

The Telegraph, 2 January 2008

To Vienna, for final round of IAEA talks

Mumbai, Jan. 1 (PTI): A delegation is leaving for Vienna tomorrow for the third round of talks with the International Atomic Energy Agency on a safeguards agreement, a follow-up to the India-US civilian nuclear deal. The team will hold talks at the IAEA headquarters on the agreed text for India-specific safeguards, one of the pre-requisites for operationalisation of the deal, mooted in July 2005, according to atomic energy department sources here. As uncertainties loomed over the deal during the major part of 2007, the atomic energy department, which had hoped to get a few imported power plants and fuel to expand the indigenous nuclear power programme, had to speed up its efforts to explore and mine uranium. Several American and French companies are already competing to do business with their Indian counterparts, especially on fuel chain supply.

DNA-INDIA, 3 January 2008

IAEA talks may be wrapped up soon

NEW DELHI: Despite a warning from the Left not to operationalise the Indo-US nuclear deal, a government team is currently in Vienna for what is being billed as the final round of negotiations for a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The completion of the safeguards discussions with the IAEA may just be a ritual the government is going through to satisfy its international interlocutors. On the other hand, it does bring India a step closer to finishing the formalities so that the nuclear deal can be operationalised when the political climate is right. The government will take it to the IAEA board meeting in March only after a green signal from the committee. The source said that negotiations with the IAEA have been smooth and satisfactory, with the nuclear watchdog agreeing to incorporate India's concerns in the safeguards agreement.

NDTV.COM, 4 January 2008

No need for UN probe into Bhutto murder, says US

The US has said that there is no need for a UN probe into the assassination of former Pakistan premier Benazir Bhutto as Britain's Scotland Yard has agreed to lead the inquiry. Scotland Yard leading the probe is appropriate and necessary, and we don't see a need for an investigation beyond that at this time... The Pakistanis have just made a decision to ask Scotland Yard to get involved. We welcome that. They have expertise in the area of investigations of this sort," White House spokeswoman Dana Perino said. The US also welcomed the new date set by Pakistan government to hold general elections and said that Washington has been closely working with Islamabad to help it conduct a "free and fair election".

DNA-INDIA, 5 January 2008

Obama would nuke the Indo-US deal

NEW DELHI: Barack Obama is better known here for trying to obstruct the Indo-US nuclear deal with a 'killer' amendment to the Hyde Act. His amendment opposed giving India the right to build strategic fuel reserves for its imported nuclear reactors. As it turned out, the Obama amendment was rejected along with the other 'killer' proposals and the Hyde Act passed into law. With Obama's star rising, the pro-deal lobby in India has yet another reason to worry. The Indo-US nuclear agreement has already lost momentum

in the wake of strident Left opposition and a string of recent electoral defeats for the Congress.

The Telegraph, 5 January 2008

Nuke deal hope alive, says Pranab

New Delhi, Jan. 4 (PTI): The government has not 'given up' on the Indo-US nuclear deal and there is no link between the Congress's recent election defeats and progress with the Left on the issue, Pranab Mukherjee said. Mukherjee, a key negotiator with the Left on the deal, said "time is running out" for completing the processes to execute it. 'But one cannot help it.' "No, I have not given up. We are working on how we can proceed," he said in reply to a question whether the government had given up on the deal because of the Left opposition. The Left had a 'problem with the US' and had been opposing the civil nuclear cooperation agreement as soon as an amended act was passed by US Congress last December, which was an enabling legislation to the 123 Agreement, Mukherjee said.

The Economic Times, 7 January 2008

Left for India getting N-fuel, but scrapping deal with US

NEW DELHI: Two days after the UPA government made the familiar we-have-not-given-up statement on Indo-US nuclear deal assertions, top Left leaders reaffirmed their opposition to the 123 Agreement. Playing down external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee's statements on going ahead with the deal, the Left sees little hope for the 123 Agreement. In other words, the Left's strategy would be to ask the government to work out a mechanism to ensure that the nuclear fuel market opens up for India but the deal with the US is not operationalised. However, without the US support, India would find it impossible to evolve a consensus in the NSG. In fact, doors are opening for India because of the US backing for the deal. Amidst the negotiations with the IAEA, Mr Karat had given a fresh ultimatum to end talks by December or face mid-term polls. He had said the Left had allowed the government to discuss India-specific safeguards with the IAEA as it did not want the government to fall before the Gujarat elections

The Times of India, 9 January 2008

Indo-US forum interfering in policy matters?

NEW DELHI: In Parliament, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee had point-blank denied that the Indo-US CEOs Forum had any institutional framework or interfered in policy matters in India, but facts accessed through RTI reveal that the Finance Ministry and the Planning Commission are working overtime to implement its recommendations. While HRD might have turned down the US embassy's request, the finance ministry has been very accommodative when it comes to the India-US CEOs Forum. In 2006, MF Farooqui, joint-secretary, finance ministry, wrote to HRD as well as various ministries informing them about the recommendations submitted by the forum during the India visit of president Bush.

The Hindu, 9 January 2008

Manmohan praises Indians in US for supporting nuke deal

New Delhi, (PTI): The Indo-US nuclear deal may have been stuck in a political storm, but Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, on Tuesday lauded the efforts of Indian

community in the US for influencing political leadership there on the issue. "I wish to record our special gratitude to the Indian community in the USA for the efforts made by them in mobilising support of the political leadership in that country for Indo-US cooperation in civil nuclear energy," he said.

The Economic Times, 10 January 2008

Pranab markets nuke deal again

NEW DELHI: The government is not losing any opportunity to push the importance of nuclear energy, and the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal, even though it is struggling to conclude the safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The India-US civil nuclear energy co-operation is precisely intended to address our concerns on energy security," said Mr Mukherjee, speaking at a plenary session focusing on the development challenges before the states. The negotiating team will now go back for a fourth round of negotiations on January 16 in a bid to finalise the text of the agreement. Government officials had expressed hope that the final draft text of the safeguards agreement would be ready after the third round of negotiations.

DNA-INDIA, 11 January 2008

N-deal critics urge IAEA to place additional conditions

WASHINGTON: Critics of the Indo-US nuclear deal have appealed to members of IAEA and Nuclear Suppliers Group to bring in "additional conditions" before atomic trade with India could resume, because they claim the accord in its present form would hurt the global non-proliferation regime. In a letter sent to more than four dozen governments this week, they claimed that the deal "would damage the already fragile nuclear nonproliferation system and set back efforts to achieve universal nuclear disarmament." Organised by US-based Arms Control Association and the Citizens' Nuclear Information Centre, Tokyo, the letter was endorsed by more than 130 experts and NGOs from 23 countries, including former UN Undersecretary General for Disarmament Affairs Jayantha Dhanapala and the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the only cities ever to experience nuclear attacks.

The New York Times, 12 January 2008

Pakistan Warns U.S. on Attacking Al Qaeda on Its Own

President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan warned in an interview published Friday that any unilateral attacks by the United States against Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters in his country's tribal areas would be treated as an invasion. But Mr. Musharraf also left open the possibility of American and Pakistani forces working together in broader combined operations to kill or capture senior Qaeda leaders believed to be hiding in the rugged border area near Afghanistan.

The Indian Express, 12 January 2008

Musharraf dares US to enter Pak

President Pervez Musharraf warned that any unilateral action by US troops to enter Pakistan's border region with Afghanistan in the hunt for al-Qaeda militants would be regarded as an invasion, and asserted they would "regret" that day. "The US seems to think what our army cannot do, they can do. This is a wrong perception. I challenge

anybody to come into our mountains. They would regret that day," Musharraf told Straits Times in what seems to be an open dare.

The Indian Express, 12 January 2008

Al-Qaeda in Pak's tribal areas a grave concern: US

A top Pentagon official has expressed "grave concern" over the presence of the al-Qaeda in the tribal areas of Pakistan saying it is up to Islamabad to address the problem directly which had a "significant impact" in the region. "There are concerns now about how much (al-Qaeda) have turned inward, literally, inside Pakistan, as well as the kind of planning, training, financing and support that (al-Qaeda's) worldwide effort demands," US military chief Admiral Michael Mullen has said.

Hindustan Times, 12 January 2008

World Bank uncovers fraud in India health projects

The World Bank said on Friday it had uncovered "serious incidents" of fraud and corruption in a review of five health projects in India and Bank President Robert Zoellick pledged he and the government would get to the bottom of it. Evidence was uncovered in a just-released Detailed Implementation Review launched by the World Bank in 2006, with the support of the government, that looked at the five health projects that covered lending for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Daily News, 12 January 2008

LTTE conspirator sentenced to 57 months in US

A US District Court has sentenced a Sri Lankan to 57 months in prison and three years of supervised release for conspiracy to provide arms, ammunition and other military materiel to the LTTE. The sentence was imposed on Thirunavukarasu Varatharasa, a Sri Lankan resident in the USA, by US District Judge Catherine C. Blake Baltimore, Maryland yesterday. US Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein announced that Thirunavukarasu Varatharasa has been sentenced to 57 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release for conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization and attempted exportation of arms and munitions.

The Times of India, 12 January 2008

Pentagon 'extremely concerned' over Al-Qaida operations in Pak

The US Defence Ministry is "extremely concerned" about Al-Qaida operations in Pakistan's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, military chief Admiral Michael Mullen has said. "We know it is having a significant impact, not just in Afghanistan, but certainly there are concerns about how much they have turned inward inside Pakistan. I am extremely concerned about this," he told reporters.

The New York Times, 13 January 2008

Sri Lanka War Worries Donor Nations

Sri Lanka's main foreign donors voiced concern Saturday over the island's escalating civil war, calling on the government and Tamil Tiger rebels to respect human rights as the death toll climbs. The military said that it had killed more than 200 insurgents since the

government announced last week that it was formally scrapping a six-year cease-fire that degenerated into renewed war two years ago. Analysts and diplomats are bracing for more bloodshed. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who are seeking an independent state, were not available for comment on the death toll reports.

The Hindu, 14 January 2008

We'll not like to proceed with deal if Left withdraws support: Pranab

Amid hopes of conclusion of talks with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) next week, the government has said it will not "like to" proceed with the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal if the Left withdraws support but noted that pullout of the agreement will have "some adverse impact" on India's standing in the world. External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee rejected suggestions that the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government's capacity to operationalise the deal had weakened after the Congress' debacle in Gujarat and Himachal assembly elections.

The Times of India, 14 January 2008

WB funds fraud may be tip of iceberg

Irregularities unearthed in World Bank-aided health projects in India may just be a pointer to a larger scam that remains to be exposed in this sector which is in very bad shape across the country. "An inquiry is already underway since 2006 by the CBI (in some Bank-aided projects) and if we receive anything fresh we would definitely refer it to the investigating agency," health secretary Naresh Dayal told TOI on Sunday.

The Times of india, 16 January 2008

Pakistan says foreign intervention an 'enemy act'

Pakistan's foreign ministry warned Wednesday that any unauthorised military strike by international forces against Al-Qaida militants on Pakistani soil would be considered an "enemy act." The warning came days after President Pervez Musharraf said in a newspaper interview that an incursion by the US-led coalition in Afghanistan without permission would be treated as an invasion.

The Times of india, 16 January 2008

Pak court defers appeal hearing in Daniel Pearl case

A Pakistani anti-terrorism court on Wednesday adjourned the hearing of appeals filed by convicts and the government in the case related to the kidnapping and murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl six years ago. The two-judge anti-terrorism appellate bench of the Sindh High Court made the decision after Special Public Prosecutor Raja Qureshi sought adjournment of the case till February 1. The judges deferred the hearing of the appeals to a date to be fixed later by the court.

The Indian Express, 16 January 2008

Scribe says Pak deported him to US

An American journalist, who had to leave Pakistan abruptly last week after writing an article on the resurgence of the Taliban, has said he was deported and did not return home on his own as claimed by authorities in Islamabad. Nicholas Schmidle said in Washington that he never felt unsafe in Pakistan until last week, when security men and

police officers started knocking at his door, telling him to leave the country.

The Times of india, 17 January 2008

F-16 maker Lockheed mounts an India campaign

"A mistake covered up may cost the lives of a brave crew." The message, displayed on a huge board at the assembly line of the C-130J Super Hercules aircraft at Lockheed Martin's plant at Marietta, Georgia, stares at workers all the time, reminding them of the enormous responsibility on their shoulders.

The Times of india, 17 January 2008

Pak welcoming bigger US role inside country: US military

Pakistan is taking a more welcoming view of US suggestions for using American troops to train and advise its own forces in the fight against anti-government extremists, the commander of US forces in that region said on Wednesday. Navy Admiral William J Fallon, commander of US Central Command, said he believes increased violence inside Pakistan in recent months has led Pakistani leaders to conclude that they must focus more intensively on extremist al-Qaida hideouts near the border with Afghanistan.

The Hindu, 18 January 2008

India in talks with U.S. for ballistic missile defence

Barely a month after carrying out successful tests of interceptor missiles, India is in talks with a leading American aerospace firm to apparently seek collaboration for developing a robust ballistic missile defence (BMD) system.

The Hindu, 18 January 2008

Disappointment if nuclear deal falls through: Manmohan

As uncertainty continues over the fate of the India-U.S. nuclear deal, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Thursday that it would be a disappointment if it fell through and he would pray to God to give him courage to be graceful under pressure. "I have already said that if the deal does not go through, it will be a disappointment but in life one has to learn to live with many disappointments," he said.

New York Times, 18 January 2008

Defense Secretary, Facing Criticism, Hails NATO's Forces in Afghanistan

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said Thursday that NATO countries were playing a "significant and powerful role in Afghanistan," after some of Washington's closest European allies assailed him for comments cited in a news report about their counterinsurgency operations in the volatile south. Speaking at a news conference in Washington, Mr. Gates said that the allies "had stepped up to the plate" in Afghanistan.

Washington Post, 18 January 2008

CIA Probes Bhutto Assassination

The CIA has concluded that members of al-Qaeda and allies of Pakistani tribal leader Baitullah Mehsud were responsible for last month's assassination of former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto, and that they also stand behind a new wave of violence threatening that country's stability, the agency's director, Michael V. Hayden, said in an

interview.

Washington Post, 18 January 2008

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The Hindustan Times, 21 January 2008

Indian student shot in US, toll 3 in five weeks

A student from Jharkhand, doing research in an engineering college in the US, was found shot dead at an apartment complex in the second incident of gun violence against Indian

students in five weeks in that country. The body of Abhijeet Mahato (29), who was doing his PhD on computational mechanics at the Dukes Pratt School of Engineering in Durham, North Carolina, was found by his friends on Friday, his grandfather Dhananjay Mahato said on Sunday.

The Hindustan Times, 23 January 2008

Market rebounds sharply in early trade on US Fed rate cut

The Bombay Stock Exchange benchmark Sensex recouped from recent lows and opened over 900 points on heavy purchases by funds triggered by a surprise interest rate cut of 75 basis points announced by the US Federal Reserve on Tuesday.

The Times of India, 23 January 2008

Backing Musharraf is hurting US, says Imran Khan

Continued US backing of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf risks alienating Pakistanis and increasing extremism in the nuclear-armed Islamic country, cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan said on Tuesday. Khan said he came to the United States "to try and convince the politicians in Washington that the policy they have adopted is a disaster for Pakistan and it is a disaster for America."

The Hindu, 24 January 2008

"Bring Russia into India-China-U.S. equation"

Russia has to be brought into the India-China-U.S. equation, N. Ram, Editor-in-Chief, The Hindu, said on Wednesday. Participating in a discussion on 'Sino-Indian Relations and the U.S.' held as part of the international conference on 'India-China-U.S.A. Triangle' here, Mr. Ram said it had to be quadrilateral especially if "you are formulating broader principles of cooperation."

The Times of India, 24 January 2008

US favours long-term ties with Pakistan

The US has described the situation in Pakistan as "complicated" but made it clear that it wants a long-term relationship with "institutions" in that country and not with "any one person". The US was "working very hard with the Pakistanis" to ensure that the upcoming general elections will be an opportunity for the country "to get back on the democratic path", Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said.

The Indian Express, 28 January 2008

Sen, Ambassador to US, decides to quit

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 27: India's Ambassador to US Ronen Sen, one of the key interlocutors for the Indo-US nuclear deal, has decided to call it quits and will return from Washington on March 31, around the same time as Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and US interlocutor for the n-deal, leaves Foggy Bottom.

Government sources confirmed to The Indian Express that two days after Burns announced his retirement from the US State Department on January 18, Sen met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee in New Delhi and conveyed his desire to return to Mumbai where he has a flat.

The Indian Express, 29 January 2008

Complete nuke deal during Bush term, says Mulford

As delay continues to plague operationalisation of the nuclear deal, the US today favoured completion of the processes involved in it during the tenure of the Bush administration, failing which 'practical problems' can push it to 2010. US Ambassador David C Mulford reminded that 'time is of essence' but underlined that Washington was 'not pushing' India as it has 'highest respect' for the political processes of this country. He underlined that the relationship between India and the US had diversified to a large extent, which cannot be affected by any single issue. Mulford maintained that the deal was 'good for India, good for the US and good for the world'.

The New York Times, 30 January 2008

McCain Defeats Romney in Florida Vote

Senator John McCain defeated Mitt Romney on Tuesday to win the delegate-rich Florida primary, solidifying his transformation to the Republican front-runner and dealing a devastating blow to the presidential hopes of Rudolph W. Giuliani. The results were a decisive turning point in the Republican race, effectively winnowing the field to Mr. McCain and Mr. Romney, two candidates with very different backgrounds who have little affection for one another but share a similar challenge in winning over elements of the party suspicious of their ideological credentials. Surveys of voters leaving polling places found that Mr. McCain not only did significantly better than Mr. Romney among voters who listed the war as their top concern, but also did better than him with voters who said they were most concerned about the economy.

The Hindu, 31 January 2008

McCain emerges Republican front-runner

John McCain emerged as the clear front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination with a victory in the hotly contested Florida primary, lining up a quick endorsement from soon-to-be dropout Rudy Giuliani before next weeks coast-to-coast contests. Hillary Rodham Clinton won a largely symbolic victory in the Democratic race in Florida. Still, Ms. Clinton, locked in a tight race with Barack Obama, looked for her wide margin of victory to boost her campaign ahead of next weeks Super Tuesday. For Mr. McCain, the Florida victory was worth 57 Republican National Convention delegates, a winner-take-all haul that catapulted him ahead of Mr. Romney for the overall.