

The Associated Press, 1 March 2005

Iran, North Korea Focus of IAEA Attention (Andrea Dudikova)

VIENNA: As the chief of the U.N. atomic watchdog scolded Iran for delays in divulging nuclear information, the United States suggested it was considering joining Europe in offering Tehran economic incentives in exchange for abandoning its nuclear fuel program. Any such move would be a major shift in U.S. policy. During President Bush's trip to Europe last week, leaders there urged him to join them in offering such carrots on the grounds that a united front would be more effective than a continuing U.S.-Europe split over how to persuade Iran to drop its nuclear ambitions. Bush has said that Tehran should not be rewarded, alleging past covert nuclear activities violated terms of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. However, as the trip progressed, the U.S. president seemed to exhibit more flexibility, and White House spokesman Scott McClellan said Monday that Bush "is thinking through some of the ideas that were discussed." Diplomats from EU countries familiar with Bush's meetings in Brussels suggested the president appeared to undergo a change of attitude during his discussions there.

Reuters, 1 March 2005

Bush Nearing Decision on Incentives for Iran

WASHINGTON: President Bush is close to deciding whether to join Europe in offering incentives to Iran, including membership of the World Trade Organization, in exchange for Tehran's agreement to give up nuclear weapons, U.S. officials said on Monday. It would mark a significant shift in strategy for Bush, who has been reluctant to consider economic incentives for Iran to avoid being seen as rewarding bad behavior. He had been talking about taking Iran to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions. After listening to European leaders last week, Bush agreed to give their ideas careful consideration, and met with top foreign policy advisers about it on Friday. "The president is considering ideas that were discussed last week in Europe for moving forward on our efforts to get Iran to end its pursuit of nuclear weapons and abandon its nuclear weapons ambitions," said White House spokesman Scott McClellan. McClellan would not comment on when Bush might make a decision, but other officials said he was close to making one.

The News, 2 March 2005

US hoping for diplomatic solution to standoff with Iran: Rice

LONDON: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice insisted that Washington was not plotting an exit strategy in Iraq, and refused categorically in a TV interview airing on Tuesday to rule out an attack on Iran. Rice, in an interview on Monday night with ITV News, said not all diplomatic options had been exhausted in getting Iran to face international concerns that its nuclear programme could be used to make atomic weapons. "The United States never categorically rules out anything, but we are in a state in which diplomacy has time to work, in which we have many other diplomatic arrows in our quiver," she told ITV News. Washington has pushed to have Tehran brought before the UN Security Council, but on Monday, Rice said the White House was considering joining European leaders in offering Iran economic incentives in exchange for abandonment of its nuclear programme.

The Korean Herald, 3 March 2005

Pyongyang demands U.S. apology, threatens to resume missile test (Choi Soung-ah)

Chinese chief negotiator Wu Dawei had separate meetings in Seoul yesterday with U.S. counterpart Christopher Hill and South Korea's Unification Minister in an intensified diplomatic drive to get North Korea back to the negotiating table to end its nuclear standoff. Wu conveyed to Hill a common assessment by Seoul and Beijing of North Korean demands for returning to the six-way disarmament talks, diplomatic sources said. Wu called at the U.S. Embassy at 9 a.m. to see Hill, now ambassador in Seoul and newly-named as America's chief negotiator to the six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear issue. The Chinese envoy also met separately with South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-young, who doubles as head of the National Security Council here, and NSC deputy Lee Jong-seok, to brief them on Beijing's position.

The Korean Herald, 3 March 2005

N.K. steps up pressure for U.S. policy change (Seo Hyun-jin)

Amid the increasingly brisk diplomatic contacts to restart the six-party nuclear talks, Pyongyang appears to be stepping up pressure on Washington to make reconciliatory gestures so that it can rejoin the negotiations without any loss of face. Diplomatic experts here noted a North Korean threat on Wednesday to resume long-range missile tests since the United States had shown no signs of budging even after the North's Feb. 10 announcement that it possesses nuclear weapons and will indefinitely boycott the nuclear talks. Along with the missile threat, the North also demanded a U.S. apology for its hostility but signaled it is ready to return to the six-party talks. "North Korea is again trying to raise its negotiation stakes," professor Kim Keun-sik at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies said. "The North is saying that it has another card of missiles since Washington remains unflinching despite its declaration of nuclear possession." Kim predicted the North will not test its missiles at the moment because that will only provoke international criticism when the North is stating that the U.S. "hostile policy" is responsible for the nuclear standoff.

Daily Times, 3 March 2005

'US doesn't have capacity to attack Iran'

TEHRAN: The United States does not have the military capacity to attack Iran and is not likely to commit such an error because the price would be too high, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani said Tuesday. "These threats have always existed," he said in an interview on state satellite television. "I do not think the United States has the capacity to attack Iran," he said. "They will not commit such a strategic error because they know the price will be very high." The official said such an attack would also create a lot of problems for both Washington and its ally Israel. On negotiations with France, Britain

and Germany who are trying to persuade Iran to abandon a uranium enrichment programme, the Iranian negotiator said his country was "prepared for all eventualities, either the failure or the success of the negotiations." Rowhani, who is also secretary of the country's Supreme National Security Council, said Iran wanted the nuclear issue wrapped up in time for the June session of the UN nuclear watchdog, the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency.

Khaleej Times, 3 March 2005

US piles pressure on Iran over atomic plans

VIENNA: The United States accused Iran on Wednesday of deceiving UN inspectors over its nuclear arms ambitions, a charge diplomats said increased pressure on Tehran to accept European demands in key talks this month. President George W. Bush will discuss with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Thursday whether to join Europe in offering incentives to Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions, and US officials said he is leaning towards doing so. France, Britain and Germany, which criticised Tehran for not fully adhering to its pledge to freeze all activities that could be used to make atomic weapons, are offering Iran economic and political incentives to terminate the most sensitive parts of its programme. Iran has refused.

Reuters, 3 March 2005

N.Korea Threatens to Hold Missile Tests, Slams U.S.

SEOUL: North Korea has threatened to resume long-range missile testing and demanded that the United States apologize for calling the reclusive country "an outpost of tyranny," official media reported. The Korean-language version of a Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) report late Wednesday quoted a Foreign Ministry statement saying Pyongyang had the right to test-fire missiles, despite a moratorium that has been in place for six years. The statement said North Korea did not feel bound by the 1999 moratorium on missile testing, reached when Pyongyang was in non-proliferation talks with the administration of then U.S. president Bill Clinton. The North said its dialogue with Washington ended with the arrival of the Bush administration in 2001 and that meant it now had the right to resume missile testing.

People's Daily, 3 March 2005

US has no intention to invade DPRK: US top nuclear negotiator

The US top nuclear negotiator reiterated Thursday that the United States does not intend to invade the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and is ready to meet Pyongyang over the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. The United States has absolutely no intentions of invading DPRK, said Christopher Hill, US ambassador to South Korea and US head delegate to the six-party nuclear talks, in a discussion session at the Asian Leadership Conference being held in Seoul. "I would say we are very much ready (to talk to DPRK)," Hill was quoted by South Korean Yonhap News Agency as saying.

People's Daily, 3 March 2005

DPRK will return to six-party talks if US softens stance

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) will return to the six-party talks on the nuclear issue of the Korean peninsula any time if the US takes a trustworthy and sincere attitude and moves to provide conditions and justification for the resumption of talks, the DPRK's Foreign Ministry said Wednesday. In a lengthy statement, the Foreign Ministry cited what it claims are concrete facts to prove that the US is wholly to blame for suspension of the talks. It said the second-term Bush administration continues the policy of not wanting to co-exist with the DPRK and of aiming to bring down the system chosen by the Koreans themselves. This eliminates any justification for the DPRK to participate in the six-party talks, the statement said.

China Daily, 3 March 2005

Official: New dynamic in N. Korea nuke talks

China's top nuclear negotiator said Wednesday there was a new dynamic in talks to end North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei was speaking as he met South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon in Seoul, part of intensive efforts by regional powers to coax Pyongyang back to the table. South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon (L) greets Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei in Seoul March 2, 2005. Top Chinese nuclear negotiator Wu arrived in Seoul on Wednesday as five countries involved in talks to end North Korea's nuclear ambitions step up diplomatic efforts to bring Pyongyang back to the table.

The News, 3 March 2005

Khan network not a Pakistani set-up: US report

WASHINGTON: The latest study by Washington's prime anti-proliferation organization tends to support Islamabad's argument that the Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan network was not a Pakistani set-up but a gang of international smugglers that sold nuclear technology in the black market. A 6,600-word report by the Institute for Science and International Security explores the truly international character of this network and warns: "There is little confidence that other networks do not or will not exist or that elements of the Khan network will not reconstitute themselves in the future." According to the report, Dr Khan and his associates slowly expanded their import operation into "a transnational illegal network" that also exported gas centrifuges and production capabilities, as well as designs for nuclear weapons, to other, mostly Muslim, countries to turn a profit and provide additional business for their international collaborators.

The News, 3 March 2005

'Iran nukes may invite attack by other regional power'

WASHINGTON: A top US military commander warned on Wednesday that Iran may invite attack by another regional power if it succeeds in developing nuclear weapons. General John Abizaid, head of the US Central Command, told members of

Congress he was surprised the Iranian military had not given more thought to the strategic consequences of acquiring nuclear weapons. "I would think it would not be a good idea to develop a weapon because it puts you behind the rest of the powers, it assumes all the powers in the region – not the United States, but the powers in the region – can accept the fact that you'll be nuclear armed," he said.

The Asahi Shimbun, 3 March 2005

Hints of secret nuke plant in N. Korea (Nobuyoshi Sakajiri)

WASHINGTON: U.S. spy planes flying near North Korea have detected traces of a radioactive gas emitted during the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel rods, which could be a possible sign of a secret nuclear facility, sources here said. U.S. intelligence analysts are still trying to determine the significance of finding krypton 85, a radioactive isotope that is a byproduct of reprocessing nuclear fuel rods to extract plutonium, in the atmosphere near North Korea last December. Krypton 85 was also detected in July 2003 when North Korea announced it had completed the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel rods. Two months later, the North Korean regime was said to have halted reprocessing operations at its Yongbyon facility about 90 kilometers north of Pyongyang, the capital.

The Telegraph, 4 March 2005

Delhi blips on Rice radar

New Delhi, March.3. US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice is likely to come to India on an official visit later this month - her first trip to the subcontinent. Though dates are yet to be finalised, indications suggest Rice may be here on March 16. It is also likely that she will also go to Pakistan as in the past years this has been the usual travel programme of senior US leaders who have visited South Asia. US embassy officials maintained that they were not aware of a visit by Rice to India or in the neighbourhood. But highly placed sources in the government said Rice is seriously considering visiting India and the visit is likely to take place by the middle of this month.

Global Security Newswire, 4 March 2005

Bunker Buster Would Not Contain Blast, Official Says (David Ruppe)

WASHINGTON: A nuclear weapon modified for earth-penetration that the Bush administration is seeking funding to study would not burrow far enough into the earth to contain its blast, a senior Energy Department official said yesterday. Nor is it intended to, National Nuclear Security Administration head Linton Brooks said, adding that the administration was "imprecise" if it had conveyed that impression. The Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator's (RNEP) hardened shell, which the White House hopes to field test next year, is intended to provide a few meters of deeper penetration in order to project its force deeper for striking enemy facilities far underground, Brooks told a House Armed Services subcommittee. Is there any way an RNEP of any size that we would drop will not produce a huge amount of radioactive debris?" Representative Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.) asked. "No, there's not," Brooks said. "I really must apologize for my lack of precision if we in the administration have suggested that it was possible to have a bomb that penetrated far enough to trap all fallout," he added. (GSN<<http://www.nti.org/d%5Fnewswire/issues/2005/2/17/eae8e5be%2D4537%2D4d6c%2Db428%2Da8bc24c15e26.html>> , Feb. 17).

Khaleej Times, 4 March 2005

Bush says he's ready to help Europeans with Iran

WASHINGTON: US President George W. Bush on Thursday again stated his willingness to assist European countries in their negotiations with Iran, and blamed Tehran for a lack of cooperation. "I have told our European friends who are handling the negotiations on behalf of the rest of the world that we want to help make sure the process goes forward, and we're looking at ways to help move the process forward," Bush said, noting talks he had during last week's trip to Europe. Bush's remarks were echoed across Washington at the State Department by the chief US diplomat, Condoleezza Rice, who said Tehran had shown "no indication" it was ready to seal a deal. Rice also reiterated the prospect that Iran could face UN action if it did not show a willingness to cooperate on the matter. Meanwhile in Vienna, diplomats said Iran is pouring the concrete foundation for a heavy-water nuclear reactor which can make weapons-grade plutonium and which the UN atomic agency had asked it not to build.

Inter Press Service, 4 March 2005

Nuclear Threat Dwarfs Existing Treaties (Jim Lobe)

U.S. President George W. Bush must be prepared to make major compromises if he wants a tougher non-proliferation regime to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to countries that do not now have them, according to a new report released here Thursday by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP). WASHINGTON, Mar 3 (IPS) - At the very least, he should be prepared to give up his latest efforts to devise new nuclear weapons, such as so-called "bunker-busters" that are supposed to penetrate targets buried far underground, and reaffirm the U.S. commitment to eventually eliminate its nuclear arsenal, according to the report, "Universal Compliance: A Strategy for Nuclear Security". A global blueprint for a kind of grand bargain between nuclear and non-nuclear states to halt the spread of nuclear weapons and begin the process of their elimination, the 220-page report comes two months before the May 2005 review of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), whose effectiveness is being questioned today as never before.

The Washington Post, 4 March 2005

A Better Iran Strategy

The chances that the West will succeed in peacefully restraining Iran from building nuclear weapons have been looking dismal

at the meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency this week. The agency's staff reported that Iran was still not fully cooperating with its investigation into the secret uranium enrichment program Tehran began 18 years ago. Iranian officials, meanwhile, made it clear that their negotiations with the European governments that seek a long-term freeze on that program are going nowhere. A permanent moratorium, said the Iranian delegate, "was not on the table, will not be on the table and should not be on the table."

The News, 5 March 2005

Iran secretly trying to make nukes: Bush

WASHINGTON: President George W Bush charged Iran with flouting its international responsibilities by secretly trying to make nuclear weapons. "The guilty party is Iran," Bush said on a visit to CIA headquarters. "They are the ones who are not living up to international accords," he said on late Thursday. "They are the people that the whole world is saying: Don't develop a nuclear weapon." With evident satisfaction, Bush said the Europeans and Russian President Vladimir Putin "feel the same way." Hinting he would support the allies in offering commercial concessions to Iran to end the programme, Bush said, "We're looking at ways to help move the process forward." But Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, at a news conference, said, "Thus far, the Iranians have shown no indication that they are taking the deal." Bush conferred briefly with Rice in the Oval Office on Wednesday and they also held a longer meeting there Thursday.

Global Security Newswire, 5 March 2005

U.S. Approves Final Tests of MOX Fuel

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission yesterday approved the test use of fuel made from weapon-grade plutonium at a U.S. nuclear power plant, according to the Associated Press (see GSN, Feb. 18). The commission granted a license to allow Duke Power to begin testing four mixed-oxide (MOX) fuel assemblies at a nuclear power plant in South Carolina. Duke Power is awaiting a shipment of MOX fuel from France and expects to begin testing this spring, AP reported. "We are pleased that NRC agrees with our assessment that it is safe," MOX project manager Steve Nesbit said. "This NRC approval is an important step toward the goal of disposing of surplus nuclear weapons material and thereby advancing international nonproliferation efforts".

Daily Times, 5 March 2005

Rice says Europe-Iran nuclear talks on right track

WASHINGTON: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Thursday European negotiations to make Iran curtail its nuclear programmes were heading in the "right direction" and Washington was weighing how best to support them. Rice, who will meet President George W Bush to discuss the US strategy towards the talks later on Thursday, said the negotiations would expose whether Iran is prepared to end the West's suspicions that it is pursuing a nuclear bomb. "We believe that the EU negotiations are leading in the right direction because what they are doing is they are confronting Iran with a choice about whether it is prepared to give the international community the kind of confidence it needs about Iranian activities," the top US diplomat said.

Global Security Newswire, 5 March 2005

Iran Wants to Break U.N. Seals and Test Nuclear-Related Equipment, Diplomats Say

Iran wants to test nuclear-related equipment that has been placed under U.N. seals, Western diplomats familiar with talks between Tehran and the European powers said yesterday (see GSN, March 3). "Iran wants to expand quality control checks and maintenance of 'nonessential' enrichment centrifuge parts to 'essential' centrifuge parts that have been sealed by the [International Atomic Energy Agency] under the [uranium enrichment] suspension," one diplomat told Reuters. A diplomat close to the U.N. nuclear watchdog confirmed the Iranian request. "This is clearly a violation of the spirit of the suspension agreement," said another diplomat, who added that the Europeans had said the demand was unacceptable.

Daily Times, 5 March 2005

Generals used Khan for Pakistan's nukes, says US report

WASHINGTON: A disarmament group has claimed that Pakistan used the Khan network for 25 years to "obtain technology, components, and materials for its own nuclear weapons." The Arms Control Association (ACA), a Washington-based group formed in 1971 to promote arms control, in an article by Leonard Weiss in its March newsletter to members states that though Dr Khan's activities had been tracked by US intelligence for "more than two decades, little attempt had been made to roll up the network he created. Rather than focusing on this profound long-term strategic danger to national security, the United States had chosen to pursue short-term, tactical foreign policy gains with Pakistan." But according to a briefing given to Pakistani journalists on February 1, 2004, by Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai, commander of Pakistan's Strategic Planning and Development Cell, Dr Khan signed a 12-page confession in which he admitted to providing Iran, Libya, and North Korea with technical assistance and components for making high-speed centrifuges used to produce enriched uranium.

The New York Times, 6 March 2005

Iran Says It Won't Give Up Program to Enrich Uranium (Nazila Fathi)

TEHRAN, Mar. 5: Iran's chief nuclear negotiator said Saturday that the country would never permanently cease enriching uranium, and he warned that if the United States went to the United Nations Security Council to seek sanctions against Iran, "the security and stability of the region would become a problem." The statements came at the opening of a rare conference on nuclear technology in Tehran, to which three American scholars were also invited. The Iranian negotiator, Hassan Rowhani, also said the government wanted to see progress in its negotiations with Europe by the middle of this month. "We

said that we were not happy with the pace of the negotiations. We will end the negotiations if we feel there is no tangible progress by then," he said.

The New York Times, 6 March 2005

Slowdown in Program to Clean Up Nuclear Waste in Washington State Is Drawing Criticism (Matthew L. Wald)

WASHINGTON, Mar. 5: The Energy Department is drawing increasing criticism for its plan to slow down its cleanup of radioactive waste in tanks at the Hanford nuclear reservation in Washington State. The energy secretary, Samuel W. Bodman, told the Senate Energy Committee on Thursday that there are issues "where we do have differences of opinion" on how thoroughly the underground tanks should be emptied. "We have slowed the spending down there, in order to take on those things where we are in agreement," Mr. Bodman said. The tanks are filled with waste from decades of atomic bomb manufacture. Most of the material is high-level waste, which by law must be stabilized and buried. But in recent years the department has defined some of the material as "waste incidental to reprocessing," which does not require deep burial, and said it wants to cover it with grout and leave it in the tanks.

The Associated Press, 6 March 2005

Iran Admits Keeping Nuclear Program Secret

TEHRAN: Iran confirmed Sunday that it initially developed its nuclear program in secret, going to the black market for material, and blaming its discretion on the U.S. sanctions and European restrictions that denied Iran access to advanced civilian nuclear technology. Iran now openly admits that it has already achieved proficiency in the full range of activities involved in enriching uranium – a technology that can be used to produce fuel for nuclear reactors or an atomic bomb. Washington has accused Tehran of using its civilian nuclear program as a cover to build a nuclear bomb. Iran denies this, saying its nuclear program is merely geared towards generating electricity. "True. There was secrecy," former president Hashemi Rafsanjani said Sunday. "But secrecy was necessary to buy equipment for a peaceful nuclear program." "If sanctions had not been imposed on us, we would have declared everything publicly, but we had problems buying metal. Nobody sold us anything in the market," he said.

The Associated Press, 6 March 2005

U.S. Envoy to Try for N.Korean Nuke Talks

SEOUL: The top U.S. negotiator for the North Korea nuclear dispute will visit Washington and Tokyo this week to seek ways to lure Pyongyang back to the negotiating table, the U.S. Embassy said Monday. Christopher Hill will meet Kenichiro Sasae, director-general of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asia-Oceania bureau on Thursday, the embassy said. In Washington, Hill is expected to hold consultations on the six-party talks and give a speech at the Brookings Institution and return to South Korea. The White House said Friday it was nominating Hill as head of the State Department's East Asia and Pacific bureau. The appointment must be approved by the Senate. Diplomatic efforts to bring back North Korea to the six-party talks gained urgency following the North's Feb. 10 claim that it has nuclear weapons.

The Associated Press, 6 March 2005

Congressman Says Syria Nuke Comment a Joke

DALLAS: A congressman who raised eyebrows with recent remarks about personally wanting to drop a nuclear bomb on Syria now says he was joking. The Feb. 19 remarks by Rep. Sam Johnson, R-Texas, at a church pancake breakfast were first reported this week in Roll Call. The Capitol Hill newspaper reported it had heard a recording of the talk made by someone in attendance. According to Roll Call, Johnson said he was talking with President Bush and GOP Rep. Kay Granger at the White House about weapons of mass destruction that troops failed to find in Iraq. According to Roll Call, Johnson said he told the president: "Syria is the problem. Syria is where those weapons of mass destruction are, in my view. You know, I can fly an F-15, put two nukes on 'em and I'll make one pass. We won't have to worry about Syria anymore."

The New York Times, 6 March 2005

One way to get attention

The Bush administration's regressive plan to develop powerful "bunker busting" nuclear weapons was held in check last year only after Congress failed to come up with research money. Ominously, lawmakers from both parties see a strong chance the money will be found this year because of concern over rogue nuclear states like North Korea. Fears of a new nuclear arms race had kept this and a companion plan for smaller weapons bottled up for years under a congressional ban. But the administration overcame Capitol resistance two years ago, insisting research was needed on more precise nuclear weapons to use against mobile and underground targets. If anything, the events of the past two years – particularly the faulty to nonexistent intelligence on Iraq – provide further caution against providing Pentagon planners with new nuclear options for hit-and-miss stratagems.

Daily Times, 6 March 2005

US think tank claims Iran's heavy-water plant nearly done

VIENNA: New satellite images show a heavy water plant in Iran, intended to supply a research reactor that could eventually produce plutonium for one atomic bomb a year, is nearly complete, a US think-tank said on Friday. The photos of the plant in Arak, 240 km south of Tehran, were taken in February by the US commercial satellite firms Digital Globe and Space Imaging and provided to Reuters by the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), a US think-tank. "Adjacent to the reactor construction site (in Arak) is the heavy water production plant, which is almost completed and is anticipated to supply the necessary heavy water for the heavy water reactor," ISIS said in an analysis of the imagery.

Dawn, 6 March 2005

Iran warns Europe, US of oil crisis

TEHRAN, Mar. 5: Iran's top nuclear official on Saturday warned the United States and Europe of the danger of an oil crisis if Tehran is sent before the UN Security Council over its nuclear programme, but said that a deal with Europe could be near. "The first to suffer will be Europe and the United States themselves, this would cause problems for the regional energy market, for the European economy and even more so for the United States," Hassan Rowhani, whose country is the second largest oil producer in OPEC, told reporters. Mr Rowhani, who was speaking at a conference in Tehran on nuclear technology and sustainable development, however expressed optimism that an agreement would be reached with Europe over the development of Iran's nuclear programme. EU members Britain, France and Germany are trying to convince Iran to dismantle nuclear fuel work - which the United States says is part of a covert atomic weapons development - in return for economic and political rewards.

The New York Times, 7 March 2005

China Doubts U.S. Data on North Korean Nuclear Work (Joseph Kahn)

BEIJING, Mar. 6: The Chinese foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, expressed doubt on Sunday about the quality of American intelligence on North Korea's nuclear program and said the United States would have to talk to North Korea one-on-one to resolve the standoff. Mr. Li's assessment, made at an extended news conference during China's annual legislative meeting, amounted to a double slap at the United States. Washington has repeatedly sounded the alarm about North Korea's nuclear efforts and has pressed China, North Korea's only significant ally, to be more active in seeking a solution. President Bush last month sent a high-level envoy to Beijing to present fresh intelligence data that the Bush administration contends shows that North Korea's nuclear program is more advanced than previously thought and that it has been selling nuclear materials around the world.

Asahi Shimbun, 7 March 2005

Proof Libya got North's uranium

U.S. says it has solid evidence of a nuclear black market. The Bush administration can "scientifically prove" Libya acquired North Korean uranium through the nuclear black market that a Pakistani scientist helped set up, according to high-level sources. Japanese officials were informed of this in January by Michael Green, senior director for Asia on the White House National Security Council, the sources said. They said he passed along the U.S. intelligence to Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda and high-ranking Foreign Ministry officials. Green, according to the sources, said the United States can show that North Korean uranium was transported to Libya via the nuclear black market that Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan helped establish.

Global Security Newswire, 9 March 2005

Padilla May be Charged, U.S. Attorney General Says

U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales suggested yesterday that criminal charges may be filed against Jose Padilla, who has been detained since 2002 on suspicion of plotting a "dirty bomb" attack, according to the Los Angeles Times. "Certainly, pursuing criminal charges would be an option that the United States would have," Gonzales said. "That decision has not been made yet." The Justice Department is appealing a federal court ruling that declared Padilla's indefinite detention illegal. The court ruled that the government must charge him with a crime, release him or name him as a material witness, the Times reported. It may be difficult for Justice Department to charge Padilla with a crime, the Times reported. Much of the information the department gathered against him was collected while Padilla has been in military detention and lacked access to a lawyer, raising concerns that it may not be admissible in court. In addition, Gonzales said there was concern that a case could not be brought against Padilla without risking "sensitive intelligence collection sources".

Global Security Newswire, 9 March 2005

U.S. Rejects Bilateral Talks With North Korea

The United States yesterday reiterated its opposition to conducting direct talks with North Korea on the Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program, Agence France-Presse reported. "We've ... made it very clear that if there is a need for North Korea to talk with us, they have the opportunity to do that in the context of the six-party talks," said White House spokesman Scott McClellan. Meanwhile, a Chinese envoy is expected to arrive in Washington today to discuss resuming stalled six-party talks, AFP reported.

Global Security Newswire, 9 March 2005

Bush Marks 35th Anniversary of NPT

On the 35th anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty yesterday, U.S. President George W. Bush called for new efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. "It is essential in these times of great challenge to international security, particularly when rogue states and terrorists seek to acquire weapons of mass destruction, that the international community work together to confront the dangers of nuclear proliferation. I call upon all states that are party to the treaty to act promptly and effectively to meet the challenges to the NPT and our common security," Bush said in a statement. Among the measures Bush proposed are efforts to prevent countries from obtaining nuclear weapons capability under the guise of civilian nuclear programs, a strengthened International Atomic Energy Agency, and universal adherence to the agency's Additional Protocol, which gives it the authority to conduct more intrusive monitoring of a country's nuclear activities.

Global Security Newswire, 9 March 2005

Better Nuclear Detectors Needed, DHS Deputy Nominee Says (Joe Fiorill)

WASHINGTON: A new unit in the U.S. Homeland Security Department will seek to bolster funds and speed research for improved nuclear detection technology at entry ports, Homeland Security Deputy Secretary-designate Michael Jackson said yesterday. Homeland Security's new Domestic Nuclear Detection Office is expected to be at the center of the department's nuclear response strategy, said the nominee, a former deputy transportation secretary who was most recently chief operating officer of AECOM Technology Corp. He cited better detection capabilities as one important aspect of the work. "This has been one of Secretary [Michael] Chertoff's early briefs, and he is strongly supportive of the effort," Jackson said when Senator Norm Coleman (R-Minn.) asked about the program at a hearing of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. President George W. Bush's fiscal 2006 budget proposal for Homeland Security stipulates creation of the new office and includes \$262 million to research and develop better port-of-entry radiation detection devices.

Financial Times.com, 9 March 2005

Russia eyes withdrawal from key treaty to cut missiles (Hubert Wetzel, Demetri Sevastopulo and Guy Dinmore)

WASHINGTON: Russia has confronted the US in recent weeks with the possibility it may withdraw from a nuclear and conventional missile disarmament treaty that formed the bedrock of arms reduction efforts during the cold war. At a meeting in Washington in January, Sergei Ivanov, the Russian defence minister, asked Donald Rumsfeld, his US counterpart, how the Bush administration would respond if Russia quit the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty (INF), the Pentagon said. In a blow to Russian military hawks, a delegation from the foreign ministry later travelled to Washington to withdraw the proposal, an informed Russian source said. The fact that Russia's military establishment was considering such a radical break with a pillar of the international arms control regime reflects a serious deterioration in relations between Russia and the west. The Pentagon and State Department said they could not confirm the withdrawal of the Russian proposal.

Reuters, 9 March 2005

U.S. Panel Faults Intelligence on Iran Weapons –NYT

WASHINGTON: A presidential commission investigating prewar intelligence about Iraq's weapons has concluded that U.S. data on Iran's arms is "inadequate," The New York Times reported on Tuesday, citing people who have been briefed on the panel's work. In a report to President Bush later this month, the panel will describe American intelligence on Iran "as inadequate to allow firm judgments about Iran's weapons program," the newspaper reported in an article posted on its Web site. A spokesman for the nine-member commission declined direct comment on the New York Times report. "The report itself isn't complete yet and the full details will be presented to the president," spokesman Larry McQuillan said. Bush accuses Iran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons and called it part of an "axis of evil." Tehran insists its nuclear program is intended solely to generate electricity.

People's Daily, 9 March 2005

US threatens to take actions against Iran

The United States warned of Iran on Tuesday that it will consider possible actions against Iran if Iran does not fulfill its obligations to stop its sensitive nuclear activities. "Iran has an obligation right now to reassure the international community that its statements about not seeking nuclear weapons are true," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said at a news briefing. Iran needs to turn its temporary suspension into a permanent cessation of uranium enrichment activity, Boucher said, noting "Refusal by Iran to do this, that and the other is not going to get them anywhere." "The only way Iran is going to get anywhere with the Europeans or with the rest of the world is by accepting freely its obligations and undertaking to fulfill them. "Unfortunately, we've not seen that kind of attitude from Iran, and we may have to consider what other action to take if Iran does not fulfill its obligations," Boucher said.

Dawn, 9 March 2005

Bush says NPT 'deserters' be punished

WASHINGTON, Mar. 8: US President George Bush on Monday called for punishing countries that desert the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and beefing up the UN nuclear watchdog agency's powers. "We cannot allow rogue states that violate their commitments and defy the international community to undermine the NPT's fundamental role in strengthening international security," President Bush said in a statement. "We must therefore close the loopholes that allow states to produce nuclear materials that can be used to build bombs under the cover of civilian nuclear programs," Mr Bush said. The US leader did not name names, but Washington has been locked in disputes over nuclear programs in North Korea - which pulled out of the NPT in 2003 to world shock - and Iran, which Washington has accused of seeking atomic weapons under the guise of developing a civilian nuclear program.

Daily Times, 10 March 2005

US envoy tells North Korea it can't divide and rule

SEOUL: The top US negotiator to North Korean nuclear talks urged Pyongyang on Wednesday to give up its atomic weapons programme and forget about trying to drive a wedge between the other countries involved in the negotiations. The US ambassador to South Korea, Christopher Hill, told a breakfast meeting North Korea had "1,000 pressing problems" and pursuing nuclear weapons would not help the impoverished state to solve any of them. "What we need from North Korea is not just a freeze of plutonium programmes. We need them to truly do away, once and for all, with all of their nuclear weapons programmes," Hill said. He called on Pyongyang to come back to the negotiating table, where it could air all its demands. He said the North should not look to make gains by trying to drive a wedge between the other five parties to the talks - South Korea, Japan, China, the United States and Russia.

The News, 10 March 2005

Enough evidence over Iran nuke ambitions: Rice

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has said there was plenty of reason to be concerned over Iran's nuclear ambitions, downplaying press reports that US intelligence on Iran was inadequate. "I believe that there is enough evidence that there are problems with Iran's civilian nuclear power ambitions," Rice said in an interview with Spanish-language network in the United States. "That's why you have so many countries trying to make sure that there is no proliferation risk," she said, according to the text of the interview handed out by the State Department. According to Rice there are "a number of countries, and indeed the International Atomic Energy Agency itself, that are concerned about suspicious activities in Iran."

China Daily, 10 March 2005

Rice to make Asia trip, talking about N. Korea

WASHINGTON - Condoleezza Rice will make her first trip to Asia as U.S. secretary of state next week to discuss with the Chinese and others how to resume talks on North Korea's nuclear program and to encourage India-Pakistan peace moves, the US State Department said on Wednesday. US President George W. Bush has pledged to stress diplomacy in his second term and is sending Rice to the region on what will be her fifth foreign trip since taking up her post in late January. After travel that has focused on Europe and the Middle East, where she was well-received, Rice will visit India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Japan, South Korea and China on a March 14-21 trip, the State Department said. "In South Asia, the secretary will highlight positive momentum in the region, including our transformed relationship with India, our continuing commitment to Afghanistan's reconstruction and our long-term engagement with Pakistan," the department said in a statement.

Dawn, 10 March 2005

Nuclear dimension of Pakistan-US ties (Tayyab Siddiqui)

The focus of US President George W. Bush's foreign policy agenda in his previous administration was the "war on terror", which determined its relations with other countries: they were "either with us or against us". Pakistan played a pivotal role in this war and was rewarded by American largesse. President Musharraf was hailed for his personal contribution in making Pakistan a front-line state, despite strident domestic opposition. Bush demonstrated his appreciation by inviting Musharraf to the Camp David retreat. Musharraf, a pariah until 9/11 on account of having assumed power in a coup, was called a 'courageous leader' and a 'personal friend' by Bush. The atmosphere has been reminiscent of the 1980s when Pakistan and the US had close ties during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The US Congress has agreed to provide \$3 billion in aid, and has also viewed proposals for the improvement of Pakistan's economy with a favourable eye. Unfortunately, President Musharraf appears to have a misplaced confidence that this relationship will endure.

United Press International, 10 March 2005

Protection not in place for electric WMD (Dee Ann Divis)

WASHINGTON, Mar. 9: A nuclear bomb detonated high above the United States could unleash an electromagnetic pulse that would shut down the nation's power grid and, along with it, communications, water supplies and even food transportation. If the effect is long-lasting enough, it also could trigger a social collapse that could conceivably cause the deaths of millions of people and, temporarily, push the nation back 100 years, a congressional commission told the Senate. Despite the threat, which could come from terrorists as well as enemy states, the Department of Homeland Security has not addressed the issue fully or weighed the commission's recommendations, said Lowell Wood and Peter Pry, respectively, a member and senior staffer on the Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States from Electromagnetic Pulse Attack. They testified Tuesday before the Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security.

The Guardian, 10 March 2005

US in dark on Iran's WMD, says inquiry (Julian Borger)

Washington: A presidential commission has found that US intelligence on Iran is so patchy that it is impossible to reach definite conclusions about the country's suspected weapons programmes, it was reported yesterday. The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the US Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction is due to report to the president by the end of this month, primarily on the intelligence fiasco over Iraq's non-existent WMD. Its findings could also knock a significant dent in the Bush administration's Iran policy, which is built on the presumption that Tehran is bent on building nuclear weapons and is not prepared to trade that for economic and diplomatic incentives, as European states hope. Late last year, Porter Goss, the CIA director, reported to Congress that Iran continued "to vigorously pursue indigenous programmes to produce nuclear, chemical and biological weapons". In response to yesterday's report, Mr Bush insisted that Washington was not alone in its sceptical view of Iran's intentions. "I think it's very important for the United States to continue to work with our friends and allies which believe that the Iranians want a nuclear weapon and which know that Iran possessing a nuclear weapon would be very destabilising."

The New York Times, 11 March 2005

U.S. and European Allies Agree on Steps in Iran Dispute (David E. Sanger and Steven R. Weisman)

WASHINGTON, Mar. 10: Europe and the United States have agreed on a joint approach to negotiating with Iran over its nuclear program after months of dispute, with the Bush administration agreeing to offer modest economic incentives and the Europeans agreeing to take the issue to the United Nations Security Council if negotiations fail, senior American officials said Thursday. The American incentives would go into effect only if Iran agreed to halt the enrichment of uranium permanently. The agreement represents a major shift in strategy for both the Bush administration, which has refused for years to offer Iran incentives to give up its program, and for Europe, which had been reluctant to discuss penalties. The agreement, which has been widely anticipated since President Bush returned from Europe late last month, is expected to be announced on Friday.

The United States will agree to support Iran's entry into the World Trade Organization, a process that usually takes years, and the sale of critical spare parts for the country's aging commercial airliners.

Daily Times, 11 March 2005

The danger of an Israeli attack on Iran (Jonathan Power)

Iran, and not North Korea, has become the pivot of Washington's attentions for one very good reason: North Korea's foreign policy is next to passive whilst Iran's is actively anti-Israel. Unsurprisingly, the number of important voices in Israel and the US who argue for preventive strikes against Iran's nuclear installations has grown significantly over the last twelve months. How is the ordinary mortal able to make up his mind on whether Iran is developing nuclear weapons or not, and if so whether this poses a serious threat to Israel or other neighbours? After all, as Hans Blix, the UN's former chief nuclear weapons' inspector, famously said about Iraq's supposed nuclear armoury, there was nothing to stop Saddam Hussein hanging up a sign "Beware of the dog", even if there was no dog. Moreover, even if Iran does have or almost have the capability to build a few nuclear weapons who would they use them against in a real life situation, as opposed to the make-believe scenarios that game playing strategists love to create? Against Israel, Europe or the US? But these putative antagonists all have enough submarines, hardened silos and nuclear missiles to ensure a second strike ability that would wipe Iran off the face of the planet.

Daily Times, 11 March 2005

US installing nuclear detectors in Singapore port

SINGAPORE: The US government will install radiation detectors in Singapore's busy port to prevent the smuggling of ingredients for dirty nuclear bombs, US officials said on Thursday. Singapore, a close ally in the US-led war on terrorism, is the first Southeast Asian nation to join Washington's "MegaPorts" security initiative which also covers the Bahamas, Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands, Sri Lanka and Spain. "The US is going to supply the equipment free of cost as well as training, and maintenance of the equipment," David Huizenga, assistant deputy administrator of the US National Nuclear Security Administration, told reporters. The devices, which resemble a gate that can sound an alarm when containers holding nuclear material pass through, should be ready by September, US officials said. Singapore operates the world's second-busiest container port after Hong Kong and the world's biggest transshipment hub, where goods arriving by ship from one port are re-loaded onto a different ship destined for another port.

Daily times, 11 March 2005

US envoy warns North Korea to return to nuke talks

TOKYO: The United States' point man on North Korea on Thursday warned the reclusive state would face grave consequences if it didn't return to the six-way talks on ending its nuclear weapons programme, Kyodo news agency reported. The US ambassador to South Korea, Christopher Hill, told a key Japanese ruling party official that North Korea would face a serious situation if it missed out on the chance to come back to the six-party nuclear talks, Kyodo said. But in his meeting with Shinzo Abe, a senior official in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, Hill stopped short of supporting economic sanctions against North Korea, expressing understanding for the contemplation of sanctions as one option, Kyodo said. Abe is a known advocate of using sanctions against the North. On Feb. 10, North Korea declared for the first time it had nuclear weapons and also said it was dropping out of the six-party talks aimed at ending its nuclear ambitions.

Hindustan Times, 11 March 2005

Bush extends Iran sanctions amid nuclear dispute

Montgomery: US President George W Bush on Thursday renewed sanctions barring US firms and citizens from oil dealings with Iran, citing an "unusual and extraordinary threat" from Tehran. In a decree released by the White House, Bush accused Iran of "support for international terrorism, efforts to undermine the West Asia peace process, and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them." The decision - which extends by one-year sanctions initially imposed by then-president Bill Clinton on March 15, 1995 - came as Bush has piled on pressure on Iran over its nuclear programmes. Washington accuses the Islamic republic of covertly seeking atomic weapons, a charge Tehran denies. The two countries have also clashed over the nascent political process in Iraq. Iran's policies and actions "are contrary to the interests of the United States in the region and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States," said Bush.

The Indian Express, 11 March 2005

A theatre of mistaken missiles (Kartik Bommakanti)

India's policy needs to be attuned to the political realities of South Asia's strategic context, instead of serving as an extension of US security policy. The Government's current negotiations with the US on possible purchase of the Patriot battery system as part of the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership deserve a critical examination. Reflecting on the broader debate about the establishment of a Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) system, there really is no merit in acquiring such a system.

The Indian Express, 11 March 2005

Spare the world a nuclear 9/11 (Jagat S. Mehta)

India and Pakistan should evolve ways to preempt such a possibility. The greatest threat to peace and stability in the 21st century comes from two irrationalities: anti-Americanism and Islamophobia; one certainty -poverty in all its ramifications and, one, probability - nuclear terrorism. The emphasis varies subjectively on the origin and consequences but they are all inter-related. The most dangerous may be nuclear terrorism. Arresting nuclear proliferation has concentrated on inter-governmental diplomacy. The Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) was postulated on the five permanent members (P5), enjoying a privileged

licence to develop nuclear weapons and other independent nations, in return for renouncing weapon capabilities, entitled to solicit cooperation of P5 for peaceful purposes. The P5 have not kept their pledge for progressive disarmament but US analysts believe that diplomacy has succeeded fairly well in enforcing the NPT. It is only now realised that NPT signatories could accumulate fissile material but, if they do not test, the letter of the NPT will not be violated.

Daily Times, 12 March 2005

US coaxes Iran to shelve nukes

WASHINGTON: The United States, in a policy shift, will offer Iran economic incentives to abandon its suspected pursuit of nuclear weapons, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Friday. "We will make clear that we will lift our objections to an Iranian application to the WTO and that we are prepared to lift an objection to the licensing of spare parts for Iranian commercial aircraft," Rice said in an interview. The united approach marks a milestone in efforts to curb what Washington believes is Iran's attempts to develop nuclear arms. Iran has denied it is seeking atomic weapons. "The decision that the president has taken is that the United States will make an effort to actively support the EU3 negotiations with the Iranians," Rice added, referring to an EU diplomatic effort to negotiate an end to Iran's suspected nuclear weapons program.

Daily Times, 12 March 2005

AQ Khan, pipeline and US policy to pressure Iran

The federal information minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, has finally confirmed that Dr AQ Khan helped Iran in its nuclear-weapons programme by providing centrifuges to enrich uranium. His statement puts to rest the controversy over the exact nature of Dr Khan's assistance to Iran. Of course, Mr Rashid was careful to reiterate that Dr Khan's enterprise had no institutional backing from the state of Pakistan. Why did Mr Rashid choose to spill the beans now? The confession comes just days ahead of the visit to Pakistan of the new US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. Another development on the Iran front is equally interesting. The United States wants India to wait another six months or so before finalising a gas pipeline deal with Iran. This pipeline, which has to go overland to India via Pakistan, has been in the works for many years. Only recently, and as a result of both India's growing need for gas as well as the thaw between India and Pakistan, has New Delhi come round to accepting its urgency.

Daily Times, 12 March 2005

Pakistan's nuclear admission part of US pressure on Iran

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's admission that the father of its atomic bomb, Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan, gave Iran centrifuges that can be used to make nuclear weapons reflects a carrot-and-stick approach to persuade Tehran to abandon any bomb-making plans, analysts said. The Pakistani admission on Thursday came just before US and European officials said that Washington, in a major shift, would adopt a European proposal to offer Iran economic incentives to abandon its nuclear ambitions. Pakistan has said in the past that the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), had discovered that Iran had centrifuges of Pakistani design. It had also conceded that these might have come from Pakistan.

Daily Times, 12 March 2005

US urged to draw China, South Korea closer on North nukes

WASHINGTON: The US drive to eliminate North Korea's nuclear programs will not succeed unless Washington works more closely with China and South Korea, experts told Congress on Thursday. James Lilley, a former US envoy to South Korea and China, said both of those immediate neighbors of North Korea shared the US goal of halting the North's nuclear ambitions but lacked America's sense of urgency. Seoul and Beijing are reluctant to cut the aid that keeps Pyongyang afloat and their aversion to coercion has "truncated, almost eliminated" a US military option, he said. "Our problem is to somehow work their carrot into our stick and reach a common objective in dealing with North Korea," Lilley told the House Committee on International Relations. South Korea, China, Japan and Russia are parties with the United States in talks with North Korea over a nuclear dispute that began in October 2002. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will visit Seoul, Tokyo and Beijing next week.

Daily Times, 12 March 2005

US, EU plan carrot-and-stick approach for Tehran

WASHINGTON: The United States and Europe have agreed on a joint approach in negotiating with Iran over its nuclear programme, with Washington agreeing to offer modest economic incentives and Europe to take the issue to the UN Security Council if all else fails, according to press reports on Friday. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is expected to make the announcement on Friday, The Washington Post said, adding that Rice's deputy Robert Zoellic worked out the details of the agreement at a meeting on Tuesday with British, French and German officials. "We're in support of what the Europeans are doing, but we had to find a way to demonstrate it," a senior American official told The New York Times about the pending announcement. "This is our way of making clear that we will join the Europeans in giving Iran positive reasons to give up its programme." The Times said the US incentives - support for Iran's entry into the World Trade Organisation and selling Iran spare parts for its ageing commercial airliners - would go into effect only if Iran agreed to permanently halt uranium enrichment at its nuclear plants.

The International Herald Tribune, 12 March 2005

U.S. and EU forge joint strategy on Iran talks (David E. Sanger and Steven R. Weisman)

WASHINGTON: The United States will drop objections to Iran's eventual membership in the World Trade Organization, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced Friday in a shift toward Europe's stance in the efforts to curb the Iranian

nuclear program. The European Union and the United States have agreed on a joint approach toward Iran over its nuclear program after months of dispute, with the Bush administration agreeing to offer modest economic incentives. Rice said the United States would also allow some sales of civilian aircraft parts to Iran on a case-by-case basis. In return, senior American officials said, the Europeans have agreed to take the nuclear issue to the United Nations Security Council if negotiations fail. Rice's statement said, "In order to support the EU3 diplomacy, the president has decided that the United States will drop its objection to Iran's application to the World Trade Organization and will consider on a case-by-case basis the licensing of spare parts for Iranian civil aircraft, in particular from the European Union to Iran."

China Daily, 12 March 2005

US: N.Korea throws up smoke screens

North Korea is throwing up "smoke screens" in its continued refusal to return to six-country talks on its nuclear programs, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Friday. Pyongyang has repeatedly demanded Washington state it has "no hostile intent" toward North Korea. Rice dismissed the demand in an interview with the Reuters, saying, "The North Koreans are throwing up smoke screens." "Let's be realistic here. This isn't an issue of what we say or what we don't say. This is an issue of whether the North Koreans come to the table prepared to make a strategic choice" to give up their nuclear activities, she said. Rice refused to use the phrase "no hostile intent," which seems to have special significance for Pyongyang and which the United States has at times emphasized to reassure North Korea. The administration has insisted it has no plans to invade or attack North Korea, a point Rice reaffirmed.

Reuters, 13 March 2005

U.S. 'Hallucinating' Over Nuclear Talks, Iran Says

TEHRAN: Washington is "hallucinating" if it thinks Iran will scrap its nuclear fuel production plans in return for economic incentives, a senior Iranian official was quoted as saying Sunday. The United States offered the encouragements in support of the European Union which is negotiating with Tehran to try to persuade it to give up sensitive nuclear activities. "U.S. officials are either unaware of the substance of the talks or (they are) hallucinating," Sirus Naseri, a senior member of Iran's nuclear negotiating team, told the official IRNA news agency. Iran says it needs atomic technology to generate electricity and will never use it to make bombs, as the United States fears. London's Sunday Times said Israel had drawn up plans for a combined air and ground attack on Iranian nuclear installations if diplomacy fails to halt Tehran's atomic program.

The Associated Press, 13 March 2005

Adviser: U.S. Not Making Iran Concessions

WASHINGTON: President Bush's national security adviser insisted Sunday the United States is not making concessions to Iran, even though Washington has softened its stance against the nation that Bush recently labeled "the world's primary state sponsor of terror." Stephen Hadley, in his first television appearances since becoming national security adviser last month, said the United States is supporting European allies as they try to negotiate an end to Iran's suspected nuclear weapons ambitions. But he said that if those negotiations fail, the Europeans and the United States have agreed to take the matter to the United Nations Security Council. "We've now got a strategic agenda with the Europeans, and we've also got agreements from the Europeans that if their negotiations do not succeed, and Iran resumes its effort to move toward a nuclear capability, then we will go together and take it to the United Nations," Hadley said during an appearance on CNN's "Late Edition."

The New York Times, 13 March 2005

Nuclear Sub Missed Warning Signs Before Crash, Navy Says

Navy investigators have found that the officers on a nuclear submarine failed to take into account a variety of danger signs before the vessel smashed into an undersea mountain in January, Navy officials said in interviews last week. The officials said crew members on the submarine, the San Francisco, did not look at some navigational charts of the South Pacific that might have prompted more caution. The sailors also should have checked the water depth more frequently and should not have been traveling at high speed, the officials said. One sailor was killed and 98 were injured on Jan. 8 when the submarine crashed into the mountain 360 miles southeast of Guam. The Navy has said the mountain was not marked on the charts, but investigators found that several charts showed other possible hazards and had inconsistencies that should have made officers more cautious.

Dawn, 13 March 2005

US softens stance on DPRK disarmament

WASHINGTON, Mar. 12: The United States said on Friday that North Korea need not completely dismantle its nuclear weapons arsenal before receiving benefits under an aid-for-disarmament proposal. "I don't think anyone is asking DPRK to completely disarm ... and only then will the United States and other members of the six-party process give them benefits," senior State Department official Evens Revere said. "That's not the explanation we provided to the DPRK," he said, referring to Pyongyang's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Under the proposal, the United States requires a "commitment" upfront from North Korea "to start a process" for ending its nuclear weapons drive, and "as the commitment is fulfilled, we would fulfill out part of the deal in terms of providing certain benefits and signing on certain agreements and understandings," he said.

The News, 13 March 2005

Iran rejects US incentives Pledges to continue nuclear programme

TEHRAN: Iran said on Saturday it was determined to press on with its nuclear programme, snubbing an announcement by the

United States that it would offer Tehran incentives to halt sensitive fuel cycle work. "The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, and no pressure, bribe or threat can make Iran give up its legitimate right," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said in a statement. Washington announced on Friday it would drop objections to Iran joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and consider allowing it access to spare parts for its decrepit fleet of civilian aircraft. US President George W Bush said the initiative was aimed at helping efforts by Britain, France and Germany to persuade Iran to abandon uranium enrichment, which could provide Tehran's clerical regime with the capacity to build a bomb.

Dawn, 14 March 2005

US helping secure Pakistan's N-plan: report

WASHINGTON, Mar. 13: The latest congressional report on nuclear threat reduction measures for India and Pakistan suggests that the United States may have been assisting Pakistan to help protect its nuclear sites since October 2001. The report by the Congressional Research Service, which provides policy guidelines to US lawmakers, says that the United States had been debating since 1998, when India and Pakistan tested their nuclear weapons, whether it should provide assistance in making those weapons safer and more secure. In the wake of September 11, 2001, interest in this kind of assistance has grown for several reasons: the possibility of terrorists gaining access to Pakistan's nuclear weapons seems higher, the US military is forging new relationships with both Pakistan and India in the war on terrorism, and heightened tension in Kashmir in 2002 threatened to push both states closer to the brink of nuclear war.

Dawn, 14 March 2005

US not discouraged by Iran's rejection, says official

WASHINGTON, Mar. 13: Negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme remain on track, despite Tehran's coolness to a package of financial incentives put on the table by the United States and the European Union, a top White House official said on Sunday. "This is a negotiating process between the Europeans and the Iranians and it's not surprising to hear those statements," Stephen Hadley, White House national security adviser, told Fox News on Sunday, in answer to a question about Iran's initial negative reaction to the overtures. "But I would point out at the same time those statements you were talking about were being made, (Iranian) President (Mohammad) Khatami was also saying that they were open for discussions on the kinds of guarantees and assurances they could give to the world that they were not seeking a nuclear weapon."

The Hindu, 15 March 2005

Security Council reforms likely to figure in talks (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi, March.14. India is expected to take up the issue of the United Nations' Security Council reforms with the United States Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, who will arrive in the capital on Tuesday evening on the first leg of an Asia tour that will also take her to Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Japan and South Korea. South Block sources told The Hindu that the U.S. had not taken any position on India joining the U.N. Security Council as a permanent member, but felt that a view could be taken in the "near term" if the "positive course" in bilateral relations continued. Washington has, so far, publicly supported only Japan for a permanent seat. The sources believe that Washington is not excited at the prospects of Germany and Brazil entering the Security Council (these two countries formed the G-4 along with Japan and India recently to push for a permanent seat), but could take a positive view on India's entry if New Delhi was "seen" to be supportive of American objectives.

Daily Times, 15 March 2005

White House acknowledges Iran intelligence 'hard to come by'

WASHINGTON: The White House acknowledged on Sunday the difficulty of gathering good intelligence in Iran but said Tehran's behaviour was "suspicious enough" to warrant stepping up pressure over its nuclear programme. "Intelligence in Iran is hard to come by. It is a very closed society. They keep their secrets very well," White House national security adviser Stephen Hadley told CNN's "Late Edition." Hadley was asked whether, given the intelligence failures in pre-war Iraq, he was convinced that US intelligence in Iran was good enough to declare that it was developing a nuclear bomb. On "Fox News Sunday," Hadley also cautioned the Iranian government against taking comfort in President George W Bush's decision to back Europe in offering limited economic incentives to Tehran to abandon its suspected nuclear arms programme. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who also appeared on the Sunday news shows, said the decision sends a message to Tehran that it now faces a united trans-Atlantic front.

Reuters, 16 March 2005

N.Korea Says No Talks without U.S. Retraction

SEOUL: North Korea ruled out on Wednesday a return to stalled six-way talks on its nuclear weapons programs unless the United States retracted its labeling of Pyongyang as an "outpost of tyranny." A spokesman for the North Korean Foreign Ministry also said recent comments by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in interviews with Reuters and the Washington Times – in which she refused to apologize for giving the North the tyranny tag – indicated the United States did not want to hold talks. "It is quite illogical for the U.S. to intend to negotiate with the DPRK without retracting its remarks listing its dialogue partner as an outpost of tyranny," the spokesman said in comments published by the North's official KCNA news agency. DPRK is short for the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Reuters, 16 March 2005

U.N. Praises U.S. Move on Iran, Urges Tehran Be Frank

LONDON: A new U.S.-European strategy to persuade Iran to abandon sensitive nuclear programs is a big step, but diplomacy

can work only if Tehran is more open, the U.N. nuclear chief said Wednesday. "The announcement by the United States last week that they are actively supporting the European initiative is something I very much welcome," the International Atomic Energy Agency's Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei, told reporters in London. But he added any deal would hinge on Tehran being more frank in accounting for its past nuclear activity. "I am not sure that the Europeans and Americans can go very far in their negotiations unless they are sure that the past chapter has been closed," he said. "Iran is playing by the book and they are implementing their international obligations. But in light of more than 20 years of undeclared programs, I would like to see more than just playing by the book. I would like to see proactive transparency."

Reuters, 16 March 2005

Bush Urges Patience, Diplomacy on Iran

WASHINGTON: President Bush on Wednesday urged patience in the pursuit of a diplomatic solution on Iran's nuclear program, and sidestepped a question about whether the United States sought "regime change" there. The United States said last week it would support European allies in offering Iran some incentives to give up its nuclear program, including starting talks on joining the World Trade Organization. In return, Britain, France and Germany said they would support hauling Tehran before the U.N. Security Council if it resumed nuclear activities that could be used to develop an atomic bomb. Bush avoided setting a specific timetable for negotiations between the Europeans and Iran to show progress before taking Tehran to the U.N. Security Council.

The New York Times, 17 March 2005

U.S. May Give Help to India on Atom Site (Joel Brinkley)

ISLAMABAD, Mar. 16: The United States may help India build one or more nuclear power plants, even as the Bush administration objects to India's proposal to construct a natural gas pipeline from Iran, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her aides said Wednesday during a visit with Indian government leaders in New Delhi. Ms. Rice said the United States needed to do what it could to help India cope with its growing energy needs. The United States maintains a trade embargo against Iran and is now engaged with Europe and the United Nations in an effort to persuade Iran to end what it suspects is a nuclear weapons program. "We do have our concerns," Ms. Rice said at a joint news conference with Natwar Singh, the Indian foreign minister. "And we have communicated our concerns to the Indian government about gas pipeline cooperation between India and Iran." But she added, "We do need to look at the broader question of how India meets its energy needs."

People's Daily, 17 March 2005

DPRK says six-party talks challenged by US-South Korean military exercises

The US-South Korean joint military exercises in South Korea was an "outright challenge" to the international community's efforts for the resumption of the six-party talks, the official Korean Central News Agency said in a commentary Wednesday. "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has already clarified its principled stand that it would not refuse to participate in the six-party talks if the United States retracts its vituperation against the dialogue partner and behaves to win his trust. However, the US responded to the DPRK's just demand with large-scale nuclear war exercises," the commentary said. "This is an outright challenge to the sincere efforts exerted by the international community and parties concerned as well as the DPRK for a negotiated peaceful solution to the nuclear issue and a perfidy to them," it added.

Daily Times, 17 March 2005

China says US must build trust with North Korea

BEIJING: The United States and North Korea need to show more mutual trust, China said Wednesday after Washington told it to "pick up the pace" to ensure talks resume on Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program. "At present the difficulties facing the six-party talks are mainly due to mutual distrust and misgivings between North Korea and the United States," foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said. "All the concerned participants in the six-party talks, especially the main parties involved, should take the necessary responsibility, show flexibility, sincerity and patience and make common and active efforts." Liu was commenting on remarks made in a congressional hearing in Washington Tuesday by Christopher Hill, who is expected to oversee the US effort in the talks as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs.

Daily Times, 17 March 2005

'Iran offers US share in nuclear programme'

LONDON: Iran is prepared to offer the United States a half share in any future nuclear programme to demonstrate it is not pursuing atomic weapons, a senior Iranian official was quoted on Wednesday as saying. The Financial Times said it was unclear how far the remarks of Hossein Kazempour, Iranian governor to the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and an energy adviser to the government, represented the policy of Tehran. "I am telling you that the Americans can come and have 50-50 (of an Iranian nuclear programme)," Kazempour was quoted as saying by the newspaper. "This offer is on the table. But they have their suspicions. This could be removed by their presence (in the programme)." US President George W Bush has accused Iran of trying to secretly develop nuclear arms. Tehran rejects the charge and says its nuclear programme is solely for electricity generation.

Dawn, 17 March 2005

Bush warns Iran of UN action: Tehran urged to 'adopt democracy'

WASHINGTON, Mar. 16: US President George Bush said on Wednesday that the United States and its European allies would seek UN Security Council action against Iran if Tehran rejected incentives to limit its nuclear programs. "The understanding is, we go to the Security Council if they reject the offer. And I hope they don't. I hope they realize the world is clear about making

sure that they don't end up with a nuclear weapon," he said. Mr Bush also said that "Iran should adopt democracy", but pointedly declined to say he thought there should be regime change in Tehran - the kind of language used in the run up to the invasion of Iraq. His comments came as Iran's President Mohammad Khatami asserted that no incentives would be enough to convince the Islamic republic to renounce its nuclear program, but pledged the country would make "every effort" to convince the world it was not seeking atomic weapons.

The Telegraph, 17 March 2005

Rice trouble cooks for Kathmandu (Pranay Sharma)

New Delhi, March 16: India and the US today joined hands to step up pressure on Nepal's King Gyanendra to take immediate steps to restore democracy in the country. US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice joined foreign minister K. Natwar Singh in describing the king's February coup, when he took away all powers from the executive, as a "setback" to the goals of democracy and pluralism. The signals follow a strong message that Delhi sent to Gyanendra through Shiv Mukherjee, the Indian ambassador to Nepal. Mukherjee, who was here three weeks ago to consult the leadership on "options" to deal with the situation in Kathmandu, has not been granted an audience with the king since his return. The US government has stressed that it would like to go along with the Indian assessment and work closely with it to resolve the political crisis in Kathmandu. By joining hands with India, the US has made it clear that the king is fast running out of choices.

The Tribune, 17 March 2005

US refuses to stop F-16 sale to Pak

New Delhi, March.16. India and the United States broke new grounds today in bilateral cooperation as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told the Indian leadership that an institutionalised mechanism of an 'energy dialogue' would be in place soon, though a dampener came in the form of her refusal to stop sale of F-16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan. A concrete outcome of the Rice visit was that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would be travelling to the US in the coming months, most probably in July, for preparing a framework of a broad strategic partnership with the US and External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh would be visiting Washington next month. Ms Rice cautioned India against pursuing the pipeline project with Iran but the Indian leadership stood its ground.

The Hindu, 18 March 2005

India aspires for greater strategic autonomy: Saran (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi, March.17. India aspires to achieve a greater strategic autonomy for itself after emerging as a major economic player, the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, said today. "The current assumption is that India's ambitions will mesh in with U.S. objectives," he said at a dialogue on India-U.S. relations. Arguing that India wanted to occupy a larger strategic space in the world, Mr. Saran said that India favoured a more balanced world order among the major players. Referring to Wednesday's talks with the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, he said that it was no accident that she had talked of India's growing energy requirements. Without referring to the controversy created by Dr. Rice around the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline deal, Mr. Saran said India's differences with the international community on nuclear energy matters were known.

Asia Times, 18 March 2005

Islamabad makes a tradeoff (Kaushik Kapisthalam)

Although Pakistani forces conducted their customary vigorous anti-terrorism operations near the Afghanistan border prior to visits by US officials, the real interest in Wednesday's meeting between President General Musharraf and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice centered on Iran. Before Rice's whirlwind visit to India, Pakistan and Afghanistan (she also goes to Japan, South Korea and China) Washington was abuzz with talk that the Bush administration had convinced Musharraf to lend support to American action against Iran for its alleged nuclear weapons program. This reinforces a number of reports by Asia Times Online's Syed Saleem Shahzad over the past months that Pakistan had agreed to host American troops and intelligence assets near its long border with Iran in Balochistan province in preparation for a possible attack on Iran, including the training of special US forces in Karachi - see, for example, US keeps Iran in its sights of January 28.

The Nation, 18 March 2005

US wants Khan network to be broken up forever (Shaiq Hussain)

ISLAMABAD: Terming Dr A.Q. Khan's network as a threat to the US and the world, the visiting US Secretary of State said it must be eliminated with the assurance that it never resurfaces. Speaking at a joint press conference with her Pakistani counterpart, Khurshid Kasuri, Condoleezza Rice praised President Musharraf for his courage and role in war on terror. However, she stressed upon Pakistan to continue down a democratic path, which would lead to free and fair elections in 2007. On Dr Khan, Dr Rice said, "I don't think that there is any doubt that A. Q. Khan represented a threat not just to the United States but a threat also to Pakistan, to the region, to the international community as a whole and we have had cooperation with Pakistan to make sure that his network is broken up to get as much information as is possible."

Daily Times, 18 March 2005

AQ Khan still a threat, says Rice (Shahzad Raza)

ISLAMABAD: The United States on Thursday said Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan and his network, continued to be a threat to the world. Dr Condoleezza Rice, the US secretary of state, said at a press conference with Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri that the US was cooperating with Pakistan and a number of countries, and wanted complete elimination of the nuclear smuggling network and its tentacles. F-16s: Rice did not specify whether any agreement was reached between the two sides for the delivery of F-16s to Pakistan, but Kasuri said "We discussed steps to take our partnership to a new and higher level of

engagement," he added. Indo-Pak ties: Dr Rice said the US encouraged efforts by Pakistan and India to improve relations but she did not comment on the controversial dams being built by India, saying they should be resolved bilaterally.

The Tribune, 18 March 2005

Shaking hands with US (K. Subrahmanyam)

The US Secretary of State, Dr Condoleezza Rice, during her first visit to India indicated two likely changes in the US policy towards India. The US is offering a civilian reactor technology which would mean complete lifting of all nuclear sanctions imposed on India since the first Pokhran nuclear test in 1974. It may be recalled that civilian nuclear energy was one of the subjects covered under the "Next Steps in Strategic Partnership" (NSSP). Secondly, the US was also prepared to sell F-16 aircraft to India. In this country, among sections of our elite, there is considerable distrust of the US on such deals in view of past history. The US Congress had imposed sanctions on India in respect of military equipment supplies and, therefore, some military men and defence bureaucracy feel that the US is not to be trusted as a reliable supplier of defence equipment.

The News, 19 March 2005

Global missile-race will hot up: US intelligence

WASHINGTON: With China building more and more intercontinental missiles and nuclear warheads, "by 2015, the number of warheads capable of targeting continental United States will increase several-fold," US Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) director Vice Admiral Lowell E Jacoby warned the Senate Armed Services Committee. China, he told the committee on Thursday, is developing and purchasing ASCMs (Anti-Ship Cruise Missiles) on a big scale and they will present significant challenge to US navy if it goes to Taiwan's aid. China and North Korea continue to sell weapons of mass destruction and missile technologies for revenue and diplomatic influence to other countries like Iran and Pakistan, Jacoby stated. Russia or 'entities within Russia' support missile programmes in China, Iran, India and Syria, he noted.

Daily Times, 19 March 2005

Pakistan itself exposed Khan network: US (Faiz Rehman)

WASHINGTON: The United States has reposed confidence in the Pakistani government, saying the US believed that the leadership was not involved in the AQ Khan network, and the network was brought to light by the Pakistanis. "We have a good understanding about how that network came about, how it operated and we certainly don't see any connection with the leadership of Pakistan," a State Department spokesman told reporters on Thursday. He said the Pakistanis were the first to expose the Khan network and the US had no idea of the full scope of its activities. "We had information or we had indications that there was proliferation activity," the spokesman said, adding, "we certainly didn't have an idea of the full scope or nature of this activity until the Pakistanis revealed what was going on." The spokesman said that the US would continue "to follow up and work with the Pakistanis to dismantle completely that network and come to a full understanding of its scope and activities." The spokesman refused to divulge details on how the US was going to accomplish the goal of seeing the network totally dismantled. He expressed concern over Iran's alleged nuclear programme, saying that there were indications on Iran's connections to Dr Khan. "Obviously we all want to get to the bottom of that."

The Nation, 19 March 2005

Rice winds up

At a joint press conference with Mr Khurshid Kasuri, Secretary Rice expressed her views on various issues of concern to the US and Pakistan, one or two at some length, others rather hurriedly and evasively. About Dr A.Q. Khan's proliferation network she was disturbingly emphatic: 'it must be eliminated with the assurance that it never resurfaces.' She did not stop at that, but added that it was most important to know how the proliferation took place so that safeguards against that kind of blackmarket entrepreneurship in the future could be built. Its interpretation obviously includes investigating the ways adopted by Dr Khan to take the sensitive equipment out of heavily guarded premises and the underground international network that he tapped to market it. Not excluded, though, would be to find out whether he enjoyed the cooperation of those charged with ensuring that the forbidden stuff did not go out. For the present, Washington, needing Islamabad's help in stabilising situation in Afghanistan, rooting out Al-Qaeda outfit and, in general, fighting its international war on terrorism, would not, perhaps, press the last point. Nor would it necessarily insist on demanding direct access to Dr Khan. But as the terrorist threat recedes, the political climate takes another turn and a US administration of another political philosophy comes into the White House, both options could be dusted off and used. With New Delhi gaining growing leverage with Washington and always on the lookout for an opportunity to put the squeeze on Islamabad, that possibility becomes all the starker.

The Indian Express, 19 March 2005

Rice presses China on fresh talks with N Korea

TOKYO: US secretary of State Condoleezza Rice pressured China to persuade North Korea to return to nuclear arms talks as she launched a drive across Asia on Friday to revive the negotiations. Rice said China, North Korea's biggest benefactor, needed to use its leverage over its neighbour to bring Pyongyang back to six-party talks. "I'll leave to the Chinese what leverage they use or what mechanisms they use, but I do think it is important that the diplomacy that the Chinese do with the North Koreans be effective," Rice said aboard her plane as she flew to Tokyo. Ahead of Rice's visit, China has released its most prominent Uighur political prisoner, Rebiya Kadeer, and the US said it would not seek to censure China at the UN Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva.

The Hindu, 19 March 2005

U.S., India can explore alternative energy sources: Rice (B.Muralidhar Reddy)

Islamabad, March.18. On her just-concluded visit to India and Pakistan, the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, said she had conveyed the opposition of Washington to the Iran gas pipeline project and offered to pool technologies and thinking to see "if we can't find ways that are environmentally sound and that can meet the burgeoning demands for energy." In two separate interviews to Pakistan Television and Geo Television here on Thursday, Dr. Rice said the U.S. had expressed concern about a gas project that Japan proposed with Iran as the United States had sanctions against Iran for "good reasons." At the same she declined to speculate on the U.S. response if India and Pakistan went ahead with the Iranian gas pipeline project. Dr. Rice said Washington understood the energy needs of the growing economies of India and Pakistan and was ready to engage them to explore alternative sources.

Dawn, 20 March 2005

A.Q. Khan network: US assurance to Pakistan

WASHINGTON, Mar. 19: The United States is believed to have assured Pakistan that it will not blame the Pakistani government for the activities of the Khan network. In return, Pakistan will extend full cooperation in probing the network's links to other states and non-state actors. This also means that if at some stage US investigators feel they need to have direct access to Dr A. Q. Khan, Pakistan should provide such an access. The outlines of this policy, which was apparently also discussed during US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's recent visit to Islamabad, appear in recent briefings by State Department officials. "We have a good understanding about how that network came about, how it operated and we certainly don't see any connection with the leadership of Pakistan," said State Department's deputy spokesman Adam Ereli while explaining the US position on the alleged link between the Khan network and the Pakistani government.

Reuters, 20 March 2005

Impatient U.S. Pushes China Amid N.Korea Nukes Split

BEIJING: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice pressed China Monday to persuade North Korea to return to nuclear disarmament talks after warning that Washington would not wait forever for a resumption. Rice, in Beijing on the last day of a sweep through Asia, wants China, North Korea's biggest benefactor, to use more of its leverage over Pyongyang despite Sino-U.S. tensions over Taiwan and Beijing's military spending. But for months, Beijing has complained that U.S. rhetoric against Pyongyang undermines its diplomacy and Chinese officials told Rice Washington needed to be more "flexible" to make the talks work, a U.S. official said. Still, U.S. impatience is rising, and Rice has begun to lay the groundwork with her Asian partners for how to deal with North Korea if it stays away, the senior State Department official, who asked not to be named, said.

The Associated Press, 20 March 2005

In Beijing, Rice Seeks China's Help on North Korea Talks

BEIJING: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Sunday sought further help from China in getting North Korea back to nuclear disarmament talks and aired U.S. concerns about Beijing's bellicose rhetoric on Taiwan. As part of a two-day visit to the Chinese capital, Rice took time to attend a Palm Sunday church service at one of the city's few state-sanctioned churches. Although Rice has previously said the United States is not satisfied with religious freedom in communist China, she let her presence at Gangwashi Christian Church speak for itself. Rice, a regular churchgoer who has described herself as deeply religious, listened to an English translation of the Chinese sermon. As she and her American delegation left, the minister said "God bless the United States."

The Hindu, 20 March 2005

U.S. will not remain silent, N. Korea told (P. S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE, Mar. 19: The U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, today called upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to "return immediately" to the stalled six-party talks on its nuclear weapons programme. Dr. Rice, who held discussions with the Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, in Tokyo said North Korea should "explore the path forward" to defuse the tensions following Pyongyang's announcements that it would expand its nuclear arsenal.

The Tribune, 20 March 2005

Modi visa denial based on NHRC findings: USA (Ashish Kumar Sen)

Washington on Friday said its decision to revoke Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi's US visa was a response to findings by the India's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) that implicated Mr Modi's government in the 2002 riots. "The fact of the matter is that it was the Indians who investigated the riots and it was the Indian Government who determined that state institutions failed to act in a way that would prevent violence and would prevent religious persecution," State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said. "So this isn't a matter of the USA saying something happened or something didn't happen," he said. "It's a matter of the USA responding to a finding by the NHRC pointing to comprehensive failure on the part of the state government of Gujarat to control persistent violations of rights."

The Hindu, 20 March 2005

U.S. unlikely to change decision on Modi (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi, March.19. The United States is unlikely to alter its decision to deny the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, a diplomatic visa and cancel his business/tourist visa, sources in the U.S. Embassy said today. The decision had been taken after due consideration, the sources pointed out. Given that a reaction to the decision from the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Central Government of India was on the cards, this would have been factored in before going public with the visa denial. A U.S. Embassy spokesman, however, said that the Charge d' Affaires of the U.S. mission, Bob Blake, had conveyed the

concerns expressed to him on Friday by the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, to Washington. "We are waiting for a response," the spokesman added.

Indian Express, 20 March 2005

US, India tell Pak, China not to go to King's aid (Shishir Gupta)

New Delhi, March.19. United States and India have decided to call King Gyanendra's bluff of seeking military aid from China and Pakistan by asking both Beijing and Islamabad not to fish in troubled waters and explaining to them the reasons behind suspension of military hardware to Kathmandu. Official sources told The Sunday Express that James Moriarty, US envoy to Nepal, told his Indian counterpart Shiv Shanker Mukherjee that Washington had asked both Pakistan and China not to provide any military assistance to Kathmandu which was stopped by the international community after the February 1 royal coup. India, on its part, took up the issue through diplomatic channels with both countries. It's learnt that New Delhi sought cooperation from Beijing and Islamabad after explaining to them the background to the suspension of military aid to Kathmandu.

The New York Times, 21 March 2005

Pakistani's Nuclear Black Market Seen as Offering Deepest Secrets of Building Bomb (William J. Broad and David E. Sanger)

Nuclear investigators from the United States and other nations now believe that the black market network run by the Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan was selling not only technology for enriching nuclear fuel and blueprints for nuclear weapons, but also some of the darkest of the bomb makers' arts: the hard-to-master engineering secrets needed to fabricate nuclear warheads. Their suspicions were initially raised by the discovery of step-by-step instructions, some of which appear to have come from China and Pakistan, among the documents recovered last year from Libya. More recently, investigators have found that the Khan network had offered similar materials to Iran.

The Korean Herald Herald, 21 March 2005

U.S. has no intention to attack N.K.' (Lee Joo-hee)

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice yesterday urged North Korea to make a "strategic choice" to give up its nuclear weapons, and repeated that the United States has no intention of attacking the North. "North Koreans know that the United States said repeatedly that we have no intention of invading or attacking North Korea," Rice said at a joint news conference with South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon before leaving for China on the final leg of an Asian tour. She came here after visiting India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Japan. Rice, who also met President Roh Moo-hyun, said direct talks between the United States and North Korea will be one of the negotiating methods within the six-party framework.

The Hindu, 21 March 2005

"U.S. hid Pakistan role in nuclear deals" (Sridhar Krishnaswami)

WASHINGTON, Mar. 20: The Bush administration told its Asian allies earlier this year that Pyongyang had exported nuclear material to Libya when the shipment first went to Pakistan, reports The Washington Post. The claims were significant in that it was the first allegation that North Korea was trying to create a new nuclear weapons state. According to officials who have briefed the paper, this is not what American intelligence agencies had reported. According to intelligence, North Korea sold uranium hexafluoride to Pakistan which then sold it to Libya. It is maintained that the U.S. had no evidence that Pyongyang knew of the Pakistani-Libyan transaction. Unnamed officials have said the U.S. had concealed the Pakistani role because it is America's top ally in the war against terror and in the hunt for the Al-Qaeda leaders. It is also said the North Korean-Pakistani tie up would not have been news to allies who have for years known of such dubious transfers. But the allies, who were worked on to further isolate Pyongyang, became increasingly more doubtful as they learnt that the U.S. had omitted key details in the transactions. The White House has declined comment on the new details but a statement attributed to an official says the U.S. shared with allies an "accurate account" of North Korea's nuclear proliferation activities.

The Indian Express, 21 March 2005

US misled allies on N Korea N-transfer (Dafna Linzer)

WASHINGTON, Mar. 20: In an effort to increase pressure on North Korea, the Bush administration told its Asian allies in briefings earlier this year that Pyongyang had exported nuclear material to Libya. That was a significant new charge, the first allegation that North Korea was helping to create a new nuclear weapons state. But that is not what US intelligence reported, according to two officials with knowledge of the transaction. North Korea, according to the intelligence, had supplied uranium hexafluoride – which can be enriched to weapons-grade uranium – to Pakistan. It was Pakistan, a key US ally with its own nuclear arsenal, that sold the material to Libya. The US government had no evidence, the officials said, that North Korea knew of the second transaction. Pakistan's role as both the buyer and the seller was concealed to cover up the part played by Washington's partner in the hunt for Al-Qaeda leaders, according to the officials, who discussed the issue on the condition of anonymity.

International Herald Tribune, 21 March 2005

Rice says nuclear weapons dispute with North Korea can't 'go on forever'

SEOUL: U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned Sunday that Washington won't let the international standoff over North Korea's nuclear weapons "go on forever," calling with South Korean leaders for Pyongyang to return to six-nation disarmament talks so it can get needed aid and international respect. After meeting officials in the South Korean capital Seoul, Rice said both sides would devote "maximum efforts" to the six-nation talks. "We need to resolve this issue, it cannot go on

forever," she told a news conference. However, Rice repeatedly emphasized during her visit here that the United States doesn't intend to attack North Korea. The United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea and China began a joint diplomatic effort with North Korea in 2003 aimed at persuading Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear program, but it has been stalled since North Korea refused to attend the last scheduled round of talks in September. Last month, it declared it had nuclear weapons and would indefinitely continue its boycott.

Dawn, 21 March 2005

Experts not to visit N-facilities (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, Mar. 20: A team of international nuclear experts scheduled to visit Pakistan early next month will not inspect facilities used for making weapons, diplomatic sources told Dawn. The Nuclear Suppliers Group, a 44-nation alliance that oversees global exports of materials and equipment, had announced earlier this week that it is sending a team of experts to Pakistan. The NSG represents the world's top nuclear exporters. Media reports quoted chairman of the group Richard Ekwall as saying that his team will assess whether controls are in place to prevent illicit exports of sensitive atomic technology from Pakistan. But diplomatic sources in Washington said the NSG is a regulatory organization which deals only with civilian nuclear facilities. According to them, NSG members cooperate with each other in regulating trade in nuclear technology. A senior South Asian diplomat rejected media reports as incorrect that the Group's visit shows that the international community was further tightening its grip on Pakistan's nuclear programme.

Dawn, 21 March 2005

'US has no plan to attack North Korea'

SEOUL, Mar. 20: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Sunday Washington had no intention of attacking North Korea while urging the communist state to drop its nuclear weapons ambitions. "We have absolutely no desire to attack North Korea," Ms Rice said in a round-table discussion with Internet-based South Korean journalists, which was broadcast by Internet Portal Media Daum live here. "North Korea does not need to worry the United States intends to attack it," she said.

People's Daily, 21 March 2005

US misleads allies on DPRK's nuclear export: paper

The United States has misled its Asian allies that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) had exported nuclear material to Libya, The Washington Post reported Sunday. In an attempt to increase pressure on Pyongyang, the Bush administration told its Asian allies in briefings early this year that the DPRK had exported nuclear material to Libya, the Post said. The new charge was believed to be significant and represented the first allegation that the DPRK was helping to create a new nuclear weapon state. However, it is not what US intelligence reported, the paper quoted two US intelligence officials as saying. The DPRK had supplied uranium hexafluoride - which can be enriched to weapons-grade uranium - to Pakistan, a key US ally in the war on terrorism, and it was Pakistan that sold the material to Libya, said the US intelligence officials with knowledge of the transaction. The US government had no evidence that the DPRK knew of the second transaction, they added.

Daily Times, 21 March 2005

N-cooperation with Iran: US not finished with Pakistan

KARACHI: The United States is exerting maximum pressure on Pakistan to provide a detailed and "authentic" list of all of its nuclear cooperation with Iran over the years, Asia Times Online (ATO) reported on Sunday. ATO said contacts in the highest echelons of Pakistan's strategic quarters had told it that during her recent visit to Islamabad, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice apprised Pakistan of the latest - and strong - US demands. Many in the Bush administration believe that Iran's nuclear energy programme is a smokescreen for developing nuclear weapons. Tehran has agreed with the European Union and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it will temporarily suspend its uranium enrichment programme. Last week, ATO said, Pakistan publicly admitted that nuclear scientist Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan had given centrifuges - rather than just blueprints - to Iran as part of a package of materials that could be used to make a nuclear bomb, but only in "his personal capacity". Centrifuges are used to enrich uranium.

Deccan Chronicle, 21 March 2005

Visa denial will hurt ties: Advani

Ahmedabad, March.20. Describing the denial of visa by the US to Chief Minister Narendra Modi as an "attack on the pride and self respect" of the country, the National Democratic Alliance on Sunday said people would not tolerate it at any cost. Addressing the Bharat Swabhimaan rally organised by the BJP at the Kankaria ground here, speakers, including NDA convenor George Fernandes, former Lok Sabha speaker Manohar Joshi, BJP president L K Advani, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Babulal Gaur criticised the denial of visa to Modi. Advani said the denial of the visa was a "severe blow to the relationship between the world's two powerful democracies and was nothing less than an "assault on the pride of India". The Swabhimaan rally organised to protest the US decision is a "result of this insult", Advani added. The reason that violation of religious freedom was behind the denial of visa was "ill-founded" as India was one of the few countries in the world whose Constitution guaranteed Freedom of Religion, he said.

The Hindu, 22 March 2005

Modi: U.S. sticks to its guns

New Delhi, March.21. Despite the Indian Government's request to reconsider the issue, the United States will not grant an entry visa to the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi. This was communicated by the U.S. Embassy here to the Ministry of

External Affairs (MEA) today. In a brief statement to the press, the U.S. Ambassador, David C. Mulford, reiterated Washington's earlier stand that Mr. Modi could not be granted a diplomatic visa as the purpose for which he wished to travel to the U.S. did not make him eligible for one. As for the Gujarat Chief Minister's existing tourist/business visa, he said this had been revoked under the Immigration and Nationality Act, which made any foreign government official who "was responsible for or directly carried out, at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom" ineligible for a visa. Reacting to the decision, the MEA spokesman said that the Government of India "regrets that in spite of its demarche ... the U.S. has not revised its decision ... This disregards the fact of the constitutional position of the Chief Minister of Gujarat as a democratically elected leader and appears to be based on selective judgment."

The Guardian, 22 March 2005

Nuke Controls Need to Be Applied Universally (Ian Black)

Iran is offering to send George Bush truckloads of pistachio nuts if he will dismantle America's huge nuclear arsenal - a cheeky response to the president's grudging readiness to try diplomacy to end the dangerous stand-off over Tehran's atomic ambitions. Last week's riposte followed the announcement that the US will support Europe's idea of dangling economic incentives in front of the Islamic Republic in exchange for guarantees not to develop nuclear weapons. But if these carrots do not tempt, the way will be open to the stick of UN sanctions and perhaps American - or Israeli - air strikes. The problem, though, is far wider than skirmishing between Bush and this most troublesome of his "outposts of tyranny". Washington wants to redraw the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Cold War bargain that allows the five "official" nuclear powers to keep their weapons - while working toward disarmament - and all others to renounce them in return for being permitted to develop civilian nuclear energy.

The New York Times, 22 March 2005

China Balks at Pressing the North Koreans (Joel Brinkley)

BEIJING, Mar. 21: Chinese government leaders have offered Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice no assurances that they will step up pressure on North Korea to return to nuclear disarmament talks, senior officials traveling with her said Monday. For the last week, at every stop on her six-nation Asian tour, Ms. Rice has urged China to be more forceful with North Korea, as she did again on Monday, saying, "China, in particular, has an important role to play." Japan's foreign minister, Nobutaka Machimura and South Korea's, Ban Ki Moon, also indicated during her visit that China may be in the best position to be persuasive. But in meetings here on Sunday and Monday with President Hu Jintao, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and other government leaders, the officials said, Ms. Rice got nothing more than bland assurances that the Chinese officials would talk to the North Koreans again, without suggesting that they would apply any particular pressure. The Chinese did say that a senior North Korean official was to visit Beijing later this week.

LewRockwell.com, 22 March 2005

Does the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Have a Future? (Lawrence S. Wittner)

This May, the United Nations will be holding a review conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a key nuclear arms control and disarmament agreement to which 188 countries are now parties. Originally proposed by the U.S. and Soviet governments, the NPT was signed at the United Nations in 1968 and went into force in 1970. Under its provisions, non-nuclear nations agreed to renounce the development of nuclear weapons and nuclear-armed nations agreed to divest themselves of their nuclear weapons through good faith negotiations for nuclear disarmament. In this fashion, nations on both sides of the Cold War divide signaled their intention to halt the nuclear arms race and move toward a nuclear-free world.

The Australian, 22 March 2005

Rice has 'options' to coax N Korea (Catherine Armitage)

"Other options" would be considered if North Korea continued to shun multi-country talks aimed at ending its nuclear program, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in Beijing yesterday, although she stopped short of publicly canvassing a military response. Her talks with senior Chinese leaders, including President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, focused "overwhelmingly" on how to get North Korea back to the negotiating table, Dr Rice said. However, she failed to address a reporter's question about whether military options had also been discussed. This is the first time the US has publicly contemplated the possible failure of the six-nation talks that began in Beijing in 2003 aimed at getting North Korea to voluntarily relinquish its nuclear weapons. The last round of talks was in June 2004.

Daily Times, 22 March 2005

UN says nuclear energy may be en vogue again

PARIS: Expectations of a sharp rise in energy demand and the risk of climate change are pushing many countries to return to the idea of nuclear power, the head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog said on Monday. Even the most conservative estimates predict at least a doubling of energy usage by mid-century, Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told a conference on nuclear energy in the 21st century. He said any discussion of the energy sector "must begin by acknowledging the expected substantial growth in energy demand in the coming decades".

International Herald Tribune, 22 March 2005.

Focus still on N. Korea as Rice ends Asia trip (Chris Buckley)

BEIJING: Condoleezza Rice ended her first visit to Asia as secretary of state on Monday with a fresh call for China and its neighbors to do more to press North Korea to return to nuclear disarmament talks and a warning that the United States would not let the nuclear standoff with North Korea continue indefinitely. Rice said at a news conference before her departure that

her talks with President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao of China on Sunday also covered Taiwan, human rights, and trade issues. But North Korea's nuclear plans appeared to dominate her meetings here as well as at her previous stops in Japan and South Korea. As Rice completed her extensive tour of Asia, at issue was whether Washington would alter its stance on North Korea at some point and whether it would eventually have to accept some form of bilateral contact with the North Koreans - a step the United States thus far has been unwilling to take.

The Washington Post, 22 March 2005

Rice: U.S. and Allies Discussed 'Options' Against N. Korea (Glenn Kessler)

BEIJING, Mar. 21: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Monday that she had raised the prospect with Asian allies over the weekend of imposing economic or political penalties against North Korea if its government persisted in refusing to return to six-nation talks aimed at ending its nuclear ambitions. In remarks at the conclusion of her week-long tour of Asia, Rice said she had discussed using "other options in the international system" against North Korea, the first time a senior U.S. official has publicly acknowledged the possibility of shifting to an aggressive campaign to isolate North Korea if the talks remain dormant. U.S. officials said the options could include tighter strictures on North Korea's illicit trade in arms and drugs and referring the matter to the U.N. Security Council.

Daily Times, 22 March 2005

US and allies need new ways to deal with North Korea

BEIJING: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned North Korea on Monday of "problems" if it fails to return to nuclear talks, while cautioning the EU against lifting its arms embargo against China. Rice said Washington and its Asian allies would have to find new ways of dealing with North Korea if it continued to shun nuclear disarmament talks. Rice, concluding a sweep through Asia designed to revive the negotiations, also gave her strongest hint to date that the United States was prepared to report North Korea to the United Nations should the talks fail. "Obviously, everyone is aware of the other options in the international system," Rice told a news conference in Beijing. "Of course if we cannot find a way to resolve the North Korean issue in this way (through six-party talks), then we will have to find other means to do it."

Dawn, 22 March 2005

Double standards on NPT won't help (Ian Black)

LONDON: Iran is offering to send George Bush truckloads of pistachio nuts if he will dismantle America's huge nuclear arsenal - a cheeky response to the president's grudging readiness to try diplomacy to end the dangerous stand-off over Tehran's atomic ambitions. Last week's riposte followed the announcement that the US will support Europe's idea of dangling economic incentives in front of the Islamic Republic in exchange for guarantees not to develop nuclear weapons. But if these carrots do not tempt, the way will be open to the stick of UN sanctions and perhaps American, or Israeli, air strikes. The problem, though, is far wider than skirmishing between Bush and this most troublesome of his "outposts of tyranny". Washington wants to redraw the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, the cold war bargain that allows the five "official" nuclear powers to keep their weapons - while working towards disarmament - and all others to renounce them in return for being permitted to develop civilian nuclear energy.

The News, 22 March 2005

Rice warns N Korea of 'problems' ahead

BEIJING: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned North Korea on Monday of "problems" if it fails to return to nuclear talks, while cautioning the EU against lifting its arms embargo against China. The US diplomat also urged Beijing to ease tensions across the Taiwan Strait and pressed for improvements in human rights and religious freedoms during two days of talks with the communist country's top leaders. Washington was considering "other options" in dealing with the rogue Stalinist regime in North Korea but Rice made it clear that a military attack was not one of them. "Whether the talks can restart depends on North Korea. Everyone is waiting and is ready to have a constructive discussion," Rice said of six-party talks to halt the North's nuclear ambitions that have been stalled since last June. The North insists that it needs a nuclear program to generate energy and Rice said Washington was "prepared to think of their energy needs", but she reiterated that progress would only be made in a multinational setting.

Dawn, 22 March 2005

Iran needs US security assurance: EIBaradei

PARIS, Mar. 1: The United States needs to give Iran some kind of security assurance as Washington joins the EU to try to persuade Tehran to give up sensitive atomic activities, the UN's nuclear watchdog chief said on Monday. "I think when the issue of security comes up (in the EU-Iran talks), obviously the US will have to step in, because ... the Iranians will very much need the American and not just European (security) assurance...", Mohamed EIBaradei told reporters on the sidelines of a conference on the future of nuclear energy. "A discussion of regional security is very much not only a European affair." France, Britain and Germany have offered Iran political and economic incentives if it permanently abandons all work on the nuclear fuel cycle, activities that could give Iran the ability to produce highly enriched uranium fuel or plutonium for bombs.

Daily Times, 23 March 2005

US rules out Iran security guarantees

WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday brushed off a call by the top UN nuclear inspector that it gives Iran security assurances in return for Tehran renouncing suspected efforts to develop a nuclear bomb. The State Department reiterated Washington's support for efforts by its European allies to negotiate an end to Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions and said the

ball was in Tehran's court. "I think the issue is not what the US will or won't do. We've been over this ground before," deputy department spokesman Adam Ereli told reporters. "The issue is, what actions will Iran take or won't Iran take to meet the concerns of the international community, to answer the questions that have been posed to it, and to bring itself into line with accepted international practice." Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said Monday Washington would have to give Iran regional security assurances if the European-led nuclear talks were to succeed. ElBaradei said, "At an appropriate time the United States will have to be fully engaged" because "regional security (in the Middle East) is very much not only a European affair."

The Tribune, 23 March 2005

US: visa issue hasn't hit ties with India (Ashish Kumar Sen)

Washington. Washington's denial of a visa to Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi has not put a crimp in U.S.-India relations, the Bush administration insisted on Monday. "The issue of this visa, frankly, I think, should be separated entirely from the broader issue of U.S.-India relations," State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli told reporters in Washington. "One should not make more of this decision [on Mr. Modi's visa] than it is. It's a decision based on the application - based on the interpretation of law with respect to a specific request for a visa. It is not a reflection of our views of the government of Gujarat or the people of Gujarat or a reflection of our bilateral relations." To the contrary, he added, "what I will tell you is that we are deeply appreciative of the role that both the BJP and the Vajpayee government have played in opening the way for positive transformation of U.S.-Indian relations."

The Hindu, 23 March 2005

Rice visit to India 'excellent': U.S. (Sridhar Krishnaswami)

Washington, March.22. The United States today said that the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice's visit to India was productive and that the U.S. was looking forward to taking the bilateral relationship to "an even greater strategic partnership." The deputy spokesman of the State Department, Adam Ereli discounted the notion that Dr. Rice had created a controversy regarding the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi's U.S. visa. "Secretary Rice did have an excellent visit to India. Secretary Rice and the Prime Minister and [the] Foreign Minister were able to talk about all aspects of what is a strengthening relationship between the United States and India and we look forward to taking that relationship to an even greater strategic partnership. And that is ... the overall impression one would take away from the visit," Mr. Ereli said.

The Tribune, 24 March 2005

PM unlikely to visit USA (Rajeev Sharma)

New Delhi, March.23. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's promised bilateral visit to the United States in July this year does not seem to be happening. It is not because of Washington's denial of visa to Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi despite a strong pitch made for it by the Ministry of External Affairs, but because he would be meeting President George W. Bush twice between May and July, sources said. In May, the Prime Minister would be travelling to Moscow to attend the 60th anniversary of the Allies' victory in the Second World War for the May 9 event. In July, the Prime Minister would visit Scotland for attending G-8 Plus Three summit. The Prime Minister would be having a meeting with Mr Bush both in Moscow and Scotland. Besides, the Prime Minister would also be meeting Mr Bush in September when he travels to New York for the United Nations General Assembly session. Over and above all this, the US President would be coming here early next year - late January or early February - for his maiden India visit. In view of these frequent engagements between Prime Minister and the US President, there does not seem to be a pressing need for Dr Manmohan Singh travelling to Washington this summer.

The Japan Times, 24 March 2005

Editorial: Nuclear shadow follows Ms. Rice

Ms. Condoleezza Rice has just completed her first tour of Asia as U.S. secretary of state. The trip took her to the major capitals of the region - Delhi, Islamabad, Tokyo, Seoul and Beijing - as well as to Afghanistan, briefly. At each stop, she confirmed U.S. commitment to the region and pledged to deepen ties with each government she met. It was an impressive performance, and one that is much appreciated given the value that Asian governments put on face-to-face diplomacy. The trip underscored the challenges the Bush administration faces in its second term, including the most daunting task of all - dealing with North Korea. On this issue, the signs are worrying. Ms. Rice began in South Asia, reaffirming U.S. determination to improve relations with India and Pakistan, and highlighting Washington's mutual interests and shared concerns with Delhi and Islamabad. In India, Ms. Rice explained American worries about a proposed pipeline that would bring Iranian energy supplies to the Indian subcontinent - thus extending Tehran's influence and providing it with much-needed hard currency. In Pakistan, the top U.S. priority is closing down the nuclear black market of Dr. A.Q. Khan. She also found time to stop in Kabul to see firsthand the progress that has been made in Afghanistan since the elections last year.

The Independent, 25 March 2005

Over nuclear issue N Korea ready for war with US

BANGKOK: Mar 25: North Korea is ready to go to war with the United States over the communist country's nuclear program, a newspaper Friday quoted a North Korean envoy as saying. But O Song Chol, North Korea's ambassador to Thailand, also said his country was prepared to enter into negotiations to resolve the dispute. "We are ready to talk peace and we are ready for war with the Americans," he told the English-language The Nation in an interview Friday. Chol said his government has formulated a contingency plan in case of war and would hit back hard. The envoy urged Washington not to refer the stalled, six-nation talks on Pyongyang's nuclear program to the U.N. Security Council, saying the move would be tantamount to a declaration of war.

The Hindu, 26 March 2005

We are disappointed: Manmohan (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi, March.25. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today conveyed India's "great disappointment" at the American decision to transfer F-16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan. An official statement said the Prime Minister expressed India's sentiments on the issue when he received a telephone call from the U.S. President, George W. Bush. "The Prime Minister expressed India's great disappointment at the decision which could have negative consequences for India's security environment," it said about the transfer of F-16s to Pakistan. Mr. Bush's telephone call came in advance of a formal announcement that the U.S. administration was to make about the transfer of the F-16s to Pakistan. During the course of a wide-ranging conversation, Mr. Bush, among other things, spoke of the administration's decision to propose the transfer of F-16s to Pakistan. Government sources said the telephone conversation was "warm and cordial." Other issues such as the U.S. "willingness" to help India in high technology fields also came up for discussion.

Daily Times, 26 March 2005

US sees North Korea as an equal in nuclear talks

SEOUL: The United States is prepared to talk to North Korea as an equal, and Pyongyang should take recent comments by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as a signal of that commitment, South Korea's foreign minister said on Friday. Rice, during an Asian visit last week, called the North "a sovereign state," which foreign policy analysts said was an attempt to appease Pyongyang's demand that she apologise for having called it "an outpost of tyranny." "North Korea keeps talking about not getting treated right at the six-party talks, so (Rice) was noting a willingness to have dialogue as equals," South Korea's Yonhap news agency quoted Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon as telling a seminar. North Korea has said a condition for a resumption of stalled six-party disarmament talks would be for the United States to cease a policy toward it that Pyongyang sees as hostile. Three rounds of the talks by the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan and Russia have produced little progress.

Daily Times, 27 March 2005

N Korea blames US-South Korean military exercise for delay in talks

SEOUL: North Korea on Saturday blamed joint military drills conducted by the United States and South Korea for a delay in the resumption of nuclear disarmament talks. The weeklong military exercises, which ended Friday, were "derailing the resumption of six-way talks," the North's Communist Party newspaper Rodong Sinmun said in a commentary carried by its official news agency, KCNA. "The US does not want either improvement of the relations with (North Korea) and a solution to the nuclear issue ... but intends only to invade (the North) by force of arms," the commentary said. North Korea has repeatedly denounced the annual exercises as preparations for a pre-emptive attack against its hardline regime and said it would beef up its nuclear arsenal to deter such an attack. Washington says it has no intention of invading, and has urged the North to return to nuclear talks aimed at persuading the communist country to give up its nuclear ambitions.

Times of India, 28 March 2005

F-18s never sold to any other country (Indrani Bagchi)

New Delhi, Boeing, Lockheed Martin's competitor in Indian markets, has sewed up a strategic alliance with the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, to conduct research in aerospace materials, encompassing new age nanotechnology, smart materials and even simulation - to infuse the best of these new ideas and technologies into Boeing. These are technologies of critical importance to the future of aerostructures. By allowing the F-18s to be sold to India, the US is making more than a simple statement of sale. Boeing's F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, popularly known as F-18s, and land and carrier-based fighter jets have not been sold to any country, even to NATO allies, according to senior aviation officials. As the details of the US deal for India unfold, it is clear that the F-16s for Pakistan are no match for what India could access from the US. The Lockheed Martin executive, Mike Kelly, was quoted as saying, "We have in the past taken up building of such exclusive fighters for UAE and are prepared to manufacture F-16s to India's special requirements."

The Tribune, 28 March 2005

No decision yet on US offer: Pranab

Kolkata, March.27. Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said India would accept the US offer of fighter aircraft only if it fulfilled the country's defence requirements. Mr Mukherjee was glad that the Bush administration had now come forward with the proposal of supplying of F-16 and some other larger supersonic fighter aircraft to India after the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, had expressed his resentment and concern over the US arms supply agreement, including the supply of F-16 planes, with Pakistan. The Defence Minister said India was now negotiating with some countries, including the USA, for purchasing fighter aircraft and other defence equipment but had not yet finalised any deal.

The Times of India, 28 March 2005

Once, US was all in favour of an Iranian N-programme (Dafna Linzer)

WASHINGTON, Mar. 27: Lacking direct evidence, Bush administration officials argue that Iran's nuclear program must be a cover for bomb-making. Vice President Dick Cheney recently said, "They're already sitting on an awful lot of oil and gas. Nobody can figure why they need nuclear as well to generate energy." Yet Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and outgoing Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz held key national security posts when the Ford administration made the opposite argument 30 years ago. Ford's team endorsed Iranian plans to build a massive nuclear energy industry, but also worked hard to complete a multibillion-dollar deal that would have given Tehran control of large quantities of plutonium and enriched uranium - the two pathways to a nuclear bomb. Either can be shaped into the core of a nuclear warhead, and obtaining one or the other is generally considered the most significant obstacle to would-be weapons builders.

The Statesman, 28 March 2005

Ford administration recommended Iran's nuke programme

WASHINGTON, Mar. 27: Former US President Gerald Ford's top officials had recommended the Iranian uranium enrichment programme - the shut-down of which the USA now demands, according to declassified US documents. The officials included Ford's Secretary of State Mr Henry Kissinger, current Vice-President Mr Dick Cheney and Defence Secretary Mr Donald Rumsfeld. The Ford administration of the 1970s even recommended to Iran at one point to make the nuclear project a joint one with Pakistan, the newly declassified documents reveal. The Ford administration "at one point suggested joint Pakistani-Iranian reprocessing as a way of promoting nonproliferation in the region 'because it would cut down on the need for additional reprocessing facilities'", the Washington Post said in a report, after reviewing the documents. Mr Cheney, Mr Rumsfeld and Mr Wolfowitz do not want to talk about it now. Mr Kissinger, however, told the Post: "They (Iranians) were then an allied country (under the Shah) and this was a commercial transaction. We did not address the question of them one day moving toward nuclear weapons."

The Washington Post, 28 March 2005

Saving Nonproliferation (Jimmy Carter)

Renewal talks for the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) are scheduled for May, yet the United States and other nuclear powers seem indifferent to its fate. This is remarkable, considering the addition of Iran and North Korea as states that either possess or seek nuclear weapons programs. A recent United Nations report warned starkly: "We are approaching a point at which the erosion of the non-proliferation regime could become irreversible and result in a cascade of proliferation." A group of "Middle States" has a simple goal: "To exert leverage on the nuclear powers to take some minimum steps to save the non-proliferation treaty in 2005." Last year this coalition of nuclear-capable states – including Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden and eight NATO members – voted for a new agenda resolution calling for implementing NPT commitments already made. Tragically, the United States, Britain and France voted against this resolution.

The Times of India, 28 March 2005

Washington took Iran down N-road

WASHINGTON, Mar. 27: The Iranian uranium enrichment programme, the shutdown of which the US now demands, was recommended by former President Gerald Ford's top officials, including his secretary of state Henry Kissinger, current vice-president Richard Cheney and defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, according to declassified US documents. The Ford administration of the 1970s even recommended to Iran at one point to make the nuclear project a joint one with Pakistan, the newly declassified documents reveal. The Ford administration "at one point suggested joint Pakistani-Iranian reprocessing as a way of promoting 'non-proliferation in the region', because it would cut down on the need for additional reprocessing facilities," the Washington Post said in a report, after reviewing the papers. Cheney, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz do not want to talk about it now, but Kissinger told the Post when asked why he joined in making these recommendations: "They (Iranians) were then an allied country (under the Shah), and this was a commercial transaction. We did not address the question of them one day moving toward nuclear weapons."

International Herald Tribune, 28 March 2005

On Iran and Korea, few options (Steven R. Weisman)

WASHINGTON: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has won praise from Europeans and Democrats for working closely with American allies on a common approach to the crises of Iran's and North Korea's nuclear programs. Her phrase "the time for diplomacy is now" has become a kind of State Department battle cry. But Rice has also sharpened her tone of impatience, as have other administration officials, over the stalled nuclear talks with North Korea and Iran, suggesting that "the time for diplomacy" may not last forever. But few options are available, administration officials say. The next steps may focus on the two countries' fear of further isolation and economic hardship by seeking resolutions of condemnation or threatening sanctions through the United Nations Security Council. Conservatives in Congress are demanding that the Bush administration promote dissident groups within Iran and among refugees from North Korea, to agitate for political changes in both countries.

Daily Times, 28 March 2005

US, South Asia and nuclear pragmatism (C Raja Mohan)

The Bush administration is going beyond mere reconciliation with the nuclear reality in the subcontinent. It is challenging the conventional wisdom that supplying arms to either or both nations in the subcontinent would lead to military imbalance and nuclear instability. The US decisions announced last Friday on releasing F-16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan and expanding military and strategic cooperation with India mark an important shift in the American policy towards the subcontinent. In fact senior administration officials who briefed the Washington press corps on Friday underlined that these decisions were part of a review of South Asian policy by the Bush team in the run-up to the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit to India, Pakistan and Afghanistan in mid-March. The most distinguishing feature of the new American approach was the striking absence of two themes - Kashmir and nuclear flashpoint - from the initial remarks.

The News, 28 March 2005

Iran refutes US allegations

WASHINGTON: A top Iranian diplomat defended Tehran's nuclear policy and refuted US allegations as baseless. "Iran has been under the most intrusive inspections over the last two years" which have proved that Iran has not diverted its nuclear program toward non-peaceful means," Javad Zarif, Iranian ambassador to the United States, said in an interview with US TV. The inspection conclusion showed US allegations against Iran's nuclear program "have simply been baseless," he said. Iran's

policy to diversify sources of energy is legitimate and "acceptable," he said. When asked about comments on Washington's warning that Iran should not get involved in Lebanon's internal affairs, Zarif said it was "ironic" for someone who has deployed "140,000 troops in a country to accuse another country of interference."

The News, 29 March 2005

US nuclear experts worried over storage of spent nuclear fuel

WASHINGTON: Nuclear experts have warned that United States federal regulators' decision to allow commercial nuclear facilities to store large quantities of radioactive spent fuel in pools of water could pose "a grave threat in case of a terrorist strike". The classified report assembled by National Academy of Sciences says the US government does not fully understand the risks that a terrorist attack could pose to the pools and sought to expedite the removal of fuel to dry storage casks that are more resilient to attack. The Bush administration has long defended the safety of pools, and the nuclear industry warned that moving large amounts of fuel to dry storage would be unnecessary and very expensive. The report was requested by Congress after the terrorist attacks of Sept 11, 2001, as homeland security officials sought to understand the potential consequences of a Sept 11-scale attack on a nuclear facility, Washington Post reported.

The Tribune, 29 March 2005

India to discuss F-16 offer with US

New Delhi, March.28. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today expressed disappointment over the US move to give F-16s to Pakistan and said his government hoped to take up the issue with Washington. He termed as "premature" the US offer to sell the F-series warplanes to India and declined to comment on it saying that the terms and conditions of the offer was yet to be known by the Indian Government. "The USA has decided to give F-16s to Pakistan. As far as India is concerned, there is an offer. But the terms and conditions, we do not know. It is premature for me to say. We will discuss with them", Dr Manmohan Singh told newsmen on the sidelines of the 2005 Padma Awards function at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here today. "We do not know what we will be getting. We will discuss with them. We have good relationship with the USA", he said.

The Indian Express, 30 March 2005

On N-energy for India, US says it's serious, will begin talks (C. Raja Mohan)

NEW DELHI, Mar. 29: The Bush Administration will soon launch negotiations with the Manmohan Singh Government as well as the US Congress on facilitating nuclear energy cooperation with India. In a conversation with a group of editors and analysts here, the U.S. Ambassador David Mulford affirmed that President George W. Bush's offer to help India develop the nuclear energy option is a "serious one". Mulford, however, underlined the "many legal and other difficulties" that have prevented such nuclear cooperation over the last three decades "have not gone away". The proposed talks are aimed at sorting out those difficulties. The US proposal, part of a broad new strategic initiative towards India unveiled by the Bush Administration, signals a major shift in American nuclear policy towards India. Ever since New Delhi conducted its first nuclear test in May 1974, the idea of nuclear cooperation with India has been a taboo in Washington. "We are now moving in a different direction", Mulford said.

Hindustan Times, 30 March 2005

US envoy pressed nuke panic button during Kargil: Jaswant

NEW DELHI, Mar. 29: Former Defence Minister Jaswant Singh on Tuesday said a former US Ambassador was responsible for spreading paranoia about an impending India-Pakistan nuclear war in the wake of the 1999 Kargil border conflict. "There was this US Ambassador, whom I shall not name, who was saying these things. And I asked (former Minister of State for Defence) Arun Singh to go and have a word with him," Singh said at a book release function. Singh asserted India had done nothing during the Kargil conflict and after that could have led to a nuclear confrontation with Pakistan. He was speaking of the period when a coalition government headed by his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was in power in New Delhi. Singh, who is Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, served as External Affairs Minister and as Defence Minister for a brief period in 2001, when Arun Singh was his aide. He did not specify when the incident in question had occurred and gave no further details. Singh was speaking after releasing the book "Low intensity conflicts in India" authored by Lt Colonel Vivek Chadha.

The Tribune, 30 March 2005

Question of double standards

There are occasions when truth must be told to set the record straight. External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh found such an occasion when he was asked to address a conference on "Emerging Nuclear Proliferation Challenges" in New Delhi on Monday. He showed the mirror to those who are never tired of giving sermons to others on non-proliferation issues, but prefer to ignore the reality when it suits their interests. The whole world, including the US, knows that Pakistan's A. Q. Khan network has been involved in providing nuclear knowhow to Libya and Iran. Pakistan's involvement in the North Korean nuclear weapon programme is also not a secret. But the irony of the situation is that the US has accorded Pakistan the status of a Major Non-NATO Ally. This is not only a "permissive" attitude. It also reflects double standards on a matter as serious as nuclear proliferation. How else can one describe the drive for achieving a lofty objective when the focus is only on the beneficiaries of the Qadeer Khan network and not on the country which has been the source of illicit supplies?

Daily Times, 30 March 2005

US questions Korean: commitment over six-way N-talks

MANILA: A top US official on Tuesday questioned North Korea's commitment to six-nation nuclear disarmament talks, but said Washington would never abandon the process. The talks, involving the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan and

Russia, aimed at ending Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions have been stalled since June, and the North has refused to return to the negotiating table because of what it calls a hostile US policy towards Pyongyang. It has also sought an apology over US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's labeling of the country as one of the world's "outposts of tyranny." Christopher Hill, the chief US negotiator in the multinational talks, told reporters in Manila that conditions imposed by the North for the resumption of negotiations had stalled a "very serious process." "For the North Koreans to be fixating on one statement and not addressing, or not even being willing to address, the fundamental issues that bring us together, really calls into question how serious they are about the process," he said.

Deccan Chronicle, 30 March 2005

US says India good, not rights record

Washington, March.29. Despite being a "vibrant democracy" with strong constitutional protections, India's human rights enforcement record has been "poor" and needed improvement, the United States has said in a report. In its second such report in a month, the state department on Monday criticised New Delhi's human rights record but said the new UPA government at the centre has started addressing rights concerns that have "arisen over the years." The report claimed that human rights organisations and religious groups remained concerned about allegations of witness intimidation by local leaders in Gujarat.

The New York Times, 31 March 2005

Using Clues From Libya to Study a Nuclear Mystery (David E. Sanger and William J. Broad)

WASHINGTON, Mar. 30: In the 15 months since Libya turned over to the United States nearly two tons of illicit uranium it had planned to use in atomic weapons, the radioactive material has become a pivotal, if mysterious, piece of evidence for investigators unraveling the nuclear black market. The Bush administration, joined by United Nations inspectors, now say the uranium most likely came from North Korea and helps to build a case that the North has exported dangerous nuclear material to Libya, and perhaps beyond. The officials drew on scientific tests, secret documents and interviews with key players in the black market, which taken together are potentially highly incriminating. But the evidence is also circumstantial. In interviews this week, administration officials and foreign diplomats disclosed that Libyan officials had also surrendered financial ledgers to the United States that provide a guide to the front companies involved in the nuclear network set up by Abdul Qadeer Khan, the Pakistani scientist. One large payment, American officials contend, was directed to North Korea, presumably for the uranium hexafluoride that arrived in Tripoli in 2001.

The Indian Express, 31 March 2005

PM is cautious but positive on US offer (Diptosh Majumdar)

MAURITIUS, Mar. 30: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today struck a more positive note on the recent US offer of F-16s, missile defence systems and civilian nuclear cooperation. On board his aircraft on a three-day trip to this picturesque island nation, the PM said with a degree of caution, "We would have to go through the details." That he was responding more enthusiastically to the US package was apparent from his statement: "India welcomes the development. The fact is that the US has expressed its willingness to engage in matters related to increase in cooperation in matters related to nuclear as well as non-nuclear issues." It was a significant change from his initial response of "disappointment" to the US offer of F-16s to Pakistan. It was apparent that the PM was no longer linking the two issues of the US resuming supply of F-16s to Pakistan and the offer of a package deal to India.

The Hindu, 31 March 2005

India may insist on co-production of F-16s (K.Venugopal)

Port Louis, March.30. The National Security Adviser, M.K. Narayanan, said today that India may ask for a co-production deal should the issue of buying the U.S-built F-16 or F-18 fighter aircraft come up. Mr. Narayanan, who is accompanying the Prime Minister on his four-day visit to Mauritius, explained that India would insist on a co-production deal because the country wished to ensure the transfer of technology and reliability of supplies. Co-production would involve the U.S. arranging for some of the components of the fighter aircraft to be produced in India.