issue, Sen and Saran on Wednesday night. In fact, key interlocutors in the US State Department were contacted by Sen soon after Mulford's comments to PTI that if India did not vote to send Iran to the Security Council, the effect on the deal would be "devastating" as the US Congress would "simply stop considering the matter." This resulted in US State Department disassociating itself from Mulford's remarks by saying that the "Ambassador was expressing his personal opinion about what the potential political outcome might be."

The Nation, 27 January 2006

Gunboat diplomacy

US Ambassador to India David C Mulford's threat to New Delhi to vote against Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board meeting scheduled on February 2 or get ready for the fallout on the Indo-US nuclear deal was met with a firm rebuttal by India, making it clear that its position would be based on its own independent judgement. This observation came amid intensified efforts by the United States and EU-3 (Britain, France and Germany) to seek world support for the resolution to be placed before the IAEA for referring Iran's nuclear issue to the UN Security Council for action. Mr Mulford told Press Trust of India on Wednesday that it had been conveyed to New Delhi that if it decided not to support the resolution the effect on US Congressmen with the regard to the civil nuclear cooperation being discussed between the two countries would be 'devastating.' "I think the Congress will simply stop considering the matter and the initiative will die..." he said five days after Indian Foreign Secretary Shayam Saran met US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns and discussed with him this particular issue. The Indian leadership must be aware of the consequences it might have to face. But it wasted no time in rejecting any attempt to link the country's position vis-à-vis Iran to the proposed Indo-US deal on civil nuclear energy cooperation. But if India has ostensibly refused to accept any pressure on the issue of Iranian nuclear issue it is not because it is interested in the gas pipeline project but because it was a matter of its sovereignty.

Daily Times, 27 January 2006

Bush ready to 'exhaust all diplomacy' on Iran nuclear issue

WASHINGTON: US President George W Bush said his government will 'exhaust all diplomacy' and work with US allies as it seeks to address Iran's disputed nuclear programme, according to a newspaper interview. "The objective is to continue to work with many nations around the world to convince Iran to get rid of its nuclear weapons ambitions. That's the objective," Bush told The Wall Street Journal in an interview published on Thursday. The president said that "it's important for us to exhaust all diplomacy, and so you're watching a diplomatic effort evolve." The US and European governments, which suspect Iran is pursuing a clandestine nuclear weapons project, are pushing for Iran to be referred to the UN Security Council when the board of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meets in Vienna next week. Bush has previously declined to rule out possible military action against Iran and when asked if such a contingency remained an option, Bush said: "Yes." Iran's top security envoy, Ali Larijani, met Chinese officials in Beijing on Thursday to try to deflect western pressure on the nuclear issue. Larijani said Tehran was ready to discuss a proposal put forward by Moscow that would have uranium from Iran enriched in Russia. Bush reiterated his support for the Russian plan that would allow 'the development of a civilian nuclear programme within Iran' with enrichment carried out in Russia under international supervision. The United States is engaged in a 'multilateral effort', consulting with allies to forge a consensus on the issue, Bush said.

Daily Times, 27 January 2006

Condoleezza Rice sees more room for diplomacy on Iran nuclear row

DAVOS: Iran poses a "significant danger" over its nuclear programme, but there is still time for international diplomacy to work, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Thursday. Rice said in comments via video link to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, that the international community should "react strongly" and haul Tehran before the UN Security Council for action. "Now when we're in the Security Council there will be many options available to the Security Council, but we believe that that is only the start of a new phase of diplomacy," she said. "A certain set of negotiations will have failed, but we will still have diplomatic means to try and get Iran to return to more sensible policies." The US and EU want the Iran dossier referred to the world executive via the UN nuclear watchdog International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is due to meet on February 2 to discuss the matter. Separately, US President George W Bush on Thursday gave public support for a Russian plan to end the Iran nuclear dispute. Bush told a press conference he would support a civilian nuclear energy programme in Iran if all the nuclear fuel was manufactured in Russia and the Russian authorities collected all the waste that could be used for nuclear weapons. Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the IAEA, said on Thursday that a Russian plan to defuse the crisis over Iran's nuclear ambitions was an attractive proposal that could lead towards a solution. "I am hopeful the Russian proposal could provide the beginning of a solution," he told the World Economic Forum.

Boston.com, 26 January 2006

India has hard choices on US nuclear deal: Rice

WASHINGTON: India has "difficult choices" to make on a controversial civil nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States before the deal can be completed, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Thursday. The landmark accord, agreed in principle in July but still to be negotiated in detail, would grant New Delhi access to civil nuclear technology it has been denied for three decades, provided it puts its civilian facilities under international inspections. Senior-level talks in New Delhi last week failed to close the gap on major issues, including which Indian facilities would be designated as civilian and military. The military plants would still be off-limits to U.N. monitors. "In order to move on to a new phase in which civil nuclear power would be available to India, India has to make some difficult choices," Rice told Reuters in an interview. She refused to provide any details but insisted, "I think we're making progress." Although announced with great fanfare, the deal has run into criticism from nuclear experts and some members of the U.S. Congress who say it undermines global nonproliferation goals. A related issue is whether India will side with the United States when the International Atomic Energy Agency board of governors debates Iran's nuclear program at a February 2 meeting.

The Indian Express, 28 January 2006

US close to nuclear deal with India

WASHINGTON, Jan 28: The United States is close to reaching a nuclear cooperation deal with India and may clinch it before President George W. Bush visits India in March, a senior U.S. official said on Friday. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh agreed last July on an accord on civil nuclear energy that would reverse a nearly 30-year-old ban on atomic cooperation with New Delhi, which has tested nuclear weapons. However details of that accord still have to be negotiated, including a plan to separate India's civil and military nuclear facilities. The deal also has to be accepted by the 44-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group and the U.S. Congress. U.S.

Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, who visited India last week to negotiate details of the agreement, told reporters he was confident a deal would be reached soon. Pressed further, he said: "It is my assessment, and I have been the one negotiating this for six months, that we are very close to an agreement." In an interview with Reuters on Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the two sides were making progress but India had to make some "difficult choices" for the final agreement to be reached. She declined to give specifics. Burns also said there needed to be more progress on a few issues, which remained confidential. "I don't believe they are insuperable."

The Asian Age, 28 January 2006

The Nuclear poison pill (Bharat Karnad)

The advocates of the proposed nuclear deal with the United States are getting shrill as they see its prospects dimming, a denouement not anticipated by its promoters within the Indian government and the media. To try and sell a patently bad agreement with the capacity seriously to injure national security and India's strategic interests on the basis that it will enhance relations with America, procure needed civilian nuclear technology from abroad, and gain Indian entry into the big power ranks as "international balancer," is at best to misread the fundamentals of international power politics and, at worst, cynically to engage in trepidation-mongering - fall in line or miss out on the main chance. One of the main reasons why the nuclear deal is hitting road-blocks is because its champions here are incoherent on the technical aspects. How else to explain the charge that rejecting this deal will result in "technology thralldom"? Come again! If ignorance of laws is no excuse for violating them, unfamiliarity with the science and technology involved cannot reasonably be the vehicle for nuclear policy propagation. Importing nuclear technology or nuclear fuel, rather than self-reliant development, surely, will result in dependence, slavery, and "thralldom" (to use a string of synonyms to emphasise the point). This is so obvious a fact, one would have thought it needed no iteration. Further, how many of the indigenously developed power plants and what other nuclear facilities to put under international safeguards is not, as per the July 18 Joint Statement, a matter of negotiation but, as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared in Parliament July 29, solely for India to decide and, like in the matter of the four other NPT-recognised nuclear weapon states, for the US to accept. That New Delhi has to produce a "credible, defensible" separation plan which will pass muster with the US Congress is a later construction of American officialdom. Unless Dr Singh was not being candid in Parliament, it is not the Indian government's responsibility to inflict hurtful measures on the country just so it enables their American counterpart to push this deal on the Capitol Hill. The more the Manmohan Singh regime bends backwards to accommodate the George W. Bush administration, the more dubious the deal becomes in the eyes of the Indian people. India has to do what other major powers have done - surrender no options, give as little ground as possible where its nuclear programme is concerned and restrict international monitoring to the barest minimum. If this is not possible, then to junk the deal and get on with life.

Deccan Herald, 28 January 2006

Uncalled for

US Ambassador David C Mulford's ultimatum to India on voting at the IAEA on Iran's nuclear programme was uncalled for. The US envoy warned that India's refusal to vote against Iran's nuclear programme at the upcoming IAEA meeting would have "devastating" consequences for the India-US nuclear deal and that the deal would "die" in the US Congress. An annoyed India has described his remarks as "inappropriate" and "not conducive to building a strong partnership" between the two countries. Indeed, the envoy should have been more circumspect in his remarks. Mr Mulford overstepped his brief with his uncalled for observations. If he had a message to convey to the Indian government, this should have been done through the right channels and at the appropriate level, not through the media. Besides, issuing ultimatums is hardly the way diplomats should conduct themselves. In a bid at damage limitation, Washington has distanced itself from its Ambassador's statement and the latter has since expressed his regrets for the remarks. However, the incident is unlikely to end here. Its impact is likely to be felt in the coming weeks and months. However, what Mr Mulford has said is not surprising. This is something US officials have been saying to Indian officials in private. It only confirms what some sections in India have been saying: that the US will use the nuclear deal as a carrot to get India to fall in line with Washington's position on the Iran nuclear programme issue

The Tribune, 28 January 2006

The Indo-US nuclear deal and the Iran vote (Ashish Kumar Sen)

Even as the Bush administration distanced itself from United States Ambassador to India David Mulford's comments about a civilian nuclear deal with India, congressional sources said his remarks are an accurate reflection of the sentiment in the U.S. Congress. In an interview with the Press Trust of India this week, Mr. Mulford had said that the July 18, 2005, agreement which seeks civil nuclear cooperation between the U.S. and India may "die in Congress" should India fail to vote against Iran at a meeting of the United Nations nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Calling Mr. Mulford's remarks the ambassador's "personal opinion," US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said on Wednesday, "how India votes on

this matter is going to be a decision for the Indian government." The Ministry of External Affairs issued a sharp response to Mr. Mulford's interview and rejected attempts to link the nuclear agreement with the Iran vote. Mr. McCormack pointed out that New Delhi had voted against Iran in September and said the Bush administration "certainly would encourage and hope that they vote for referral this time around." The Bush administration must get the approval of the U.S. Congress before key laws are changed to allow the deal to materialise. Before that approval can be given, however, India must present a credible plan to separate its civilian and military nuclear facilities. U.S. and Indian officials have still to agree on which comes first - the separation or the request to Congress.

Hindustan Times, 28 January 2006

Ronen Sen meets Nicholas Burns (Sridhar Krishnaswami)

Washington, Jan 27: The US has said that the nuclear energy cooperation with India remained a "very important goal" for it as Indian Ambassador Ronen Sen met Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns. The meeting was held to apparently convey India's displeasure over Ambassador David Mulford's remarks on the future of Indo-US nuclear deal. Although specific details of the discussions held on Friday were not available, Sen is understood to have told him about the implications Mulford's remarks would have on the process aimed at increasing understanding on the issues involved in implementing the deal. "What we are focussed on is moving ahead on the civilian-nuclear agreement and that is what we are continuing to have discussions with Indian officials with," a senior administration official informed in Washington. "Coming to an agreement on this issue remains a very important goal for us," the official said, also making the point that Mulford's remarks "were a part of the process to increase understanding of the issues involved". On the top American envoy's comments, the senior official stressed once again that it is Mulford's "personal analysis of the political situation involving Congress on this particular issue" and that the Ambassador had said in the interview that India will make its choice based on its national interests. India had summoned Mulford on Friday and conveyed its strong displeasure, saying the remarks were "inappropriate" and "not conducive to building a strong partnership" between the two countries.

Hindustan Times, 28 January 2006

Atom & Jerry show

At first sight, there is nothing extraordinary about US Ambassador David Mulford's comments that an Indian decision not to vote for the referral of Iran to the UN Security Council will have 'devastating' results. And so it would have been in September 2005 when India did vote to haul up Teheran. Since then, nothing has happened to change the situation in Iran's favour. Instead, there has been a series of negative developments. First, Iran admitted that it had received information on casting and machining parts of nuclear weapons, allegedly unsolicited. Earlier this month, it broke the IAEA seals in its pilot nuclear enrichment plant. In these circumstances, an Indian turnabout - even through abstention - would be seen as, at best, a loss of nerve, and at worst, an effort to cock a snook at the issue of non-proliferation. However, diplomacy is often a matter of timing and in this, Mr Mulford has got it all wrong. This was the time for unobtrusive, quiet lobbying and negotiation. Instead, there is a feeling that the US is determined to extract its pound of flesh on the India-US nuclear deal by pressuring India to vote against Iran. As it is, there is a perception in India that the US is shifting the goalposts by ignoring vital points in the July 18 agreement and dumping its stated obligation of persuading the Congress to approve the legislation on New Delhi. Mr Mulford's frustration is understandable. The ambassador and the administration are keen to have a Congressional approval on hand, before the US president lands in South Asia and makes it the capstone of the visit. Unfortunately, New Delhi wasted six months in offering a plan to separate its civil and military nuclear facilities because it needlessly humoured naysayers in the Department of Atomic Energy. The result was a plan so patently unrealistic that American officials felt the Congress would laugh it out of court. Diplomats, Indian or American, have the legitimate goal of obtaining the best outcome for their respective side. Both must resist the temptations of over-reaching and stick, instead, to the target of implementing the letter and spirit of what was agreed to on July 18, 2005.

The Hindu, 28 January 2006

Coming to terms with nuclear regime change (Siddharth Varadarajan)

Revealed by some in India as the "ayatollahs of non-proliferation," Michael Krepon of the Stimson Center and Leonard Spector of the Centre for Nonproliferation Studies are leading the charge against the Indo-U.S. nuclear agreement in Washington. In an interview during a recent visit to Delhi, they spoke about the reasons for their opposition. Condoleezza Rice has said offering nuclear commerce to India is the price Washington must pay to get the Indians to cut off energy links with Iran. Are you comfortable with this kind of trade-off? Michael Krepon: It's odd for the Bush administration to suggest it's OK for India to import Iranian natural gas by tanker but not by pipeline. It's also odd to support a peace process in South Asia but to oppose infrastructure that can help with the peace process. That said, Iran does pose a serious challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation regime that is detrimental to U.S. and Indian national security interests. So we have to find ways to square this circle. Leonard Spector: There is a timing issue too. Availability of gas from Iran will certainly come faster from either means -

pipelines or ships - than even the signing of a nuclear agreement because the whole nuclear area is so difficult from the commercial standpoint, even assuming everything else was taken care of. But in the medium to long term, from the carbon emissions point of view and because of hydrocarbon depletion, many argue nuclear power has to play a bigger role in India's energy mix. Why do you oppose nuclear cooperation with India in the form the Bush administration is proposing? Leonard Spector: The problem is that in order to facilitate nuclear trade with India, it is necessary to change non-proliferation rules which have applied since 1978. I think the U.S. and virtually the whole spectrum of Congress and even critics like us would be prepared to do that if the deal were structured the right way and if the impact were both to improve relations with India and its energy situation but not to do damage to the non-proliferation regime.

Daily Times, 28 January 2006

Special treatment for India will weaken non-proliferation regime: Krepon (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: While the rules preventing proliferation will be stronger with India "inside the tent," a country-specific exemption that relaxes consensus-based rules of nuclear commerce is the wrong way of achieving that, according to leading nuclear security expert Michael Krepon. Krepon, the founding president of local think tank the Stimson Centre, writes in an analysis that President George Bush's "bold initiative" is aimed at changing the rules of nuclear commerce to benefit India. What the Bush administration has proposed will mean carving out an exception for India that would permit nuclear power plant construction, if New Delhi proposes a credible, transparent, and defensible plan to separate its civil and military nuclear facilities, while putting the former under international safeguards in perpetuity. Krepon writes that much is riding on the outcome of the current negotiations between the two countries. He notes that companies that want to do business with India are gearing up to promote the deal, while those who worry about proliferation have pointed out the risks. India, if the deal passes Congress, would gain the same benefits without the same obligations as states that have forsworn nuclear weapons, which could add more disgruntled parties to the Nonproliferation Treaty. In addition, civil nuclear commerce could be diverted to nuclear weapon programmes, which is why the Bush administration wants India to accept safeguards in perpetuity. "India followed this route to test its first nuclear weapon in 1974, and Iran is now following a similar path," Krepon points out.

The Indian Express, 28 January 2006

A nuclear Iran? It's Bush's call (Max Boot)

Iran's decision to remove the UN seals on its nuclear research facilities has made obvious the failure of European attempts to cajole the mullahs into giving up their atomic dreams. Some experts estimate that Iran will need only three more years to build its first nuclear bomb, and it will pass the point of no return much sooner. An Iranian nuke is not a reassuring prospect, given that country's well-earned designation by the state department as the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism. The mullahs serve as godfathers to, among other charming organisations, Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. Making the situation even more alarming was last year's "election" (in an undemocratic process) of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a former member of the Revolutionary Guards (Iran's SS), as president. He has been busy making headlines with claims that the Holocaust never occurred and that Israel is a "tumour" that should be "wiped off the map". In sum, a terrorist-sponsoring state led by an apocalyptic lunatic will soon have the ability to incinerate Tel Aviv or New York. The International Atomic Energy Agency is concerned enough to convene an emergency meeting on February 2 to discuss a referral to the UN Security Council. This is not a prospect to make the mullahs quake. They know perfectly well that no serious sanctions are likely. Their business partners in Russia and China will see to that. Nor do the Europeans have any interest in embargoing Iran's main export - petroleum - when oil is more than \$60 a barrel. The most that might happen is that some Iranian officials might have their foreign accounts frozen and their foreign travel curtailed. That seems a small price to pay for nuclear glory.

The Times of India, 28 January 2006

'India will vote on Iran based on self-interest'

WASHINGTON: The United States has said that it expects India to vote on Iran based on its self interests at the IAEA meeting on February 2 and it has "no desire" to interfere in this process. "I think the record is clear that the United States considers India to be a great country and great countries make their own decisions based on their interests. We have the highest respect for that process. We would never want to interfere in it", the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns told Indian mediapersons at a reception on the occasion of the Republican Day celebrations at the Indian Ambassador Ronen Sen's residence. "Ambassador Mulford and I both believe that he and I have had a chance to discuss with the Indian government directly and we will keep those discussions private...We respect India, we respect its sovereignty, we respect its right to make its own decision", Burns said. "But we have a right in international politics to articulate our own views, and Ambassador and I have both done that. I think it has been blown out of proportions. We have a mature, respectful relationship with the Indian government", he said. Defending his top envoy in New Delhi as an "outstanding" Ambassador, Burns said the United States has the highest respect for the sovereignty of India. Burns, when asked if Iran was

part of the civilian nuclear energy arrangement with India, argued that while India is expected to vote in its self interests, it was imperative that a broader message is sent to Teheran as well. And the message should be that Iran is an outlaw state in terms of its nuclear ambitions and democratic countries like India, Russia, the United States and Britain, we all hope we can all be together on this... I think that's the best way to explain this situation", the official remarked. When asked why all the attention was on India when it was only one vote at the IAEA, Burns stressed the importance of all democracies to send the message to Iran.

Hindustan Times, 28 January 2006

US should provide Iran with reactors: ElBaradei

Davos: UN nuclear chief Mohamed ElBaradei has called on the United States to provide Iran with nuclear reactors, and urged Tehran to declare a moratorium on enriching uranium for at least eight years. He said eight or nine years would enable the country to earn the confidence of the international community that it was really interested in nuclear energy - not nuclear weapons. The Iranians argue that they need to develop an enrichment capability because they cannot be assured of a guaranteed supply of fuel for a peaceful nuclear energy programme, ElBaradei said at a panel at the World Economic Forum on Friday. "I would separate the issues of using nuclear technology for energy and to produce weapons," he said. "I would call upon the United States to provide Iran with reactors, and I would call upon Iran to declare a moratorium on enrichment for at least eight or nine years" until the country can earn the global community's confidence. Iran provoked an international outcry on January 10 when it cut seals of the International Atomic Energy Agency at its main enrichment plant and resumed small-scale enrichment of uranium - a process that can be used to produce fuel for generating electricity or material for atomic bombs. Britain, France and Germany - who have been leading European Union efforts to get Iran to abandon uranium conversion and enrichment activities - succeeded in getting the IAEA's board to meet February 2 to discuss taking action against Iran, a move supported by the United States.

Hindustan Times, 28 January 2006

Sanctions against Iran possible, says Bush

Washington: United States President George W Bush on Saturday said referring Iran to the United Nations Security Council is still a possibility and he has not ruled out military action as the last option. In a wide-ranging interview with CBS Evening News anchor Bob Schieffer, Bush said Iran's designs to pursue for possessing nuclear weapons is "unacceptable" and sanctions are "certainly a real possibility" if Iran continues its nuclear programme. "All options should be on the table, and the last option is the military option. We have got to work hard to exhaust all diplomacy and that's what the country is seeing to happen," Bush said last night. Iran, which is the second largest oil producer after Saudi Arabia in West Asia, earlier this month resumed research on the nuclear fuel cycle. It says its programme is for peaceful purposes and to harness energy. The US and the European Union say they fear Iran's aim is to build a nuclear weapons. Taking a hard line against Iran's nuclear ambitions, Bush said, "The Free World cannot allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon." In the 20-minute interview in the White House, Bush said, "Our strategy is to present and... Hold together a united front -- a coalition of nations -- to say to the Iranians your designs to have a nuclear weapon or your desire to have the capability of making a nuclear weapon is unacceptable." Meanwhile, the US Senate has passed a unanimous resolution condemning Iran's nuclear programme and refer it to the United Nations Security Council for possible sanctions for violating non-proliferation goals.

The Hindu, 28 January 2006

U.S. tells India to back off Syria oil deal (Siddharth Varadarajan)

NEW DELHI: Taking strong exception to India's recent decision to buy a Syrian oilfield in partnership with China, the United States has asked the Manmohan Singh Government to "reconsider" its proposed investment. A demarche to this effect was made earlier this month and an aide memoire outlining Washington's objections handed over to the Ministry of External Affairs by senior diplomats here. In December last, ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) and the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) teamed up to purchase a 37 per cent stake in the al-Furat oil and gas fields from Petro-Canada for \$573 million. The mature fields, jointly run by Shell, have proven reserves of 300 million barrels of oil equivalent. Indian officials consider the Syrian venture to be of enormous strategic significance, both for the value of the underlying assets and the role it will play in cementing the China-India partnership for acquiring oil and gas equities in third countries. The U.S. aide memoire, a copy of which is in the possession of The Hindu, says: "The United States strongly opposes such investments in Syrian resources." Pointing out that the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed two resolutions, UNSCR 1636 and 1644, "mandating complete cooperation by the government of Syria with the U.N.'s investigation into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri," the U.S. note says: "Now is not the time to send mixed messages to the SARG [Syrian Arab Republic Government] either through investment deals or through any form of economic or political reward to the Damascus regime."

Dawn, 28 January 2006

Where the US went wrong (Touqir Hussain)

The Bush foreign policy has provoked intense debate both at home and abroad. Within the US, one is stunned by the inconclusiveness of the debate; it is strained and confused. It is obvious that the fractious debate is reflective of the testing times the country is facing internally and abroad in the post-Cold War, post-9/11 world. But scarred by the 9/11 trauma, inspired by a religious outlook and driven by the supreme consciousness of power, the American response tends to simplify or distort emerging challenges. The fact is that although the United States may have become the sole superpower, globalization and the end of the Cold War have also led to a certain devolution of power, thus raising the status of other powers with competing interests and policies. This makes it difficult for the US to lead, tempting her to dominate and so provoking reaction and resistance. There is a tragic paradox in America's condition; being the only superpower encourages the temptation to use power yet constrains the prospects of success as never before. American power, therefore, is not absolute. And, on many issues, the United States is walking alone. It was alright in the days when the US was a dominant power, at least in half of the world. Now it may command the whole world but its power and influence are no longer incontestable. Also, coalitions or partnerships these days are not as rigid as during the Cold War era. They are based on narrow or limited interests, are transient and unstable, and ever more susceptible to the vagaries of public opinion in each country. America has to thus learn to lead not through domination but consensus and compromise. And that is the central dilemma it faces: how to navigate the transition from hegemony to domination and to leadership. Its recourse to unilateralism could well be an escape from this dilemma.

Daily Times, 29 January 2006

Key US official meets Bangladeshi Islamic leader

DHAKA: US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, Christina Rocca, ended a three-day visit to Bangladesh on Saturday during which she met the chief of the country's biggest Islamic party. Rocca's visit was primarily aimed to discuss terrorism, corruption and political conflicts in the country with government and opposition leaders. Political analysts said her previously unannounced meeting with the chief of Jamaat-e-Islami party, Motiur Rahman Nizami, was important in the country's current political context. Bangladesh has been hit by a recent wave of bombings by Islamist militants, killing 30 people and wounding at least 150 since August. The government accuses two outlawed Islamist groups - Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh - of being involved in the attacks. Opposition parties led by former prime minister Sheikh Hasina say the perpetrators were harboured and protected by the Jamaat-e-Islami, a partner in Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's coalition government. Jamaat and the government deny the allegation. On Friday, Rocca also met the widow and son of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, who was killed in a grenade attack on January 27 last year. Kibria was a senior leader and policy maker of Hasina's Awami League. His family said they had requested Rocca to raise the issue of Kibria's assassination at the UN Security Council as they did not expect justice in Bangladesh.

Daily Times, 29 January 2006

US pledges more assistance for quake-hit areas

WASHINGTON: The US Senate passed a resolution on Friday commending the US relief efforts in response to the October 8 earthquake and pledged additional support to Pakistan. Adopted unanimously, the resolution urged commitment by the United States and the international community to support long-term relief and reconstruction efforts in the quake-affected areas. The resolution was sponsored by Barbara A Mikulski, a democratic party senator from Maryland, while its co-sponsors included Senator Richard Lugar, Republican from Indiana, Senator Joseph Biden, of the democratic party from Delaware, and Paul S Sarbanes of democratic party from Maryland. The resolution praised efforts by members of the US Armed Forces and civilian employees of the Department of State and US Agency for International Development (USAID). "The US military and the employees of the State Department and USAID are working hard to extend support to our friends in their time of need. We thank them for their service and pledge that we, too, will do our part." The overall US commitment to Pakistan for relief and reconstruction amounts to a total of \$510 million. This includes \$300 million in assistance from the USAID, \$110 million in military support to relief operations and at least \$100 million anticipated from the US private sector. The resolution added, 'President Bush and members of Congress joined the world community to express our sympathy and pledge assistance to help those suffering after the terrible disaster'.

The Indian Express, 29 January 2006

16 N-reactors, how many to declare? (Pranab Dhal Samanta)

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: New Delhi has said no to Washington's proposal that all its power-generating nuclear reactors be put on the civilian list. With negotiations on the landmark nuclear deal going right down to the wire, India is working on how many-and which-of the 16 indigenous reactors can be put on the civilian list without affecting the country's strategic objectives. India has 22 reactors in all, of which the six from abroad are under safeguards. The remaining are indigenous, of which 11 are operational, five under construction. India's strategic programme runs from the fissile material produced by its indigenous reactors. The Department of Atomic Energy

has been asked to soon revert with the "final bottomline" of how many reactors it can put on the civilian list. The urgency is significant, given that New Delhi hopes to get back to Washington by early February with its final position. In fact, Washington's key interlocutor in the talks, Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, said in Washington today that a deal is likely to be reached before President George Bush visits India. He said that despite the hurdles the agreement has faced, including opposition in the US Congress and the non-proliferation lobby, and difficulties in negotiating separation, the two countries were close to clinching a deal.

The Times of India, 29 January 2006

Manmohan wants to control N-deal

NEW DELHI: With the external affairs ministry still with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, it was also being put out that there need not be a link between the early March visit of US president George W Bush and a new entrant to the foreign office. Even in the short space of time, Natwar Singh's replacement could get on with the job. But it is also plain that Singh wants to be the man in control of the Indo-US civil nuclear deal, which is poised at a delicate stage and requires diplomatic footwork with US as also Indian nuclear and foreign policy establishment. He also wants to in total command of Indo-Pak peace efforts. Therefore, it is unlikely that anybody will be appointed to the job until, at the very least, the Bush visit is a done deal. It may not be easy to find a candidate who while having the right presence, will not seek to be a play-maker. By that time Bush leaves, the budget would have been presented. So - as persistent grapevine indicates - finance minister P Chidambaram could hand over the baton to a Manmohan favourite, former RBI governor C Rangarajan, and cross the street to take over MEA. If this happens, it will not be the first time that finance ministers have "done" foreign policy, after Yashwant Sinha flitted seamlessly into South Block from North Block. Its also not too different - because the economy plays a greater role in foreign policy now than ever before. Of course, Rangarajan will have to become a member of Parliament first, preferably an elected one rather than a nominated one. And some other political equations will probably need to be worked out. But it's a possibility. And hence the delay.

The Hindu, 29 January 2005

"Nuclear deal may not be finalized before Bush visit"

WASHINGTON: Indicating that the India-U.S. nuclear deal may not be finalised by the time President George W. Bush visits India in March, Washington has said there are a "few issues" that remain "barriers." "I think we've made some progress. I think we need to see further progress. There are a few issues. And I shouldn't go into them because they should remain confidential, but remain barriers to an agreement. I don't believe they're insuperable," U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns told reporters here on Friday. "...my assessment, and I'm the one negotiating this for six months, is that we're very close to an agreement," he said. oes not covertly divert enriched fuel towards a weapons programme. Iran says its nuclear programme is solely for peaceful purposes, but the West is concerned that it has been intent on developing weapons. Iran's foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki was quoted on Saturday in the Islamic Republic News Agency as saying that "thus far, Tehran and Moscow have reached agreement on certain points such as increasing the number of partners." Iran would send its uranium to Russia under such a plan. The uranium would be enriched there and shipped back to Iran - which would use the material to generate electricity. Mottaki made his comments in Tehran after meeting with his counterpart from Bahrain. News footage recorded Mottaki saying that more "intensive talks" are needed over Iran's nuclear program. The International Atomic Energy Agency board of governors will discuss the issue at a special meeting Thursday in Vienna. But Mottaki thinks talks should continue until another IAEA board meeting in March. Months of talks with European nations did not make headway in settling the issue. Iran recently broke IAEA seals on its nuclear facilities, raising great concerns in the West and a possible referral to the UN Security Council for violating a nuclear arms treaty and ensuing sanctions.

Daily Times, 30 January 2006 Rice leaves for diplomatic trip to London WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice leaves on Sunday for a 36-hour trip to London where she will attend a series of meetings on Afghanistan, Hamas and Iran. The top US diplomat is due to arrive in the British capital late Sunday and has a meeting scheduled mid-Monday with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, in town for a conference of donors to Afghanistan on Tuesday and Wednesday. Rice's meeting with Karzai compensates for her abbreviated participation in the conference, where she will appear early Tuesday before heading back to Washington for President George W Bush's annual State of the Union speech. At the talks to be attended by 70 countries, Washington "will announce a major financial contribution for the next fiscal year, for our economic and our military support to Afghanistan," Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns told reporters. He said the money would be on top of 10 billion dollars the United States has given to Afghanistan since it helped oust the hardline Taliban regime in 2001 after the deadly September 11 attacks that year. Monday afternoon, Rice meets with other members of the so-called diplomatic Quartet - the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and Russia - which

authored the "road-map" blueprint for Middle East peace. Daily Times, 30 January 2006 US didn't coordinate Bajaur attack with Pakistan: Musharraf (Khalid Hasan) WASHINGTON: President Gen Pervez Musharraf has condemned the Bajaur air strike, calling it a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and stating that the attack was not coordinated with Islamabad. "This was definitely not coordinated with us. We condemn it and have objected to it as an issue of sovereignty. (But) we do know there are foreigners and Al Qaeda in that (area). It is my regret that there are (such) people there," he said in an interview with the Washington Post published on Sunday. Asked if he meant Arabs or Al Qaeda members, he said, "Yes, indeed. We are investigating who got killed there. Probably - and I use that word carefully - there were five or six Arabs or foreigners killed there." He added, "While this (strike) is a violation of our sovereignty, I also consider the presence of Al Qaeda and foreigners a violation of our sovereignty. Let's not play into the hands of extremists (who say) that sovereignty is only violated when someone comes by air." Asked if the US has intelligence that a terrorist leader is hiding in a certain house, would there be time for the US and Pakistan to coordinate, the President's reply was, "You have to compromise on these things. Our capability is not as much as the US, but that doesn't mean that we should allow US forces to operate in Pakistan." He added that there is a "lot of (intelligence) coordination going on" between the two governments. He rejected the view that once the US government had intelligence that needed to be acted upon, it left no time for coordinating with Pakistan.

Dawn, 30 January 2006 Washington expanding plan to use drone attacks WASHINGTON, Jan 29: Despite continued protests in Pakistan against the Jan 13 drone attack in Bajaur, the United States is expanding its top-secret plan to kill suspected terrorists with drone-fired missiles, US officials said. Commenting on reports published in a section of the US media, the officials said that the CIA and the Pentagon have deployed at least several dozen Predator drones along the Pakistan-Afghan border and throughout Afghanistan and Iraq for attacking suspected terrorist targets. The CIA also has sent the remote-controlled aircraft into the skies over Yemen and some other countries believed to be Al Qaeda havens, particularly those without a strong government or military with which the United States can work in tandem, the L.A. Times reported on Saturday. Among the senior Al Qaeda leaders killed in Predator strikes are military commander Mohammed Atef in Afghanistan in November 2001 and Qaed Sinan Harithi, a suspected mastermind of the bombing of the US destroyer Cole in Yemen, in 2002. Last year, Predators took out two Al Qaeda leaders in Pakistan: Haitham Yemeni in May and Abu Hamza Rabia in December, one month after another missile strike missed him. The CIA's failed Jan 13 attempt to assassinate Al Qaeda second-in-command Ayman Zawahiri in Bajaur was the latest strike in the "targeted killing" programme, US officials said. Critics of the programme dispute its legality under US and international law, and say it is administered by the CIA with little oversight. US intelligence officials insist it is one of their most tightly regulated, carefully vetted programmes. The Washington Post, 30 January 2006 Bush's Choice on Iran (Jackson Diehl) The debate on Iran is drifting toward the ugly question that the Bush administration would most like to avoid. That is: Is it preferable for the United States to live with the consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran, or with those of a unilateral American military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities? President Bush has never answered that question; instead, he and his State Department have repeatedly called an Iranian bomb "intolerable" while building a diplomatic coalition that won't tolerate a military solution. But two of our more principled senators, Republican John McCain and Democrat Joe Lieberman, have this month faced the Iranian Choice -- and both endorsed military action. McCain was most direct: "There is only one thing worse than the United States exercising a military option," he said on "Face the Nation." "That is a nuclear-armed Iran." It's easy to see why the Bush administration prefers ambiguity to McCain's decisive judgment. After all, both options are terrible, and everyone can agree that diplomacy is worth a try. Yet Bush and both parties in Congress ought to be thinking through their own answers to the Iranian Choice, for two reasons. First, it looks more likely than not that the United States will, in the end, have to make that decision; and, second, the answer to the question ought to shape how the coming diplomatic phase is managed. One driver of the choice is the ranting of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad about Israel and the Holocaust -- which, contrary to what a Western secular sensibility might suggest, is not necessarily a bluff. Another decision forcer is that, for all the talk among Iran watchers about opposition within the regime to Ahmadinejad, there is no evidence that anyone in Tehran

disagrees with his judgment about negotiations with the West -- which is that Iran has no need to make a deal. Iranian leaders were universally dismissive of the offer made last summer by the European Union. There is no indication that any senior leader or faction favors giving up uranium enrichment, under any circumstances. Not even the democratic opposition wants it. Deccan Herald, 30 January 2006 The devil and the deep (Sunanda K Datta-Ray) India's decisions at the IAEA meet will be difficult as all its options are going to have serious repercussions. When the Afghan premier visited Delhi in January 1951, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, then Home Minister, said: "It is no secret that our foreign policy holds Indo-Afghan friendship to be essential; and when we two are bound in friendship we will squeeze anyone in between in the same embrace of affection - a pincer movement for peace, so to speak." That also applies to Indo-Iranian relations, which is why India will face a difficult choice when the International Atomic Energy Agency meets in Vienna on Thursday. At last September's meeting India voted against Iran. It is already under strong and public American pressure to do so this time too. But, as Albert Einstein put it, "Politics is for the moment. An equation is for eternity." So are India's permanent interests, transcending George W. Bush's dyspepsia not over what Iran has done but over what it might do. Both the US and Iran bear directly on India's single most important permanent interest - the security threat from Pakistan. Neither must be offended more than is unavoidable. One course for India might be to warn Iran about its presumed intentions while also stressing US disregard of Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty committing all five acknowledged nuclear powers "to make progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally with the ultimate end of eliminating those weapons." If disarmament is a Utopian dream, so is the Big Five's eternal monopoly which India, Pakistan and Israel have already rejected and Japan can whenever it chooses. Exclusivity is discriminatory, as India argued repeatedly until Pokharan II, making its objection to Iran's complaint of the "dual standard" implicit in India-US nuclear relations somewhat illogical. The Tribune, 30 January 2006 No pressure on Iran issue, says PM New Delhi, Jan 29: While Congress President Sonia Gandhi hinted at the possibility of some changes in the party organisation in the light of today's Cabinet expansion, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh parried all questions on the appointment of a full-fledged External Affairs Minister. Speaking to presspersons after the swearing-in ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan today, Mrs Gandhi said some changes in the party set-up would be undertaken "very soon", possibly in the next few days. This reshuffle has become necessary now that Mrs Ambika Soni, AICC General Secretary and chairperson of the party's media department, has been inducted into the Cabinet. Similarly, long-time party spokesperson Anand Sharma has been given a ministerial berth. Both will have to be replaced. Mrs Soni will be required to relinquish the general secretary's post but there is no bar on her continuing as a member of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) as several senior leaders, including Pranab Mukherjee, Shivraj Patil and Arjun Singh, are both ministers and members of the party's apex decision-making body. The Indian Express, 30 January 2006 'Separation must before N-ties' (C Raja Mohan) NEW DELHI, Jan 29: Three weeks before President Jacques Chirac arrives here, France is signaling its eagerness to launch civilian nuclear energy cooperation with India. But much like the US, France would also want to see India separate its civilian and military nuclear facilities before initiating any substantive atomic energy cooperation. That New Delhi needs to take effective non-proliferation measures to convince the international community to change the rules in its favour was the important message from a French special envoy to the government on Friday. Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, special representative of President Jacques Chirac had an intensive round of consultations with the National Security Adviser M K Narayanan on Friday. This is the fifteenth round of strategic dialogue between the two governments, launched by Chirac and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1998, and was focused on preparing for the French President's visit slated for February 19-20. Chirac also lent strong support to India after the May 1998 tests and lobbied the Europeans against imposing sanctions. At a time when the Clinton administration and Japan were leading the international charge to isolate India, Chirac's France provided invaluable political cover for New Delhi in the difficult days after Pokharan II. France has consistently argued that India, as a responsible nuclear power, must be treated as a unique case and that the current restrictions against atomic commerce with Delhi need to be altered.

The Indian Express, 31 January 2006

Miffed by US envoy's N-remarks, India plans to abstain over Iran vote

IAEA New Delhi, January 30: India plans to abstain from a vote on Iran's nuclear programme at a meeting of the UN's atomic watchdog this week, top Indian officials said on Monday. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board is due to hold an emergency session in Vienna on Thursday to consider sending Iran to the UN Security Council for sanctions over its disputed nuclear programme. The US Ambassador to India, David Mulford, said last week that if India did not oppose Tehran at the IAEA, a landmark India-US nuclear cooperation pact could be in trouble. "We cannot vote with the US after his comments. We're planning to abstain," one senior official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, told Reuters. Although Mulford later said he had been quoted out of context and expressed regret, his remarks triggered a domestic furore with allies in Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's ruling coalition and opposition groups accusing the government of selling out to Washington.

The Hindu, 31 January 2006

Left demands Mulford's recall

NEW DELHI: The Left parties said on Monday that the Manmohan Singh Government must ask Washington to recall its ambassador David Mulford. The Bharatiya Janata Party reiterated its demand that the Government hold an all-party meeting on the nuclear deal with the U.S. The recall demand came in the wake of Mr. Mulford's criticism of the Left approach to foreign direct investment in retail trade and its opposition to the opening up of the banking and insurance sectors. Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member Sitaram Yechury said it appeared that Mr. Mulford was a "serial offender." Describing the envoy's remark as "unbecoming," he said it was "short of blatant interference in the domestic affairs" of a sovereign country. "The Government should seriously consider the option of his recall and U.S. diplomacy should know that it is not dealing with some banana republic." Communist Party of India national secretary D. Raja said Mr. Mulford was "crossing all limits." Being the American ambassador did not give him the right to interfere with the domestic and foreign affairs of India. "We are not slaves to any Roman or American empire and it is time the Government takes it up [with Washington] and tells the U.S. ambassador to mend his ways or have him recalled." All-India Forward Bloc general secretary Debabrata Biswas said the Left parties did not need any advice from the envoy. "The Government should ask the Bush administration to call him back immediately." The BJP said the Prime Minister should call a meeting of Opposition leaders and take them into confidence on the latest developments related to the nuclear deal. However, it stopped short of demanding Mr. Mulford's recall.

Hindustan Times, 31 January 2006

India will make a decision as a sovereign nation: US

Washington: Observing that India will make a decision "as a sovereign country" on how it votes on the issue of referring Iran to the UN Security Council, the US has said it is closely engaged with New Delhi about shared concerns regarding Tehran's nuclear programme. India will decide as a sovereign country and will take its own decision on how it votes on the issue at the International Atomic Energy Agency meeting in Vienna on Thursday, State Department Acting Spokesman Adam Ereli said on Monday. "We have been engaged with them ...closely and in a productive way about our shared concerns over Iran's nuclear programme," he added. Asked whether India had notified Washington that it will not support Iran's referral to the Security Council, Ereli merely said, "Not that I'm aware of, but I think the Secretary (of State Condoleezza Rice) spoke to this extensively in London." Ereli's remarks came as Left parties asked the Government to have David C Mulford recalled and BJP demanded an all-party meet on Indo-US ties. Accusing Mulford of directly interfering in India's internal affairs, senior CPI(M) and CPI leaders said it was "unbecoming" of the Ambassador to comment on domestic affairs of India. Expressing serious concern over the American envoy's remarks on Iran vote and Indo-US nuclear deal, BJP asked the Centre to take all political parties into confidence on Indo-US ties by calling an all-party meeting.

The Indian Express, 31 January 2006

US strike didn't get me: Zawahri in new tape

DUBAI: Al Qaeda's deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahri blasted U.S. President George W. Bush as a "butcher" in a video tape aired on Monday, saying a recent U.S. air strike targeting him had killed only innocent people. In the tape aired by Al Jazeera television on Monday, Zawahri, Osama bin Laden's right-hand man, also mentioned a truce which the al Qaeda leader had offered the United States in an audio tape aired earlier this month. "U.S. warplanes have launched a raid ... on a village near Peshawar just after the Eid al-Adha (feast) in which 18 Muslim men, women and children were killed in their (U.S.) fight against jihad which they call terrorism," he said, referring to the January air strike in Pakistan. "They said this was intended to kill myself and four of my brothers but now the whole world has discovered the U.S. lies and their failure and brutality," Zawahri added. Zawahri began the tape by saying "my first message is to the butcher Bush". The U.S. State Department said it was analysing the tape for its authenticity, but downplayed its significance as it continues to battle al Qaeda after the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington. "Whatever the status of Zawahri there continues to be a determined al Qaeda effort to destroy peace and innocent lives," State Department spokesman Adam Ereli told reporters. Zawahri appeared in the video dressed in white and speaking directly to the camera in front of a black background. The video carried English subtitles.

The Indian Express, 31 January 2006

Discovery's new show: US, Pak & the hunt for Al-Qaeda (Tony Perry)

LOS ANGELES, Jan 30: Politics, it is said, makes strange bed-fellows. So too does the fight against Al-Qaeda. The first part of a top-notch two-hour documentary, The new Al-Qaeda-Frontline Pakistan and Jihad.com, on the Discovery Times Channel, examines the marriage of convenience between Pakistan and the US and Britain. Before September 11, 2001, Pakistan was devoutly pro-Taliban as a way to keep peace along its border with Afghanistan. Even after Pakistan switched sides, its army and intelligence service remained rife with the ultra-orthodox Taliban sympathisers, which may have hampered the early search for Osama bin Laden. The US would like Pakistani military strongman Pervez Musharraf, who seized power in 1999, to try a bit of democracy. Musharraf is pressuring the US to soften its support for Israel. Frontline Pakistan captures the sometimes tense, always complicated relationship between Washington and Islamabad. To back the US, Musharraf has put his life in danger; he has escaped at least two assassination attempts. "Pakistan is turning Islamist," says a former CIA agent. "Musharraf may have done all he can," he added. BBC reporter Peter Taylor has gotten access to Pakistani intelligence agents and military brass to explain their hunt for Al-Qaeda operatives involved in strikes against Western targets, including US embassies in Africa. In retaliation for Pakistan's cooperation with the West, Al-Qaeda attacked the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad.

The Indian Express, 31 January 2006

India free to make its own decision on Iran: US

Washington: Observing that India will take a decision 'as a sovereign country' on how it votes on the issue of referring Iran to the UN Security Council, the US has said it was closely engaged with New Delhi about shared concerns regarding Tehran's nuclear programme. "India will decide as a sovereign country and will make a decision--its own decision on how it votes on the (Iran) issue" at the International Atomic Energy Agency meeting in Vienna on Thursday, State Department acting spokesman Adam Ereli said yesterday. "We have been engaged with them ...closely and in a productive way about our shared concerns over Iran's nuclear programme", he added. Asked whether India had notified Washington that it will not support Iran's referral to the Security Council, Ereli merely said, "Not that I'm aware of, but I think the Secretary of State (Condoleezza Rice) spoke on this extensively in London." Ereli's remarks came as Left parties asked the government to have David C Mulford recalled and BJP demanded an all-party meet on Indo-US ties over the controversial remarks by the US ambassador to India on Iran issue and US-India civilian nuclear cooperation. Accusing Mulford of directly interfering in India's internal affairs, senior CPI(M) and CPI leaders said it was 'unbecoming' of the Ambassador to comment on domestic affairs of India. Expressing serious concern over the American envoy's remarks on Iran vote and Indo-US nuclear deal, BJP asked the Centre to take all political parties into confidence on Indo-US ties by calling an all-party meeting.

The Nation, 31 January 2006

Shukat Aziz's US visit, a leap forward (S. RAHMAN)

Analysing the foreign tours of state dignitaries some times becomes a tricky task given the high degree of expectations pinned on such visits. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's US visit too is not free from expectations nevertheless it won't be deemed wise to evaluate it purely with the idea of expecting miracles or miraculous breakthroughs. That, however, does not mean that Aziz's US visit has brought little hope. By all standards of international relations and global diplomacy, the Prime Minister Aziz's US visit has been a success at least in the sense that it provided yet another golden opportunity to Pakistan to re-assert itself and make the world realise the centrality of Pakistan to all the burning issues of today. In fact, in the case of Pakistan the things are not confined to mere cosmetic diplomacy in the area of US-Pak ties. The relations between the two countries is unique in nature and functioning given the placing of Pakistan in today's situation. It was very much in Prime Minister's mind when he likened Pakistan to an anchor for regional peace and security while addressing a prominent forum in the United States. Aziz has rightly stated that Pakistan is a pivotal country for the pursuit of Pakistan and United States shared interests in promoting peace, security and development in the region as well as in the world.

Daily Times, 31 January 2006

Editorial: Pakistan and US should play straight with each other

Some two years ago, says a report in a UK newspaper, American intelligence picked up electronic traffic indicating the possible presence of Al Qaeda chief Osama Bin Laden in the Zhob area of northern Balochistan. Citing US and Pakistani intelligence and diplomatic sources, the report says that the US then sought permission from Pakistan to launch a laser-guided missile from a drone to take out Bin Laden and his associates. However, the paper's sources say the Pakistani government prevaricated in granting permission for the strike, which allowed Bin Laden to move out of the area and cost America the chance to eliminate him. The report claims that the account by a diplomat is corroborated by sources in the Pakistani intelligence who confirmed to the newspaper that the Americans did pick up Bin Laden's spoor in Zhob, an area inhabited by Pashtun and Baloch tribes "sympathetic to Al Qaeda and the Taliban". The implication of the report is that some elements within the

Pakistani government and/or intelligence might have wanted Bin Laden to escape. They delayed the transmission of the US request for the drone attack through official channels and perhaps tipped Bin Laden off before granting permission for the strike to materialise. "While Pakistan's president, Pervez Musharraf, has vowed to eliminate terrorists operating within his country, elements within Pakistan's ISI intelligence service may have sought to protect Bin Laden," says the report. However, the most interesting part of the report, based on its US diplomatic source, relates to the recent US air strike in Bajaur Agency. The diplomat told the newspaper that the reason America decided to keep Islamabad in the dark before striking in Bajaur was its previous experience.

The Nation, 31 January 2006

Increasing pressures

Last Tuesday, in his joint press conference in Washington with Mr Shaukat Aziz, President Bush said his country had a strategic relationship with Pakistan and he wanted to see this relationship further strengthened. Within days Washington issued an advisory telling American citizens to defer non-essential travel to Pakistan as Al-Qaeda, Taliban militants and other indigenous sectarian groups could pose potential danger to them. This indicates a lack of confidence in the ability of a strategic ally to arrest or eliminate foreign militants, something for which the government has left no stone unturned. The impatience of the Bush administration has led to incidents which have caused embarrassment to the government. Instead of leaving action against suspected militants inside the country to Pakistani agencies, direct action was taken in Bajaur in violation of Pakistan's sovereignty. Meanwhile, a section of the US media has tried to create the perception that the attack was carried out in collaboration with Pakistani security agencies, trying thus to discredit the government. This led the President not only to contradict that the attack was coordinated with Pakistan but also to strongly protest over the violation of our sovereignty. One had hoped the Bajaur attack, which failed to eliminate Dr Ayman Al-Zawahiri but killed 18 Pakistanis, would convince the US not only of the difficulties of locating militants in the area, but also make it realise that hasty actions can cause widespread bitterness in Pakistan. The reported decision by CIA and the Pentagon to deploy several dozen drones along the Durand Line for what might turn out to be a repeat of the Bajaur incident is highly unwise. This shows the US has not only learnt no lesson from the tragic incident but continues to pursue the policy despite the government's protests. Another report tells of two US helicopters repeatedly violating Pakistan's airspace in Waziristan on Sunday. Meanwhile, the DG ISPR has told the press a US helicopter which entered the county's airspace went back only after warnings from the Pakistan side. Such incidents are likely to hamper the government's efforts to improve the USA's image among the Pakistani public.

Hindustan Times, 31 January 2006

Big Mouth strikes again

Diplomacy, as we have had occasion to say earlier, is about timing. Few statements could have been more poorly timed than US Ambassador David Mulford's remarks, first on the issue of the Indian vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency on Iran and, more recently, on the opening of retail to foreign direct investment. Remarkably, the ambassador's remarks on foreign direct investment (FDI) in retail came just after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had sought to douse the fires of anger that his Iran remarks had lit. In response to a question on the issue, the prime minister, somewhat generously declared that "to err was human". But to err twice in the space of a week requires a degree of felicity in reading things wrong. The decision to open FDI in single-brand retail was part of a delicate exercise through which the government had hoped to bring around recalcitrant allies. Mr Mulford cannot be unaware of the situation of the UPA government. It depends for its survival on a clutch of allies, some of whom feel strongly about both issues. With the IAEA set to meet to decide on the issue later this week, and the budget session of Parliament a month away, what Mr Mulford has succeeded in doing is to undermine the position of the Union government in relation to its allies, as well as its intended policies. Undoubtedly, this was not his plan. But in the real world, we are responsible for the consequences of our actions, rather than on what we intended to do. While it is the job of an ambassador to push the policy of his government in the country to which he is posted, we would argue that this is better achieved through unobtrusive suggestions and actions, rather than the way Mr Mulford has been going about of late.