

The News, 1 June 2005

Nato discusses possible N-terror attack

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia: More than 300 lawmakers from Nato countries traded ideas on Tuesday on how to stave off a nuclear terrorist attack in the heart of Europe and what to do in the wake of such a catastrophe. Hammering the message home on the closing day of Nato's five-day parliamentary assembly spring session, the participants observed a simulated nuclear attack in downtown Brussels, Belgium. The exercise, dubbed Black Dawn, envisions hundreds of thousands of victims from the immediate impact of the blast in the first few days and mass-scale destruction of homes and infrastructure. Radiation carried downwind would spread for miles, while contaminated electrical, water and food supplies would send after-effects permeating through Europe. World markets would crash and commerce would grind to a halt as fear, panic and grief spawns alarm in far-flung regions, prompting the closure of land, sea, air and other borders in expectation of follow-up attacks." This is not scare tactics," said Nato parliamentary assembly president, Pierre Lellouche. "This is based on real facts." The exercise was the highlight of the parliamentary meeting, which included weekend discussions on a range of matters, from the alliance's current missions to its future role in "post-conflict" operations.

The News, 1 June 2005

Nukes' seventh anniversary-IV South Asia's misfortunes (M B Naqvi)

South Asia's future has been jeopardized by the Indian and Pakistani nukes, politically and possibly physically, depending upon whether there will be a nuclear war between the two. India and Pakistan's neighbours have no option but to helplessly wait for what will happen. Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan resent being adversely affected whether there is a war or not. The misfortunes non-nuclear countries continue to face, even if there is no war, have to do with the function of mistrust between India and Pakistan. The current deluge of protocol goodwill and fomenting a feel good factor by the two governments -- under American prodding -- has not removed their mistrust. Which South Asian country can ignore it? Their worry is reasonable. Pakistani nuclear missiles are ready to be fired at Indian targets. If they are fired, a few cities in India will be incinerated. And it will take only a few minutes to destroy Pakistan if the Indian nukes are fired in this direction. Neither side will have the time for defensive measures. During the east-west cold war, there were 27 minutes available for decisions. Both sides could read blips on their radars as missiles or geese or some debris. In South Asia, a missile's flying time to its target is 3 to 5 minutes. No government can react in this timeframe and the scope for misunderstanding, wrong calculations and unauthorized launches by power-hungry groups or terrorists in both countries cannot be ignored.

Dawn, 1 June 2005

IAEA working on pact with Riyadh

VIENNA: The UN atomic agency is urging its members to accept a deal for Saudi Arabia to finally allow inspections of its nuclear facilities, even if there is concern the agreement struck could severely limit the agency's investigative rights, according to a document. International Atomic Energy Agency officials have negotiated a "safeguards agreement" with Saudi Arabia and are urging the IAEA's 35-nation board "to conclude ... and subsequently implement" the deal when the board meets in Vienna on June 13, according to the confidential IAEA document.

Dawn, 1 June 2005

France to propose N-deal to Libya

PARIS: France will "soon" offer Libya a cooperation agreement to help Tripoli develop its civilian nuclear energy program, the French foreign ministry said on Tuesday. "The principle of cooperation in the area of peaceful applications of nuclear energy is a given, but the content has yet to be defined. We're still in the exploratory phase," said ministry spokesman Jean-Baptiste Mattei.

Reuters, 1 June 2005

S.Korea Says Distrust Delaying Talks

SEOUL: Distrust between Washington and Pyongyang is impeding efforts to revive talks on North Korea's nuclear program, despite a recent, but rare, meeting of their officials, South Korea said on Wednesday. South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon told a news conference that Pyongyang and Washington remained divided even though the two sides held a face-to-face meeting last month at the United Nations. "Despite efforts to clear distrust between the United States and North Korea, the situation is not evolving in a favorable way," Ban said at his weekly press briefing. He said President Bush's comments on Tuesday -- that there were still diplomatic options available to persuade the North to abandon its nuclear ambitions -- were helpful. "It's either diplomacy or military. And I am for the diplomacy approach," Bush told reporters in Washington. U.S. officials have said that patience is wearing thin with Pyongyang, which has boycotted the six-nation talks aimed at dismantling its nuclear weapons program, for almost a year. "It is meaningful in that President Bush reaffirmed his stance to resolve the issue in a peaceful and diplomatic manner," Ban said. In February, North Korea said it possessed nuclear

weapons. Concerns that Pyongyang may soon conduct a nuclear test have added impetus to resume the talks that include North and South Korea, China, Japan, Russia and the United States.

The Asahi Shimbun, 1 June 2005

Editorial: Ruling on Monju reactor

Ten years have passed since the prototype Monju fast-breeder reactor stopped operations because of a sodium coolant leak. Monju is sometimes called "a dream reactor" because it generates more plutonium than it consumes. The Supreme Court abrogated a ruling by the Kanazawa branch of the Nagoya High Court, which had invalidated the government's approval to build the reactor. The branch said the safety screening of a government agency before the reactor's construction was inadequate. The high court's decision, handed down in 2003, was the first time residents had won a lawsuit concerning a nuclear reactor. If the government had lost the case at the Supreme Court, it would have been forced to scrap Monju. As it turned out, the nation's top court completely reversed the decision of the lower court. Nevertheless, the Monju project will be confronted with difficulties, both in terms of funding and safety. The Supreme Court and the high court branch reached completely opposite conclusions because they viewed the government's screening of the reactor's construction plan for safety differently. The high court recognized the possibility of serious accidents occurring at the Monju reactor, the main concern of residents who filed the lawsuit. The branch said in its ruling that the government screening process of the Monju plan was seriously flawed because it had overlooked such a possibility.

The Hindu, 2 June 2005

"Biological agent" sent to envoy (P.S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE: Australian Prime Minister John Howard on Wednesday expressed apologies to Indonesia over a "very serious criminal act" that was possibly an episode of biological terrorism and which apparently involved one or more Australians. A "biological agent" was anonymously sent, in the form of powder, to the Indonesian Ambassador in Canberra, in an overall atmosphere that was surcharged with considerable anger and frustration among Australians over the latest conviction and sentencing of one of their compatriots, Schapelle Corby, by an Indonesian court in a drug trafficking case. Mr. Howard told journalists in Canberra that Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who was informed of Australia's "concern" and apology, "understands how aghast we are at this development". Asked whether the episode was an act of terrorism, Mr. Howard said "it is an act with reckless indifference to human life" especially if the preliminary analysis of the suspected "biological agent" in question "proves correct" in the sense that the substance was "not benign" at all. Making it clear that such action would not be of any help in the Corby case, Mr. Howard said the incident might "do great damage" to Australia's ties with Indonesia at a time when these appeared to be looking up.

The News, 2 June 2005

Pinstech takes lead in Fuel Cell technology

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science & Technology (Pinstech), an institute of Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), has developed a new technology to fabricate the fuel cell indigenously, taking lead in the development of Fuel Cell Technology in Pakistan. PAEC sources said that the fuel cells are efficient and environment friendly power sources, which mostly operate on hydrogen gas that can be obtained from different sources including electrolysis of water by nuclear and other sources. Polymer electrolyte membrane fuel cells are useful for stationary, automobiles as well as portable applications. In order to bring about reduction in unwanted greenhouse gases coming from vehicular emissions, experiments to run the transport on hydrogen fuel are underway in many countries and auto-manufacturers are working on the production of vehicles powered by fuel cells. Fuel cells have widespread applications in many other fields like space and defence. Fuel cells are also alternate energy sources for the future when oil and gas reserves would be depleted. According to the sources Pinstech initiated a research and development programme on the subject as a result of which it has developed fuel cells indigenously. A low power fuel cell stack has been fabricated and tested successfully. It can be extended to produce power sources as per requirement, particularly for automobiles and off grid utilisations etc.

The Nation, 2 June 2005

Israel's defence (Fauzia Qureshi)

Israel's nuclear programme, which officially doesn't exist, has long been an open secret. Until recently, the US has been reticent about discussing Israeli nukes. The decades-long excuse for America's silence on the issue has generally been that Israel is the only democracy in the region and a close ally, who shares the same values. It is not surprising that a January 2001, Pentagon report titled 'Proliferation: Threat and Responses' entirely omitted Israel from its review of the Middle East. This hypocrisy on the US part hasn't escaped the world especially the Muslims. Why is the US turning a blind eye towards Israel's nuclear programme and its bullying nature? Is this behaviour leading to further urge on part of various countries to acquire nuclear weapons?

The Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) of January 2002, indicates that the US is making the Middle East region a

central focus of the redesigned strategic deterrent, now comprising nuclear and conventional components, with conventional long range precision-strike weapons functioning in a 'strategic' context. The NPR implies that the defence of Israel represents a core mission for the strategic deterrent by identifying several near-term contingencies involving an attack on Israel that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons by the US. Iraq, Iran, Syria and Libya along with North Korea are identified as countries involved in immediate, potential or unexpected nuclear contingencies. All are said to be hostile towards the US and sponsoring or harbouring terrorists, along with active WMD and missile programmes.

The News, 2 June 2005

A nuclear Iran? (Dr. Maqsud UI Hasan Nuri)

A nuclearised Iran could be more stable and moderate, and even enter into a more enduring relationship with major powers, including neighbours like Pakistan. The ongoing nuclear spat between Iran and the European Union and Iran and the USA has been underway for the last couple of years. Threats and counter-threats continue to be traded. Viewed from a Pakistani perspective, the conundrum is: should Iran become a nuclear state or be prevented from doing so by others, or opt to manufacture nuclear weapons on its own volition. First of all, it can be stated categorically that the Iranians themselves should be the best judge of their national issues and decide if and when they want to go nuclear. In today's uncertain and troubled world, every nation has the right to make decisions in line with its perceived national interests. As Iran's immediate neighbour, how Pakistan's interests would be impinged upon, should Iran cross the nuclear threshold -- is a question that needs to be addressed. It is natural for all nuclear states to become status quo powers and resist any further nuclear proliferation. Moreover, after attaining nuclear club status, they are reluctant to allow others to traverse the same path. The exclusive club of nuclear 'haves' would be loath to admitting more members. With Iran joining the other Asian nuclear countries, China, India and Pakistan, the region will become nuclear dense.

The Guardian, 2 June 2005

Anthrax alert at embassy

Indonesia's embassy in Australia was sealed off and its staff quarantined yesterday after a package containing what authorities described as a "biological agent" was delivered. Officials linked the incident to outrage over the conviction in Bali of an Australian woman on drug charges. The prime minister, John Howard, said that powder was sent in an envelope addressed to the Indonesian ambassador, Imron Cotan, who was not in the building. "It would be the first time, if the preliminary results are confirmed, such a biological agent has been sent in Australia," he said. If tests proved the powder was dangerous, "it's an act of reckless indifference to human life and I apologise on behalf of the Australian people to the Indonesian embassy and to the Indonesian government". He said later that the substance contained bacillus, a genus of bacteria, most of which are benign but include anthracis, which causes anthrax. Schapelle Corby, 27, was given a 20-year prison sentence for smuggling 4.1kg (9lb) of marijuana on to Bali last year. The case caused a backlash among Australians.

BBC News, 2 June 2005

Australian bacteria alert fades

Bacterial powder sent to Indonesia's embassy in Canberra, sparking a security scare, was probably harmless, Australian police have said. They did say, however, that tests on the mystery package would continue. The Australian authorities have linked the case with public anger over Indonesia's jailing of a 27-year-old for smuggling drugs into Bali. Schapelle Corby, who was given a 20-year sentence, has maintained her innocence throughout her trial. Australian Federal Police commander John Davies said preliminary tests on the powder found it contained a bacteria, but it was unlikely to be anthrax or other agents harmful to humans. "It is unlikely to contain material of pathological significance," he told reporters. The powder, found in a parcel addressed to Indonesia's Ambassador to Australia Imron Cotan, forced the embassy to shut on Wednesday and quarantine its staff for 12 hours. None has shown symptoms of illness.

The News, 3 June 2005

N-deterrence a guarantee for security: Shaukat

ANKARA: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Thursday said Pakistan adhered to doctrine of minimum nuclear deterrence as guarantee for its security. Speaking at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara on Pakistan's efforts to promote regional peace and development in Asia, Shaukat said Pakistan's nuclear and missile capabilities have been developed purely for self-defence and provide a credible deterrence to ensure its security. "Being a responsible nuclear power, Pakistan has proposed a Strategic Restraint Regime that seeks to avoid a strategic and conventional arms race with India," the prime minister said. Shaukat reiterated Pakistan's opposition to nuclear proliferation, saying the country has developed a strong command and control system to protect its strategic assets. Highlighting Pakistan's strategic location, he said the country sits at the crossroads of South, Central and West Asia providing shortest access to the sea for landlocked Central Asian states. He underlined the

need for creating an enabling environment to promote intra-regional cooperation.

The News, 3 June 2005

North Korean test will signal death of NPT

VIENNA: An atomic weapons test by North Korea, which would make the Stalinist state the world's ninth declared nuclear power, would signal the death knell for the Non-Proliferation Treaty but could inject new urgency into the campaign to limit the further spread of nuclear weapons, analysts say. UN nuclear chief Mohamed ElBaradei, who has said the North Koreans already have six nuclear bombs, warned just under a month ago that a nuclear test by the North would have "disastrous" political and environmental consequences in Asia and around the world. ElBaradei also said recently that he found the failure of a month-long UN NPT conference in May to adopt new measures to fight the spread of nuclear weapons "distressing". The IAEA is pushing for a more beefed-up NPT Treaty including, among other things, punishment to prevent states from failing to abide by it.

Daily Yomiuri, 3 June 2005

New export controls eyed to stem WMD

In a bid to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles in Asia, the government Thursday mapped out measures to strengthen export controls at home and abroad. Under the envisaged plan, the government would help improve legislation and in-house regulations of companies in other Asian countries. The government also will conduct on-site inspections of companies in Japan. As measures to assist other Asian countries, the government will: -- Help establish an export control system among Association of Southeast Asian Nations member states; offer cooperation to India and Pakistan which have nuclear weapons; assist Asian companies with their trading controls. ASEAN countries lag behind in establishing a legal system to control exports and as a result, such countries are considered a hotbed for illegal nuclear-related technology transactions. The government plans to help establish a legal system concerning trade controls, utilizing customs officials and other experts, and compile a list of regulated items that can be converted for military use in those countries. As part of the strategy, the government plans to dispatch experts in export control to the respective countries, having them conduct seminars on the export industry.

People's Daily, 3 June 2005

DPRK urges US to remove "biggest" obstacle to six-party talks

A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) said Friday that the US terming of the DPRK as the "an outpost of tyranny" constituted the "biggest hurdle" in the way of resuming the six-party talks. He told the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) that if the United States truly wants a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, it should make a bold decision to withdraw that remarks. The spokesman said the DPRK has noticed that US President George W. Bush called the top DPRK leader Mr. Kim Jong-il at a press conference held in the White House on Tuesday. "We take note of this. We keep a tab on a string of vituperation let loose by high-ranking officials of the US administration against the DPRK even some days ago," he said. "If Bush's remarks put an end to the scramble between the hawkish group and the moderate group in the US, which has thrown the Korean policy into a state of confusion, it would help create an atmosphere for the six-party talks," the spokesman said. "We will closely follow if President Bush's remarks would not change," he added.

The Washington Post, 3 June 2005

We Need to Talk to North Korea (Susan E. Rice)

"That horse is out of the barn," said actor and former Republican senator Fred Thompson when asked about North Korea's nuclear program. Thompson spoke at the premiere of "Last Best Chance," a chillingly realistic film sponsored by the Nuclear Threat Initiative. In it, he plays a president who fails to prevent al Qaeda from smuggling stolen nukes into the United States, dramatizing the imperative to halt proliferation at its source. President Bush agrees that the greatest threat we face is nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists. If, indeed, the North Korean horse "is out of the barn," we face a grave risk. To date, President Bush has failed to prevent North Korea from producing enough fissile material to build an estimated six to eight nuclear weapons, up from one to two in 2003. Though administration officials have played down the significance of North Korea's growing arsenal, the threat to the United States has greatly increased. Impoverished North Korea now probably has enough nuclear material to sell its surplus to the highest bidder and still retain its own stockpile. Al Qaeda, which aims to use weapons of mass destruction against the United States, could be that bidder.

The Guardian, 3 June 2005

N Korea dubs Cheney a beast

The war of words between the US and North Korea, which has already broken every diplomatic nicety in the

book, descended to new levels of insult yesterday when the Korean government called the US vice-president a "bloodthirsty beast". Responding to criticism from Dick Cheney - who had labelled North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-il, "one of the world's more irresponsible leaders" - a North Korean official hit back with some bald invective, saying the row would do little to revive the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons programmes. "Cheney is hated as the most cruel monster and bloodthirsty beast, as he has drenched various parts of the world in blood," said the foreign ministry spokesman. The exchanges have escalated in recent weeks, with George Bush calling the Korean leader a tyrant. The Pyongyang government has shot back, calling the US president "a half-baked man" and "a philistine". Earlier in the week Mr Cheney told CNN that Mr Kim ran a police state. "He's got one of the most heavily militarised societies in the world. He doesn't take care of his people at all. And he obviously wants to throw his weight around and become a nuclear power."

International Herald Tribune, 4 June 2005

U.S warns of Asian nuclear arms race

TOKYO: The development of a nuclear weapon by North Korea would put pressure on Japan and South Korea to consider building their own nuclear arsenals, the U.S. ambassador to Japan said Friday. Ambassador Thomas Schieffer told reporters at his residence in Tokyo that if North Korea were to test an atomic bomb, the strategic balance in the region would be changed. "If you had a nuclear North Korea, it just introduces a whole different dynamic," Schieffer said. "It seems to me that that increases the pressure on both South Korea and Japan to consider going nuclear themselves." Schieffer is not the first official to suggest a kind of domino effect in Northeast Asia from any verified revelation that North Korea possesses nuclear arms. But his remarks reflect the extent to which Japan, which lost 210,000 people in two atomic bomb attacks at the end of World War II, could pursue an option long considered out of the question. The United States, China, Japan, Russia and South Korea are urging the North to return to six-party talks that are intended to persuade it to give up its nuclear weapons programs. The talks were last held in June 2004. Since then, the North has stayed away from the table, citing a "hostile" U.S. policy, and it claimed in February that it had nuclear weapons. Speculation has mounted that it is preparing for a nuclear test.

The News, 4 June 2005

Iran wants resumption of EU talks

VIENNA: Iran wants talks with the European Union aimed at guaranteeing its nuclear programme is peaceful to resume soon as it rejects a two-month delay in negotiations it had provisionally accepted, EU diplomats said. "They want working groups to resume and for there to be a major meeting of the principals within one month," a diplomat from one of the three countries negotiating with Iran said. The diplomat said Iran also insisted that its enriching uranium be part of any talks or agreement with EU negotiators Britain, France and Germany.

Dawn, 4 June 2005

Bush urged to engage Iran, N. Korea (Jim Lobe)

WASHINGTON: Hawks in the administration of President George W. Bush may think that they are tough, but their dreams of "regime change" in Iran and North Korea are increasingly deluded, not to say dangerous, according to their hard-edged realist rivals who have become increasingly outspoken in recent weeks. Their latest broadside comes in the form of an article by Richard Haass, president of the influential Council on Foreign Relations, in the forthcoming edition of the journal *Foreign Affairs* entitled "The Limits of Regime Change." Haass, who served under Bush in a top State Department position, also has just published a new book, 'The Opportunity: America's Moment to Alter History's Course', one of the central themes of which is that the hawks have over-estimated Washington's ability to change the world. Haass' article and book release follow the publication of a column last week by arch-realist Brent Scowcroft in the *Wall Street Journal* which argues that the hawks' rejection of bilateral talks with North Korea in the hopes that the government there will collapse are "irresponsible." Yet another realist, former *Foreign Affairs* editor Fareed Zakaria, made much the same argument in a recent *Newsweek* column that assailed the White House for what he called a four-year "stalemate" within the administration between hawks who "want to push for regime change" in North Korea and "pragmatists" who "want to end the North's nuclear programme."

The News, 4 June 2005

The NPT crisis concerns us all (Praful Bidwai)

It is a telling comment on the narrowing of the scope of public debate in South Asia that a recent major development that concerns global security has found hardly any mention in the news columns of our press, leave alone the comment pages. This is the disastrous collapse of the second Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The four weeks-long meeting failed to produce a consensus declaration or even an agreed account of the worrisome developments that have taken place since the last such conference, in 2000, and the progress (or lack of it) on the commitments made by the five "recognised" nuclear weapons-states

(NWSs) in respect of disarmament. It does not speak well of our "strategic community" that it should be so indifferent to events that have far-reaching implications for the spread of nuclear weapons and the prospect for global disarmament. But wait a minute! Perhaps what's at work is not indifference at all, but quiet, smug, cynical rejoicing that the NPT conference ended in failure and the non-proliferation agenda has received a setback. Since non-proliferation is no longer in the limelight, and since neither Pakistan nor India is a signatory to the NPT, there will be reduced pressure on the two states to demonstrate nuclear restraint. We can carry on stockpiling fissile material, build more and more bombs and make or acquire more and more missiles, warplanes and ships that can deliver them -- so that our governments can assuredly roast millions of non-combatant civilians to gory death or turn them into specks of radioactive dust!

The New York Times, 4 June 2005

A Small but Dangerous Clause

At a time when world leaders are struggling to keep dangerous nuclear materials from terrorists and rogue nations, a devious provision in the energy bill now in Congress heads in the opposite direction. The provision would weaken controls on exporting bomb-grade uranium to plants abroad for use in making medical isotopes - radioactive materials used to diagnose and treat various illnesses. The measure is described as vital to keep the isotopes flowing, but its real purpose is to exempt isotope producers from pressure to work toward using safer forms of uranium. The highly enriched uranium serves as "target" material that is irradiated in a reactor to produce the medical isotopes. Each year, the major isotope producers use or stockpile enough target material to make a small number of bombs. Arms controllers hope to convert the plants to low-enriched uranium that cannot be used in weapons, thus eliminating any risk of theft by terrorists or renegade nations.

People's Daily, 4 June 2005

US urges DPRK to return to six-party talks

The United States reiterated calls on Friday for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to return to the six-party talks and realize a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. "We'd like to see them (DPRK) return to the six-party talks. They say a lot of things. We want to see them come back and be prepared to talk in a serious way about how to move forward," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said. "We are all saying we want to see a nuclear weapons-free peninsula, and the way to get there is through the six-party talks. We've made that very clear to North Korea," he said. McClellan said there are no preconditions for the United States to return to the six-party talks. Three rounds of the six-party talks have been held to try to resolve the DPRK nuclear issue. The six-party talks have been stalled since June last year as the DPRK accused the United States of adopting a hostile policy towards Pyongyang.

The News, 5 June 2005

'US decision on taking up N Korea in UN likely this month'

SINGAPORE: The United States is likely to decide before the end of the month whether to take the North Korean nuclear issue before the UN Security Council, a senior US defense official said Sunday at a regional security conference in Singapore. A senior US official said there was growing consensus within the US administration that the status quo could not continue. Taking up the issue with UN Security Council "is something we're giving increased study to. And probably we'll come to a decision in the next few weeks," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. North Korea has boycotted the six-nation talks on its nuclear program since last June, and on February 10 declared it has nuclear weapons.

The News, 5 June 2005

North Korean proliferation a threat to world, says Rumsfeld

SINGAPORE: US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld conceded on Saturday he had no idea how North Korea might be persuaded to resume negotiations on its nuclear weapons programme as allies debated the next steps if Pyongyang continues to shun six-party talks. "I have no way of knowing what might conceivably finally persuade the people in the North to behave in a way that is more consistent with the behaviour of other countries in the world," Rumsfeld told an international conference on Asia security. "My hope is that the countries in the six-party talks will continue to be persuasive, try to be more persuasive with them and that they will see it is in their interest to enter those discussions," he said. Rumsfeld made the comment in response to questions following a speech in which he warned that Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions threaten the security not just of the region, but of the world. Given North Korea's record in selling ballistic missile technologies, as well as trafficking in illegal drugs and counterfeit currency, he said "one has to assume that they will sell anything and they would be willing to sell nuclear technologies".

The News, 5 June 2005

EU, US stand firm on Iran abandoning nuclear fuel cycle work

VIENNA: The EU and the United States remain committed to Iran giving up uranium enrichment work that could be used to make atomic weapons and want to clear up any confusion over this with Tehran, diplomats said on Saturday. A trio of European Union negotiators, Britain, France and Germany, are to try to clear up an apparent misunderstanding over the US position on uranium enrichment as explained by President George W. Bush on Tuesday, diplomats said. A US and an EU diplomat told AFP the statement may have misled the Iranians into thinking Washington is open to their being able to enrich uranium to low levels. These diplomatic moves come with Iran saying it has not yet decided whether to grant a two-month delay in talks with the EU over its nuclear ambitions. The talks are deadlocked over Iran's insistence on its right to enrich uranium, a process which makes fuel for civilian nuclear reactors but which can also be the explosive core of atom bombs. The United States charges that Iran is using its civilian atomic programme to hide the development of nuclear weapons but is backing the EU initiative to get Iran to definitively abandon enrichment in return for trade, technology and security incentives.

The Times of India, 6 June 2005

TIMESVIEW: Nuclear power must be a top priority

For the first time, nuclear energy figures high on the agenda of Indo-US cooperation. Ahead of prime minister Manmohan Singh's visit to the US next month, senior officials of both countries are drawing up a road map for energy cooperation with nuclear power being an area of focus. This is a welcome move to bring to the forefront the potential of nuclear power to meet India's growing electricity needs. At present, the total installed generating power capacity in India is 120,000 megawatts, of which nuclear power supplies only 3.7 percent. Experts predict that over the next decade, the demand for power would nearly double. When that happens, generation from hydroelectric, coal, lignite, oil or gas plants would fall way short of meeting India's needs. The only and reasonably quick way out is to increase nuclear power generation. A major concern of boosting nuclear power generation is safety. This is a legitimate concern since India's nuclear plants are shielded from public scrutiny and their safety record is not exemplary. But for too long disasters like the one at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Russia have influenced the debate on nuclear energy. It is time to look ahead.

The Times of India, 6 June 2005

COUNTERVIEW: Nuclear energy is unsafe, uneconomical (A Srinivas)

Two decades after Chernobyl, nuclear energy is making a stealthy comeback. The reasons for that are not far to seek. As a carbon-free fuel, it can sidestep the Kyoto Protocol that obliges member countries to clean up their act by reducing carbon emissions. Nuclear power producers, India included, can pile up tradable carbon credits against their name. No wonder, Indian and global spin doctors are back in action, peddling the clean technology argument. Chernobyl, we are told, will not happen because of the technological advancements that have taken place since then. It is another matter that India picked up Soviet technology within years of the disaster. Are we then to believe that nuclear power suddenly poses fewer dangers? There is still no clean method of dealing with radioactive waste, which stays toxic for generations. Besides, the plant conditions of Indian reactors do not inspire confidence. Former chairman of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board A Gopalakrishnan, soon after retirement in 1996, spilled the beans on appalling safety conditions in India's antiquated nuclear plants. That a Chernobyl has not occurred in India is a miracle. In a country where Bhopal happened despite early warnings, can we afford to be complacent? What's worse, nuclear energy, unlike thermal or hydel, is shrouded in awe and state secrecy. As a result, minor accidents never come to light.

Daily Times, 6 June 1995

Chashma-II from this year

BEIJING: Construction of the 300-megawatt Chashma nuclear power plant is expected to begin as early as the end of this year, a leading Chinese official said Monday. "In May last year, CNNC signed with the Pakistani side a contract concerning the second 300 megawatt power plant in Chashma," Kang Rixin, general manager of the state-owned China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) told journalists. "Now the contract is being carried out and by the end of this year or the beginning of next year construction on this project will be started and the first concrete will be poured."

The News, 6 June 2005

China says it has no nuclear cooperation with Iran, North Korea or Libya

BEIJING: China said Monday that it was willing to engage in international cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, but denied that it had any such dealings with Iran, North Korea or Libya. "The cooperation between CNNC and foreign counterparts is for peaceful uses of nuclear power. We will actively carry out such cooperation," Kang Rixin, general manager of the state-owned China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC), told journalists. "Our international cooperation is for the peaceful use and we strictly follow relevant rules and

principles. We have no such cooperation with Iran, North Korea or Libya." China has exported one 300 megawatt nuclear power plant to Pakistan and is building a second one at the Chashma nuclear facility south of Islamabad. Pakistan's top nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, who is now under detention, publicly admitted early last year he had passed nuclear secrets to Iran, North Korea and Libya that could be used to build nuclear weapons. Iran has been subject to more than two years of investigations by the international nuclear watchdog after it emerged the country had been covering up its activities for 18 years.

The News, 6 June 2005

Iran agrees to EU demands

TEHRAN: A senior Iranian official said on Sunday that Tehran has only conditionally agreed to EU demands it maintain a suspension of sensitive nuclear activities until the end of July, the official news agency IRNA reported. "Iran has conditionally agreed to the EU offer, and Europe has until the end of July to provide a complete proposal with details," Supreme National Security Council official Ali Agha Mohammadi was quoted as saying. He said the conditions were that three joint working groups and a steering committee meet before the end of July and "that there is an exchange between the European foreign ministers and the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (Hassan Rowhani)". Tehran has continued to complain the Europeans have been seeking to drag out the talks, and therefore Iran's nuclear suspension. But the demand for talks to be brought forward may prove a headache for Eurocrats planning their summer holidays. Mohammadi said the demands were aimed at ensuring that any European proposal is in line with the "agreed aims" of a nuclear suspension agreement signed in Paris between Iran and Britain, France and Germany last November. "The two sides must have offers in line with the main aims of the Paris agreement, which is objective guarantees on our part and firm guarantees from the European side," Mohammadi said.

The Associated Press, 6 June 2005

Iran Extends Freeze on Nuclear Enrichment

TEHRAN: Iran said it will extend its suspension of uranium enrichment until the end of July to give European negotiators time to prepare a proposal it can accept, but Tehran also warned against wasting the opportunity to strike a deal. The announcement Sunday followed Iran's agreement last month to review a European Union proposal for a new round of negotiations in the summer. Tehran's decision injects some breathing space into the international crisis over its nuclear program, at least temporarily. "The Europeans have time up to the end of July to prepare details of their proposal," said Ali Aghamohammadi, a spokesman for Iran's Supreme National Security Council. "To make Iran's nuclear facilities active in a proper way, both sides should work toward providing guarantees," Aghamohammadi was quoted as saying by the official Islamic Republic News Agency. Europe sees suspension of uranium enrichment by Tehran as a precondition for further talks. No date has been set for the summer negotiations. Iran suspended enrichment last November under international pressure led by the United States. Iran maintains its program is peaceful, but the EU and the United States fear the program is being used to develop nuclear weapons in violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The Associated Press, 6 June 2005

China Said Weighing Bids on Nuke Plants

BEIJING: China is still weighing bids by competing U.S., French and Russian suppliers of nuclear power technology before making a closely watched multibillion-dollar decision on equipping two new power plants, a senior official said Monday. The contracts, reportedly worth up to \$8 billion, are expected to be the biggest in years in the world's nuclear power industry, which is looking to China to drive equipment sales as it tries to meet surging energy needs. Suppliers' willingness to transfer technology to China is among key issues still being examined, said Kang Rixin, general manager of the China National Nuclear Corp. Chinese news reports have said contracts for the two nuclear plants might be awarded in October. But asked about timing at a news conference, Kang would say only, "We will make a decision in due time." The two planned facilities are at Sanmen in the eastern province of Zhejiang, just south of Shanghai, and Yangjiang in Guangdong province, which borders Hong Kong. Competitors to equip the facilities are the French nuclear group Areva; Westinghouse Electric Co., the U.S. unit of British Nuclear Fuels PLC; and Russia's AtomStroyExport. China is in the midst of a boom in power plant construction as it tries to cope with rapidly increasing energy demands that have caused blackouts in areas throughout the country.

Reuters, 6 June 2005

Japan Says May Need To Let UN Handle N.Korea Issue

TOKYO: It is time to consider taking the issue of North Korea's nuclear ambitions to the United Nations, which could result in sanctions, Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura said on Monday. The last round of six-party talks on Pyongyang's nuclear programs took place nearly a year ago, and international frustration is growing to the extent that a senior U.S. defense official said on Sunday that a decision is likely within weeks on whether

the issue should be taken to the U.N. Security Council. Machimura, reiterating Tokyo's view that other options should be considered if the talks are not resumed, said sanctions were not the only approach, however. "A statement by the Council president or a resolution, saying as a representative of international society to North Korea that they should return to the talks as soon as possible -- this would have plenty of diplomatic meaning," Machimura said in a speech. China and Russia, two of the five permanent members of the Security Council, oppose such a move, however. Both are part of the six-party talks, along with Japan, the United States and the two Koreas. The administration of President Bush has long held out the possibility of asking the Security Council to take action as a means of holding Pyongyang accountable, but officials have said that lighter methods, such as a Council president statement, are likely to precede sanctions.

The Associated Press, 6 June 2005

Japan Endorses U.S. - North Korea Meeting

TOKYO: The meeting in New York between U.S. and North Korean officials has increased the chances of a resumption of six-party talks on Pyongyang's nuclear weapons programs, a Japanese official said Tuesday. The disarmament talks stalled almost a year ago. Since then, North Korea has declared it has atomic bombs, claiming they were a deterrent against a possible attack by the U.S. The United States met Monday with North Korea on halting its nuclear weapons program, and Washington withdrew a threat to try to punish the North Koreans soon with U.N. sanctions. The meeting was requested by North Korea, a U.S. official said. "Judging from their amount of recent contacts, it is progress, and we hope it would lead to a resumption of the six-way talks," said Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda. Japanese leaders have voiced optimism that North Korea is warming to the idea of resuming the talks, which it has been boycotting. Hosoda, however, said that North Korea has not yet pledged to return to discussions with the United States, South Korea, China, Japan and Russia. The U.S. reiterated its call for a resumption of negotiations.

The Indian Express, 7 June, 2005

China says willing to cooperate with India on nuclear power

BEIJING: China has expressed willingness to cooperate with India in the sensitive nuclear power sector under the guidelines of the UN nuclear watchdog and other concerned international agencies. "My personal feeling is that cooperation can be carried out with India as long as nuclear technology is for the purpose of economic growth and is guided by relevant rules and regulations of International Atomic Energy Agency and other concerned agencies," general manager of the China National Nuclear Corp. (CNNC), Kang Rixin told a press conference here. At the same time, Kang denied any links with the clandestine nuclear programmes of Iran, North Korea or Libya. He also asserted that CNNC's cooperation with Pakistan was only for "peaceful purposes". Construction of a 300 megawatt Chinese-made nuclear power plant in Pakistan is expected to begin as early as the end of this year.

The Reuters, 7 June 2005

US, North Korean Officials Meet In New York

NEW YORK: U.S. and North Korean officials met in New York Monday for the first time in nearly a month after Washington urged Pyongyang to return to stalled talks on its nuclear weapons program, U.S. officials said. "There was a New York channel meeting in New York. Our representatives met with North Korean representatives," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was attending a conference. McCormack said Rice had not yet been briefed on the meeting and so could offer no reaction. The United States was represented by Joseph DeTrani, the U.S. special envoy to the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear ambitions, and by Jim Foster, director of the State Department's Office of Korean Affairs, said another U.S. official in Washington, who asked not to be named. Representing North Korea were U.N. Ambassador Pak Gil Yon and a deputy, Han Song Ryol, a State Department official said. Both men declined comment as they returned to their U.N. mission after the meeting. No six-party talks have been held since June 2004. The six governments participating in those negotiations are China, Japan, South Korea and Russia in addition to North Korea and the United States.

The News, 7 June 2005

Rumsfeld reaffirms US commitment to talks on North Korea

BANGKOK: US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld reaffirmed on Monday the United States' commitment to deal with the North Korea nuclear issue through six-nation talks. A senior US Defence official travelling with Rumsfeld told reporters on Sunday that the administration was likely to decide this month whether to seek sanctions at the UN Security Council on the issue. But Rumsfeld said there was no change in US policy. "The government of the United States has been on the path of the six-party talks and that's where it is," he told reporters Monday. Asked if it was time to start thinking of taking the issue to the UN Security Council, Rumsfeld brushed off the question. "I'm not going to get into that type of thing. The president spoke. The secretary of state

spoke. I've spoken. We've all said the same thing. There isn't an issue about it." Rumsfeld made the comments at the end of a tour of the Grand Palace in Bangkok, a complex of gilded Buddhist temples around a royal palace, after meeting with senior Thai officials on security issues.

The Korean Herald, 7 June 2005

Roh pledges best effort at summit (Lee Joo-hee)

Seoul and Washington are hoping that their summit this week will become a watershed in getting North Korea back to the negotiating table, and President Roh Moo-hyun echoed this yesterday by pledging to do his best to find a way with President George W. Bush. With the six-party talks now stalled for just under a year and North Korea increasingly vocal about its nuclear weapons prowess, all eyes are on the Roh-Bush meeting June 10 (Saturday Korean time) hoping it will conjure up a formula to get the negotiations between the Koreas, United States, China, Japan and Russia moving again to end the nuclear standoff. Roh and Bush will exclude all diplomatic programs and ritual in Washington to concentrate only on the major business at hand - how to find a peaceful solution to of the nuclear standoff and solidifying the Korea-U.S. alliance. President Roh Moo-hyun and first lady Kwon Yang-suk walk out of the national cemetery in southern Seoul, yesterday, after a ceremony to mark the 50th Memorial Day anniversary for those killed in the 1950-53 Korean War.

The June, 7 June 2005

Suspicious package in Australian uranium mine

SYDNEY: A suspicious substance was found Monday in a package sent to the world's largest uranium mine in South Australia just days after hoax anthrax attacks on Indonesia's embassy and parliament house in Canberra, the Australian Associate Press reported. Police in South Australia said they had implemented routine isolation procedures after discovery of the parcel sent to the Roxby Downs mine, which holds almost 40 per cent of the world's known uranium deposits. No further information was available, but the security scare came amid renewed debate in Australia about a possible expansion of uranium mining and exports as well as about introducing nuclear power to the country. It also came a day before Prime Minister John Howard's cabinet was reportedly due to debate where Australia should store atomic waste, mainly from the country's sole research reactor. A proposal to store the low- and medium-level waste at a remote desert site in South Australia was over-ruled by a state court last year and the government has reportedly backed away from plans to seek a storage site on a remote Pacific island.

The News, 7 June 2005

Japan, EU to 'joint host' nuclear reactor

TOKYO: Japan will ask the European Union to declare it a "joint host" of a revolutionary nuclear energy project even if the reactor is located in France, a newspaper said Monday. The Nihon Keizai Shimbun said the Japanese government did not want to abandon its bid for the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) out of concern for the wishes of northern Aomori prefecture, which wants to host the multibillion-dollar project. A public renunciation of the ITER bid could lead the local government to refuse an unrelated proposal to store spent nuclear fuel, damaging Japan's overall nuclear energy program, the business daily said. "Joint host" status would give Japan a more active role in ITER, making the Aomori village of Rokkasho-mura a research hub even if the reactor goes to the French town of Cadarache. But the report said South Korea has unofficially expressed objections that Japan would get so much out of ITER unlike other participating nations that will not host the reactor. Japan and EU have already agreed that Japan would receive 57 billion yen (533 million dollars) worth of contracts to build facilities related to ITER and that a new analysis center for ITER would be built in Japan, according to the Nihon Keizai. The two sides have also agreed that any later-generation ITER reactor would go to Japan, it said.

The Hindu, 7 June 2005

Teheran to put off uranium enrichment process till July (Atul Aneja)

MANAMA: Iran has declared that it would put off uranium enrichment till July, formalising the pause in its nuclear dialogue with the European Union until a new President is elected. The announcement followed Iran's agreement with the European Union (E.U.) in May, to consider its proposal for a new round of negotiations this summer. "The Europeans have time up to the end of July to prepare details of their proposal," said Ali Aghamohammadi, a spokesman for Iran's Supreme National Security Council. "To make Iran's nuclear facilities active in a proper way, both sides should work toward providing guarantees," Mr. Aghamohammadi was quoted as saying by the official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). The Iran-E.U. dialogue, which gathered steam six months ago, revolves around two specific issues, over which differences persist. The European Union, backed by the United States, wants Iran to terminate indigenous enrichment of uranium, fearing that the material could be used for making nuclear bombs.

International Herald Tribune, 7 June 2005

A small but dangerous clause

At a time when world leaders are struggling to keep dangerous nuclear materials from terrorists and rogue nations, a devious provision in the energy bill now in the U.S. Congress heads in the opposite direction. The provision would weaken controls on exporting bomb-grade uranium to plants abroad for use in making medical isotopes - radioactive materials used to diagnose and treat various illnesses. The measure is described as vital to keep the isotopes flowing, but its real purpose is to exempt isotope producers from pressure to work toward using safer forms of uranium. The highly enriched uranium serves as "target" material that is irradiated in a reactor to produce the medical isotopes. Each year, the major isotope producers use or stockpile a quantity of target material that would be enough to make a small number of bombs. Arms controllers hope to convert the plants to low-enriched uranium that cannot be used in weapons, thus eliminating any risk of theft by terrorists or renegade nations. The United States has great leverage because it provides highly enriched uranium to the largest producer, MDS Nordion in Canada, and can impose conditions on its use.

Dawn, 8 June 2005

Nonproliferation: failure yet again (Zubeida Mustafa)

The NPT review conference which collapsed with a whimper at the end of May went practically unnoticed in Pakistan. This indifference can be attributed to the fact that Islamabad, along with New Delhi and Tel Aviv, was not present at the conference which brought 188 NPT signatories together in New York for their five-yearly exercise. Another reason for not taking note of the event is the apathy in this country towards nuclear weapons. The conference ended a day before the seventh anniversary of Pakistan's own nuclear tests at Chaghai. It might seem rather strange that apart from a few peace activists no one even remembered that catastrophic day when Pakistan opted for the road which can prove to be self-destructive. With Hiroshima nearly 60 years behind us, the world appears to have forgotten the horrors of the nuclear war, notwithstanding a desperate campaign by the activists from Hiroshima to keep alive the memory of the devastation caused by nuclear arms.

The Washington Post, 8 June 2005

U.S. Drops Opposition to IAEA Chief (Dafna Linzer)

The Bush administration, having found no alternate candidate or support from any allies, has given up on its attempt to force out Mohamed ElBaradei as director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, according to two U.S. officials. With ElBaradei's bid for a third term virtually guaranteed when the agency's board meets next week, the White House decided to invite him to Washington for a talk tomorrow with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice about the terms of U.S. support, the officials said. Mohamed ElBaradei, seeking a third term as head of the IAEA, is scheduled to meet tomorrow with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "We're willing to lift our objections under certain conditions," one of the officials said. "Namely, get tougher on Iran." The Bush administration's vigorous but solitary campaign -- including a complete halt of intelligence sharing, recruitment of potential replacements and eavesdropping on ElBaradei in search of ammunition against him -- won not a single ally on the IAEA board. ElBaradei, who repeatedly challenged U.S. assertions about Iraq's weapons programs, does not need Washington's backing to be reappointed. He is supported by the 34 other countries on the IAEA board.

The Washington Post, 8 June 2005

U.S. Officials Wary of N. Korean Statement (Glenn Kessler)

U.S. officials were skeptical yesterday that North Korea's statement Monday that it was committed to returning to multinational disarmament talks signaled a breakthrough in the year-long effort to arrange another meeting. But Asian officials were optimistic, with China's U.N. ambassador even predicting that talks would resume within the next few weeks. "I think it will be pretty soon, in the next few weeks," Ambassador Wang Guangya told reporters. "I understand that it will be Beijing." China has been the host of three previous meetings, each time luring North Korea to the table with tens of millions of dollars in incentives. But little progress has been made at the meetings, which are supposed to lead to the dismantling of North Korea's nuclear programs. South Korea, Japan and Russia also participate in the talks. U.S. and Asian officials said Monday that North Korean officials at the United Nations had told a U.S. delegation that it was committed to the talks but would not set a date. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack confirmed that account yesterday.

The New York Times, 8 June 2005

North Korea Said to Offer to Rejoin Nuclear Talks (David E. Sanger)

WASHINGTON, June 7: The United States and China said Tuesday that North Korea had committed itself to returning eventually to multinational negotiations over its nuclear program, but officials said the North had set no date. That left both American and Asian officials wondering whether North Korea was simply trying to defuse talk about the United States going to the United Nations to ask for sanctions. The North Korean statements, after a

yearlong suspension in the six-nation talks, came during a meeting on Monday in New York between the North's representatives to the United Nations and two American diplomats, Joseph DeTrani and Jim Foster. But after a day of conflicting signals in Washington about what the North Koreans actually said, and an optimistic prediction by the Chinese representative to the United Nations that talks would resume "in the next couple of weeks," both American and Asian officials expressed caution.

Reuters, 8 June 2005

Restart of Nuke Talks Is Only First Step

WASHINGTON: Getting North Korea to say yet again it will return to negotiations on its nuclear weapons program is only the first step on a long road that will test the Bush administration's Asian alliances and its influence with China. So far, North Korea simply has informed American diplomats that it would return to the negotiating table after a yearlong breakoff. No date was set, and North Korea's record is a spotty one. "The North Koreans said they would return but did not give us a time," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Tuesday in reporting the outcome of talks Monday at the North Koreans' U.N. mission in New York. In a statement Wednesday, North Korea mentioned the meetings with U.S. officials but didn't give any indication of its imminent return to the negotiating table. The North said a resumption of the disarmament talks "was entirely dependent on how the United States accepts our demand for creating right conditions and environment," according to the statement carried by the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

The Korean Herald, 8 June 2005

U.S., N.K. seen moving closer to six-way talks (Lee Joo-hee)

As Presidents Roh Moo-hyun and George W. Bush finalized preparations for their weekend summit, hopes of the United States and North Korea coming to terms to revive the stalled six-party talks hit a higher note yesterday with word they had made direct contact again through a newly-reopened dialogue channel in New York. Details of the Monday meeting between representatives of Washington and Pyongyang were not immediately disclosed but analysts expressed optimism that the direct communication between the two openly hostile opponents would positively influence efforts to resume the six-party discussions, now stalled for nearly a year. A South Korean government official said yesterday the New York meeting between Washington and Pyongyang representatives certainly was part of the communication process that could lead to the resumption of the six-party talks but that no tangible result has come from the Monday talks. "The discussion between the two can be said that it is in mid-way (to seeing an outcome). The talks are likely to continue," the official said on condition of anonymity.

Tehrantimes.com, 8 June 2005

Kuwait not concerned about Iran's nuclear program

TEHRAN: The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), Hassan Rowhani, arrived in Abu Dhabi Monday night on the second leg of his four-nation Asian tour, which has already taken him to Kuwait. Rowhani and his delegation were welcomed by the United Arab Emirates Interior Minister Saif bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan, Iranian Ambassador to the UAE Mohammad-Ali Hadi, and several other officials. He also visited the mausoleum of former UAE president Sheikh Zayid bin Sultan Al Nuhayyan and signed the memorial book. During his two-day visit, Rowhani is scheduled to meet UAE President Khalifa bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan, and he has already met Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al-Nahayan. Holding talks on bilateral and regional issues and briefing officials on Tehran's progress in nuclear talks are the main objectives of the Iranian official's Asian trip. Rowhani's week-long tour will also take him to Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Aljazeera, 8 June 2005

Iran gives the EU last chance for N-deal

European negotiators representing the European Union are given one last chance to reach a deal with Iran that would allow the latter to produce nuclear fuel or the Islamic republic will go its own way, a senior Iranian official said. Last November, Iran agreed with the EU big-three; France, Britain and Germany to temporarily suspend its nuclear activities. "This round of negotiations is the final chance and if negotiations are faced with a 'No', in fact that would be the end of it," head of the Supreme National Security Council's Propaganda Office, Ali Agha Mohammadi, said. The European, backed by the United States has threatened to take Iran's nuclear case to the United Nations Security Council for possible sanctions if the Islamic republic refused to maintain its nuclear freeze, and halt all activities related to uranium enrichment. Iran refuses to give up its right to peaceful uranium enrichment. Meanwhile, head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Hassan Rowhani, urged Washington to make a 'courageous' first move for reconciliation on Monday as he wrapped up a two-day visit to Kuwait. "I believe that the American side should initiate a first courageous step," Mr. Rowhani said.

The Guardian, 9 June 2005

UN alert as nuclear plans go missing (Ian Traynor)

VIENNA: Electronic drawings that give comprehensive details of how to build and test equipment essential for making nuclear bombs have vanished and could be put up for sale on the international black market, according to UN investigators. The blueprints, running to hundreds of pages, show how to make centrifuges for enriching uranium. In addition, the investigators have been unable to trace key components for uranium centrifuge rigs and fear that drawings for a nuclear warhead have been secreted away and could be for sale. Inspectors at the UN's nuclear authority, the International Atomic Energy Agency, have been investigating the worst nuclear smuggling racket ever uncovered, headed by the Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan. The operation was discovered two years ago to be selling sensitive nuclear technology to Libya and Iran. A senior official said several sets of blueprints for uranium centrifuges - the so-called P-1 and more advanced P-2 systems which were peddled by the Khan network - have gone missing.

The News, 9 June 2005

EI Baradei to meet Rice

VIENNA: The head of the UN nuclear monitoring agency flies to Washington on Wednesday for talks with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and senior officials on Iran's nuclear programme and his own future at the organisation, agency officials and diplomats said. Rice invited Mohamed EI Baradei, who heads the International Atomic Energy Agency, for a discussion on a variety of important non-proliferation matters" before the agency's board meets on Monday in Vienna, IAEA spokesman Mark Gwozdecky said. EI Baradei's bid for a third term as head of the agency will in all likelihood" be discussed, Gwozdecky said but declined to discuss specifics on that topic or single out countries up for discussion during the Thursday meetings in Washington. A senior Western diplomat familiar with EI Baradei's agenda, however, confirmed Iran will be discussed when EI Baradei meets with Rice and Bob Joseph, the designated undersecretary of state in charge of non-proliferation issues. Other diplomats, who are accredited to the agency, said he planned to seek support for remaining in his post despite American opposition. They spoke to The AP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to divulge information to journalists. EI Baradei's candidacy for a third term is on the agenda for the IAEA board's Monday meeting.

BBC News, 9 June 2005

US could support UN nuclear head (Jane O'Brien)

The US has indicated it could support a third term for Mohamed EI Baradei as head of the UN's nuclear watchdog - if he toughens his stance on Iran. The Bush administration had called for him to step down at the end of his second term this year. The US is the only country to oppose his continuing at the helm of the International Atomic Energy Agency. But the US secretary of state now says it could support him and will discuss the issue at a meeting on Thursday. The comments from Condoleezza Rice, who will meet Mr EI Baradei in Washington, indicate a major change of heart by the Bush administration. The US fell out with him over Iraq and Iran. Ms Rice stopped short of an outright endorsement of the 62-year-old Egyptian lawyer who has headed the IAEA since 1997, but she did say they had worked well together in the past. Thursday's meeting in Washington is being seen as something of a job interview for Mr EI Baradei, who is, however, the only candidate. Condoleezza Rice has made it clear that US support will depend on whether the two can reach agreement over the IAEA's position on Iran.

The Associated Press, 9 June 2005

Saudis Seek Relaxed Nuclear Oversight

WASHINGTON: Saudi Arabia is seeking to permanently lower international scrutiny of its lone nuclear reactor, but a top Saudi official said Wednesday the request is not a prelude to development of nuclear weapons. "We have no desire to acquire any type of weapon of mass destruction, period," Saudi foreign policy adviser Adel al-Jubeir said. The Saudi request this spring set off alarm bells at the International Atomic Energy Agency and within the Bush administration, which has accused neighboring Iran of using its civilian nuclear program as cover to develop weapons that could be used against Israel or other U.S. allies in the Middle East. He also said reports, some based on U.S. intelligence, that Saudi Arabia has sought possible nuclear weapons help from Pakistan are "not correct." In a wide-ranging interview with The Associated Press, al-Jubeir said relations between his nation and the Bush administration are strong but "the environment in which the relationship operates ... still leaves a lot to be desired." Ordinary Saudis remain deeply distrustful of the United States in the aftermath of the Iraq war and revelations about mistreatment of Muslim prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and a range of complaints about conditions at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, al-Jubeir said.

BBC News, 9 June 2005

N Korea 'is building more bombs'

North Korea is boosting its arsenal of nuclear weapons, the communist state's Vice-Foreign Minister, Kim Gye-

gwan, has told the US ABC News network. He said North Korea had enough atomic bombs to protect itself against attack by the US and was building more. He refused to say whether North Korean missiles could reach the US. US President George Bush has meanwhile said Pyongyang must show it is ready to give up its nuclear weapons programme in a "serious and substantive" way. The BBC's Seoul correspondent, Charles Scanlon, says Mr Kim's statement reveals how deeply North Korea and the US disagree over its weapons ambitions. Six-nation negotiations aimed at getting North Korea to give up its weapons programme have been stalled for over a year. On Wednesday, the Chinese envoy to the UN said Pyongyang might "soon" return to the negotiating table, following talks between US and North Korean officials on Monday.

The Associated Press, 9 June 2005

Bush Urges China to Push N. Korea on Nukes

WASHINGTON: President Bush suggested Wednesday that he'd like to see China move more aggressively to push North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons programs and said he has a good enough relationship with Chinese leaders to talk about any differences. Six-party talks involving the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan and Russia -- aimed at halting the North's nuclear pursuits -- have been dormant for a year. On Tuesday, the United States said North Korea had agreed to return to the negotiations, but there is no timetable. "China has been at the table," Bush said in an interview with Fox News Channel's Neil Cavuto. "Can they do more at a different time frame than we're interested in? Perhaps. But the relationship is such that I'm able to explain to Hu Jintao, my counterpart, that, you know, keep the pressure on." On Social Security, the president said he couldn't "live with myself" if he didn't persist in his efforts to overhaul it. His proposal is intended to fix most of the program's long-term financial problems by reducing the growth of government benefits for all but the poorest retirees and would introduce individual investment accounts as part of the program. "If I didn't take this on, I'd have said, 'What did you go to Washington for in the first place?'" he said.

International Herald Tribune, 9 June 2005

EI Baradei won't heed US on Iran: Aids

VIENNA: The head of the United Nations nuclear monitoring agency is ready to listen to U.S. suggestions while in Washington but will not become tougher on Iran just to secure American support for his campaign for another term, agency officials said Wednesday. The comments by officials at the International Atomic Energy Agency appeared calculated to counter speculation that the IAEA director general, Mohamed ElBaradei, was prepared to strike a deal with the Americans to ensure his future at the organization. They spoke as ElBaradei flew to Washington for talks with the U.S. secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, and other senior officials. Agency spokesmen were noncommittal on the trip. An IAEA spokesman, Mark Gwozdecky, said that Rice had invited ElBaradei "for a discussion on a variety of important nonproliferation matters" before the agency's board meets Monday in Vienna. He said ElBaradei's bid for a third term as head of the agency would "in all likelihood" be discussed but declined to talk about specifics on the agenda.

The Korean Herald, 10 June 2005

N.K. claims nuclear bomb stockpile (Lee Joo-hee)

North Korea opened up a new dimension to its nuclear standoff on the eve of the key Roh-Bush summit by claiming yesterday that it possesses a stockpile of nuclear bombs to defend against a U.S. attack. The assertion came in an interview with the U.S. television network ABC amid growing anticipation of an imminent resumption of the six-party talks following revival of informal contacts between Washington and Pyongyang and as President Roh Moo-hyun headed to Washington to meet President George W. Bush tomorrow (Korean time). ABC News reported that North Korea's vice foreign minister, Kim Gye-gwan, said North Korea has nuclear bombs and is building more such weapons. "I should say that we have enough nuclear bombs to defend against a U.S. attack," Kim said. His comments were made three days after North Korea asked in informal talks with U.S. officials in New York for acknowledgement that it is a nuclear state and, consequently, should be treated as such.

The Hindu, 10 June 2005

Nuclear bomb blueprints vanish (Ian Traynor)

VIENNA: Electronic drawings that give comprehensive details of how to build and test equipment essential for making nuclear bombs have vanished and could be put up for sale on the international black market, according to U.N. investigators. The blueprints, running to hundreds of pages, show how to make centrifuges for enriching uranium. In addition, the investigators have been unable to trace key components for uranium centrifuge rigs and fear that drawings for a nuclear warhead have been secreted away and could be for sale. Inspectors at the U.N.'s nuclear authority, the International Atomic Energy Agency, have been investigating the worst nuclear smuggling racket ever uncovered, headed by the Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan. The operation was discovered two years ago to be selling sensitive nuclear technology to Libya and Iran. A senior official said several sets of blueprints for uranium centrifuges - the so-called P-1 and more advanced P-2 systems which were peddled by the

Khan network - have gone missing. "We know there were several sets of them prepared," said the official. "So who got those electronic drawings? We have only actually got to the one full set from Libya. So who got the rest, the copies?"

The News, 10 June 2005

IAEA test of Pak N-parts strengthens Iran's claim

VIENNA: Iranian claims that the country did not produce weapons-grade uranium - despite US assertions to the contrary - appeared to be strengthened by preliminary examination of Pakistani equipment identical to that used by Tehran, a well-placed diplomat said on Thursday. The diplomat, who is accredited to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said testing of traces of weapons-grade uranium on the centrifuge parts provided by Pakistan appear to match those found on centrifuges bought by Iran on the nuclear black market headed by Pakistani scientist AQ Khan. That would strengthen arguments that the suspect traces might have arrived in Iran together with the equipment itself, as the Iranians claim. A senior diplomat close to the agency, who is familiar with the investigations, did not discount such a conclusion, but said it was too early to issue a definite judgment on the origin of the traces, which were found on the equipment in Iran by agency experts two years ago. Since then, IAEA experts have been urging Pakistan to provide centrifuge components to compare the traces and assess Iran's claims of innocence. The parts were finally provided by Islamabad last month.

Dawn, 10 June 2005

US accepts third term for ElBaradei

WASHINGTON, June 9: The United States on Thursday reversed its opposition to UN nuclear chief Mohamed ElBaradei and said it was ready to accept a third term for the Egyptian despite past policy disagreements. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Washington was ready to join other nations in supporting Mr ElBaradei, who is the only candidate for director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). "We expect that when the vote comes up in the (IAEA) board of governors on this issue we will join the consensus," he said after Mr ElBaradei held talks here with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The IAEA board will choose a new head when it holds a regular meeting opening on Monday at its headquarters in Vienna. Washington had resisted a new four-year term for Mr ElBaradei, who had run the agency since 1997.

The Washington Post, 10 June 2005

Bush, S.Korean Leader Differ on N.Korea (Tom Raum)

WASHINGTON: President Bush's efforts to draw North Korea back to disarmament talks are being complicated by U.S. diplomatic strains with South Korea and China. Boasts by the North of its atomic bomb capability and harsh rhetoric by American officials aren't helping, analysts suggest. Pyongyang's nuclear program tops the agenda for a White House meeting on Friday between Bush and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun. China-led international negotiations over the North's nuclear ambitions have been deadlocked for close to a year, and both Bush and Roh are putting a high premium on getting them restarted. But the two leaders have different views on how. The South is trying to coexist peacefully with its communist neighbor, and relations between the two Koreas have warmed. That has created strains with a U.S. administration that views the North as a dangerous regime capable of producing and proliferating weapons of mass destruction. Ties between Washington and Seoul are further stressed by disagreements over how to reshape their 50-year-old military alliance. The U.S. has about 32,500 troops in South Korea but is reducing that number to about 24,500 in the coming years.

The Associated Press, 10 June 2005

Bush, S.Korean Leader Differ on N.Korea

WASHINGTON: President Bush's efforts to draw North Korea back to disarmament talks are being complicated by U.S. diplomatic strains with South Korea and China. Boasts by the North of its atomic bomb capability and harsh rhetoric by American officials aren't helping, analysts suggest. Pyongyang's nuclear program tops the agenda for a White House meeting on Friday between Bush and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun. China-led international negotiations over the North's nuclear ambitions have been deadlocked for close to a year, and both Bush and Roh are putting a high premium on getting them restarted. But the two leaders have different views on how. The South is trying to coexist peacefully with its communist neighbor, and relations between the two Koreas have warmed. That has created strains with a U.S. administration that views the North as a dangerous regime capable of producing and proliferating weapons of mass destruction. Ties between Washington and Seoul are further stressed by disagreements over how to reshape their 50-year-old military alliance. The U.S. has about 32,500 troops in South Korea but is reducing that number to about 24,500 in the coming years.

Reuters, 10 June 2005

Ex - S.Korea Pres. Says North Breakthrough Possible

SEOUL: The United States and North Korea have the power to resolve the Korean nuclear crisis if they approach

each other in a spirit of give and take, the former South Korean president who held a historic summit with the North said on Friday. In a commentary delivered exclusively to Reuters on Friday, former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung wrote that North Korea must assure regional powers it will give up its nuclear programs, while Washington should deliver a security guarantee to the reclusive state. "A breakthrough could be achieved if the United States and North Korea have the will for a rational negotiation, where both sides give what should be given and take what should be taken," Kim wrote. Kim's comments came ahead of a meeting in Washington between South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun and President Bush. The two leaders will focus on ways to bring Pyongyang back to stalled six-party talks aimed at ending its nuclear ambitions. Kim won the Nobel Peace prize for orchestrating the June 15, 2000, summit in Pyongyang with the North's Kim Jong-il. That historic meeting raised hopes around the world of a change in the security dynamics on the Korean peninsula.

The News, 11 June 2005

'Iran has frozen work at N-site'

VIENNA: Experts from the UN nuclear watchdog have inspected an underground uranium enrichment plant in Iran and verified that Tehran has kept its word by freezing all sensitive nuclear work there, diplomats said on Friday. A team from the IAEA went to the uranium enrichment plant at Natanz on Thursday and verified that no activities related to the production of uranium fuel were taking place. "The IAEA went to Natanz and, among other things, verified the suspension," a Western diplomat said on condition of anonymity. The agency was expected to inform the IAEA's board of governors at next week's meeting that Iran had kept its promise about freezing sensitive work at Natanz and elsewhere, diplomats said.

The News, 11 June 2005

US, EU, Australia pressurise Saudis for nuclear openness

VIENNA: The United States, Europe and Australia are joining forces in an unusually stark reflection of international concern in urging Saudi Arabia to agree to more nuclear openness ahead of a key meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Diplomats accredited to the agency and European officials told The Associated Press Friday that both the European Union and Australia will send formal diplomatic notes to the Saudi government this weekend asking it to consider allowing inspectors of the International Atomic Energy agency into the country. Washington has already done so but its chief delegate to Monday's IAEA board meeting will renew the request at a Vienna meeting on the weekend with her Saudi counterpart, said the diplomats and officials, who demanded anonymity because they are not authorized to speak on sensitive issues to the media. The joint diplomatic push is being sparked by concerns that the Saudis could be exempt from any outside policing of their nuclear agenda under an agreement they have negotiated with the IAEA, and by past Saudi nuclear ambiguities, including reported interest in a weapons programme.

Dawn, 11 June 2005

EIBaradei faces Iran challenge in new term (Louis Charbonneau)

VIENNA: The head of the UN nuclear watchdog, Mohamed EIBaradei, has won the support of Washington but now faces the greater challenge of dealing with an Iranian atomic programme that the European countries and the US suspect is aimed at building weapons. For over a year, the United States tried to oust the 62-year-old Egyptian director-general of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), but officially gave up its campaign against him on Thursday when the US State Department said it would back the lawyer and veteran diplomat. This means he has the unanimous support of the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors, which meets next week to approve his reappointment for a third term and discuss the latest report on the agency's investigation of Iran's nuclear programme. Some US officials have accused EIBaradei of being soft on Iran and undermining the US push to refer Tehran to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions. But some European diplomats and arms experts say he is anything but soft. "

Daily Times, 11 June 2005

Rafsanjani sees nuclear deal with EU

TEHRAN: Leading presidential candidate Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani has expressed optimism Iran can forge a deal with Europe over its nuclear programme, but warned against negotiations taking too much time. "We can reach an accord, but I cannot predict when that will happen," Rafsanjani told AFP in an interview when asked of the chances of reaching a deal in the talks with Britain, France and Germany. Rafsanjani, the hot favourite to win June 17's presidential election, reaffirmed Tehran's position that it wanted to resume uranium enrichment activities, currently suspended for the talks. "We are against the negotiations being dragged out for no reason. The negotiations can continue longer, on the condition that we can resume our (uranium conversion) activities in Isfahan." The cleric said it would be "positive" for the talks if the United States joined the Europeans at the negotiating table, claiming Washington had conceded that Iran should be allowed to carry out low-level enrichment of uranium. "I think it would be easier if the Americans continue to act the way they have. We need an

accord on enrichment. (Bush) said, according to what was reported in the press, that Iran can enrich to low levels," he said.

The Korean Herald, 11 June 2005

Roh, Bush put new pressure on N.K. (Lee Joo-hee)

The Washington summit early today between Presidents Roh Moo-hyun and George W. Bush heralded new pressure on North Korea to return immediately to the six-party talks and surrender its nuclear weapons ambitions. Roh arrived in Washington yesterday and quickly launched into his packed schedule, meeting Bush in the White House Oval Office at 11.25 a.m. Washington time Friday (0025 Saturday Korean time). The hour-long meeting, followed by a luncheon, was their fourth summit in the past two years. Without drawing up a joint-statement, Roh and Bush also arranged a short news briefing. Altogether, Roh and Bush set aside two hours together, enough time to exchange views closely and accurately, South Korean government officials said. The vital summit of the two key allies came as North Korea showed hints of yielding from its stubborn refusal to return to the six-party talks but has yet to fix a date. Roh and Bush, in a "working level meeting" which allowed them to get down to business quickly, underscored how pressing the North Korean nuclear standoff has become. By reconfirming their will to peacefully and diplomatically solve the nuclear problem, the two leaders were sending a stern message to North Korea to make a progressive move toward ending the standoff, a high-ranking South Korean government official said.

People's Daily, 11 June 2005

US, S. Korea united on six-party talks: Bush

The United States and the Republic of Korea share the same view that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) should return to six-party talks, US President George W. Bush said in Washington Friday. "South Korea and the United States share the same goal, and that is a Korean peninsula with no nuclear weapons," Bush told reporters after talks with his South Korean counterpart Roh Moo-hyun at the White House. Roh said there were some remaining differences between his country and the United States. "There are one or two minor issues, but I'm certain we will be able to work them out with dialogue," Roh said. The South Korean president said there were "no difference between our two sides on basic principles." Stressing that Washington and Seoul should "speak with one voice" on the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, Bush reiterated his call for Pyongyang to return to the six-party talks that also involves the United States, the Republic of Korea, China, Japan and Russia. Bush did not offer new inducements to Pyongyang to prompt its return to the talks, saying trade and economic incentives contained in a US-backed offer made last June stand.

The Asahi Shimbun, 11 June 2005

Nuclear policy to focus on upgraded light-water reactors

In a policy shift, the government will upgrade existing light-water nuclear reactors and shelve its fast-breeder reactor plans for the nation's power needs over the next few decades, officials said Thursday. The light-water reactors, which use enriched uranium as fuel, will be designed to reduce costs for construction and power generation by 20 percent-and will have much higher safety standards, officials said. The next-generation reactors will be able to operate for longer periods without regular inspections, they said. Currently, nuclear power reactors are inspected once every 13 months. The newer reactors will require safety checks once in every 24 months, they said. The new reactors will also produce 20 percent less waste. "It is necessary to develop new nuclear power reactors that are safe and economical," said an official of the Nuclear Energy Policy Planning Division. "We want to start the new development project under the government's initiative so that development will not be too late." The division is part of the government's Agency for Natural Resources and Energy.

The Tribune, 12 June 2005

A world first in N-power programme (Arup Chanda)

KALPAKKAM, June 11: India has made a big leap forward in its nuclear power programme by achieving reprocessing of nuclear fuel with high plutonium content with a high burn-up mark for the first time in the world. Addressing a press conference here today at the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR), about 70 km from Chennai, Dr Anil Kakodkar, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission and Secretary of Department of Atomic Energy, said for the first time the plutonium and uranium-rich carbide fuel with a high burn-up mark of 147.8 giga watts day per tonne had been achieved. He said: "The fast breed test reactor here is unique because it is using carbide fuel. It was a bold step and as a part of cautious approach the target for burnup was fixed at 25,000 mega watts day per tonne. But what has been achieved is six times of the target." Dr Baldev Raj, Director, IGCAR, said: "The department is committed to efficiently closing the fast reactor fuel cycle by safely reprocessing future discharges of spent fuels with increasing burnups and in achieving the energy security for the country". He said while the fast breed reactors (FBR) had been using oxide and carbide fuel the facility had decided to "leapfrog into using metallic fuel in specially designed FBRs".

The News, 12 June 2005

US, EU urge Saudi Arabia to agree to full N-inspections

VIENNA: The United States, Europe and other Western nations are urging Saudi Arabia to agree to full international nuclear inspections, despite Riyadh's desire to sign a protocol that would severely limit investigations by the UN atomic agency, diplomats said on Saturday. The European Union is expected this weekend to make a so-called diplomatic demarche, both in Vienna and Riyadh, asking Saudi Arabia not to sign a protocol, to which it has the right, that would reduce the possibility of inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), European diplomats told AFP. Saudi Arabia, a key state in the tense Middle East, is not believed to be a direct nuclear proliferation threat, but diplomats are seeking to calm fears amid a major test of wills with nearby Iran, which US officials suspect of seeking to develop nuclear weapons. There have also been reports denied by the Saudis that in a crisis they could use their financial clout to get nuclear technology, or even weapons, from countries such as Pakistan, which does have nuclear arms. While diplomats were all agreed that they would prefer full access to Saudi Arabia's nuclear facilities, one non-aligned official said the deal proposed would be for the country to sign a less stringent agreement known as the Small Quantities Protocol (SQP), but also make a commitment to allowing inspections if asked to do so.

The News, 12 June 2005

PAEC to build 10-12 nuclear plants in next few years (Tariq Butt)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) Chairman Pervez Butt says 10 to 12 new nuclear power plants will be built in the next few years to meet energy requirements of Pakistan. "In the present day competitive era, each nation has to carve out its own destiny from available resources and the PAEC has followed this self-reliance path to achieve successes in the domains of national security, agriculture, cancer treatment, nuclear energy and industrial support services," Butt said while addressing the prize distribution ceremony of the National Engineering Robotic Contest 2005, organized by the College of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (EME), National University of Science and Technology, Islamabad, and during an informal talks with reporters. He said the PAEC has, on self-help basis, conducted research in different fields and proved its worth in self-reliance and proficiency. "We have adopted the path of self reliance for our survival in this high speed and competitive era." Butt said the government has planned to produce 8,800 megawatts of electricity in the next twenty-five years. He said the strength of the Karachi nuclear power plant is being constantly enhanced.

Reuters, 12 June 2005

US Swings Behind UN's ElBaradei, Takes Aim at Iran

VIENNA: The governing board of the U.N. nuclear watchdog is expected to formally approve Mohamed ElBaradei's third term as the agency's chief on Monday after Washington ended its efforts to oust him, diplomats said. But the United States has not given up its battle against Iran's nuclear program, which Washington says is a front to develop nuclear weapons. Iran denies this, insisting its atomic ambitions are limited to the peaceful generation of electricity. "The U.S. has taken the most graceful way out of this situation," a Western diplomat said ahead of the meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) board of governors. "It has decided to back ElBaradei in exchange for what it hopes will be a tougher stance on Iran," the diplomat said on condition of anonymity. Washington said it opposed the 62-year-old Egyptian, who has run the IAEA since 1997, because it believes U.N. agency heads should only have two terms. But U.N. diplomats say the real reason is the U.S. belief that he was soft on Iraq and Iran. Diplomats at the Vienna-based IAEA denied that ElBaradei had cut any deals with the Americans to get their backing when the 35 nations on the IAEA board vote on his reappointment bid.

Reuters, 12 June 2005

N.Korea Nuclear Test Would Spur Neighbors

TOKYO: A move by North Korea to test a nuclear bomb would prompt its Asian neighbors to seriously debate arming themselves with nuclear weapons, experts say. But Japan's experience as the only nation ever to suffer a nuclear attack could make it difficult for policy-makers in Tokyo to actually take that step. Pyongyang declared in February that it had some atomic weapons and has hinted it may be on the verge of conducting a weapons test. Last week, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan told ABC news that his country had enough atomic bombs to defend itself against a U.S. attack and was making more. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan -- key players in Northeast Asia along with nuclear power China -- could consider joining the club of nuclear powers if North Korea conducted a test. "If North Korea did carry out a nuclear test, South Korea and Japan could start debating seriously whether to arm themselves with nuclear weapons," said Yasuhiko Yoshida, a professor at Osaka University of Economics and Law. "It's possible that a North Korean nuclear test could trigger a chain reaction. If Japan and South Korea decided to become nuclear powers, Taiwan could also want to take a similar path," added Yoshida, a former official at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Reuters, 12 June 2005

S.Korea's Roh Says North Can Expect Flexibility

SEOUL: South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun is optimistic about North Korea returning to six-country talks on its nuclear ambitions and said on Monday Pyongyang would see more flexibility if it did go back to negotiations. Speaking publicly for the first time since a meeting with President Bush in Washington last Friday, Roh urged the North to decide to return to the talks it has boycotted for the past year and reap the benefits regional powers are ready to offer. "If the six-party talks resume, I am certain that there will be more flexible and progressive dialogue," Roh told a conference marking the fifth anniversary of an unprecedented North-South summit in Pyongyang. "We are preparing comprehensive, very detailed and active measures" to aid the North so that it can secure political stability and make economic progress, he said. North Korea has indicated in recent weeks it might return to the talks, stalled since the last round in June. Bush said at the meeting with Roh that the U.S. proposal made at the last round still stood. Washington proposed last year it would join South Korea, China, Japan and Russia in easing North Korea's economic and political isolation once Pyongyang agrees to dismantle its nuclear programs with verifiable certainty.

The Associated Press, 12 June 2005

Saudis Willing to Cooperate With IAEA

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia is willing to cooperate with the U.N. nuclear watchdog, a foreign ministry official said Sunday after the United States, Europe and Australia had urged the kingdom to allow in nuclear inspectors. The joint diplomatic push was sparked by concerns the Saudis could be exempt from outside policing of their nuclear agenda under an agreement they negotiated with the International Atomic Energy Agency and by past Saudi nuclear ambiguities, including reported interest in a weapons program. The foreign ministry official said Saudi Arabia "does not own any nuclear facilities or reactors," according to comments reported by the official Saudi Press Agency. The official said Saudi Arabia was committed to cooperating with the IAEA and "supports all the steps and efforts to establish areas free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction." The news agency did not name the official. Adel al-Jubeir, a senior Saudi foreign policy adviser, has said Saudi Arabia has "no desire to acquire any type of weapon of mass destruction, period." He denied reports, some based on U.S. intelligence, that Saudi Arabia has sought possible nuclear weapons help from Pakistan.

The Associated Press, 12 June 2005

South Korea Optimistic on Nuclear Talks

SEOUL: South Korea's president said Monday he was certain international nuclear talks with North Korea would resume and called for more flexibility in offering incentives to convince Pyongyang to disarm. President Roh Moo-hyun expressed his confidence at a news conference marking the fifth anniversary of the historic 2000 summit in Pyongyang between leaders of the two Koreas. "The six-party talks are going to be resumed -- I'm very sure about this," he said. On Saturday, Roh returned from a trip to Washington where he and President Bush emphasized the two countries' common stand on resolving the nuclear standoff with North Korea through diplomacy -- despite differences over how hard to press Pyongyang. Washington has refused to offer any incentives to the North until it disarms and allows inspections, but Seoul has continued its economic engagement with its neighbor. Roh said Monday that he hoped there would be "more flexible talks and negotiations" when the stalled nuclear talks resume. North Korea has boycotted the six-nation talks -- which include China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States -- for nearly a year, citing "hostile" U.S. policies.

The Korean Herald, 13 June 2005

Roh, Bush throw ball to N.K.'s court (Lee Joo-hee)

The Washington summit between Presidents Roh Moo-hyun and George W. Bush surprised few but raised the hopes of many for an imminent positive development in North Korea's nuclear standoff by reaffirming the allies' intention to solve the problem "peacefully." Seoul government officials deemed the summit "successful" as South Korea and the United States took the same ground in approaching the nuclear threat despite North Korea's almost year-long boycott of the six-party talks, and by hitting a powerful joint serve that forces North Korea to make a decision. The burning question now is how North Korea will respond. Experts said the "working-level" summit between Roh and Bush June 10 (Saturday Korean time) leaves North Korea with little room to further refuse to return to the negotiating table with South Korea, the United States, China, Japan and Russia. "For the United States, the summit was crucial in emphasizing its intention to solve the nuclear problem peacefully and diplomatically in order to counter North Korea's repeated claim that the United States has been hostile toward the communist state," said professor Kim Sung-han of the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security.

Daily Yomiuri, 13 June 2005

U.S.-S. Korea trees obscure N-talks forest

U.S. President George W. Bush and his South Korean counterpart Roh Moo Hyun held summit talks Friday in Washington to reconfirm maintenance of the U.S.-South Korean alliance as well as the significance of six-party

talks aimed at achieving North Korea's nuclear disarmament. However, we are concerned with the outcome of the talks because a question remained over how closely the two leaders agreed on their measures to deal with Pyongyang's development of nuclear weapons. After the talks, Bush told reporters that the United States and South Korea were "of one voice" on the issue and would keep cooperating to urge North Korea to dismantle its nuclear program in a verifiable way. Roh asked Bush to nod after saying that the bilateral alliance was working very well. Washington is skeptical of Seoul taking a conciliatory approach to Pyongyang. Nonetheless, Washington tried to highlight its strong ties with Seoul after the summit talks, apparently to hide their differences. This is a very delicate time now as North Korea has sent mixed signals on whether it will return to negotiations with five countries including the United States, South Korea and Japan.

The Korean Herald, 13 June 2005

Editorial: Window of dialogue

Presidents Roh Moo-hyun and George W. Bush held an important summit at the White House on Saturday. The two leaders focused on two key issues - the long-running North Korean nuclear problem and the frayed Korea-U.S. alliance. Roh and Bush reaffirmed they will not tolerate a nuclear North Korea and reconfirmed their commitment to resolve the problem through diplomacy. It was expected that the two leaders would reaffirm the principle of a peaceful approach to the nuclear question. Nevertheless, it still carries great importance that Seoul and Washington reconfirmed it, given the growing calls for sanctions against Pyongyang for boycotting the six-party talks on its nuclear weapons. Stressing South Korea and the United States are of one voice on the nuclear issue, the two leaders called on Pyongyang to return to stalled multinational talks without any conditions. We reckon this unequivocal commitment to dialogue has improved the environment for Pyongyang to return to the negotiation table. Furthermore, Bush pledged to establish "more normal relations" with North Korea if it abandons its nuclear weapons.

Daily Yomiuri, 13 June 2005

Nuclear fusion energy '50 years away'

The planned International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor is a large-scale nuclear fusion experimental reactor to be built through an international collaboration, with the aim of using nuclear fusion for power generation. The cost of building and operating the main structure of the ITER is estimated at 570 billion yen, with the total cost, including related expenses, of 1.3 trillion yen. Agreement on the project was first reached in the 1985 U.S.-Soviet summit talks between then leaders Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. Japan, China, the European Union and South Korea subsequently joined the project, meaning that it currently is being undertaken by six parties. The basic process of a nuclear fusion reaction is to be produced by confining a mixture of heavy hydrogen, also called deuterium, and tritium--a radioisotope of hydrogen with atoms three times the mass of ordinary light hydrogen atoms--in a 20-meter diameter doughnut-shaped vacuum vessel, which is to be heated to 100 million C or more. Nuclear fusion is said to be safer than nuclear fission, while one of the major fuel components, heavy hydrogen, can easily be obtained from seawater.

The News, 13 June 2005

IAEA to meet in Vienna today

VIENNA: The UN nuclear watchdog opens a week-long meeting in Vienna Monday expected to re-elect Mohamed ElBaradei as its chief after a dramatic folding of US opposition to the former Egyptian diplomat. IAEA spokeswoman Melissa Fleming said there might be a vote first thing Monday on a third term for El Baradei, even though the ballot is technically on the agenda for later in the week. The International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-nation board of governors will also be hearing a report on Iran's nuclear program, which the United States claims is hiding covert atomic weapons development.

The News, 13 June 2005

'US N-plants vulnerable to big attack'

WASHINGTON: The US government may have set its security standards for nuclear power plants too low, and guards say they may not be ready to stop a terrorist attack of September 11 magnitude, a US magazine reported on Sunday. A Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) document raises serious questions about whether the government has set security requirements for nuclear plants too low and allowed nuclear plant operators to provide security on the cheap, reported weekly Time. Even plant guards worry that they would be unable to thwart a big terrorist operation, saying they lack the necessary training and weapons, the magazine said. The plants could also be vulnerable to an attack on foot, it said. "Our training has increased, but I do not think it has increased enough to deal with that," a veteran guard, who was not named, told the Time. Another guard said: "We do not have the weapons or training to stop an attack of that magnitude. Everyone feels that way. It is a consensus of opinion." Senior NRC official David Orrik, who retired in February after a 20-year career probing power-plant vulnerabilities, was quoted as saying: "I do not think they could handle a 9/11-size attack." The

government has spent \$1 billion since the 9/11 attacks to boost nuclear power plant security, compared to \$20 billion for aviation security, the magazine reported.

The Tribune, 13 June 2005

Nuclear feat

Reprocessing carbide fuel is a milestone. India's nuclear power programme is one success story that has been scripted with vibrant detailing and proficiency. What makes it all the more creditable is the fact that all achievements have been made in the face of great odds. Despite India being religiously committed to peaceful use of nuclear power, the western world has always tried to scuttle its modest programme. Due to this restrictive factor, the country has had to innovate repeatedly, which in real terms amounted to re-discovering the wheel on occasions. This pressure has been a blessing in disguise, given the giant strides that the indigenous programme has made. Another milestone in this ongoing pursuit for excellence was reached recently when the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research at Kalpakkam managed to reprocess the uranium-plutonium mixed carbide fuel of the fast breeder test reactor, becoming the first country in the world to do so. This bold step is expected to increase electricity yield from nuclear reactors dramatically. It involved developing some highly sophisticated equipment such as centrifugal extractors, choppers for cutting the fuel and dissolution chambers.

The Nation, 14 June 2005

EI Baradei set for re-election

VIENNA: The UN nuclear watchdog opened a week-long meeting in Vienna Monday expected to re-elect Mohamed ElBaradei as its chief after a surprise folding of US opposition to the former Egyptian diplomat. The International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-nation board of governors will also be hearing a report on Iran's nuclear programme, which the United States claims is a cover for covert atomic weapons development. The report comes at a diplomatically crucial time as the European Union is pursuing talks to get Iran to guarantee it is not secretly developing nuclear weapons. The IAEA was expected to approve ElBaradei unanimously by consensus. Negotiations were under way to bring forward the ballot, making it the first order of business instead of later in the week, a diplomat close to the agency said. Japan was objecting to the agenda change, however, and was now discussing the timetable with the chairman of the IAEA board, the diplomat said.

Dawn, 14 June 2005

N. Korea's N-test will spur neighbours (Teruaki Ueno)

TOKYO: A move by North Korea to test a nuclear bomb would prompt its Asian neighbours to seriously debate arming themselves with nuclear weapons, experts say. But Japan's experience as the only nation ever to suffer a nuclear attack could make it difficult for policy-makers in Tokyo to actually take that step. Pyongyang declared in February that it had some atomic weapons and has hinted it may be on the verge of conducting a weapons test. Last week, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan told ABC news that his country had enough atomic bombs to defend itself against a US attack and was making more. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan - key players in Northeast Asia along with nuclear power China - could consider joining the club of nuclear powers if North Korea conducted a test. "If North Korea did carry out a nuclear test, South Korea and Japan could start debating seriously whether to arm themselves with nuclear weapons," said Yasuhiko Yoshida, a professor at Osaka University of Economics and Law.

The News, 14 June 2005

IAEA focuses on Iran, N Korea, Saudi Arabia

VIENNA: Key members of the UN nuclear watchdog agency will hear a report mildly critical of Iran for not fully cooperating with a probe of its nuclear activities. On Iran, other diplomats said the Islamic republic would also come in for some praise, with a senior IAEA official planning to tell the agency's board that Iran has kept its promise of freezing a key programme that could be used to make nuclear arms. Speaking on the eve of Monday's start of the 35-nation IAEA board meeting, the diplomats described the report on Iran-likely to be delivered Tuesday or Wednesday by IAEA Deputy Director General Pierre Goldschmidt-as relatively mild compared with previous summaries since that nation's nuclear programme became a matter of international concern three years ago. Tehran has been under agency review since revelations in 2003 of nearly two decades of secret nuclear activities, including work on enriching uranium - a technology that can make weapons-grade material for nuclear warheads. Iran insists it wants to enrich only to generate nuclear power, but froze that programme and linked activities late last year as it focused on talks with France, Britain and Germany meant to reduce concerns about Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

The Daily Times, 14 June 2005

UN will not end Iran nuke probe: ElBaradei

VIENNA: The head of the UN nuclear watchdog, Muhammad ElBaradei, said on Monday he was not ready to end

his two-year probe of Iran's atomic programme, which Washington says is a cover for a nuclear weapons programme. "The Iran file will be closed when we close all the issues that are still open," EIBaradei told reporters after the governing board of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) unanimously approved a third term for him as IAEA chief. "We are inching forward but I'd like to have more speedy cooperation on the part of Iran," he added. Iran insists that its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful. While EIBaradei has found no hard proof that Washington is right about Tehran's nuclear plans, he says it is too early to say whether the programme is exclusively peaceful. EIBaradei praised Iran for granting access to nuclear materials inside the country and for suspending its uranium enrichment programme, which could be used to make purified uranium fuel for atomic power plants or weapons.

The Daily Times, 14 June 2005

Syria compares US intelligence accusations to Iraqi WMDs

WASHINGTON: US accusations that Syria has not fully withdrawn its intelligence agents from Lebanon are similar to the unfounded pre-war charges that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, Syria's ambassador to the United States said on Sunday. "I would say it's a shame that the world's unique superpower, the United States of America, will degrade itself to this level," Imad Moustapha said on CNN's "Late Edition." After almost 30 years in Lebanon, Syria has said it had pulled out all military and intelligence personnel after former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri was assassinated in February. "The day we completed our withdrawal from Lebanon, the very same day the United States repeatedly continued saying from the very early stages, 'No, Syria has not withdrawn from Lebanon. Syria has agents there. We have information and reports that Syria still has agents there,'" Moustapha said.

The Daily Times, 14 June 2005

Roh says Pyongyang can expect flexibility in nuclear talks

SEOUL: South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun is optimistic about North Korea returning to six-country talks on its nuclear ambitions and said on Monday Pyongyang would see more flexibility if it did go back to negotiations. Speaking publicly for the first time since meeting US President George W Bush in Washington on Friday, Roh urged the North to decide to return to the talks it has boycotted for the past year and reap the benefits that regional powers are ready to offer. "If the six-party talks resume, I am certain that there will be more flexible and progressive dialogue," Roh told a conference marking the fifth anniversary of an unprecedented North-South summit in Pyongyang. "We are preparing comprehensive, very detailed and active measures" to aid the North so that it can secure political stability and make economic progress, he said.

The Times of India, 14 June 2005

Look beyond NPT's framework (C UDAY BHASKAR)

As anticipated, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference held at the United Nations in New York ended in acrimony. The 188 nations that are signatories to the 1970 treaty were unable to arrive at a consensus. This dissonance is in marked contrast to the review conferences of 1995 and 2000. Then there was significant consensus over the commitments that the nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear fraternity would undertake to halt nuclear proliferation. The disappointment at this turn of events was summed up by UN secretary-general Kofi Annan who noted that the 2005 review "missed a vital opportunity to strengthen our collective security against the many nuclear threats to which all states and all peoples are vulnerable". For India this is a piquant moment since New Delhi has steadfastly remained outside the NPT framework; it sees the NPT as discriminatory and inimical to its core security interests. Paradoxically, India remains committed to the spirit of nuclear non-proliferation and global disarmament, and was in the vanguard of such initiatives - notwithstanding the 1998 nuclear tests that made it a de facto nuclear weapon state - albeit outside the NPT framework.

The Daily Times, 14 June 2005

US swings behind EIBaradei, takes aim at Iran

VIENNA: The governing board of the UN nuclear watchdog is expected to formally approve Mohamed EIBaradei's third term as the agency's chief after Washington gave up its efforts to oust him, UN diplomats said on Monday. While the United States lost the battle to depose EIBaradei, it has not given up its fight against Iran's nuclear programme, which Washington says is a front to develop nuclear weapons. Iran denies this, insisting its atomic ambitions are limited to the peaceful generation of electricity. "The US has taken the most graceful way out of this situation," a Western diplomat said ahead of the meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) board of governors. "It has decided to back EIBaradei in exchange for what it hopes will be a tougher stance on Iran," the diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

Japan Today, 14 June 2005

Iran reportedly in talks with N Korea over nuclear facilities

LONDON: Iran is secretly negotiating with North Korea to build a network of underground bunkers to conceal its

clandestine nuclear weapons project, the Sunday Telegraph reported Sunday. A team of construction experts, including a senior North Korean specialist in underground construction who helped to design the bunkers that contain Pyongyang's illegal weapons program, has arrived in Teheran to conduct a survey of Iranian requirements, the newspaper said.

The New York Times, 15 June 2005

A grim tourist hot spot: Chernobyl (C.J. Chivers)

PRIPYAT, Ukraine Sometime after visiting the ruins of the Polissia Hotel, the darkened Energetic theater and the idled Ferris wheel, the minivans stopped again. Doors slid open. Six young Finnish men stepped out and followed their guide through a patch of temperate jungle that once was an urban courtyard. Branches draped down. Mud squished underfoot. A cloud of mosquitoes rose to the feast. The men stepped past discarded gas-mask filters to the entrance of a ghostly kindergarten. They fanned out with cameras and began to work. Much was as the children and their teachers had left it 19 years ago. Tiny shoes littered the classroom floor. Dolls and wooden blocks remained on shelves. Soviet slogans exhorted children to study, to exercise, to prepare for a life of work. Much had also changed. Now there is rot, broken windows, rusting bed frames and paint falling away in great blisters and peels. And now there are tourists, participating in what may be the strangest vacation excursion available in the former Soviet space: the package tour of the Chernobyl exclusion zone, scene of the worst civilian disaster of the nuclear age.

Dawn, 15 June 2005

IAEA seeks access to Iran's N-sites

VIENNA, June 14: The head of the UN nuclear watchdog urged Iran on Tuesday to allow agency experts to return to a military site called Parchin, which they inspected once but have since been barred from returning to. "I would also ask Iran to support the agency's efforts to pursue further its investigation of the Lavizan-Shian and Parchin sites," Mohamed ElBaradei said, adding that his agency wanted to visit "areas of interest" at Parchin. Parchin and Lavizan are among the sites where the United States suspects Iranian scientists have conducted research related to the development of nuclear weapons. Iran says it has no interest in nuclear weapons, only in civilian nuclear technology to generate electricity.

The Hindu, 15 June 2005

ElBaradei gets third term as U.S. drops objection (Jonathan Steele)

VIENNA: The U.S. formally dropped its objections on Monday to the appointment of Mohamed ElBaradei to a third term as head of the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog. The 35-member board of the International Atomic Energy Agency unanimously endorsed a third four-year term for the 62-year-old Egyptian, who angered Washington in 2003 by contradicting U.S. intelligence before the Iraq war and saying that Saddam Hussein's regime did not have nuclear weapons or a nuclear programme. Although U.N. agency heads normally serve a maximum of two terms, there was no serious alternative candidate. European diplomats have been impressed with Mr ElBaradei's record since he took over in 1997 and the U.S. would have been in a minority of one had it tried to veto his candidacy.

Dawn, 15 June 2005

Iran's new president to face tough N-choices (Edmund Blair)

TEHRAN: Iran's nuclear programme stirs national pride across the Islamic Republic even if it has been the focus of a tense standoff with the West. But after years of isolation, some Iranians preparing for Friday's presidential elections worry they may be paying too dear a price to master atomic power. Western states are pressing Iran with a mixture of threats and incentives to scrap an enrichment programme that Iran says will be used to generate electricity but which the United States and Europeans suspect may be used for making atomic bombs. "If the result would be similar to North Korea, where the people have a low standard of living but are making the atomic bomb, then we don't want that," said 45-year-old Abbas, who asked that his full name not be used in this sensitive debate. The topic is so sensitive, that while other taboos - such as discussing ties with arch-foe United States or reviewing strict religious social laws - have become fair game in the campaign, none of the eight hopefuls has offered fresh ideas on breaking the nuclear impasse with the West.

The Daily Times, 15 June 2005

Iran's top nuclear official endorses Rafsanjani

TEHRAN: Iran's top nuclear official on Tuesday came out in support of presidential front-runner Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani as the only man capable of resolving the Islamic state's nuclear standoff with the West. The Jomhuri-ye Eslami newspaper quoted Gholamreza Aghazadeh, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, as reiterating that Iran was determined to go ahead with its nuclear programme, which the United States suspects is a cover to build atomic weapons. "With his unique prudence, Rafsanjani is the only one who can solve Iran's nuclear standoff," Aghazadeh told the conservative newspaper. He did not say how Rafsanjani, who served as president

from 1989 to 1997, would resolve the issue, which will be the most pressing foreign policy concern for Iran's next president. France, Britain and Germany share US suspicions and have been in talks to persuade Tehran to halt all enrichment activities as the only way to allay these concerns. Iran insists its programme is entirely peaceful.

The Daily Times, 15 June 2005

Turkey, US agree to halt spread of WMDs

ANKARA: Turkey and the United States on Tuesday signed an agreement to cooperate in preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction and controlling the illegal trade of dual-use materials and technology, the foreign ministry here said. Under the deal, the United States will assist Turkey with expertise and technical equipment to identify dual-use materials in a bid to help overhaul the country's national export control system and bolster border security, the ministry said in a statement. The agreement, which will come into force when both sides complete necessary national procedures, will be valid for three years with automatic one-year extensions unless prior notice is given to the contrary. Ankara and Washington have a long-standing political and military alliance, although bilateral relations between the two NATO members have cooled in recent years due to differences over the US-led invasion of Iraq.

The Daily Times, 15 June 2005

Wanted - a roadmap for North Korea (Michael O'hanlon)

It is time for a fundamentally fresh approach to North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. As North Korea indicates a tentative, lukewarm interest in returning to negotiations, one thing is clear: Washington's approach has not been working. President Bush's hard-line policy, in which he has demanded North Korean denuclearisation before anything else, has coincided with a quadrupling of the estimated North Korean nuclear arsenal over the last three years. President Bill Clinton's earlier policy of engagement did help cap the North Korean nuclear arsenal for years. But Pyongyang invalidated that approach when, starting around 1998, it began to cheat on its 1994 treaty commitments and developed a uranium enrichment programme for nuclear weapons purposes. Both approaches have effectively been invalidated - or at least rendered obsolete - by the track record.

The Japan Times, 15 June 2005

Speaking with one voice

Resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis depends to a large degree on the ability of the other five countries in the six-party talks -- the United States, Japan, South Korea, China and Russia -- to speak with one voice. It is vitally important that Washington and Seoul, in particular, closely coordinate policies; if they do not, Pyongyang will do its best to exploit differences between them. Thus far North Korea has done just that. As the six-party process remains stalled, the leaders of the U.S. and South Korea have realized that they must work more closely together. At last week's summit meeting, Presidents George W. Bush and Roh Moo Hyun began to close the gap in their two countries' positions. South Korea, like the other members of the six-party talks -- even North Korea -- agrees on the need for a nuclear-weapons-free Korean Peninsula.

The International Herald Tribune, 15 June 2005

2 key senators assail U.S. policy on Korea (Brian Knowlton)

WASHINGTON Two senior senators, a Republican and a Democrat, pointedly criticized American policy on North Korea on Tuesday, saying that it was inconsistent, ineffective and undercut efforts to revive talks with Pyongyang by giving the impression that its real aim was regime change. "Although I understand that there may be a need for some ambiguity in United States policy toward North Korea, it is not evident this ambiguity has been constructive or even intentional," said Senator Richard Lugar, Republican of Indiana, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. But the top American official involved in the six-party talks on North Korea, the assistant secretary for East Asia, Christopher Hill, defended the approach during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing and indicated the administration had no plans to soften its tone.

Japan Today, 15 June 2005

N Korea resumes construction of 2 nuclear reactors

WASHINGTON: North Korea told a visiting U.S. scholar late last month that it has resumed the construction of two nuclear reactors frozen under a 1994 accord with the United States, information already conveyed to the U.S. government, administration sources said Tuesday. The 50-megawatt and 200-megawatt reactors located in the Yongbyon nuclear complex would be capable of producing about 280 kilograms of plutonium, or enough to manufacture about 50 nuclear bombs, if they are completed and begin operations, according to U.S. nuclear experts.

The Daily Times, 16 June 2005

IAEA says Iran has changed story on plutonium

VIENNA: Iran has admitted to experimenting with producing plutonium, which can be used to fuel atomic bombs, much more recently than it originally told the U.N. nuclear watchdog, according to a draft UN speech. Originally Iran had told the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that its last experiments with the reprocessing of plutonium took place in 1993 but revised that date to 1998, according to a draft speech deputy IAEA chief Pierre Goldschmidt is due to make to the agency's board of governors on Thursday. The speech, obtained by Reuters, said the IAEA had asked Iran to confirm that one bottle of a solution containing plutonium "had been processed in 1995 while the solution in the second one had been purified in 1998". It added that Iran confirmed this in a letter dated May 26, 2005.

Dawn, 16 June 2005

Tehran processed plutonium in '98: IAEA's claim

VIENNA, June 15: Iran has admitted to processing plutonium, a potential material for atomic bombs, more recently than it originally reported, according to the draft of a report to be made to the UN nuclear agency. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) 'has been pursuing with Iran the dates of its plutonium separation experiments' and Iran has admitted to purifying plutonium in 1998, the text said. This was a revision of Iran's previous statement 'that the experiments were completed in 1993', according to the draft for a speech to be delivered to the IAEA's board of governors on Thursday by deputy director for safeguards Pierre Goldschmidt. A diplomat close to the IAEA said the agency therefore 'wants to know whether Iran is still processing plutonium'.

The News, 17 June 2005

US blasts Iran for deception over its nuclear programme

VIENNA: The United States charged on Thursday that Iran is continuing to deceive about its past and present nuclear activities after the UN atomic agency said Tehran had falsely reported the timing of experiments with plutonium, a potential bomb material. US ambassador Jackie Sanders told a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency: "It is evident that Iran has not come clean about its past, or present nuclear activities," according to a text of her speech to the IAEA 35-nation board of governors. She said "contradictions" between Iran's reporting to the IAEA and "the facts as they are uncovered cannot be explained by inadvertent error. They are simply too numerous and pervasive." Sanders called on Iran to dismantle "all nuclear fuel cycle activities," which can make fuel for civilian reactors but also bomb material, if it wished to strike a deal with the European Union to guarantee it is not developing nuclear weapons, something the United States claims it is doing. This US call for dismantling includes a heavy-water reactor Iran is building and which is not part of a suspension in nuclear fuel cycle work currently in effect by Iran while it talks with the EU.

The Daily Times, 17 June 2005

IAEA exempts Saudis from nuke inspection

VIENNA: Board members of the UN atomic watchdog agency on Thursday approved a deal that exempts Saudi Arabia from nuclear inspections, despite serious misgivings that in an era of heightened proliferation fears the arrangement should no longer be applied. Although the Saudis resisted Western pressure to compromise and allow some form of monitoring, the board of the International Atomic Energy Agency had no choice but to allow it to sign on to the IAEA agreement. Called the small quantities protocol, the deal allows countries whose nuclear equipment or activities are thought to be below a minimum threshold to submit a declaration instead of undergoing inspection. There is little concern the Saudis are trying to make nuclear arms, but diplomats accredited to the meeting said Riyadh's resistance to inspections - and any new deals limiting the IAEA's powers to probe - were disconcerting at a time of increased fears countries or terrorists might be interested in acquiring such weapons.

The Japan Times, 17 June 2005

Enveloped in a nuclear fog (HARVEY STOCKWIN)

HONG KONG: Any day now the mere oscillation of a seismograph needle could precipitate uncertainties and greatly increase tensions: North Korea may become the second East Asian nation to shock the world with an underground nuclear test explosion, just as China did at Lop Nor in 1964. At the end of April the Bush administration informed the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and several allied nations that an underground test was being prepared by the North Koreans and could take place as early as June. Governments made sure that their seismographs were ready to read any rumbles emanating from northeast North Korea. Prudently, the Americans were not categorical regarding dates. Washington knows full well that, as ever, North Korea marches to its own unpredictable drumbeat. The current personification of the Kim communist dynastic dictatorship, Kim Jong Il, will decide on the propitious moment for that initial nuclear detonation, perhaps in consultation with one or two North Korean military leaders.

The Korea Times, 17 June 2005

Nuclear Dump Site, Haste Can End Up As Another Waste

After 19 years of futile attempts, the government Thursday resumed the process to select a site for storing nuclear waste. An interagency committee said it would receive applications through Aug. 31 and pick a site during November to put an end to the government's longest-pending task this year. It will likely have fewer problems this time, as five local autonomous bodies are vying to lure the once-avoided facility to their areas. However, some stumbling blocks may still lie ahead.

The Nation, 18 June 2005

Pakistan, India put off N-talks (SHAIQ HUSSAIN)

ISLAMABAD: In the backdrop of hectic diplomatic efforts to finalise agreement on advance warning of missile tests, Pakistan and India have put off their nuclear talks till the last week of July to reach consensus on vital issue before formal deliberations. The South Asian nuclear rivals had earlier agreed to hold the talks on nuclear CBMs in the current month of June. However, it has been decided to put off the crucial talks until the last week of July to iron out differences on proposed pre-notification pact on flight testing of missiles, diplomatic sources told The Nation here on Friday. Nonetheless, they said before the formal talks at experts' level, both the sides would strive to do away with the technical differences on the proposed agreement through the so-called 'secret diplomacy'.

The News, 18 June 2005

Musharraf offers India nuclear disarmament

AUCKLAND, New Zealand: President Pervez Musharraf said on Friday he has proposed nuclear disarmament with India to ensure peace and stability between the nuclear-armed neighbours. Musharraf said his country has gone "much further" than proposing a no first-strike nuclear policy in order to build confidence between the South Asian rivals, which have fought three wars since gaining independence from Britain in 1947. "We have suggested (nuclear) disarmament and reduction of forces," said Musharraf, who has repeatedly pledged in the past to defend and strengthen his country's nuclear and missile capability. Pakistan also opposes nuclear proliferation and was "against any other country acquiring nuclear weapons," he told reporters after talks with New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark in the northern city of Auckland. Clark said she hoped recent confidence-building measures between the two neighbours "might extend into the nuclear arena". New Zealand was the first nation to pass legislation banning nuclear arms and nuclear-powered vessels from its territorial waters.

The News, 18 June 2005

Iran rejects IAEA accusation on plutonium

VIENNA: Iran on Friday said that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had erred in saying it had misreported dates for separating plutonium, a potential bomb-making material, but IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei insisted that it was Tehran's reporting, which was flawed. Deputy Director IAEA for safeguards Pierre Goldschmidt had said on Thursday that Iran had admitted, after IAEA analysis of samples, to separating out small amounts of plutonium more recently than it originally reported, in 1998 instead of 1993. But the Iranian delegation said here on Friday as a week-long meeting of the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors ended that the IAEA had erred in saying that it had misreported dates for separating plutonium. The delegation said in a statement that it had told the IAEA that research on separating plutonium "was terminated in 1993". What continued was "other activities such as the ones related to purification and related waste management", the statement said. ElBaradei called on Iran to answer all questions about its nuclear programme as soon as possible, saying this is crucial for talks with the EU.

Dawn, 18 June 2005

IAEA sets up body to handle N-plans

VIENNA, June 17: The UN atomic agency on Friday set up a special committee to deal with difficult verification problems such as investigating Iran's nuclear programme, a move US President George W. Bush had suggested last year. "They adopted it by consensus," a diplomat told AFP of the setting up of an "advisory committee on safeguards and verification". US ambassador Jackie Sanders told reporters: "The proliferation challenges of today, including non-compliance by North Korea and Iran and the revelation of nuclear (international smuggling) procurement networks, call for more evolution. The new committee should play a key role in helping us meet these challenges." The United States charges that Iran is using a civilian nuclear programme, which the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been investigating for over two years, to probe the development of nuclear weapons.

The Hindu, 18 June 2005

Kim Jong-Il "willing" to rejoin six-party nuclear talks (P. S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE: North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il on Friday expressed his "willingness" to rejoin the stalled six-party talks on its nuclear-weapons programme as early as next month on a specific condition. Mr. Kim told the visiting

South Korean Unification Minister, Chung Don-young, in Pyongyang that the parleys, in abeyance for about a year now, could be resumed "if the United States recognises and respects the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)," the official name for North Korea. The six parties to the talks are the two Koreas, China as the host, the U.S., Japan and Russia. Mr. Chung was in Pyongyang to attend the celebration of the fifth anniversary of Mr. Kim's historic summit in 2000 with the then South Korean President.

The Daily Times, 18 June 2005

EU underlines Iran N-freeze must continue

BRUSSELS: The European Union reiterated on Friday that Iran must maintain its freeze on key nuclear activities as a condition for continuing bilateral talks, according to draft summit conclusions. The 25-nation bloc, which has offered the prospect of a trade and cooperation accord to Tehran, stressed that the international community needs "objective guarantees" that its nuclear plans were only for peaceful purposes. "The European Council underlines that maintaining the suspension of activities linked to enrichment and to all reprocessing activities was a condition for the continuation of the whole process," they said. "The EU is ready to examine means to further develop political and economic cooperation with Iran, following the measures taken by this country to respond to ... concerns by the fight against terrorism, human rights and Iran's approach to the Middle East peace process," said the French-language text.

The Nation, 19 June 2005

North Korea willing to rejoin NPT

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il said Friday the communist country would rejoin the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and open up to international inspectors once the nuclear standoff with the outside world was resolved. "Come and look. We have no reason to hide. We will expose everything (to inspections)," Kim was quoted as saying in talks with South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-Young in Pyongyang. Kim also said North Korea could return to stalled nuclear disarmament talks in July if the United States 'recognises and respects' his country as a dialogue partner. However, the North Korean leader said Pyongyang needed "further consultations with the United States" before returning to dialogue, Chung told journalists in Seoul after returning from the meeting with Kim. The United States reacted cautiously to the reported comments and said it was checking them with officials in South Korea.

The Daily Times, 19 June 2005

US asks Kim to match words with action

WASHINGTON: The United States said Friday North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il should match words with action after he indicated that his hardline communist state could return to stalled nuclear disarmament talks in July. "Statements are one thing, real action is another," a State Department official said as he underlined the need for caution over Kim's remarks. South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-Young told reporters after talks with Kim in Pyongyang earlier Friday that the leader told him North Korea could return to the six-party talks in July if Washington "recognizes and respects" his country as a dialogue partner. Kim was also quoted saying Friday that North Korea would rejoin the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and open up to international inspectors once the nuclear standoff with the outside world was resolved. "Let's just put it in the proper perspective. It is statement for public consumption," said the State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Dawn, 19 June 2005

Nuclear disarmament

SPEAKING to reporters in Auckland, New Zealand, on Friday, President Pervez Musharraf said that he had proposed nuclear disarmament and force reduction to India. This is not for the first time that Pakistan has suggested nuclear disarmament to India. Islamabad has repeatedly pleaded for a nuclear-free South Asia but received no response from New Delhi. It is not clear when the president made this proposal, but going by experience, it is highly improbable that New Delhi will respond positively to it. That Pakistan and India, both afflicted with massive poverty, should become nuclear powers is indeed unfair to their people. But, the truth is that Pakistan was left with no choice when India tested its nuclear weapons in 1998.

Dawn, 19 June 2005

US hails IAEA nuclear monitoring committee

WASHINGTON, June 18: The United States has welcomed the decision by the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to establish a committee on safeguards and verification. "The reason it's significant is because it will begin a process of strengthening the agency's ability to monitor and enforce compliance with nuclear non-proliferation obligations," the State Department's deputy spokesman Adam Ereli told reporters in Washington. "We think it's an important step and we look forward to working with the board and the committee to help the IAEA develop all the tools that it needs to fulfill its mandates and to strengthen the

international non-proliferation regime," he added. The committee will work as a consultative body of the IAEA board of governors, assist the agency in carrying out its function of safeguarding and monitoring and present recommendations to the board. The tenure of the committee will be two years, and after that the board will evaluate its efficiency and determine its future. The committee will be open to all member states of the agency.

The Korea Times, 19 June 2005

S. Korea, US Hold Workshop on Security of Nuclear Facilities

SEOUL: South Korea and the United States will hold a workshop this week to discuss improving security at South Korea's nuclear facilities, the Ministry of Science and Technology said Sunday. The three-day meeting to start Monday will touch on the defense and security of nuclear facilities and atomic materials in transit. "Around 50 local scientists and security officials along with U.S. experts will take part in detailed discussions to enhance protection for the critical facilities in South Korea," a ministry official said. He said the U.S. raised security for its nuclear power plants and related sites after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the meeting will give South Korea a chance to review how changes implemented by Washington then can be emulated here. The meeting will also discuss ways to help raise security awareness for managers of key facilities.

Dawn, 20 June 2005

'N-missiles had been readied for launch': Kargil crisis (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, June 19: The Pakistani military had prepared their nuclear-tipped missile to fight back a possible Indian attack during the Kargil crisis and former US President Bill Clinton had conveyed this news to the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif, one of Mr Clinton's close aides said here. Bruce Riedel, a special assistant to the president and a senior director of Near East and South Asian affairs at the National Security Council in the Clinton era, was present in the July 4, 1999 meeting between the two leaders. In a new book, "Pakistan Between Mosque And Military," Mr Riedel is quoted as saying that Mr Sharif "wanted desperately" to find a solution that would allow Pakistan to withdraw from Kargil "with some cover." The author, Husain Haqqani, has spoken to a number of senior US officials who dealt with Pakistan during major crises confronting the country during the last 58 years and includes their description of crises like the 1971 disaster and the Kargil dispute in his book.

The News, 20 June 2005

North Korea making 'excuses' for not returning to talks: Rice

WASHINGTON: North Korean officials "love to make excuses" for their continued absence at six-party talks aimed at ending the Stalinist state's nuclear standoff, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Sunday. Rice added that the United States was ready to listen to North Korea when it sets a date for returning to the talks, which also include South Korea, Japan, China and Russia. "The North Koreans love to make excuses for why they can't come to the six-party talks," she told Fox News on Sunday when asked if it was time for Washington to "cool the rhetoric" with the North Korean regime, which Rice has called one of six "outposts of tyranny" in the world. "The reason they don't want to come to the six-party talks is they don't like facing China and Russia and Japan and South Korea and the United States telling them in a concerted fashion that it's time to get rid of their weapons, their nuclear weapons," Rice said from Jerusalem during her first major Middle East trip as chief US diplomat. "This doesn't have to do with what somebody's called or whether somebody states facts about the North Korean regime," she said. "This is because the North Koreans want to avoid the inevitable confrontation, in a sense, with those who do not believe that the North Koreans can have nuclear weapons and that you can have a secure and peaceful Korean Peninsula."

The Daily Times, 20 June 2005

Seoul briefs US envoy on talks with Kim

SEOUL: South Korea's unification minister on Sunday briefed Christopher Hill, the main US envoy on the North Korean nuclear dispute, about his meeting last week with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, officials said. In a meeting with Unification Minister Chung Dong-young in Pyongyang on Friday, Kim said his communist regime could rejoin nuclear disarmament talks as early as next month if the United States respects North Korea as a partner. On Sunday, Chung told US Assistant Secretary of State Hill that all participants in the nuclear talks should make efforts to ensure that his meeting with Kim heralds the start of a "favourable atmosphere" for reviving the stalled nuclear talks, a Unification Ministry spokesman said, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency. The United States, Russia, China, Japan and the two Koreas are participating in the talks. The North has refused since June last year to return to the negotiating table, citing a US "hostile policy" towards it. US officials have repeatedly said they have no intention to invade North Korea, and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has said Washington recognises North Korea as a sovereign nation. Meanwhile, analysts said North Korea sent the ball back into the US court in the standoff over its nuclear ambitions when its leader Kim Jong-Il said the communist state was willing to return to disarmament talks.

The International Herald Tribune, 21 June 2005

Enlarge the North Korean problem (James Goodby)

ASHINGTON Some of South Korea's most influential policy advisers met for five hours last Friday with North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Il. The Bush administration's initial reaction was dismissive. Tone deafness is not unusual in this administration but, in this case, the problem with Washington's approach is more fundamental. What began as an exercise in arms control has been superseded by a much bigger issue: the future security structure of Northeast Asia. The administration seems to be unaware of this. South Korea is not. There is much talk in Seoul of a Northeast Asian community. Washington's friends are on to something: The nuclear issue can only be resolved within a framework that is as large as the strategic issue of which it is a part. Some years ago, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld published "Rumsfeld's Rules," one of which declares that "if you can't solve a problem, enlarge it." This happens to be very good advice in this particular case.

The Times of India, 21 June 2005

Kim to dump his missiles if US revives ties

SEOUL: North Korea will give up its missiles if the US establishes diplomatic ties, North Korean leader Kim Jong-il told a South Korean minister last week, an official in the South said on Monday. Unification minister Chung Dong-young met Kim in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, on Friday and the communist leader told him that the North was ready to end its year-long boycott of talks on its nuclear weapons if the US showed it respect. Chung briefed the South Korean cabinet on Monday. "If North Korea normalises diplomatic ties with the US and Washington becomes an ally with Pyongyang, then North Korea would give up all of its missiles," a senior government official quoted Chung as telling ministers. The official, who asked not to be identified, told Reuters that Kim had been referring to long-, medium- and short-range missiles, some of which can reach Japan as well as South Korea. Washington looks unlikely to respond favourably to Kim's latest reported remarks. Diplomatic relations with the North would be all but impossible before a nuclear deal and before Washington detected improved human rights in the communist state. US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice said on Sunday that North Korea's earlier statement that it would only return to stalled six-party nuclear talks if shown respect was an excuse to avoid pressure over its atomic programme. "The North Koreans love to make excuses," Rice told CNN in an interview from Jerusalem.

Dawn, 21 June 2005

US, EU press Iran, N.Korea over N-arms

WASHINGTON, June 20: The United States and the European Union on Monday jointly called on Iran to freeze uranium enrichment and reprocessing and to work with the UN atomic energy watchdog. "We remain united in our determination to see the proliferation implications of Iran's advanced nuclear program resolved," they said in a joint statement released by the European Union after the annual US-EU summit. The statement also called upon North Korea to dismantle its nuclear arms and nuclear weapons making programme. "The DPRK must comply fully with its non-proliferation obligations, and dismantle its nuclear weapons in a permanent, transparent, thorough, and verifiable manner," the statement said.

The Daily Times, 21 June 2005

NSG gather to discuss non-proliferation

OSLO: Over 40 countries exporting nuclear technology began a four-day meeting in Oslo Monday to discuss ways to prevent nuclear proliferation. The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is an informal organisation of 44 countries which export nuclear materials and technology, all of them signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It includes major exporters such as Britain, France, Russia and the United States. Iran and North Korea are likely to be high on the agenda. "The discussions among the member states are not public, but at the end of the session on Friday there will be a statement", said outgoing group president Richard Ekwall.

The News, 22 June 2005

Swirl of diplomacy around North Korea (M B Naqvi)

The US has spent years trying to isolate North Korea. Bush had included it in his Axis of Evil. North Korea in the meantime has pursued a tough policy: It withdrew from NPT and threw out the IAEA inspectors from the country; resumed work on its nuclear programme. It has recently confirmed it possesses a few atomic weapons. It has not attended the Six-Party Conference of North and South Korea, US, Japan, China and Russia for over a year. The conference was to seek ways to force North Korea to give up the Bomb. North Korea balks at that. Western experts think it has one or two nukes. Their use is clearly to deter aggression. Whether a few nukes will do so is debatable. However, a certain amount of deterrence does attach to atomic weapons. If extrapolated, the Indo-Pakistan experience of the 2002 crisis would suggest the nukes are useless. How and when can North Korea rationally use its weapon(s)? Either in anticipation of an American-led invasion or during a conventional war when things look bleak to Pyongyang. Supposing, choosing a target poses no problem to North Koreans, what happens

after Pyongyang has spent its atomic arsenal? Would not the US take out all major towns in North Korea in retaliation, if not pre-emptively? All concerned will then have ample time to ponder over the point of it all.

The Daily Times, 22 June 2005

Two Koreas agree to talk but disagree on issues (Jack Kim)

SENIOR officials from North and South Korea began four days of talks on Tuesday, reviving bilateral dialogue after a year of deadlock but still differing sharply over what they want from the meeting. Seoul will push Pyongyang for a firm commitment to return to stalled six-country talks on North Korea's nuclear plans, but the impoverished North's top priority will probably be winning more farm aid to feed its people, a South Korean official said. North Korean leader Kim Jong-il told South Korea's unification minister last week his country would return to the nuclear talks in July if Washington showed it respect, raising hope those negotiations could resume soon after a year of delay. Washington said the North was just making more excuses. "Minister Chung has met with General Kim Jong-il so it's like sowing for unification has been done," a media pool report quoted North Korea's chief delegate, Chief Cabinet Councillor Kwon Ho-ung, as telling the South's Unification Minister Chung Dong-young after arrival.

The News, 22 June 2005

North Korea nuclear programme on top of agenda

BEIJING: South Korean Prime Minister Lee Hae-Chan was in Beijing on Tuesday for a three-day visit aimed at kick-starting stalled six-nation talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons programme, state media said. Lee began his first China trip since becoming prime minister by meeting his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao. He is also scheduled to have talks with President Hu Jintao and parliamentary chairman Wu Bangguo. He is expected to brief them on a meeting last week in Pyongyang between South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-Young and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il. "Dialogue and negotiation is the only way the Korean issue can be solved," Wen said as he received Lee at Beijing's Great Hall of the People, according to Chinese state television. "All parties involved should seize the opportunity and show more flexibility and sincerity in order to create conditions for the restart of the talks as soon as possible," Wen said. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said earlier that "China values the important role South Korea has been playing in the talks as well as its efforts to solve the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula."

The Tribune, 23 June 2005

Nuclear threat or bluff? (K. Subrahmanyam)

THE old time-worn story of Bruce Riedel, who was on President Clinton's National Security Council staff during the Kargil crisis and was present during the Clinton-Nawaz Sharif negotiations on July 4, 1999, has captured Indian media headlines once again. The story has been quoted in the new book of well-known Pakistan columnist Hussein Haqqani "Pakistan between Mosque and Military". The Riedel story, in the version in which it was released first in the paper of the Centre for the Advanced Study of India, Policy Paper, University of Pennsylvania (2002) and quoted subsequently in other publications leaves one with the feeling that it is not the full story and has given only a doctored version to achieve a particular purpose. According to the story, President Clinton asked Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during his July 4th meeting if he knew his military was preparing nuclear-tipped missiles. The President further enquired whether Mr Sharif realised that if even one bomb was dropped - and Mr Sharif finished the sentence - "it would be a catastrophe".

The Nation, 23 June 2005

Nuclear diplomacy at stake in Iran run-off vote

TEHRAN: A victory in Iran's presidential run-off by hardliner Mahmood Ahmadinejad would remove a moderating influence from within the regime and could put the Islamic republic on a collision course with the West, diplomats and analysts said Wednesday. Seen as most at stake is Iran's relatively pragmatic approach in diplomacy over its nuclear programme, which Iran maintains is for peaceful purposes but is seen by many as the cover for weapons development. Ahmadinejad's rival for the presidency, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, has been considered as the man in driving seat on the Iranian side - sticking by a freeze of sensitive nuclear activities and talks with Britain, France and Germany. "It is extremely important to understand that what is at stake is this process concerning dangerous nuclear materials," French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy cautioned after Ahmadinejad was thrust into a shock run-off against Rafsanjani.

The Daily Times, 23 June 2005

Russian N-fuel could come within months: Iran

BUSHEHR: Iran could take delivery of Russian nuclear fuel to fire up its first nuclear power station within months, a senior atomic energy official said Wednesday. "The site is 84 percent finished and will be completed towards the end of 2006," Assadollah Sabouri, the deputy head of Iran's atomic energy organisation, told reporters taken

on a visit of the site. "The fuel is in Russia and ready to be transported, and it will be delivered soon but the exact date will remain confidential," he added. Asked if it would arrive before the end of 2005, he replied: "God Willing, in a few months!" Earlier this year Iran and Russia signed a landmark fuel accord that paves the way for the firing up of the station in southern Iran, a project the United States alleges is part of a cover for weapons development.

The Daily Times, 23 June 2005

Risk of WMD attack on the rise (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: A new survey released here this week says the possibility of a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) attack against a city or other target somewhere in the world is real and increasing over time. The survey, in which a large number of experts participated, was made by Senator Richard Lugar, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The majority of those surveyed said that even within the short time frame of the next five years, the risks of a WMD attack were judged to be substantial. The median estimate of the risk of a nuclear attack during the next five years was 10 percent. The average estimate was 16.4 percent. When the time-frame was extended to 10 years, the median response doubled to 20 percent and the average response almost doubled to 29.2 percent. The estimates of the risks of a biological or chemical attack during the same time periods were each judged to be comparable to or slightly higher than the risk of a nuclear attack.

The News, 23 June 2005

Japan nuke data leak raises security concerns

TOKYO: Japanese officials scrambled on Thursday to contain the public relations fallout from reports that confidential information about Japan's nuclear plants had leaked onto the Internet through a virus on a personal computer. Japan's top government spokesman pledged to take steps to protect information after data on several nuclear plants appeared online, including photographs of their interiors, details of regular inspections and repair work and names of workers. "Nuclear plants are important facilities in terms of anti-terrorist measures, security and what not, and therefore we would like to take full steps to ensure information management," Chief Cabinet Secretary told reporters.

The Daily Times, 23 June 2005

Russia foiled two attacks on nuclear defences

MOSCOW: Russia's Defence Ministry has foiled two separate attempts to break into nuclear weapons installations, a general in charge of Russian atomic arms safety said on Wednesday. Colonel-General Igor Valynkin, quoted by Russian news agencies, said the two attempts were made in 2002 and 2003. The perpetrators were arrested and handed over to security services, he said. "This shows that we have good mobile divisions for the guarding and defence of nuclear installations," Itar-Tass quoted Valynkin as saying. He gave no further details on the two attempts. An often repeated nightmare scenario, played out in films, books and by military analysts, is some sort of attack against Russia's huge nuclear arms stockpile and the theft of nuclear weapons. He said the main threat came from Chechens.

The Daily Times, 23 June 2005

North Korea wants N-free peninsula

SEOUL: North Korea's ultimate goal is a nuclear-free Korean peninsula and it would have no use for nuclear weapons if the United States were friendly, Pyongyang's top delegate to inter-Korean talks said Wednesday. "The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula was the last will of (the late North Korean) president Kim Il-Sung and that's our ultimate goal," North Korean chief delegate Kwon Ho-Ung was quoted as saying during the talks. "If the US becomes amicable towards North Korea, we will have no reason to have a single nuclear weapon," he was quoted as saying by South Korean spokesman Kim Chun-Shick. North Korea's founding father Kim Il-Sung died in 1994, two years after an inter-Korean accord on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula came into effect.

The Daily Times, 23 June 2005

Bush spurned secret 2002 North Korea overture

WASHINGTON: North Korean leader Kim Jong-il attempted to engage President George W Bush directly on the nuclear weapons issue three years ago but the administration spurned the overture, two American experts on Asia said on Wednesday. Writing in the Washington Post, former US ambassador to South Korea Donald Gregg and former journalist Don Oberdorfer expressed concern that Kim's November 2002 initiative was never pursued and urged Bush to respond positively to his current overture, made last week. When Bush took office in 2001, US officials estimated Pyongyang had fuel for one or two nuclear weapons. Now, that estimate is up to at least half a dozen and, the authors said, "many believe their claim to have fabricated the weapons themselves." Gregg and Oberdorfer said they visited Pyongyang in November 2002, after then-US Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly was there and accused the North of pursuing a secret programme of enriching uranium for nuclear weapons. The North froze its weapons-related plutonium programme in 1994 under an agreement with the United States.

The News, 23 June 2005

Nuclear disarmament

President Pervez Musharraf has taken a bold step by offering nuclear disarmament with India during his recent visit to New Zealand. The latest offer is above and beyond the one on a no-first-strike agreement that Islamabad had extended to New Delhi in the past. The readiness by Pakistan to go to such an extreme only indicates the intensity of its desire to attain durable peace and security in the South Asian region. In addition to nuclear disarmament, President Musharraf also suggested reduction in conventional forces by the nuclear neighbours as another way to boost mutual confidence. The fact that President Musharraf also commands the country's army makes it obvious that his proposal enjoys the institutional support of the military, a key determinant in Pakistan's foreign policy decisions. This factor alone makes it a serious proposal, which is not just for the purpose of image-building and scoring political points. The logic of the offer seems to be simple. The eradication of nuclear arms and reduction of conventional forces would lower the level of threat between India and Pakistan, which have fought three wars and a mini war in Kargil since their inception 57 years ago. This will minimise the security dilemma for the two countries, enabling them to direct their meagre resources to the development of the poverty-marred region.

The Nation, 24 June 2005

Breakup of Khan's network 'great success'-US (IFTIKHAR ALI)

NEW YORK: The United States Wednesday described as "great Success" the breakup of the A.Q. Khan network, which allegedly leaked nuclear secrets to Iran, North Korea and Libya . "There are a number of countries that have been involved in helping us to dismantle the Khan network, and we continue to move forward, working with other countries, to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction," White House spokesman Scott McClellan told a news briefing in Washington. He was answering a question from an Indian correspondent question about the U.S. being denied access to Pakistan's nuclear scientist. Deflecting the question, the spokesman said, "It was a very significant network in terms of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. And it was a significant development in our efforts to stop the spread of those weapons".

The News, 24 June 2005

Koreas agree on peaceful resolution of nuclear standoff

SEOUL: The two Koreas agreed on Thursday to seek a peaceful resolution to the North's nuclear standoff with the international community, but failed to set a date for stalled disarmament talks to resume. "The two Koreas have agreed to take real measures for peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue through dialogue ... with the ultimate goal of denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula," South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-young, Seoul's head delegate said. According to AP North has stayed away from arms talks for a year, citing "hostile" US policies. Last week, North Korea's leader Kim Jong Il said the communist state could return to the talks if it gets appropriate respect from Washington. The top delegates from North and South appeared side-by-side at a news conference after their negotiations, a departure from previous high-level talks that normally ended with the issuing of a written statement. Koreas end meeting without nuclear talks agreement. In other agreements on Thursday, the South decided to give food aid to the North "on the basis of brotherly love and humanitarian" needs, according to a final statement. The details were to be discussed later. The next round of Cabinet-level talks was set for Sept. 13-16 at the North's Mount Paektu, and another session was planned for December in South Korea.

The Daily Times, 24 June 2005

Nuclear whistleblower demands Israel release his letters

JERUSALEM: Nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu asked Israel's top court on Thursday to return copies of letters he wrote during an 18-year prison term, and which authorities confiscated before his release last year. Vanunu, who is confined to Israel under restrictions that the government says are needed to prevent him harming national security, wrote in a petition to the High Court of Justice that his jailhouse correspondence contained no secrets. "I couldn't write anything about nuclear weapons or any nuclear secrets because I was in their hands," he told reporters. The Justice Ministry did not comment on the case, saying it awaited word from the court on when it would be heard. Convicted of treason after he discussed his work at the Dimona reactor with a British newspaper in 1986, Vanunu denies government charges that he has more to tell about a nuclear capability whose existence the Jewish state refuses to confirm.

The Daily Times, 24 June 2005

Japan nuclear data leak raises security concerns

TOKYO: Japanese officials scrambled on Thursday to contain the public relations fallout from reports that confidential information about Japan's nuclear plants had leaked onto the Internet through a virus on a personal computer. Japan's top government spokesman pledged to take steps to protect information after data on several

nuclear plants appeared online, including photographs of their interiors, details of regular inspections and repair work and names of workers. "Nuclear plants are important facilities in terms of anti-terrorist measures, security and what not, and therefore we would like to take full steps to ensure information management," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda told reporters. Mitsubishi Electric Corp. said the information was leaked through a personal computer used by an employee of a Mitsubishi subsidiary that was in charge of inspecting the plants.

The Daily Times, 24 June 2005

Hans Blix says Iran years away from nuclear capacity

STOCKHOLM: Iran is years away from achieving a nuclear capacity sufficient to create a bomb, former chief UN weapons inspector in Iraq Hans Blix said in a Swedish public radio interview on Thursday. "They are many years away from being able to convert enriched uranium into a bomb," Blix told the Ekot news programme. The United States and the European Union have repeatedly urged Iran to freeze uranium enrichment and reprocessing and to work with the UN atomic energy watchdog amid worries that Tehran is seeking to acquire nuclear weapons. Tehran meanwhile has claimed that its nuclear programme is for civilian use only. News on Wednesday that Iran could within months take delivery of Russian nuclear fuel to fire up its first nuclear power station has exacerbated international concerns that the new Bushehr plant in southern Iran could be a cover for weapons development.

The Korea Times, 24 June 2005

US Coaxes Pyongyang Back to Nuclear Talks (Reuben Staines)

Amid signs of softening in U.S. policy toward North Korea, Washington's top negotiator in the nuclear standoff has said he is willing to meet the communist nation's reclusive leader, Kim Jong-il. Christopher Hill, U.S. assistant secretary of state, indicated he would like to meet the North's leader in a Korean-language message posted on an Internet site run by the U.S. Embassy in South Korea on Wednesday. It is the first time a U.S. official has expressed a readiness to meet with Kim since President George W. Bush was inaugurated in 2001. The hint of a policy shift came as the U.S. State Department announced it will donate 50,000 tons in food aid to the impoverished country. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also said she will keep in mind a request by South Korea for the U.S. to refrain from provocative rhetoric toward the North. Experts believed while the three concurrent developments are not necessarily a coordinated diplomatic strategy, they indicate a desire by Washington to coax Pyongyang back to stalled nuclear negotiations.

The Japan Times, 24 June 2005

Door wide open for resolving Korean nuclear issue (JAMES A. KELLY)

HONOLULU: There is no country in Asia, indeed in the world, that behaves like the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Since its founding more than a half century ago, the DPRK has pursued a different course, always troubling. For 13-15 years it has been the very center of Northeast Asian tensions. This path has been one of uninterrupted hardship for most of North Korea's people, with an exceptional loss of life, to starvation. Now, as several times before, nuclear weapons are at the center of these tensions. No one knows how this situation will play out and there are serious dangers. But these tensions can be eased at any time. DPRK sovereignty is recognized and if it turns not just part way, but completely and transparently from its nuclear weapons policy, it can have solid security assurances. Indeed, many countries would hasten to provide aid and support to the DPRK's participation in the global system.

The Daily Times, 25 June 2005

Uranium missing from Japanese nuclear power plant

TOKYO: A small amount of enriched uranium - not enough to make a bomb - has gone missing from a nuclear power plant in central Japan, the Science Ministry said Friday. Officials have been unable to locate a neutron-detecting device containing 1.7 milligrams of enriched uranium at the No. 3 reactor at Takahama nuclear power plant in Fukui prefecture (state) about 320 kilometres west of Tokyo, the ministry said in a statement. The amount missing is too small to make a bomb, a ministry official said on condition of anonymity. The missing uranium is not radioactive enough to pose a threat to humans, the official said. The device, used to measure the level of neutrons in the reactor, was found to be missing Friday afternoon during an inspection of the nuclear fuel inventory at the plant, which is operated by Kansai Electric Power Co. The whereabouts of the uranium was last confirmed on July 6, 2004, during a previous inspection of the plant's inventory, the statement said.

The Nation, 25 June 2005

Iran says it will enrich uranium

TEHRAN: Iran will eventually resume its controversial uranium enrichment activities regardless of the result of the Islamic republic's presidential election, the foreign ministry insisted Friday. "Whoever is the next president, a permanent suspension is not on the cards," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters. "Decisions on the nuclear question are taken in a collective way and at the highest levels of the regime," he

commented, even though he said the president "does have a certain influence". Seen as being at stake in Friday's presidential run-off is Iran's relatively pragmatic approach in diplomacy over its nuclear programme, which Iran maintains is for peaceful purposes but is seen by many as a cover for weapons development.

The Daily Times, 25 June 2005

The EU and the NPT (Shaukat Qadir)

There have been two major two negative developments in the last month in international affairs; one much debated and the other, quite surprisingly, relatively unnoticed. The first was the 'No' to the proposed constitution of the European Union, first by France and then by the Netherlands. The second was the inability of the international community to agree upon and extend the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Various European experts, more knowledgeable than I, have commented on the future of the EU in the wake of these two votes. They do not seem to agree on whether or not there is a future for the EU. My personal opinion is that the expanded EU, despite the economic disparities between member states was a creature born of two needs: to fill the vacuum of a second 'pole' in a unipolar world and, the realisation that Europe, despite its rich historical and cultural heritage had become dependant for its security on what was, a few hundred years ago, a European colony - the USA.

The Korea Times, 25 June 2005

Nuke Talks: Give Normalized Ties a Chance (Anthony DiFilippo)

It took awhile for many people to catch on, but the sixparty talks have always been a risky way to approach the North Korean nuclear crisis. Insisting all along that the multiparty format was necessary, since the North Korean nuclear crisis involves the security interests of six countries, the Bush administration's decisions and leadership have only worsened the situation over time. When Pyongyang announced the withdrawal of North Korea from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in January 2003, it maintained that it would not build nuclear weapons. Since then things have gotten progressively more precarious. Pyongyang's claim that it has nuclear weapons demonstrates that the crisis is far from resolved, while raising the possibility of an arms race in Northeast Asia. The worsening and prolongation of the North Korean nuclear crisis notwithstanding, the Bush administration has retained the same hard line and largely inflexible position that it initially adopted in October 2002.

The Associated Press, 26 June 2005

Iran's New President Vows to Pursue Peaceful Nuclear Program

TEHRAN: Iran President-elect Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vowed Sunday to pursue a peaceful nuclear program -- an effort the United States maintains is really a cover for trying to build atomic bombs -- and said his government will not be an extremist one. Ahmadinejad also said Iran did not need the United States to help it become more self-reliant. His comments came as Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld criticized Friday's vote, in which the ultraconservative former Tehran mayor steamrolled former President Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, as a "mock election." Rumsfeld said more than 1,000 potential candidates -- including all women -- were disqualified from running by the country's hard-line Guardian Council. "He is no friend of democracy," Rumsfeld said on "Fox News Sunday." "He is a person who is very much supportive of the current ayatollahs, who are telling the people of that country how to live their lives, and my guess is over time the young people and women will find him as well as his masters unacceptable."

Dawn, 26 June 2005

Russia to continue N-ties with Iran

MOSCOW, June 25: Russia is ready to continue cooperating with Iran in the atomic energy sector following the victory of hardliner Mahmood Ahmadinejad in presidential elections, but will meet obligations to prevent nuclear weapons proliferation, President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday. "We are ready to continue cooperation with Iran in the atomic energy sector, while taking into account our international obligations in the area of non-proliferation, (and) to cooperate on finding a mutually acceptable political solution to existing questions," Mr Putin said in a statement. Mr Putin congratulated Mr Ahmadinejad, saying his resounding win was an 'expression of the will of the Iranian people' and that Moscow looked forward to developing relations with Tehran. Construction work on a new Russian nuclear power station at Bushehr, in Iran, is almost complete. Officials there said this week that the first deliveries of Russian nuclear fuel should be made within a few months. In an attempt to allay US and EU concerns that the civilian power station is part of a secret weapons development programme, Moscow and Tehran brokered a deal in which Iran must send spent fuel back to Russia.

The News, 26 June 2005

South Korea demands North return to talks

SEOUL: South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun called on Saturday for North Korea's early return to nuclear disarmament talks as tens of thousands of conservatives held anti-communist rallies. "The biggest threat to peace

on the Korean peninsula is the North Korean nuclear problem," Roh said in a speech marking the 55th anniversary of the start of the 1950-53 Korean War. "The six-party talks must be resumed soon," he said. The appeal came two days after inter-Korean talks produced several agreements on improving cooperation but nothing concrete on resuming talks on the nuclear standoff that has been stalled for a year. Roh said the talks this week between South and North Korea would accelerate inter-Korean relations stalled by the nuclear standoff. More than 30,000 conservative Christians, however, marked the war anniversary Saturday with a rally denouncing North's Korea's nuclear weapons drive. Three months ago North Korea declared itself a "fully-fledged" nuclear state and said it had no plans to return to talks or to give up its atomic weapons. North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il said last Friday in a meeting in Pyongyang with South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-Young that talks could take place as early next month.

The Nation, 27 June 2005

WMD and terrorism (Shahid Saleem Afzal)

There is also a worldwide con-cern that WMD should not fall in the hands of terrorists. Terrorists are generally those people who use violence to achieve their aim. Terrorism refers to the use of violence for the purpose of achieving a political, religious, or ideological goal. The targets of terrorist acts can be government officials, military personnel, people serving the interests of governments, or civilians. Acts of terror against military targets tend to blend into a strategy of guerrilla warfare. According to one view, one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter. Muslims have not been involved in most of the terrorist attacks committed prior to 9/11. Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber, detonated a seven-ton truck bomb outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on 19 April 1995 that killed 168 people, including 19 children, in the deadliest act of terrorism ever committed on US soil prior to 9/11.

The Korean Herald, 27 June 2005

Editorial: Teheran and Pyongyang

Iranians have elected a hard-line conservative who advocates his country's right to pursue nuclear development, and we are concerned that this might embolden North Korea in its pursuit for nuclear armament. Facing international pressure to return to the six-way talks on its nuclear program, Pyongyang might seek to have more time to see how Washington reacts to the election of Mahmood Ahmadinejad. Both Iran and North Korea are suspected of working on uranium enrichment projects while the North has long concentrated on producing plutonium-based nuclear weapons. There have been incessant reports on cooperation between Pyongyang and Teheran for missile development and more recently on the construction of underground facilities to conceal secret missile and/or nuclear facilities. Teheran is not only being helped by North Korean arms technology but it is also learning Pyongyang's brinkmanship tactics. Iran agreed to suspend its uranium enrichment program last year following negotiations with the EU3 - Britain, France and Germany - but threatened early this month to continue its efforts to enrich uranium ostensibly for peaceful purposes. The president-elect now opens door to further talks but demands that the Europeans show trust.

Daily Yomiuri, 27 June 2005

U.S. ready to take over where NPT confab failed (Al Schleicher)

When the sun set over the conference in New York to review the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty more than three weeks ago with no official agreement on the pressing issues to combat the spread of nuclear weapons and material, the impact on the nonproliferation regime was thought to be significant. While NPT member nations pointed fingers over who was to blame for the conference's failure, U.S. government officials have quietly pressed ahead with U.S. President George W. Bush's plan to slow down the spread of nuclear materials with an aggressive counterproliferation strategy that is widely becoming known among nuclear experts as NPT Plus. "The Bush administration perceives the NPT review process as a forum that is, unto itself, a debating society," said Leonard Spector, a nuclear energy expert at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California. "These gatherings have at best a modest impact on the treaty, and the real action is elsewhere." Analysts like Spector have pointed out that public forums such as the one in New York are used to score political points against rivals or to put up a strong face to the United States, which many perceive as being a bully. In the end, these actions only serve to dilute the impact of such meetings.

The News, 27 June 2005

G8 to press NKorea, Iran over suspected N-activities

TOKYO: The Group of Eight major nations will press North Korea and Iran over their nuclear ambitions at next month's G8 summit, a report said Monday. The group of world powers would adopt a declaration on nuclear non-proliferation at the summit in Scotland, the evening edition of the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper said. A senior Japanese official said the G8 would send out a strong message on non-proliferation but was not sure whether any

countries would be named in any declaration, particularly when Iran has just elected a new leader. "We will send a strong message on nuclear non-proliferation," deputy foreign minister Mitoji Yabunaka told to a foreign news agency in an interview. "In order to maximize the message we are now preparing for a possible statement." "We should not have a foregone conclusion about Iran," Yabunaka added. The Yomiuri Shimbun said the G8 would express "strong concern" about North Korea's declaration that it has nuclear weapons in the statement to be issued at the July 6-8 summit.

The Hindu, 27 June 2005

"Iran does not need America to progress"

TEHERAN: Iran's President-elect Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vowed on Sunday to pursue a peaceful nuclear programme and said Iran did not need America to make progress. "Iran's peaceful technology is the outcome of the scientific achievements of Iran's youth. We need the peaceful nuclear technology for energy, medical and agricultural purposes and our scientific progress. We will continue this," the ultraconservative Ahmadinejad told his first news conference since being elected on Friday. He said Iran's decision would not change. "This is the final path we have taken," he said. The United States alleges that Iran's nuclear program is aimed at building atomic bombs. Mr. Ahmadinejad said Iran would continue nuclear talks with the Europeans but said they must implement their commitments if they want trust to be established. "We will continue talks with Europeans while preserving our national interests and insistence on the right of the Iranian nation to use nuclear energy," he said in the news conference, broadcast live on state-run television.

The Guardian, 27 June 2005

We won't give up nuclear effort, says Iranian leader

Iran's new hardline president-elect, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, yesterday threw down a challenge to western leaders by vowing to resist international pressure to abandon the country's nuclear programme and branding Israel the source of instability in the Middle East. The remarks, made at his first press conference since a landslide victory, will underline concerns in America, Israel, Britain and other European countries, where wrongfooted diplomats have been scrambling to come to terms with the consequences of his win. The rise of Mr Ahmadinejad, the ultra-Islamist mayor of Tehran who has expressed a desire to recreate the atmosphere of the early days of Iran's 1979 revolution, has created alarm, not least because of fears it will be even harder to secure a diplomatic solution to the stand-off between Iran and the west over the country's nuclear programme. The British government has been dismayed by the election result, seeing it as a setback for its efforts along with France and Germany to secure a compromise.

Reuters, 27 June 2005

U.S. To Resume Plutonium 238 Production - Report

NEW YORK: The United States plans to produce highly radioactive plutonium 238 for the first time since the Cold War, The New York Times reported on Monday. The newspaper quoted project managers as saying most, if not all, of the new plutonium was intended for secret missions. The officials would not disclose details, but the newspaper said the plutonium in the past powered espionage devices. The Times said Timothy Frazier, head of radioisotope power systems at the U.S. Energy Department, vigorously denied in a recent interview any of the classified missions would involve nuclear arms, satellites or weapons in space. "The real reason we're starting production is for national security," Frazier was quoted as saying. Officials at the Energy Department could not be reached for comment. The program, which the newspaper said had raised concerns among environmentalists, would produce 330 pounds (150 kg) over 30 years at the Idaho National Laboratory. The program could cost \$1.5 billion and generate over 50,000 drums of hazardous and radioactive waste, federal officials told the Times.

Reuters, 27 June 2005

EU Needs New Offer to Iran in Nuke Talks - Schroeder

WASHINGTON: German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said on Sunday the European Union should put forward new proposals to resolve the dispute over Iran's nuclear program after a hard-liner was elected president of the Islamic Republic. The EU's "big three" -- Britain, France and Germany -- are negotiating with Iran in the name of the 25-nation bloc for a halt to Iran's nuclear program that they, along with the United States, suspect is a front for making atomic weapons. Iran, the world's fourth largest oil exporter, insists the program is to meet soaring demand for electricity. "The Europeans are well advised to put an offer on the table to move things forward for the next round of negotiations," Schroeder told reporters traveling with him on a visit to Washington. The EU has offered Iran incentives to give up parts of its nuclear program that could be used to develop weapons.

Reuters, 27 June 2005

Japan to Raise N.Korea Nuclear Issue at G8

TOKYO: Japan will raise the issue of North Korea's nuclear arms development at next week's Group of Eight summit, Deputy Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka said on Monday. North Korea, which said in February it had nuclear weapons, has said it may return to stalled six-party talks on its nuclear programs as early as July but has not set a date for doing so. "The present situation is very worrisome and it is a matter of course that this issue will be discussed," said Yabunaka, who is Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's special representative for the summit of industrialized nations. The leaders of the G8 countries -- Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States and Russia -- are to meet in Gleneagles, Scotland, from July 6-8. "Japan of course cannot tolerate North Korea's nuclear development. Our basic thinking is that six-way talks should be resumed quickly to resolve this issue," Yabunaka said in an interview. Before assuming his current post in January, Yabunaka headed the ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau and served as Japan's chief negotiator at the six-way talks.

Reuters, 27 June 2005

Solana Sees No Change in EU Nuclear Policy on Iran

BRUSSELS: EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana on Monday ruled out an immediate change in the bloc's nuclear policy on Iran following the weekend election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president. The European Union will stand by an agreement reached at a meeting with Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Hassan Rohani, in Geneva at the end of May, he said. "At that time, we offered the possibility of presenting to the Iranian leaders around the end of July ... a comprehensive proposal for them to analyze. We don't have any reason to change at this point in time," Solana told reporters. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said in Washington on Sunday that the EU should put forward new proposals to solve the dispute over Iran's nuclear program, but Solana said he was talking about the same plan to present a new proposal in July. "The Schroeder proposal ... it's nothing new. We took that decision on May 25 in Geneva, we had a meeting with Mr Rohani and we offered that. That is what the Chancellor was referring to," he said.

BBC News, 28 June 2005

India urges end to nuclear curbs

Indian Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee has urged the United States to lift curbs on nuclear technology transfers to India. The US imposed the restrictions in the wake of India's nuclear tests in 1998. Mr Mukherjee was speaking in Washington on his first visit since assuming his post last year, following the Congress party victory in India's elections. There has been a significant transformation in relations between the two countries in recent years. Speaking at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on Monday, Mr Mukherjee said Washington and Delhi shared "common values and security concerns". "Our nuclear energy and security programmes are separate," he said. "We can assure you that it [sensitive technology] will never fall in the wrong hands," the Associated Press quotes him as saying. India is keen for access to US civilian nuclear technology. The Indian defence minister met US Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. On Tuesday, he is due to meet his counterpart, Donald Rumsfeld. Next month, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is to hold talks with President George W Bush during a visit to the United States.

BBC News, 28 June 2005

Global nuclear policy irks India

India has criticised the international community for failing to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Foreign Minister Natwar Singh said much of the proliferation tended to emanate from its South Asian neighbourhood. India has long criticised the United States for overlooking Pakistan's alleged involvement in spreading nuclear technology. Mr Singh's comments came three days after the US said it would sell F-16 jets to India's nuclear rival Pakistan. Washington has also offered India combat planes, an offer Delhi said it would consider. But ahead of an international conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Mr Singh said the world's leading nuclear powers had not been serious in its efforts. "Unfortunately, even today, we see the same inconsistencies in approach with selective focus on the recipients of such clandestine proliferation but not enough attention on the sources of supply," Mr Singh said. Pakistan's disgraced nuclear scientist, AQ Khan, is believed to have supplied nuclear technology to Iran, Libya and North Korea. Last week Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said Islamabad was considering sending nuclear parts to a UN watchdog to help it investigate whether Iran was developing atomic weapons.

The Guardian, 28 June 2005

Scientists expect go-ahead for nuclear fusion reactor (David Adam)

Scientists should today finally get the go-ahead to build a prototype nuclear fusion reactor which could offer a clean source of unlimited energy. Ministers are expected to announce at a meeting in Moscow that a £7bn experimental reactor, designed to prove the new type of nuclear power is commercially viable, will be built in France. The reactor is intended to produce electricity by harnessing the nuclear reaction at the heart of the sun.

Today's announcement follows years of often bitter negotiations. The international project - called the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor, or Iter - has been deadlocked since December 2003, when the world's leading scientific powers fell out over where to build it. Russia and China supported the EU's plan for Cadarache in southern France while the US and South Korea favoured a rival bid from Japan for Rokkasho. Reports say Japan has been persuaded to drop its claim in return for lucrative construction contracts. Unlike conventional nuclear power stations that harness the energy released when atoms split, Iter would work by capturing the heat produced when hydrogen isotopes combine to form helium.

The Guardian, 28 June 2005

US to produce deadly isotope (Jamie Wilson)

WASHINGTON: The United States is planning its first production since the cold war of plutonium 238 - one of the most deadly forms of the element - for use in secret missions, possibly including spy satellites and undersea devices. The isotope, which is so radioactive that a speck can cause cancer, has no central role in nuclear arms. Its steady heat is used to create electricity; nuclear batteries powered by it work for years and even decades, and have been used to power spacecraft that go where sunlight is too dim to produce solar power. Federal officials told the New York Times the programme would produce a total of 150kg (330lb) over 30 years at the Idaho National Laboratory in Wyoming. The programme could cost \$1.5bn (£820m) and generate more than 50,000 drums of hazardous and radioactive waste. It is likely to face opposition from environmentalists who fear it is a potential threat to the nearby Yellowstone national park. Experts unconnected to the project told the New York Times that the plutonium would probably power devices for conducting espionage and devices used to tap undersea communications cables.

Daily Times, 28 June 2005

US plans to halt weapons spread

WASHINGTON: A draft executive order President Bush is expected to sign ahead of July's G-8 summit outlines new measures targetting the US assets of anyone conducting business with Iranian, North Korean and Syrian companies that Washington believes are involved in weapons programmes, US officials said. According to an internal government memo, the order authorises "the blocking or 'freezing' of assets of WMD proliferators and their supporters... thereby prohibiting US persons from engaging in transactions with them." The draft executive order goes far beyond previous measures by threatening the US assets of individuals or companies, including foreign banks, that do business with those on the list. In particular, Russian and Chinese companies, which do enormous business with Iran and North Korea, could be affected by the new strategy, officials said.

The News, 28 June 2005

Iran's N-programme unacceptable, says Bush

WASHINGTON: US President George W Bush on Monday encouraged German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder to continue working with France and Great Britain on negotiations to curb Iran's nuclear programme and send a unified message along with the United States that development of nuclear weapons is unacceptable. "My message is to the chancellor is that we continue working with Great Britain, France and Germany to send a focused, concerted, unified message that says the development of a nuclear weapon is unacceptable and a process which would enable Iran to develop a nuclear weapon is unacceptable," Bush said. Schroeder said he agreed with Bush's message to Iran. "We are going to continue being tough and firm on that," he said after an Oval Office meeting with Bush. Iran's president-elect Mahmoud Ahmadinejad should not expect the international community to "go soft" on Tehran's nuclear policy, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said on Monday. "We expect Iran to honour its obligations, and we have tried to find a way through the impasse over nuclear capabilities," Blair told a press conference. "It would be a serious mistake if he (Ahmadinejad) thought that we are going to go soft on them, because we are not."

The Statesman, 28 June 2005

Relevance of NPT: Time For Some New Thinking (Harsh V Pant)

They came, they talked, and they went - that's how one can essentially sum up the proceedings of the month-long seventh quinquennial review conference of the 35-year-old Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that was held last month in New York. Though the chairman of the conference declared that "very little has been accomplished", what became clear is how little relevance the NPT holds for the international community today. This is paradoxical given that the threat of nuclear proliferation is the pre-eminent global security issue of our times and the dangers from proliferation have never been higher. The last review conference held in 2000 at least agreed on "thirteen steps" to prevent any further spread of nuclear weapons and to hold the nuclear weapon states to their commitment to eliminate their nuclear arsenals in the long run. The 2005 review conference had no such luck. There were only disagreements to show off in the end and short-term interests of the states were just too divergent to allow for any meaningful debate. And as a consequence, the month-long conference ended with

nothing to show for its four weeks of rather acrimonious debate.

Daily Times, 28 June 2005

G8 to press North Korea, Iran over nuclear activities

TOKYO: The Group of Eight major nations will press North Korea and Iran over their nuclear ambitions at next month's G8 summit, a report said Monday. The group of world powers would adopt a declaration on nuclear non-proliferation at the summit in Scotland, the evening edition of the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper said. A senior Japanese official said the G8 would send out a strong message on non-proliferation but was not sure whether any countries would be named in any declaration, particularly when Iran has just elected a new leader. "We will send a strong message on nuclear non-proliferation," deputy foreign minister Mitoji Yabunaka told AFP in an interview. "In order to maximize the message we are now preparing for a possible statement." "We should not have a foregone conclusion about Iran," Yabunaka added.

Daily Times, 28 June 2005

Britain urges Iran not to renege on nuclear talks

LONDON: Britain called on Iran's new government on Monday not to resume nuclear activities that western powers fear could be a front for making atomic weapons. "We are working on the basis that any incoming government in Iran will honour the commitments made by the outgoing government," Foreign Secretary Jack Straw told reporters after talks with his Indian counterpart. "We look to the Iranian government under its new president-elect to honour those commitments," he said. "We are preparing detailed proposals," Straw said.

The News, 28 June 2005

EU says no immediate change on Iran policy

BRUSSELS: European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana said on Monday he saw no immediate reason to change policy on Iran after the election of hard-liner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, adding that nuclear talks with Tehran will continue. "We don't have any reason to change at this time," Solana told reporters. He said talks between Iran and three European nations, Germany, France and Britain, remain on track. Solana is also participating in those talks, representing the EU. However, he expressed concerns about claims of voting irregularities. The EU head office urged Tehran to address the allegations. The Europeans are leading talks to convince Tehran to freeze its nuclear enrichment program, which Washington believes is being used to make warheads. But in his first remarks as Iran's president-elect, Ahmadinejad vowed on Sunday to restart the enrichment program, saying Iran needs "peaceful nuclear technology for energy, medical and agricultural purposes." Solana gave a cautious response, saying the EU would judge Ahmadinejad on his actions rather than his words. "At this point in time we are in a waiting mode," he said.

The Associated Press, 28 June 2005

France Chosen As Site for Nuclear Reactor (Vladimir Isachenkov)

MOSCOW: A six-party consortium chose France as the site for an experimental nuclear fusion reactor, a spokeswoman for the European Union said Tuesday. The International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor is intended to show that nuclear fusion, which harnesses the same energy that heats the sun to generate electricity, can wean the world off pollution-producing fossil fuels. Nuclear fusion produces no greenhouse gas emissions and only low levels of radioactive waste. The project is funded by a consortium comprised of Japan, the United States, South Korea, Russia, China and the European Union, but the six parties had been divided over where to put the test reactor. Competition was intense. At stake are billions of dollars worth of research funding, construction and engineering contracts, and the creation of up to 100,000 new jobs, according to estimates cited by Dow Jones NewsWires. Japan, the United States and South Korea wanted the facility built at Rokkasho in northern Japan. Russia, China and the European Union wanted it at Cadarache, in southern France. Site proposals for Canada and Spain had already been withdrawn.

International Herald Tribune, 28 June 2005

Bush and Schröder are on message about Iran (Brian Knowlton)

WASHINGTON: President George W. Bush said Monday that he and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany had agreed on a firm line on Iran, saying that European negotiators should continue to send Tehran a "focused, concerted, unified message that says the development of a nuclear weapon is unacceptable." Taking reporters' questions with Bush after a White House meeting, Schröder endorsed the president's message. "We're going to continue being tough and firm," he said. "The message must stay very clear." But the two leaders did not make entirely clear whether the recent election of a deeply conservative Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, had opened any gap between European and American expectations of the talks aimed at halting any Iranian nuclear weapons work. While the U.S. and German leaders are still nursing a relationship bruised by the Iraq war and the

chancellor is in a tough re-election campaign, Bush offered him a small political lift, saying that he did not oppose Germany's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Dawn, 29 June 2005

'US willing to use N-arms' (Masood Haider)

UNITED NATIONS, May 28: Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations Javad Zarif said on Friday that US threat to Iran's nuclear programme were a "smoke screen to divert attention from its violations" that included a US willingness "to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states." Talking to reporters following the failure of Nuclear Non-Proliferation review conference here Mr Zarif said the United States never intended to scrap its nuclear arsenal, despite promising to eventually disarm when it signed the 1970 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the landmark arms control pact. Iran's chief delegate asserted that Israel, which is widely believed to have nuclear weapons, was the threat to the Middle East region. "There is unanimity on the threat that is posed not only by Israeli nuclear weapons but by its aggressive policy", he said. "Israel is the threat to the region," he said. "It is one of the great ironies of our age that a country outside the framework of legality in the area of non-proliferation is one of the countries that is the most active participants against Iran," he said.

Reuters, 29 June 2005

U.S Military Says Can Defeat Nuclear - Armed N.Korea

SEOUL: U.S. and South Korean forces can deter and defeat North Korea even if the reclusive communist state has several nuclear weapons, a senior U.S. military officer said in an interview broadcast on Wednesday. Amid growing signs stalled six-country talks on those weapons could restart, South Korea's foreign minister said regional powers trying to coax North Korea back to the table should anticipate a possible resumption of the process. Seoul sent its unification minister to Washington on Wednesday for talks with senior U.S. officials including Vice President Dick Cheney on the nuclear crisis. The commander of the U.S. forces in South Korea, General Leon LaPorte, said the U.S. military believed North Korea had one to two nuclear weapons at a minimum, and was also working to advance its missile program. "Whether North Korea has one or several nuclear weapons does not change the balance on the peninsula," LaPorte told South Korea's PBC radio in an interview taped on Tuesday, according to a transcript provided by the station.

Reuters, 29 June 2005

France Will Get Fusion Reactor to Seek a Future Energy Source (Craig S. Smith)

PARIS, June 28: An international consortium announced Tuesday that France would be the site of the world's first large-scale, sustainable nuclear fusion reactor, an estimated \$10 billion project that many scientists see as crucial to solving the world's future energy needs. "It is a great success for France, for Europe and for all the partners in ITER," President Jacques Chirac said in a statement released after the six-member consortium of the United States, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea and the European Union chose the country as the site for the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor. Japan, which had lobbied hard for the project, dropped out of the bidding in the last few days and ceded to France. The consortium agreed in Moscow to build the project at Cadarache in southern France. Nuclear fusion is the process by which atomic nuclei are forced together, releasing huge amounts of energy, as with the sun or a hydrogen bomb. The process has long been studied as a potential energy source that would be far cleaner than burning fossil fuels or even nuclear fission, which is used in nuclear reactors today but produces dangerous radioactive waste.

People's Daily, 29 June 2005

China supports, keeps close eye on Iran-EU negotiation: FM spokesman

China has always supported and kept its close eye on the nuclear issue negotiations between Iran and European Union (EU), expressing the hope that the two sides would reach a long-term solution to the issue soon, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said in Beijing on June 28. Liu said at a routine press conference that China has noticed some consensus reached between Iran and the EU, which includes the bilateral commitments to properly address the concerns of the two sides through negotiations. China appreciates the constructive attitude and diplomatic efforts made by the two sides, which will serve the common interests of the international community, Liu said.

The Hindu, 29 June 2005

Russian n-offer to Iran (Vladimir Radyuhin)

MOSCOW: Russia is keen to build up to six nuclear reactors in Iran in addition to one it has constructed at Bushehr, Russia's nuclear energy chief said. "We will take part in tenders for the construction of new nuclear power reactors when Iran opens them," Alexander Rumyantsev, head of Russia's Atomic Energy Agency, Rosatom, told the Itar-Tass news agency on Tuesday. He said Iran planned to build another six nuclear reactors.

The statement came four days after Iran's newly elected President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reaffirmed Teheran's right to develop nuclear energy. In his congratulatory message to the new leader, Russia's President Vladimir Putin said Moscow was ready to continue cooperation with Iran in the atomic energy sector "taking into account our international obligations in the area of non-proliferation." Mr. Putin's warm congratulations to Mr. Ahmadinejad sharply contrasted with Washington's claim that the Iranian election was "neither free nor fair."

The Indian Express, 29 June 2005

Nuclear project could solve energy woes, says scientist (Patricia Reaney)

LONDON, June 28: Describing the ITER as a huge physics experiment, Ian Fells of Britain's Royal Academy of Engineering said in an interview that if the project succeeded "there will be enough electricity to last the world for the next 1,000 to 2,000 years". "I give it a 50-50 chance of success but the engineering is very difficult," said Fells. The ITER's objective is to demonstrate the feasibility of producing electricity from a fusion reaction, which involves fusing atomic nuclei at extremely high temperatures inside a giant electromagnetic ring. It is the same process by which stars, including the sun, produce energy. Deuterium, the major fuel to operate the reactor, will be extracted from seawater. "The oceans are absolutely stuffed full of it," said Fells. Proponents of the project argue that if it succeeds it will result in potentially inexhaustible and cheap supplies of energy, eventually replacing oil and gas. Opponents say the project is only experimental and it will be at least 50 years before a commercially viable reactor is built. The ITER would have an advantage over current nuclear reactors because it would be cleaner. It would not rely on enriched uranium fuel and it would not produce plutonium, which is a concern from a terrorism point of view. However, the ITER does pose some problems.

The Tribune, 30 June 2005

Non-proliferation today (G. Parthasarathy)

India's stand will come to be accepted. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) signed in 1968 had three essential facets. The treaty envisaged that only those powers that possessed nuclear weapons prior to its being signed could possess nuclear weapons. All other countries were required to forswear the acquisition of these weapons and accept international safeguards on all fissile materials. In return, these countries were promised access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, including power generation. The nuclear weapons powers were required to cease "the manufacture of nuclear weapons, the liquidation of all existing stockpiles and the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, pursuant to a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control". China initially denounced the treaty as an instrument of hegemony and then opportunistically joined it in 1992, after the Cold War ended.

The News, 30 June 2005

South Korea urges US not to provoke North Korea

SEOUL: South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon said on Wednesday he has urged the United States to avoid provoking North Korea at a time when hopes are high for a new round of six-party nuclear talks. He said he made the request to US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Brussels last week during a conference of donor countries for Iraq. "I made an open request that North Korea should not be provoked unnecessarily at a time when a positive atmosphere is proceeding," Ban told YTN cable news television. "I explained to Secretary Rice that the United States and other dialogue partners need to be circumspect in behaviour and she expressed understanding." Ban said Seoul was working hard to restart the talks next month after North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il hinted at a return to dialogue during a recent meeting with South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-Young. "We are making lots of diplomatic efforts after taking significantly Chairman Kim's comment about the possible resumption of talks in July given his (supreme) status in the North's system."

The News, 30 June 2005

Japanese envoy for nuclear free world (Syed Bukhar Shah)

PESHAWAR: The ambassador of Japan to Islamabad, Nobuaki Tanaka has appealed all nations to struggle for the establishment of a nuclear free world. Addressing the inaugural function of photo exhibition here he said his country would continue its struggle for the establishment of peace and nuclear free world. "Before the Second World War, Japan was a military state and now it is completely a peace loving country opposed to atomic weapons," he said. Learning Awareness and Motivation Program (LAMP) has organised the exhibition from June 26 to July 3, on the completion of 60 years of the bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The 30-minutes original film of the nuclear devastation was also shown to the participants. The overwhelmed participants watched the film in pin drop silence and majority of them could not control their emotions due to the nerve racking tragic scenes. They later cursed the scientists for inventing the destructive weapons against humanity.

The New York Times, 30 June 2005

U.S. and Allies to Meet Official of North Korea (Joel Brinkley)

WASHINGTON, June 29: A senior North Korean official, in New York to attend a private foreign policy conference, will meet Thursday with representatives of the United States, Japan and South Korea, senior Bush administration officials and foreign diplomats said Wednesday. They said they would press him to explain whether North Korea planned to return to nuclear disarmament talks. More than a year has passed since North Korea walked away from the talks. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is planning to take a new approach with the Chinese when she travels to Beijing next month. Instead of urging them to press North Korea to return to the talks, as she has until now, Ms. Rice will instead ask the Chinese to explain what additional punitive steps against North Korea they may be willing to accept, said the diplomats and officials, who are not authorized by their governments to discuss the issue publicly.