

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.

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.

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."

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 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 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.

The News, 9 June 2005

EIBaradei 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 EIBaradei, 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. EIBaradei'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 EIBaradei's agenda, however, confirmed Iran will be discussed when EIBaradei 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. EIBaradei'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 EIBaradei 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 EIBaradei 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 EIBaradei, 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.

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.

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

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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

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.

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 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.

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.

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.

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 Daily Times, 14 June 2005

US fully aware of our defense needs: Kasuri

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri has said that he had raised the matters of strengthening of economic and defense ties, during his meeting with US President George W Bush, while regional and international affairs had also come under discussion. He was addressing a press conference on his return from the US, where he met President Bush, State Secretary Condoleezza Rice and Congressmen. He said relations between the US and Pakistan were satisfactory and Washington commends Islamabad's role in the war on terror.

The Hindu, 14 June 2005

Pakistan silent on U.S. displeasure over pipeline (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday declined to comment on reports from Washington that the U.S. threatened to impose sanctions on it if it went ahead with the Iran gas pipeline project. Foreign Office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani merely said here that Islamabad was aware of Washington's "concerns." "Pakistan is looking at various options including the Iran pipeline to take care of its energy requirements and would take appropriate decisions in the best national interests." During the recent visit of Union Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar, India and Pakistan agreed to constitute a Joint Working Group (JWG) to look into the financial, technical and all other aspects of the Iran gas pipeline.

The Daily Times, 15 June 2005

US will stand by Pakistan for the 'long haul': Rocca

WASHINGTON: Despite hard and persistent questioning by members of a congressional committee about US support to Pakistan, Christina Rocca, assistant secretary of state for South Asia, refused to wilt or falter in her defence of Pakistan as a reliable ally in the war against terrorism who deserved support. Ms Rocca was testifying before the House International Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific. Ms Rocca said of the proposed sale of F-16s to Pakistan - that came under much criticism - "The sale sends a clear signal of our determination to stand by Pakistan for the long haul. As a result, it will be easier for Pakistan to take the steps necessary to build a lasting peace with all its neighbours."

The Hindu, 15 June 2005

U.S. official explains arms export policy

NEW DELHI: With the U.S. keen on selling defence equipment to India, a senior State Department official on Monday met officials from the External Affairs and Defence Ministries to explain the intricacies of the American policy for exporting military hardware. Here to "demystify" America's regulatory process, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Gregory Suchan's trip is seen as familiarising Indian officials with the U.S. defence export process before Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee visits Washington. Officials here also viewed the meeting as a follow-up on last month's interaction between Indian Air Force officers and Jeffrey B. Kohler, Chief of the U.S. Defence Security Cooperation Agency, which oversees military sales and financing programmes. The talks with Mr. Kohler dealt with the technical aspects of F-16 and F-18 fighters the U.S. is keen on selling to India. Mr.

Suchan dwelt on the procedural aspects of defence sales agreements. He allayed Indian apprehensions about the U.S. being an unreliable long-term supplier of sophisticated arms in view of the sanctions it imposed after the 1998 nuclear tests.

The Tribune, 16 June 2005

A defining moment: Indo-US cooperation will boost stability in Asia (G. Parthasarathy)

PLEADING for foreign investment in oil and gas exploration, Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar told bemused senior executives of American and Canadian oil companies in Houston and Calgary earlier this year: "Take my oil please. We invite you to come and get it". Never one given to understatement, Mr Aiyar added: "I would simply go down on my knees and say, 'Please, please come'... India desperately needs you to find more oil and gas." The soft-spoken economist-turned accomplished diplomat, Dr Manmohan Singh will, of course, not be "desperate" like Mr. Aiyar when he visits the White House on July 18. But his visit could constitute a defining moment for the future of US-India relations, as the two countries are discovering new areas where their interests coincide. They could well become partners for economic progress and strategic stability in Asia.

The Tribune, 17 June 2005

US threatens India on gas pipeline

New Delhi, June 16: The USA today virtually asked India to abandon the Iran gas pipeline to meet energy needs as Washington apprehends that Tehran would use the oil revenue to fund its weapons of mass destruction programme and to support terrorism. "We think it will be a mistake. Because such a pipeline project could provide funds to the Iran government which could use it for funding terrorism and weapons of mass destruction," visiting Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control Stephen G. Rademaker told reporters here. "We have in place a legislation in the USA that threatens sanctions against particular projects that will develop oil resources in Iran... So that is our policy and we continue to discourage construction...such as this proposed pipeline."

The Nation, 17 June 2005

F-16s vs Patriots

IT says a lot for US politicians' sense of fair play and Pakistan's standing at the Capitol Hill despite its immediate yes to the Us and Them question, that no Congressperson supporting or opposing the F-16s sale mentioned that these aircraft had been paid for by Pakistan in late 80s - and it was the US that had gone back on the deal and also kept most of the money. Instead the International Relations Committee Subcommittee for Asia and the Pacific heard the usual arguments from many Republican and Democrat members about the sale triggering an arms race in the region. Many feared the worst from the sale of F-16s; others, such as Republican Dana Rohrabacher, thought the sale would be against "good conscience."

The Hindu, 20 June 2005

U.S. Ambassador's statement is irresponsible, says Pakistan (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: In a sharp reaction to the statement of the outgoing U.S. envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, that Taliban leader Mullah Omar was in Pakistan, a Foreign Office spokesman has dubbed it as "irresponsible." "It does not behove of a senior official like Zalmay Khalilzad to make such irresponsible statements," Foreign Office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani told presspersons. Commenting on Mr. Khalilzad's statement, Mr. Jilani said the interview with an alleged Taliban leader at an undisclosed location did not mean that Mullah Omar or Osama bin Laden was in Pakistan. "They could be anywhere in the world including Afghanistan," he added. Mr. Jilani said if Mr. Khalilzad has any specific intelligence information with regard to the presence of the two individuals, "he should come forward and share it with us."

Dawn, 21 June 2005

Pakistan-US naval drill

KARACHI, June 20: Pakistan and United States navies will conduct a joint exercise in the North Arabian Sea from Wednesday, it was announced on Monday by US and Pakistani naval officials. Commodore Hank Miranda of United States Navy and Commodore Azhar Hayat of Pakistan Navy gave details of the exercise to newsmen at a press conference on board USS Kauffman. The exercise, which will last for 10 days, has been named Inspired Union 2005, a Pakistan Navy statement said.

The Daily Times, 21 June 2005

State Department conference examining 1971 crisis

WASHINGTON: The State Department is holding a two-day conference later this month to examine the South Asian crisis in 1971 and US policy towards the region between 1961 and the year of Pakistan's dismemberment. On June 28, the opening day, the conference will start with an address by Dr Marc J Susser, the Department's Historian, to be followed by a keynote address to be delivered by Ambassador R Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary

of State for Political Affairs. A discussion will take place thereafter on the release of the latest volume covering US foreign relations with South Asia from 1961 to 1972. Dr Louis J Smith of the Department's Office of the Historian will be the featured speaker. A roundtable on the 1971 crisis will follow in which four retired US diplomats will take part. They are Sidney Sober, who was charge d'affaires in Islamabad during the 1971 crisis, Ambassador Anthony C.E. Quainton, Ambassador L. Bruce Laingen and Samuel M. Hoskinson, a retired official of the National Security Council.

The Daily Times, 22 June 2005

Weeklong US-Pakistan naval exercises begin

KARACHI: US and Pakistani submarines and destroyers met in the Arabian Sea on Tuesday for a week of military exercises, a spokesman for the Pakistan Navy said. More than 700 sailors and officers from the two countries are taking part in the effort to further improve military-to-military relations and benefit from each other's experience, Lt Commander Salman Ali said. He gave no other details, and only said they would issue a statement about the exercises later Tuesday. The navies will be focusing on "undersea" and "explosive" warfare and deep water exercises, Capt Hank Miranda, commander of the US Destroyer Squadron 50, told reporters on Monday in Karachi. "These (exercises) are not directly related to checking the movement of terrorists. The purpose is to practice skills such as communications and try to keep the sea trouble-free for trade and commercial purposes and to strengthen ties as allies," he said.

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". Mr Riedel's story continued, "Mr Clinton asked, Did Mr Sharif order the Pakistani nuclear missile force to prepare for action? Did he realise how crazy that was? You have put me in the middle today, set the US to fail and I would not let it happen. Pakistan is messing with nuclear war."

Dawn, 24 June 2005

US anti-missile system for India

WASHINGTON, June 23: The Bush administration has cleared the sale of Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) anti-missile system to India and a deal could be finalized when Indian Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee arrives here next week, sources have told Dawn. The US decision is an improvement on its earlier offer to sell PAC-2. Unlike its previous versions, PAC-3 relies on kinetic energy to eliminate short and medium-range missiles carrying nuclear, biological and chemical warheads.

The Tribune, 25 June 2005

India, USA may sign missile development MoU

New Delhi, June 24: India may sign a memorandum of understanding with the USA on missile research development training and evaluation (RDTE) during the nine-day visit of Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee, starting tomorrow. Senior Defence Ministry officials said here ahead of the start of the visit that no major shopping list was on the agenda of the Defence Minister, who would be the first Indian Defence Minister to visit Washington in a long time. The issue of Mr Mukherjee's visit to the USA also came up for discussion at the meeting of the Cabinet Committee of Security (CCS) here this morning. The CCS chaired by the Prime Minister held detailed discussions over the issues which were expected to crop up during the visit. The CCS meeting was also attended among others by Mr Mukherjee, Home Minister Shivraj Patil, External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh and Finance Minister P. Chidambaram.

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.

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.

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."

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.