

The Tribune, 1 May 2005

Koizumi, Pervez discuss n-proliferation

Islamabad, April 30: Indo-Pak ties, bilateral relations, nuclear non-proliferation and UN Security Council reforms figured in talks Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi had with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf today. Mr Koizumi, who arrived in Islamabad from New Delhi on a two-day visit, held two-hour-long one-to-one meeting with Mr Musharraf during which a host of issues, including Pakistan's commitment to the Indo-Pak peace process, figured. He also held talks with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. Nuclear proliferation, which is of concern to Japan specially in the aftermath of the disclosures by disgraced nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan and the proposed UN reforms and Tokyo's bid for permanent membership at the UNSC, also came up for discussion.

The Hindu, 1 May 2005

North Korea set to test nuclear bomb, warns U.S.

VIENNA: The United States has warned its allies that North Korea may be ready to carry out an underground nuclear test as early as June, diplomats said on Saturday, even as Iran stated that it will resume some nuclear activities related to uranium enrichment next week. The diplomats said the information regarding North Korea had been apparently gathered in part from satellite imagery. They spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of discussing intelligence information. The reported U.S. warnings reflected growing fears in Washington that the North is going ahead with efforts to develop nuclear weapons after South Korean officials said Pyongyang had recently shut down a nuclear reactor, possibly to harvest plutonium that could be used in an underground test. The 5-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon generates spent fuel rods laced with plutonium, but they must be removed and reprocessed to extract the plutonium for use in an atomic weapon. They can be removed only if the reactor is shut down. In Teheran, a top nuclear negotiator said on Saturday that his country would resume some nuclear activities related to uranium enrichment.

The Daily Times, 1 May 2005

Korea may conduct nuclear test by June

TOKYO: The United States has warned the International Atomic Energy Agency that North Korea has been preparing to carry out an underground nuclear test since March and could go ahead as early as June, Kyodo news agency said on Saturday. The report, which quoted diplomatic sources in Vienna, came a day after the chief US negotiator to stalled talks on Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions said Washington believed North Korea might be trying to harvest material for a nuclear bomb from a shut-down reactor. According to the sources, who said the information was obtained by satellite photos and from within North Korea, Pyongyang was preparing to test a small-scale plutonium device.

People's Daily, 1 May 2005

DPRK: No expectation of settling nuclear issue during Bush's term

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on Saturday said that it does not expect any solution to the nuclear issue or any progress in the DPRK-US relations during the tenure of incumbent US president George W. Bush. "Because, Bush is, indeed, a world dictator whose hands are stained with the blood shed by innocent civilians," the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) quoted a spokesman of the DPRK's Foreign Ministry as saying. "Peace can never settle in the world as long as Bush stays in power." The spokesman said that over more than four years since Bush's inauguration, the DPRK has shown "utmost magnanimity and patience." He stressed that it can no longer do so, "waiting for any shift in the US policy." The DPRK's anger came after Bush made accusation against the DPRK's top leader Kim Jong-il at a press conference on Friday, when Bush branded Kim as a "tyrant and a dangerous man."

The Korea Times, 2 May 2005

Fragile Six-Party Dialogue: Washington Ought to Stop Pushing Pyongyang

Is U.S. President George W. Bush really committed to resolving the nuclear standoff with North Korea through the six-party dialogue? Once again, not just the five other participants in the talks but also the rest of the international community may be forgiven for doubting his seriousness after his vilification of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in a news conference Thursday. In return, Pyongyang bitterly denounced Bush Saturday, vowing not to deal with Washington while he is in office. Bush mentioned Kim more than 10 times in the news conference, calling him "a dangerous person who starves his people" and "a tyrant." The North attacked Bush as "a hooligan bereft of any personality" and a Philistine whom they can never deal with. Even though Kim is responsible for triggering the nuclear crisis, the United States should restrain itself from pushing the North too far when Seoul and Beijing are endeavoring to resume the six-party talks suspended since last June, following the third round in Beijing. Bush's attack on Kim was improper and irrational because his nuclear top negotiator Christopher Hill was visiting Seoul, Tokyo and Beijing probably in a last-minute effort to bring the North to the negotiating table.

Japan Today, 2 May 2005

Hosoda plays down reported N Korean missile launch

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda on Monday played down the seriousness of North Korea's reported launch of a short-range missile, telling reporters there is "nothing special" to say about the incident.

The Japan Times, 2 May 2005

U.S. may allow nuke strikes over WMD: Proposal would reverse 10-year policy

WASHINGTON: The U.S. military is considering allowing regional combatant commanders to request presidential approval for pre-emptive nuclear strikes against possible attacks with weapons of mass destruction on the United States or its allies, according to a draft nuclear operations paper. The March 15 paper, drafted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is titled "Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations," providing "guidelines for the joint employment of forces in nuclear operations . . . for the

employment of U.S. nuclear forces, command and control relationships, and weapons effect considerations." "There are numerous nonstate organizations (terrorist, criminal) and about 30 nations with WMD programs, including many regional states," the paper says in recommending that commanders in the Pacific and other theaters be given an option of pre-emptive strikes against "rogue" states and terrorists and "request presidential approval for use of nuclear weapons" under set conditions. The paper identifies nuclear, biological and chemical weapons as requiring pre-emptive strikes to prevent their use. Allowing pre-emptive nuclear strikes against possible biological and chemical attacks would effectively contradict a "negative security assurance" policy declared 10 years ago by the Clinton administration during an international conference to review the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The Korea Times, 2 May 2005

Allies Downplay Pyongyang's Missile Test (Ryu Jin)

South Korea on Monday played down the significance of Sunday's missile test by North Korea, saying it was a common end-of-winter military drill, involving a short-range missile without nuclear capabilities. The missile test is also unrelated to the dispute over the North's nuclear ambition, a high-ranking government official said. Song Min-soon, deputy foreign minister and chief South Korean delegate to the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons programs, said that no symptoms have been found to back up recent speculations that the North may test an atomic weapon soon. "The missile that North Korea recently fired is a short-range missile and nowhere near like anything that can carry a nuclear weapon," he told the Seoul-based Yonhap news agency. "This isn't a case to be linked to the nuclear dispute." In Japan and across the Pacific in the United States, officials attached little significance to the test-firing either. Andrew Card, the White House chief of staff, publicly announced the test, saying it was "not surprising." A Japanese military official also noted that Tokyo believes the missile flew only an extremely short distance and would not pose an immediate threat to it.

People's Daily, 2 May 2005

ROK says no signs of DPRK's nuclear test

The South Korean government said Monday that there are no signs of a possible nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Seoul has yet to find any sign of Pyongyang conducting underground nuclear tests despite close scrutiny, said Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon, who is also Seoul's chief negotiator to the six-party talks on the nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula. His remarks were regarded as a response to earlier reports that the United States has notified its allies, including South Korea, of Pyongyang's plan to carry out nuclear tests. "The (South Korean) government has never received any US notification concerning North Korean nuclear tests," Song said. Song told the official Yonhap News Agency that the DPRK launched a short-range missile in the Sea of Japan on Sunday morning, but adding that the missile with a range of about 100 km can not be considered "nuclear-capable."

The Tribune, 2 May 2005

North Korea lashes out at Bush (Glenn Kessle)

Washington, May 1: North Korea lashed out at President Bush on Saturday for comments he made about the country's leader, Kim Il Jong, at a news conference on Thursday, asserting that the North Korean nuclear crisis will never be resolved while Bush remains in office. North Korea declared in February that it had produced nuclear weapons and refused to return to six-nation disarmament talks. Saturday's statement appears to signal the end of that diplomatic process, heightening the stakes in the impasse. The Bush Administration has warned Asian allies in the past week that satellite images suggest North Korea is preparing its first underground nuclear test. "We can no longer tolerate and wait for a shift in the (US) policy," the North Korean statement concluded. The Bush Administration has engaged in an intensive effort to persuade North Korea to return to the talks, with a senior envoy shuttling between Beijing, Tokyo and Seoul last week. Bush took State Department officials and foreign diplomats by surprise with unusually strong language at the televised news conference, calling Kim a "tyrant" and a "dangerous person" who ran "concentration camps." Kim is considered almost a deity in his country, and the North Korean statement said it could not ignore such "slandering and cursing remarks."

The Nation, 2 May 2005

Iran issues nuclear warning to US

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in comments apparently directed at the United States that the Islamic republic's nuclear programme was "none of your business". In a speech carried on state television Sunday, the all-powerful Khamenei also said that the June presidential election would not bring any change to Iran's determination to press on with its controversial atomic activities. "The shameless arrogance and rudeness has gone so far that it has given rise to such comments that Iran does not need nuclear technology. This is none of your business," he told a gathering in the southern city of Kerman. "You do not have the right to judge if a nation needs nuclear energy or not," he said. His comments came the day after Iran said it was unhappy with the progress of nuclear negotiations with Britain, France and Germany, and warned it may resume uranium conversion activities next week in defiance of a key agreement.

The Nation, 2 May 2005

North Korea testfires short range missile

WASHINGTON: A senior White House official on Sunday said Washington was closely monitoring developments in North Korea, following reports that Pyongyang fired a short-range missile into the Sea of Japan. "They've tested missiles before. This is not the first time of alleged testing of missiles," said White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card, speaking on the Fox News Sunday television programme. "We know what their intent is and we're trying to keep a good close eye on them," Card said. We know that we would like to see a nuclear-free Korean peninsula," he said. Meanwhile, David Almay, a White House spokesman said that for the moment there is no "official comment" verifying that the missile firing took place. Sunday's report follows an assessment by the director of the Defence Intelligence Agency last week that North Korea is believed capable of arming a long-range missile with a nuclear warhead and has the ability to deploy a two-stage inter-continental missile that

could successfully hit US territory.

The Nation, 2 May 2005

'NPT signing only after recognition as N-state'

ISLAMABAD: In response to a renewed Japanese demand for signing the NPT, Pakistan has said it would join the global non-proliferation treaty only after its recognition as a nuclear state. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who left Islamabad Sunday for Luxembourg after a two-day visit, urged the top Pakistani leadership to sign Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as he conveyed his country's concerns over nuclear proliferation to his host authorities. However, the official sources here said, the Japanese prime minister was told that any positive change in Pakistan's policy on NPT would not be forthcoming before it was recognized as a nuclear weapon state. The renewed demand by Japanese prime minister for signing NPT came two days ahead of the international conference to review NPT starting today (Monday) at UN headquarters in New York.

The Nation, 2 May 2005

Nations review non-proliferation regime today

VIENNA: Some 190 nations gather in New York Monday to review the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) at a time when the world's fight against the spread of nuclear weapons has become imperiled by the discovery of secret nuclear programmes in Iran and North Korea. The NPT, which went into effect in 1970, also received a rude blow with the unearthing two years ago of an international black market network in technology that could be used to make atomic weapons. The smuggling ring had been secretly supplying these three nations, labeled by Washington as "rogue states." Mohammed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which verifies compliance with the NPT, has been in the forefront of critics calling for fixes to loopholes in the treaty that make coming to grips with countries like Iran and North Korea difficult. North Korea kicked out IAEA inspectors in December 2002 and withdrew from the NPT the following month, and now claims to have made atom bombs.

The Daily Times, 2 May 2005

Korean nuclear test may change dynamics in Asia (Jon Herskovitz)

Six-party talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear ambitions have been stalled for almost a year, but that has not stopped Pyongyang from boasting it had nuclear weapons. NORTH Korea needs to conduct a test to see if the vast sums it spent to develop atomic weapons have produced a working bomb, analysts say, but the political fall-out from such a blast could paralyse its already crippled economy. The nuclear card overwhelms all other cards the reclusive state possesses. Six-party talks aimed at ending its nuclear ambitions have been stalled for almost a year, but that did not stop Pyongyang from boasting in February it had nuclear weapons. Recently, it has also stepped up activity at a site that could be used for an underground nuclear test; US newspapers reported citing US officials, spurring speculation that the North may be thinking of carrying out such a test. Washington warned the International Atomic Energy Agency that North Korea has been preparing to carry out an underground test since March and could set off a blast as early as June, Japan's Kyodo news agency reported on Saturday citing diplomatic sources in Vienna.

The Daily Times, 2 May 2005

Korea may have launched missile towards Japan

TOKYO: The US military informed Japan on Sunday that North Korea may have launched a short-range missile towards the Sea of Japan, Kyodo News agency said, citing government sources. Japan's government was trying to confirm the report of the launch, which could have taken place earlier Sunday, Kyodo News said. Asked about the report, a Japanese foreign ministry official said: "We have unconfirmed reports about a missile." The communist state shocked the world in 1998 by firing a missile over Japan into the Pacific Ocean. The report comes as North Korea is locked in a standoff over its nuclear ambitions, with Pyongyang's state media saying Saturday that no resolution would be possible with US President George W Bush in office. Pyongyang has accused Washington of seeking to topple its government and announced on February 10 that it possesses nuclear weapons to defend itself.

Dawn, 2 May 2005

Khamenei warns US over N-issue

TEHRAN, May 1: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Sunday in comments apparently directed at the United States that the Islamic republic's nuclear programme was "none of your business". In a speech carried on state television, Ayatollah Khamenei also said that the June presidential election would not bring any change to Iran's determination to press on with its atomic activities. "The shameless arrogance and rudeness has gone so far that it has given rise to such comments that Iran does not need nuclear technology. This is none of your business," he told a gathering in the southern city of Kerman. "You do not have the right to judge if a nation needs nuclear energy or not," he said. His comments came the day after Iran said it was unhappy with the progress of nuclear negotiations with Britain, France and Germany, and warned it may resume uranium conversion activities next week in defiance of a key agreement. Uranium conversion - or turning raw uranium into a gas to be fed into centrifuges for the enrichment process - is covered by a freeze agreed to by Iran in November 2004 as a confidence-building measure. The European Union, backed by the United States, wants Iran to halt all nuclear fuel cycle activities.

Daily Times, 3 May 2005

Pakistan says it won't sign NPT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan reiterated on Monday that it would not join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapons state. Replying to questions at a weekly news briefing, Foreign Office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani said Pakistan

conveyed to the Japanese prime minister that its nuclear capability was indispensable for the country's security. The spokesman said that Pakistan had shared the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and the Japanese prime minister was satisfied with the steps taken by Islamabad for the purpose. To a question, Jilani said there was no change in Pakistan's principled position on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, which had to be resolved in accordance with the wishes of Kashmiris. Asked to comment on apprehensions expressed by APHC Chairman Syed Ali Geelani about threats to his life, the spokesman said Mr Geelani had made tremendous efforts for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute and Pakistan prayed for his long life.

The News, 3 May 2005

Nuclear treaty out of date, says Annan

UNITED NATIONS: The non-proliferation treaty on the spread of nuclear weapons is out of date in the face of new threats and technology and needs to be fixed, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said on Monday. "The plain fact is that the regime has not kept pace with the march of technology and globalisation, and developments of many kinds in recent years have placed it under great stress," Annan said in opening a month-long UN meeting on the 1970 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Annan said the international community must act to strengthen the NPT before "the gap between promise and performance becomes unbridgeable." The NPT faces a new era of "rogue" states with alleged nuclear weapons programmes, international nuclear smuggling rings and transnational terrorist groups seeking weapons of mass destruction. Annan said the 188 nations meeting at UN headquarters "must strengthen confidence in the integrity of the treaty, particularly in the face of the first withdrawal announced by a state." "Unless violations are directly addressed, the most basic collective reassurance on which the treaty rests will be called into serious question," Annan said.

The Asahi Shimbun, 3 May 2005

U.S. to let Japan extract plutonium (Tomohiro Murayama)

NEW YORK: The Bush administration plans to allow five non-nuclear nations-including Japan-to maintain uranium enrichment programs for nuclear power generation, administration sources said. The four other nations to be given the special privilege are Argentina, Brazil, Germany and the Netherlands, the sources said. But Japan would be the only one allowed to start up a reprocessing facility to extract plutonium from spent fuel rods. The revelation came before the Monday start of the 2005 review conference for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) at U.N. headquarters in New York. The conference is slated to run until May 27. The United States has been criticized for not doing enough to strengthen the NPT framework and compromising very little in setting an agenda for the review conference. Its plan concerning the five non-nuclear nations will likely spark more criticism since it would create a new category of nations with the privilege of uranium enrichment. The review conference also comes at a time when international concerns are increasing about nuclear programs in North Korea and Iran.

People's Daily, 3 May 2005

IAEA head calls for better mechanism to prevent nuclear proliferation

Mohamed ElBaradei, Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said on Monday that the way to prevent nuclear weapons development is to effectively adjust the mechanism for achieving the goals of security and development. ElBaradei made the remarks at the opening session of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). "Without question, improving control of facilities capable of producing weapons-usable material will go a long way towards establishing a better margin of security," he said. ElBaradei also stressed that the mechanisms for achieving the goals of security and development must evolve. "We should be clear: there is no incompatibility between tightening controls over the nuclear fuel cycle and expanding the use of peaceful nuclear technology," ElBaradei noted, stressing the importance of balancing both development and security interests.

Daily Times, 3 May 2005

No plans to resume uranium enrichment, says Iran

TEHRAN: Iran has no plans for the time being to resume uranium enrichment, a senior nuclear official said on Monday, following warnings from German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer that any such move would spell the end of talks with the European Union. "As the secretary of the Supreme Council for National Security (Hassan Rowhani) has said previously, our decision does not concern any resumption of enrichment, our discussions concern the uranium conversion facilities in Isfahan," said council spokesman Ali Agha Mohammadi. "No decision has been taken for the time being," he said. "I hope the patience and seriousness of Iran will enable the cleansing of the poisoned atmosphere created by the US so that we can continue our talks with the European Union," he added. Fischer's warning had come on the sidelines of an international conference to review the 1970 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). "It is the foundation of the talks that the uranium enrichment remains suspended," Fischer told reporters. Any resumption would "lead to a collapse of the talks".

The News, 3 May 2005

North Korea not planning N-test: Seoul

SEOUL: South Korea on Monday said there were no signs Stalinist North Korea was preparing to conduct a nuclear test, dismissing speculation about such an imminent move by Pyongyang. Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-Soon, Seoul's chief negotiator to six-way talks aimed at ending the North's nuclear ambitions, also denied that Seoul had received any intelligence from Washington about such a test. "The government has closely monitored (North Korea) for theoretical possibility, but it has detected no signs of supporting the probability of a nuclear test," Song said in an interview with Yonhap news agency. "The government has never been informed by the United States (of North Korea's possible nuclear test)." Song's remarks followed a series of media reports that the North had been preparing for an underground nuclear test since March and might conduct one as early as June. Quoting sources in Austria, Japan's Kyodo news agency said Saturday the United States had conveyed

the information to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency and other countries concerned.

The News, 3 May 2005

Iran uranium enrichment would lead to end of EU talks

UNITED NATIONS: A resumption of Iran's uranium enrichment activities would lead to an end of its nuclear talks with the European Union, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said Monday. "This would lead to a collapse of the talks," Fischer told reporters on the sidelines of a conference on non-proliferation at the United Nations in New York. "It is the foundation of the talks that the uranium enrichment remains suspended," Fischer said. Iran is unhappy with the progress of the talks and may resume uranium conversion activities in defiance of an agreed suspension of such nuclear fuel cycle work, top negotiator Hassan Rowhani said in Tehran over the weekend. "It is unlikely that we will resume enrichment, that is to say the activities at Natanz. But some activities at the UCF (Uranium Conversion Facility) at Isfahan could resume next week,"

Daily Times, 3 May 2005

Annan asks Iran to abandon N-plan (Masood Haider)

UNITED NATIONS, May 2: UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Monday called on non-nuclear states like Iran not to fall prey to nuclear temptation and on the United States and Russia to cut back more sharply on their nuclear arsenal. "All must work toward "a world of reduced nuclear threat and, ultimately, a world free of nuclear weapons," Mr Annan said as he opened a month-long Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) conference in New York. Mr Annan urged Washington and Moscow "to commit themselves - irreversibly - to further cuts in their arsenals, so that warheads number in the hundreds, not the thousands." "But you must go further. Many states still live under a nuclear umbrella, whether of their own or an ally. Ways must be found to lessen, and ultimately overcome, their reliance on nuclear deterrence," he added. The UN chief underscored: "The obligation therefore falls on all states - nuclear and non-nuclear alike - to increase transparency and security. Indeed, unless all states recognize that disarmament, like non-proliferation, requires action from everyone, the goal of general and complete disarmament will remain a distant dream."

Daily Times, 3 May 2005

PM to overhaul British nuclear deterrent system

LONDON: British Prime Minister Tony Blair has decided to equip Britain with a new generation of deterrent nuclear weapons, to replace those currently deployed on Trident submarines, The Independent reported Monday. "The decision (to replace Trident) has been taken in principle very recently," a senior defense source told the daily on condition of anonymity. A new nuclear deterrent would cost some 10 billion pounds (14.4 billion euros, 18.5 billion dollars), the paper said. Blair, who is currently campaigning hard for his Labour Party to win a third consecutive election this Thursday, last week said he not yet decided on a new deterrent. "We have got to retain our nuclear deterrent. That decision is for another time," he told the BBC. "But I believe that is the right thing." The defense source quoted by The Independent said it took an extremely long time to build new nuclear weapons, which is why the decision had to come far in advance of decommissioning the Tridents, expected in 2024.

Dawn, 3 May 2005

Enrichment could scuttle talks, Germany warns Iran

UNITED NATIONS, May 2: Germany warned on Monday that Iran's threat to defy the West and resume uranium enrichment activities which could be used to make nuclear weapons would torpedo talks between the European Union and Tehran. In one of the strongest warnings yet over Iran's disputed nuclear programme, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said such a move would "collapse" the talks but stressed that negotiations with Iran were for now continuing. "It is the foundation of the talks that the uranium enrichment remains suspended," Mr Fischer told reporters on the sidelines of an international conference to review the 1970 nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT). If Tehran re-starts enrichment, he said, "this would lead to a collapse of the talks". Iran has insisted that its nuclear programme is intended for peaceful, civilian energy purposes and stopped enriching uranium as a confidence-building measure for negotiations with the European Union that were launched in December.

The Associated Press, 3 May 2005

S. Korea Says It Has No Intel on Nuke Test

SEOUL: South Korea on Tuesday denied a report that U.S. intelligence officials told Seoul that North Korea might be preparing for a nuclear test. South Korea's mass-circulation Chosun Ilbo reported Tuesday that U.S. satellite photos showed the frequent movement of trucks and the placement of cranes and other equipment in the North Korean town of Gilju. Based on an analysis of the satellite photos and other intelligence, U.S. authorities concluded that North Korea might be preparing for an underground nuclear test and notified South Korean officials, the report said, citing an unidentified government source. However, South Korea's Defense Ministry on Tuesday denied receiving any such analysis from U.S. officials. South Korea detected signs that North Korea was digging tunnels in Gilju in the late 1990s, but there is no evidence suggesting that Pyongyang was preparing for a nuclear test there, an official at the Defense Ministry said.

Reuters, 3 May 2005

Iran readies reply to warnings about arms program

UNITED NATIONS: Iran was expected to deliver a strong defense of its nuclear energy plans on Tuesday after the United States and others warned Tehran not to use its facilities as a cover for atomic weapons programs. Rising tensions about Iran as well as North Korea, which has said it has nuclear arms, threatened to overshadow a monthlong review conference of the

1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), the cornerstone of atomic disarmament pacts. At the same time, speaker after speaker called for the United States and Russia, who have a combined arsenal of some 28,000 nuclear arms, to fulfill treaty obligations, and move quicker toward disarmament. But the United States on Monday pressed the conference of 188 nations to ensure Tehran and Pyongyang are denied peaceful nuclear energy benefits because they had violated the treaty.

International Herald Tribune, 3 May 2005

Russian nuclear hunt shifts into gear (C.J. Chivers)

MOSCOW: The man carrying the hidden radioactive material passed among airline passengers at Sheremetyevo Airport on an afternoon this year. His briefcase holding the contraband was indistinguishable from anyone else's carry-on. Then, as he approached the check-in counter, lights flashed and an alarm sounded. A mounted video camera captured the man's image. Guards seized the briefcase and took it to a lead-lined booth for inspection. So passed a drill for a quietly expanding nuclear security initiative in the former Soviet Union. The man, a Russian customs employee, had tripped a silent sentinel - an electronic radiation detector that had been installed by the government, underwritten in part by the United States. Since the Sept. 11 attacks, the United States and Russia have accelerated the installation of automated radiation detectors at Russian shipping ports, border crossings and airports, hoping to deter or detect the movement of radioactive material through Russia, a land where law and order is deeply inconsistent.

The Hindu, 3 May 2005

Anti-nuclear demonstration at U.N.

NEW YORK: Thousands of activists marched past the United Nations, hoping to remind diplomats reviewing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty of the horrors of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki five decades ago. Chanting "No War, No Nukes" and carrying signs saying "No More Hiroshima, No more Nagasaki," the marchers then headed to Central Park, where they formed a human peace symbol. Organisers put the number of Sunday's protesters at 40,000. The Mayor of Hiroshima, Tadatoshi Akiba, told the crowd that the survivors of the bombs were "the only people who have had the experience of nuclear war. For them the world is a family, and we need to work together so that no member of this family will have to suffer the pain that they suffered in 1945." One of those survivors, Sunao Tsuboi, was a 20-year-old college student when the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. Speaking through an interpreter, he spoke of the physical and mental anguish he experienced. "That's why we call the atomic bomb the absolute evil," he said.

The Indian Express, 3 May 2005

Make or break time for NPT (Evelyn Leopold)

UNITED NATIONS, May 2: Foreign ministers from around the world try on Monday to breathe life into a 35-year old nuclear disarmament treaty whose credibility UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan says is seriously challenged. The United States, in the month-long conference that appears deadlocked before it even begins, wants the focus on Iran and North Korea. But the majority of nations complain that the nuclear powers, mainly the United States and Russia, have moved far too slowly in abiding by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), which calls for them to move toward dismantling their arsenals. Iran threatened on Saturday to resume producing nuclear fuel. North Korea, which said it has nuclear weapons and withdrew from the NPT, on the eve of the conference apparently launched a short-range missile into the Sea of Japan. The 188 members of the 1970 treaty, the cornerstone in arms reduction treaties, meet every five years to review progress and set new goals. Only the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China are permitted to have nuclear arms while all other countries vow to give up atomic warheads for good.

The Indian Express, 3 May 2005

Seoul, Tokyo say N Korea's missile test no cause for worry

SEOUL, May 2: North Korea's suspected missile test at the weekend was not a major worry for the region since it appeared to be a short-range weapon incapable of carrying a nuclear warhead, officials said on Monday. But the test would strain efforts to restart talks on Pyongyang's nuclear programmes, they said. North Korea test-launched what appeared to be a short-range missile into the Sea of Japan on Sunday, US officials said. The test came as Washington officials indicated Pyongyang may be headed toward a nuclear test. "Is this the kind of missile that can carry a nuclear warhead? Not really," a South Korean government official said on condition of anonymity, referring to Sunday's test. A Defence Ministry spokeswoman in Tokyo said Japan had yet to confirm whether the launch took place. "At this point, the missile in question is thought to have flown a very short distance and cannot be described as something that immediately has a particular impact on our country's security," a spokeswoman said.

Reuters, 3 May 2005

NPT impasse over shedding nukes

UNITED NATIONS: Controversy over the nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea dominated a global disarmament conference on Monday, with the United States and others telling both countries to give up suspected atomic arms programs. The United States pressed the conference taking stock of the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to ensure Tehran and Pyongyang were denied peaceful nuclear energy benefits because they had violated the pact. Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, also urged Iran not to follow through on threats to resume nuclear enrichment activities that could be used to produce atomic weapons. The monthlong review of the NPT, the bedrock pact for halting the spread of nuclear arms, seemed deadlocked from the start. The United States wants to keep the focus on Iran's and North Korea's NPT violations, while other nations argue Moscow and Washington have done too little to reduce their own arsenals. The United States and Russia have a combined arsenal of 28,000 of the world's 30,000 nuclear arms.

Dawn, 3 May 2005

Flaws in convention on nuclear terrorism (Ghayoor Ahmed)

After seven years of negotiations, the 191-member UN General Assembly adopted, by consensus, an international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism, on April 13. It will open for signature from September 14 this year to December 2006. UN Secretary-General, Kofi Anan, hailed the convention as a vital step forward in multilateral efforts to prevent terrorist groups from gaining access to the most lethal weapons known to mankind. A number of member states, welcoming the adoption of the convention, have also described it as an affective tool to combat the nuclear terrorism which is the most dangerous form of terrorism. There are, however, many loopholes in the convention, which may impair the chances of its success. The most glaring weakness is that the convention does not address the issue of legality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by states. As a matter of fact, the activities of the armed forces of a state, undertaken during an armed conflict, are exempted from the purview of the convention on the ground that they are governed by other rules of international law.

Daily Yomiuri, 3 May 2005

Japan needs realistic NPT plan (Masahiko Asada)

The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty faces new challenges as international nuclear security has changed rapidly since the dawn of the 21st century following the dramatic upheavals brought about by the end of the Cold War. But challenges to the NPT are not unusual. India, Pakistan and Israel have persistently challenged the treaty from the outside as three nuclear-armed countries that have refused to join the NPT. The treaty has also faced challenges from within, including the discovery in 1991 that Iraq had secretly attempted to develop nuclear weapons and a dispute in 1995 over extension of the NPT. The challenges of the 1990s were overcome primarily by strengthening the NPT framework. Negotiations about the extension of the treaty transformed it from an agreement with an uncertain future to an open-ended treaty with a solid foundation. The scope of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which investigates illegitimate nuclear weapons development, was greatly improved by a 1997 supplementary protocol to the NPT that gave it the authority to carry out a broad range of inspections of suspected nuclear facilities.

The Korean Herald, 3 May 2005

Editorial: Failed six-way talks

For nearly two years, nations directly concerned about North Korea's nuclear arms development program have chased a mirage called "the six-way talks" aimed at persuading the Pyongyang regime to give it up. U.S. officials believed, or hoped, the multilateral process would be more effective than the previous bilateral method that produced the 1994 Agreed Framework that eventually failed, but they were wrong. China was also enthusiastic about the talks, playing host to three sessions, between August 2003 and June 2004, yet the multi-party conference proved to be one of the most unproductive negotiations in diplomatic history. While the United States, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea were patiently awaiting the opening of the fourth session, Pyongyang announced, on Feb. 10, it was pulling out of the talks and that it now had nuclear weapons. North Korea has since raised its provocative rhetoric and showed signs of activities to bolster its brand-new nuclear arsenal. Intelligence reports reveal that the 5-megawatt reactor in Yongbyon was recently shut down possibly to harvest more plutonium from spent fuel and movements of important equipment were detected in satellite images indicating possible preparations for a nuclear test.

The Indian Express, 3 May 2005

Orbiting the NPT (C. Raja Mohan)

India must stop demonising the nuclear treaty and start reinforcing it. If there is a moment for India to signal its strong support to an effective global regime on non-proliferation, it is now. Yesterday the month-long Seventh Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty got underway at the United Nations in New York. Any suggestion that India should be sending a reconciliatory message to the NPT system, which has for long symbolised the essence of India's nuclear problems with the world, would surprise many Indians. When global consensus was reached on the indefinite and unconditional extension of the NPT, exactly ten years ago, New Delhi seethed with anger. Fortunately it had a sensible fallout in helping India overcome one of its fondest illusions - that universal nuclear disarmament will one day replace the discriminatory non-proliferation order. Amidst the shattering of its disarmament illusions, India refused to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and accelerated its nuclear weapons programme.

The Japan Times, 3 May 2005

'Nothing special' about possible North Korea missile test: Hosoda

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda played down on Monday the seriousness of North Korea's reported launch of a short-range missile, telling reporters there was "nothing special" to say about the incident. "It is apparently a fact that tests have been conducted from time to time. There is nothing special to speak of," he said. The launch of such a short-range missile would not infringe on the 2002 Japan-North Korean Pyongyang Declaration, under which North Korea promised to maintain a moratorium on missile launches beyond 2003. "It is not a missile with a range of hundreds of kilometers to fly over the open sea," he said. The timing of the reported launch "would not have anything to do with Japan," Hosoda said. "We believe it would have been something like an ordinary domestic military drill." He said the missile launch has not been confirmed. Japanese government sources said Sunday that North Korea may have launched a short-range missile into the Sea of Japan in the morning, citing information given to the Defense Agency by the U.S. military.

BBC.com, 3 May 2005

Inspecting Iran's nuclear hideaway (Olly Bootle)

The unearthing of nuclear facilities in Iran, concealed from the outside world for 18 years, has reinforced the United States' suspicion of the Islamic state, but is it too late for international arbitration? Can diplomacy end the mutual distrust between Iran and the West? Three months ago, reporter Paul Kenyon and I received visas to go to Iran. After much negotiation, Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation had agreed to help us make a documentary about the state of their nuclear programme. With the threats from America and Israel piling up, and the window for a diplomatic solution with the Europeans slowly shutting, the Iranians were keen to tell their side of the nuclear story. That story is simple: they have a peaceful nuclear energy programme, and according to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), they have an "inalienable right" to develop and use nuclear technology for peaceful means. The American story is equally simple. As Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control Stephen Rademaker told us: "We think there's no question that Iran has embarked on a project to acquire nuclear weapons."

The Japan Times, 3 May 2005

Editorial: Nonproliferation plus disarmament

An international conference to review the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) opens at the United Nations Monday. The 1970 treaty is riddled with inefficacy, as illustrated by North Korea's nuclear-weapons program, Iran's moves to enrich uranium, and the existence of an international black market for nuclear equipment and technology. Restoring confidence in the NPT regime largely depends on the conference. Confidence building requires resolving, or at least reducing, the deep disagreement and mistrust that exists between nuclear haves and have-nots. All treaty nations have the collective responsibility to craft a more effective international system for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. During the review conference, which is expected to last more than three weeks, a range of nuclear issues will get a full airing not only in keynote speeches by representatives from member states, but also in the committee discussions that follow. On the agenda are three general subjects: disarmament, nuclear nonproliferation and peaceful use of atomic energy.

Hindustan Times, 3 May 2005

All nations, including India, Pak, must adhere to NPT: US

The US is going full steam ahead on its demand for "universal" adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and said all nations, including India and Pakistan, would have to adhere to the agreement to have "full relationship" with the rest of the world. "I think one thing that will be re-emphasised or reiterated in his (US representative's) remarks (at the Non-Proliferation Review Conference) will be that we believe in universal adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan told reporters when asked whether US President George W Bush "is going to put pressure on India - his friends, India, Pakistan and Israel - to shut down their nuclear arsenals". State Department spokesman Richard Boucher echoed similar sentiments when asked about the issue of nuclear arsenals of India and Pakistan, at the regular briefing on Monday. When a correspondent asked why he did not mention India and Pakistan, which have developed nuclear weapons and whether the two South Asian countries were not "better off" than countries without nuclear weapons, Boucher said: "I don't think so but I am sure they would debate that."

People's Daily, 3 May 2005

US boasts of deterrent capability over DPRK

The United States on Monday boasted its deterrent capability over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) after reports that the DPRK test-fired a short-range missile. "We have, after all, a very strong alliance with South Korea and a very strong alliance with Japan. And of course the United States maintains significant - and I want to underline 'significant' - deterrent capability of all kinds in the Asia-Pacific region," US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said after talks with French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier. "I don't think there should be any doubt about our ability to deter whatever the North Koreans are up to, but that does not mean that it is not a serious problem and that the North Koreans shouldn't come back to the six-party talks," Rice said. The test of DPRK's missiles "will at some point have to be a part of the discussions," Rice said. "It appears that there was a test of a short-range missile by the North Koreans and it landed in the Sea of Japan. We're not surprised by this. The North Koreans have tested their missiles before," White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card said in an interview with CNN's "Late Edition."

Daily Times, 3 May 2005

US, Asian allies downplay North Korea's missile test

SEOUL: The United States, Japan and South Korea on Monday played down North Korea's test-firing of a short-range missile off its east coast, saying it was not related to Pyongyang's drive for nuclear weapons. US officials confirmed Sunday's test, a day before the opening of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty conference in New York, and called on its allies to express concern. But they said they were not surprised by incident, the latest short-range missile test apparently timed for political impact. "We're not surprised by this. The North Koreans have tested their missiles before. They've had some failures," White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card told CNN television. "We have to work together with our allies around the world - especially the Japanese, the South Koreans, the Russians and the Chinese - to demonstrate that North Korea's actions are inappropriate," Card said. "We don't want them to have any nuclear weapons, we don't want the Korean peninsula to have any nuclear weapons on it."

The Times of India, 3 May 2005

US stiffens stand at NPT

WASHINGTON: The US has made it clear it will counter attempts by signatories to the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to press the "lawful" Nuclear Five to disarm before asking others not to build atomic weapons, while vowing to continue its call for

universal compliance to the treaty. This was stated by state department's leading arms control official assistant secretary of state Stephen Rademaker, ahead of the review conference of NPT which began on Monday in New York, attended by some 190 nations. India, which has not signed the NPT which came into effect in 1970, is among countries advocating time-bound universal disarmament. "Some of the concern expressed to date in the NPT review process about the pace of nuclear disarmament has dangerous overtones... Some states suggest strengthening the treaty's non-proliferation provisions should be linked to greater progress on nuclear disarmament," Rademaker told a congressional committee on April 28. "This point of view is fraught with risks, not least of which is to appear to excuse proliferation by blaming those who lawfully possess nuclear weapons under the NPT... Such thinking is confused and wrong. If it is accepted, it weakens nonproliferation. It must be vigorously countered," he said.

China Daily, 4 May 2005

Concessions urged as nuclear fears rise

Amid rising nuclear tensions, more than 180 nations convened Monday to review the nonproliferation treaty, hearing calls from many sides for concessions by Iran and North Korea, America, Russia and others to move toward a world free of the nuclear threat. "Ultimately, the only way to guarantee that they will never be used is for our world to be free of such weapons," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in opening the month long conference. The U.N. chief urged nonweapons states like Iran to renounce potential bomb technology, in return for international guarantees of nuclear fuel. But he also challenged Washington and Moscow to slash their nuclear arsenals irreversibly to just hundreds of warheads. That call was echoed by a spokeswoman for a coalition of disarmament-minded nations. "We are greatly disappointed" by "unsatisfactory progress" toward disarmament by the big powers, said New Zealand's Marian Hobbs. The U.S. representative rejected such criticism, pointing to recent arms-control agreements.

Daily Yomiuri, 4 May 2005

Multilateral N-arms cuts eyed (Ryuichi Otsuka and Yutaka Ishiguro)

Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura on Monday called for drastic arms reductions by "all nuclear powers" while drawing the world's attention to the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear program. In his opening address to the U.N. conference held to review the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Machimura also stressed the need for an early implementation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. He also urged more countries to sign up to the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguard protocol that requires inspections of nuclear facilities. Machimura disclosed a comprehensive plan to strengthen the NPT regime under the title "21 Measures for the 21st Century," which would oblige countries seeking to acquiring nuclear technology or resources to sign the IAEA protocol. The 21-point proposal includes creating a scheme for the return or disposal of nuclear-related materials of countries that leave the NPT. The document also urges the conference to call for drastic arms reduction by all existing nuclear powers.

People's Daily, 4 May 2005

China appeals for progress in promoting NPT goals

The three goals of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) must be promoted in a comprehensive and balance manner, said Zhang Yan, Head of the Chinese Delegation to 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), on Tuesday. "In light of the latest developments, challenges and problems in international security, it is urgent for the international community to take more pragmatic and concrete steps to preserve and strengthen the universality, effectiveness and authority of the NPT," Zhang said in the general debate at the 2005 NPT Review Conference at the UN headquarters in New York. "To achieve this, the three goals of NPT, namely nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, must be promoted in a comprehensive and balance manner," he stressed, adding that the three goals are interlinked and inseparable. Zhang stressed that this conference is expected to make progress in promoting the three goals of the Treaty.

The News, 4 May 2005

Iran vows to pursue nuclear activities

UNITED NATIONS: Iran vowed on Tuesday to press ahead with nuclear activities that could be used to make weapons and accused the United States and Israel of threatening international peace with their own atomic arsenals. "Iran is determined to pursue all legal areas of nuclear technology including uranium enrichment, exclusively for peaceful purposes," Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told a conference to review the 1970 nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. He said that it was it wrong to limit "access to peaceful nuclear technology to an exclusive club of technologically advanced states under the pretext of non-proliferation." Iran also attacked the United States for not scrapping its own arsenal as required by the NPT. "Unilateral nuclear disarmament measures should be pursued vigorously," Kharrazi said. It was also "abhorrent that ... the dangerous doctrine of the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states and threats was officially proclaimed by the United States and Nato."

The Korean Herald, 4 May 2005

Editorial: Review of the NPT

Of all the complexities of international politics, the nuclear monopoly by the five powers as institutionalized by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty is perhaps the hardest thing to explain to our children. The United States, the former Soviet Union, Britain, France and China which had "manufactured and exploded a nuclear explosive device prior to Jan. 1, 1967" were given the permanent status of a "nuclear-weapon state" and all the rest of the countries in the world were permanently banned from receiving or manufacturing any nuclear explosive device under the NPT, which took force in 1970. World nations are reviewing the NPT at the United Nations after a five-year interval, but the absurd structure will not be questioned in the month-long

session. North Korea and Iran, the former for its announced possession of nuclear weapons and the latter for its suspected nuclear weapons development program, are the focus of the 2005 conference, and not much attention will be given to the nearly non-existent moves of the nuclear powers toward scrapping their own nuclear arms.

The News, 4 May 2005

Pakistan to join NPT only as nuclear state: envoy

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's permanent representative to UN Munir Akram has said his country will join the Non-Proliferation Treaty only as a recognised "nuclear weapons state". "Pakistan can join it under the status of nuclear-weapon state, it cannot join it under the status of non-nuclear state," Munir told BBC Radio. Asked about the hurdle in joining the NPT, Munir said: "The remaining parties of the NPT have not yet taken decision to acknowledge us as atomic powers which are out of the NPT. He said although in favour of non-proliferation, Pakistan was not joining the conference of 190 countries being held in New York because Pakistan, India and Israel were not signatories to the NPT. Munir said as Pakistan was not attending the conference it would not be obliged to comply with the decisions taken there. "But we wish the conference to take realistic decisions. If it has to carry its objectives forward, it will have to display realism," he added.

The News, 4 May 2005

Thousands protest on eve of UN nuclear conference (Kirk Semple)

In a merger of the nuclear disarmament and antiwar movements, several thousand protesters, including a group of survivors of the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, marched through Midtown (New York) yesterday and rallied in Central Park to call for the end of nuclear proliferation and the withdrawal of United States troops from Iraq. The impetus for the event was a conference at the United Nations, scheduled to begin today, to review the flaws in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Organizers said they hoped the rally would help resuscitate the faded antinuclear movement. "We feel it is important to continue our focus on ending the war in Iraq and strengthening our movement by making the connection to nuclear disarmament," said Leslie Cagan, national coordinator of United for Peace and Justice, which helped to organise the march with "Abolition Now!" - a coalition of nuclear disarmament groups. "Given that the Nonproliferation Treaty conference is going on, we thought it was the right time to make that connection and re-energize opposition to nuclear weapons."

Dawn, 4 May 2005

Iran vows to continue nuclear plans (Masood Haider)

UNITED NATIONS, May 3: Iran declared on Tuesday that it is determined to pursue all legal areas of nuclear technology, including uranium enrichment asserting that it is the "inalienable right of states to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes". Addressing a UN conference on the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said his government is "eager" to provide guarantees that its nuclear-fuel programme will serve only peaceful purposes, as sought in talks with European governments. US contends Iran's uranium enrichment programme is aimed at building nuclear weapons and President Bush has proposed banning such technology to all but those countries that already have it. Enriched uranium also can be used to generate electricity, which Iran says is its only aim. "It is unacceptable that some intend to limit the access to nuclear technology to an exclusive club of technologically advanced states under the pretext of non-proliferation," Mr Kharrazi said in an apparent reference to the position taken by the United States.

Dawn, 4 May 2005

IAEA seeks inclusion of Pakistan, India, Israel: N-disarmament talks

UNITED NATIONS, May 3: The chief of UN nuclear watchdog on Monday urged the inclusion of Israel, India and Pakistan - the three nations who are not a party to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) - in talks on nuclear disarmament. "Nuclear disarmament can only succeed if it is universal," Mohamed ElBaradei, Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said at the opening session of the 2005 Review Conference of the states parties to the NPT. Although Mr ElBaradei has proposed the involvement of these three states not party to the NPT in disarmament discussions at earlier events also, it is the first time he has done so before a high-level global conference.

Daily Times, 4 May 2005

Iran 'determined' to pursue nuclear enrichment

UNITED NATIONS: Iran is determined to pursue all legal areas of nuclear technology, including uranium enrichment, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told the United Nations conference on the non-proliferation treaty on Tuesday. Kharrazi said Tehran was "eager" to guarantee that its nuclear-fuel programme would be for peaceful purposes, as sought by European governments. Washington contends Iran's enrichment programme is aimed at building nuclear weapons and US President George W Bush has proposed banning such technology to all but those countries that already have it. "It is unacceptable that some countries intend to limit the access to nuclear technology to an exclusive club of technologically advanced states under the pretext of non-proliferation," said the Iranian minister. He said the United States and other nuclear-weapons states should make legally binding assurances to non-nuclear states that they would not be subject to nuclear attack for nuclear bombs. Ap

Daily Times, 4 May 2005

Annan sketches out nuclear disaster

UNITED NATIONS: The voice was soft, calm, familiar. But the scenario Kofi Annan sketched out was chilling. A nuclear bomb goes off in a great city. Chaos ensues, and a frightened world asks, "Was this an act of terrorism? Was it an act of aggression by a state? Was it an accident?" Tens or hundreds of thousands would be dead, the UN chief said, and questions, implications

and dread would consume world leaders. Treaties might collapse, trade and economies totter, human rights and freedoms come under threat. And statesmen would ask: "How did it come to this?" It was Monday's arresting opening to a month-long conference reviewing the workings of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, at a moment of rising nuclear tensions in the world, on a day when speakers called for concessions from many sides, Iran, North Korea, America, Russia, to move toward a world free of the nuclear threat. "Ultimately, the only way to guarantee that they will never be used is for our world to be free of such weapons," Annan said, and he then urged the United States and Russia to slash their nuclear arsenals irreversibly to just hundreds of warheads.

Daily Times, 4 May 2005

UN disarmament talks: Iran expected to deliver strong defence

UNITED NATIONS: Iran was expected to deliver a strong defence of its nuclear energy plans on Tuesday after the United States and others warned Tehran not to use its facilities as a cover for atomic weapons programs. Rising tensions about Iran as well as North Korea, which has said it has nuclear arms, threatened to overshadow a month long review conference of the 1970 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), the cornerstone of atomic disarmament pacts. At the same time, speaker after speaker called for the United States and Russia, who have a combined arsenal of some 28,000 nuclear arms, to fulfil treaty obligations, and move quicker towards disarmament. But the United States on Monday pressed the conference of 188 nations to ensure Tehran and Pyongyang are denied peaceful nuclear energy benefits because they had violated the treaty. "For almost two decades, Iran has conducted a clandestine nuclear weapons program," Assistant Secretary of State Stephen Rademaker said. "We dare not look the other way."

Daily Times, 4 May 2005

Tehran warns of nuclear activities

UNITED NATIONS: Iran announced on Tuesday it will resume some nuclear activities suspended as part of a deal with the European Union, despite the threat of international sanctions and fresh UN efforts to limit the spread of sensitive atomic technology. Iran agreed in November last year to suspend its fuel cycle work - the focus of international fears the country may be seeking the bomb - and open talks with Britain, France and Germany. But the clerical regime has since voiced frustration over the negotiations, in which the EU-3 are offering a package of incentives in return for "objective guarantees" from Iran that it will not develop the bomb. "Very certainly we will resume some of our activities," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters. "We are in the process of discussing among ourselves which activities, but this does not concern enrichment," he said, adding the leadership would make a decision within seven or eight days.

Hindustan Times, 4 May 2005

Iran crisis overshadows UN nuke disarmament talks

UNITED NATIONS, May 3: The controversy over Iran's nuclear ambitions threatened to overshadow a conference on a key disarmament treaty on Monday, with world leaders telling Tehran to refrain from sensitive atomic activities. UN Secretary-General opened a month-long review of the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that appeared deadlocked before it began. The United States wants the focus on Iran and North Korea's nuclear programmes, while most other nations argue that Moscow and Washington retained too many dangerous bombs. Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), urged Iran not to follow through on its threats to resume sensitive nuclear enrichment activities that could be used to produce atomic weapons. "I would hope that the Iranians would not take a unilateral decision to initiate any activities that now are currently suspended," he said after a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi.

The Guardian, 4 May 2005

Nuclear double standards (Simon Tisdall)

Many damaging accusations have been levelled at John Bolton, President George Bush's controversial nominee as US ambassador to the UN. But perhaps the most serious is that Mr Bolton, as undersecretary of state for arms control and international security since 200, bungled efforts to dissuade North Korea from developing nuclear weapons. Mr Bolton helped to scrap the Clinton administration's 1994 "agreed framework" that froze North Korea's weapons-related plutonium reprocessing programme. The framework was imperfect - but nothing remotely adequate replaced it. In 2002, President Bush denounced North Korea as part of the "axis of evil". In 2003, Pyongyang withdrew from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and traded insults with Mr Bolton. In February, it declared itself a nuclear weapons state. And at the weekend, on the eve of the treaty review conference in New York, North Korea said stalled regional talks were effectively dead. The Pentagon's Defence Intelligence Agency conceded last week that North Korea probably now has nuclear-armed missiles capable of hitting US soil.

The Guardian, 4 May 2005

Nuclear options

Thirty-five years is a long time in politics, and the world has changed in countless ways since the nuclear non-proliferation treaty came into force in 1970. It is a measure of its success that there are still just five officially acknowledged nuclear weapons states - the US, Russia, China, Britain and France - which won the second world war and still make up the permanent, veto-wielding membership of the UN security council. True, since the NPT was extended in 1995, India and Pakistan, which never signed the treaty, have come out of the closet as nuclear powers. And Israel, also outside the NPT, neither confirms nor denies that it has the world's third largest nuclear arsenal. It is true that fears of a nuclear free-for-all have not been realised. But with an estimated 30,000 weapons capable of destroying the planet several times over there is no room for complacency as the five-yearly NPT review conference gets under way in New York. Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, launched its proceedings on Monday with a stark warning that the system was simply failing to keep pace with developments.

Aljazeera, 4 May 2005

Iran: Nuclear programme to continue

Iran has vowed to press ahead with its nuclear programme while accusing the United States and Israel of threatening international peace with their own atomic arsenals. Addressing a UN conference to review the 1970 Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi on Tuesday also accused Washington of endangering world peace. "Iran is determined to pursue all legal areas of nuclear technology including uranium enrichment, exclusively for peaceful purposes," Kharrazi said. He said it was wrong to limit "access to peaceful nuclear technology to an exclusive club of technologically advanced states under the pretext of non-proliferation".

The Washington Post, 4 May 2005

The Proliferation Crisis

Events of the past few days have underlined the vulnerability of the international regime that for 35 years has mostly prevented the spread of nuclear weapons. On Sunday, North Korea, which claims to be a nuclear power and has refused to return to multilateral negotiations about its presumed arsenal, test-fired another missile, dramatizing its ambition to acquire the capacity to attack Japan and the United States. Yesterday, Iran's foreign minister restated his country's intention to enrich uranium, an advance that would allow Tehran to assemble a nuclear bomb at its discretion. The Bush administration, meanwhile, demonstrated another reason why the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is in danger. It dispatched a mid-level State Department official, rather than Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, to address the foreign ministers who gathered at a major review conference in New York. It thereby signaled that it will not make a serious effort during the month-long forum to build an international consensus behind desperately needed reforms. Once again, the administration's distaste for arms control and international treaties appears to have won out over diplomatic common sense.

The New York Times, 4 May 2005

Iran to Resume Nuclear Plans, Official States at U.N. Conference (Warren Hoge and David E. Sanger)

UNITED NATIONS, May 3: Iran declared Tuesday that it would soon resume some of the nuclear activities it had suspended during negotiations with Europe, and it used a conference here to accuse the United States and other nations of using the fear of nuclear weapons proliferation to deny peaceful nuclear technology to developing nations. The Iranian announcement, on the second day of the United Nations conference reviewing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, was made by the spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, Hamid-Reza Asefi. He stopped short of saying exactly what kind of work Iran would resume in breaking what it has termed a voluntary moratorium while it negotiated with the European Union. But he said he did not expect Iran would begin "the actual enrichment" of uranium, which can lead to production of bomb fuel. European officials and the Bush administration have both said any breach of the moratorium would prompt a sharp response. In Washington, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Tuesday at a brief news conference, "There needs to be a very clear commitment from the Iranians to live up to their international obligations not to seek a nuclear weapon under the cover of civilian nuclear power."

The New York Times, 4 May 2005

Editorial: The Nuclear Power Option

In his sketchy speech on energy policy last week, President Bush placed a high priority on nuclear energy, which he described as "one of the safest, cleanest sources of power in the world." The president had good reason to suggest an important role for this much-feared energy source. The price of natural gas, the current fuel of choice for power plants, has risen sharply. And there is mounting evidence that damage from global warming may dwarf any environmental risk posed by nuclear power. It is therefore critical to keep nuclear power as part of the nation's energy mix. But Mr. Bush will have to address some crucial concerns before the public will follow him down the nuclear path with much enthusiasm. For starters, there is the awkward fact that nuclear power plants pose a risk of proliferating the materials and skills to make nuclear weapons. That is not an issue in the United States, which already has a mammoth nuclear arsenal. But if the United States resurrects its stagnant nuclear industry, other nations may also turn to nuclear power, with the risk that rogue nations may someday use the fuel to make bombs.

The Washington Post, 4 May 2005

North Korea's Nuclear Program (David Kang)

North Korea recently fired a short-range missile into the Sea of Japan, reminding its neighbors once again of its desire to intimidate and the potential consequences of its nuclear weapons program. The U.S. denounced the the action while expressing cautious hope that the six-party talks with China, Japan, South Korea and Russia, which have been stalled since June, would be resumed. This was the most recent in a series of similar tests conducted by North Korea, whose leader Kim Jong Il has openly expressed hostility towards the U.S. What is the significance of this most recent move? What is the status of North Korea's nuclear program? David Kang, co-author of "Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies," and an associate professor of government at Dartmouth college, will be online Wednesday, May 4 at 3 p.m. ET to take your questions about North Korea.

International Herald Tribune, 4 May 2005

Get tougher on nukes (Kenneth C. Brill)

As the five-year review conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty gets under way, everyone seems to agree that proliferation is a bad thing. But that doesn't translate into agreement about what needs to be done about it. While disarmament is pushed by some treaty members as the solution, strengthening the treaty's enforcement mechanisms is much more important if we are to stop proliferation. Given what has happened since the last review conference in 2000, disarmament is

the least of the problems facing the treaty today. After all, since 2000 there has been much progress on the disarmament front. Through the Treaty of Moscow, Russia and the United States agreed in 2002 to significantly reduce their deployed strategic nuclear warheads. By 2012, the United States will have reduced by about 80 percent the number of strategic warheads it deployed in 1990. Last May, President George W. Bush approved a plan that will cut the current U.S. nuclear stockpile almost in half in less than a decade.

People's Daily, 4 May 2005

Rice urges Iran not to seek nuke

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Tuesday urged Iran not to develop nuclear weapons under the pretenses of developing a nuclear program for civilian purposes. "There needs to be a very clear commitment from the Iranians to live up to their international obligations and not to seek nuclear weapons under cover of nuclear civilian power," Rice told reporters after talks with European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana. Washington has repeatedly accused Iran of using its civilian nuclear program as a cover to develop nuclear weapons. Iran always denies this, saying its nuclear program is for peaceful power generation. Prior to Rice's allegation, US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher also renewed American call for Iran to abandon its uranium enrichment program. "There is no reason for them to have an enrichment and reprocessing program," said Boucher, "We continue to believe that this is the only way for Iran to resolve this issue, and a way that the international community will be able to verify and to support." The US officials made the remarks after Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said on Tuesday that Iran is "determined" to pursue all legal areas of nuclear technology, including enrichment, exclusively for peaceful purposes.

The Korean Herald, 4 May 2005

South Korea, U.S. keep close watch on N.K. tunnels (Joo Sang-min)

Korean and U.S. intelligence authorities have been keeping track of North Korean construction of underground tunnels in a northeastern region, raising speculation they could be for military purposes although any use as an underground nuclear test site appears unlikely because the area is populated. Defense Ministry officials said yesterday the authorities have watched the construction since the late 1990s in Gilju County, in North Hamgyeong Province, but have not been able to verify the purpose of the tunnels. "Korea and the United States have continuously been checking the process of the tunnel construction, but the specific aim is uncertain at this moment," ministry spokesman Brig. Gen. Shin Hyun-don told reporters. Pyongyang has constructed about 8,200 underground tunnels over the years to disguise its military buildup and use the tunnels as military posts in the event of a war, according to North Korean data leaked to media last year.

China Daily, 4 May 2005

Rice to North Korea: U.S. can defend itself

Talking tough, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice informed North Korea on Monday the United States is able to defend itself and its allies against nuclear and missile threats. Responding to reports that North Korea launched a short-range missile into the Sea of Japan on Sunday, Rice said, "I don't think there should be any doubt about our ability to deter whatever the North Koreans are up to." And, in reassuring South Korea, Japan and other allies in the Pacific area, Rice told reporters: "This is not just between the United States and North Korea." A suggestion Thursday by Vice Adm. Lowell E. Jacoby, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, that North Korea might be able to strike American territory with a nuclear-tipped missile also has raised tensions and concerns. Negotiations with North Korea on its nuclear weapons program are stalemated. But Rice said North Korea's missile program should be put on the agenda when and if the talks are resumed. By contrast, South Korea and other Asian governments appeared to take Sunday's missile test in stride. They said it was a short-range weapon that could not reach even Japan and it had no link to Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program.

The Japan Times, 4 May 2005

Japan, U.S. to seek other options on N. Korea

WASHINGTON (Kyodo) Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice agreed Monday to seek "other options" if North Korea continues to refuse to return to the six-party talks on its nuclear ambitions. Machimura told reporters after the meeting they also agreed to cooperate on U.N. reform, including Japan's bid to gain a permanent seat on the Security Council. However, Rice did not give a clear-cut response to Japan's plan to submit a resolution in June on expanding the council's membership, according to Machimura. The two also remained divided over Japan's 17-month-old import ban on American beef, with Machimura again stopping short of making commitments despite strong U.S. calls for an early resumption of imports. Following the hastily arranged talks, Machimura said he agreed with Rice on a U.S. initiative to upgrade the ongoing sub-Cabinet-level "strategic dialogue" involving the two nations and Australia into a top-level consultation body of foreign ministers. They also reaffirmed the need to maintain the momentum in discussions between the two nations on the realignment of the U.S. military in Japan.

The News, 4 May 2005

US detects N Korea's test preparations

SEOUL: US intelligence has detected the movement of heavy equipment in North Korea that points to possible preparations for an underground nuclear test, a South Korean newspaper said on Tuesday. The influential Chosun Ilbo, quoting a government source, said US spy satellites had captured frequent movements of trucks in the northeastern region of Kilju, as well as the movement of cranes and other heavy equipment into the area. "US intelligence authorities believe the images and other information point to preparations for a possible underground nuclear test," the source was quoted as saying. US and Japanese news reports last week said Washington had warned some governments and agencies that North Korea could be

preparing for a test, which would represent a serious escalation of tensions over North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions. South Korean officials and US have since denied there were definitive signs of an imminent test. On Tuesday Seoul shot down the latest report, with Defence Minister Yoon Kwang-ung telling reporters before a cabinet meeting there were no unusual indications in the area.

Dawn, 4 May 2005

India, Pakistan not better off with N-weapons: US (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, May 3: The United States said on Tuesday that it did not believe India and Pakistan were better off possessing nuclear weapons, but did not include the two South Asian nations among those criticized for violating the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. The assertion of US position on the nuclear issue, given at an afternoon briefing at the State Department, comes amid a major non-proliferation conference being held at the UN headquarters in New York. The conference, which will run through May 27, brings together top officials from across the world every five years to review the status of the NPT. At the briefing in Washington, State Department's spokesman Richard Boucher counted Libya, South Africa, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan among those nations who have agreed to get rid of their nuclear weapons and said: "They're all better off for it."

The Hindu, 4 May 2005

U.S. demands Iran dismantle all nuclear facilities (David E. Sanger)

UNITED NATIONS: The gulf between Iran and the United States widened considerably on Monday when the Bush administration, at the opening of a conference on the future of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, demanded that Iran dismantle all the "equipment and facilities" it has built over the past two decades to manufacture nuclear material. The demand, made by Stephen Rademaker, Assistant Secretary of State who spoke at the opening of the conference in the chamber of the General Assembly on Monday afternoon, has been made before by the United States. But it came only two days after Iran threatened to resume some production activities in coming weeks. As part of Iran's negotiations with the European Union over the future of its nuclear programme - which it insists is solely intended for electricity production - Iran has demanded that it must be allowed to install 3,000 centrifuges, which enrich uranium. If enriched at a low level, that uranium could fuel a nuclear power plant. But the centrifuges could also produce enough highly enrichment uranium to manufacture nuclear weapons.

The News, 5 May 2005

EU sees 'no change' on nuclear project plans

BRUSSELS: The European Commission said on Wednesday that it was unaware of any change in plans for a revolutionary nuclear reactor despite new indications that Japan could give up its bid to host the project. The European Union (EU)'s executive arm said negotiations with Japan are continuing on the multi-billion dollar International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project, with the aim of reaching an agreement by July. "For the moment there is no change for us," said a commission spokeswoman when asked about a report in the Japanese daily Yomiuri Shimbun that Tokyo was discussing "giving up its bid to build the nuclear reactor" in Japan. "We are continuing discussions to clarify the roles of the host of ITER and the non-host," said Antonia Mochan, spokeswoman for EU science and research commissioner Janez Potocnik. Her comments appeared to imply that talks might be under way to give concrete roles both to the eventual host of the project and to another country. Speculation has been rife that the EU is trying securing the right to host the ITER site in return for offering Japan sweeteners of some kind.

The News, 5 May 2005

Iran determined to enrich uranium: Khatami

TEHRAN: Iran reiterated on Wednesday that it was sticking by its controversial effort to make its own nuclear fuel, but nevertheless said it wanted to continue negotiations with the European Union aimed at easing international alarm. Speaking on state television, President Mohammad Khatami pledged that any nuclear activities that may resume, despite a deal with Britain, France and Germany, would be "still very far away" from the highly-sensitive process of enriching uranium. "Our desire is to negotiate and to find a compromise," he emphasised, in comments that appeared to back away from the more defiant tone struck by the clerical regime the previous day. Top Iranian nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani also emphasised that "Iran will maintain the suspension of the key enrichment activities but could, if it decided to, resume some of its activities." Iran insists it only wants to enrich uranium to make fuel for an atomic energy programme, but its possession of the entire nuclear fuel cycle could also hand it the capacity to produce nuclear weapons.

The News, 5 May 2005

Amending the NPT: Consensus unlikely (Nasim Zehra)

Between the present fact of a world with nuclear weapons and the future vision of a nuclear free world lies the objective of restricting the spread of nuclear weapons by reducing the causes of state insecurity that drive governments to opt for clandestine nuclear weapons programmes. If the US delegation has arrived at the seventh NPT Review Conference in New York seeking support to take action on Iran and North Korea, others will demand quicker nuclear disarmament moves by nuclear states. Non-nuclear states are critical of the very slow movement on nuclear disarmament by the big powers. The weaknesses of the Non-Proliferation Treaty notwithstanding, the UN member states at the Review Conference reaffirmed the global consensus on retaining the Treaty as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. The NPT is the only binding multilateral treaty commitment by the nuclear-weapons states to the goal of disarmament as well as the most widely adhered to multilateral disarmament treaty.

Dawn, 5 May 2005

IAEA's right approach

The task of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and ensuring N-disarmament has fallen victim to big-power chauvinism. It is assumed, for instance, that weapons of mass destruction are safer in the hands of the recognized powers - the so-called P-5 - than in the hands of the unrecognized club (Pakistan and India - Israel's position being one of what is called "strategic ambiguity"). History shows that it is a recognized nuclear power that dropped nuclear bombs on a non-white country. Subsequently, the two nuclear superpowers brought the world to the brink of a nuclear holocaust over the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. In many other crises also - Berlin and Hungary - the use of nuclear weapons was never beyond the realm of possibility. Even in normal times, N-armed bombers of America's Strategic Air Command were in the air round the clock, while Soviet N-tipped missiles mounted on rail tracks moved back and forth, ready to respond. There have also been accidents involving nuclear submarines. The recognized powers have also been toying with the idea of making low-yield, tactical nuclear weapons.

Daily Yomiuri, 5 May 2005

PLANNING NATIONAL STRATEGIES—Resources and energy / Nuclear power back in favor as energy source

This is the 13th installment in a series of articles in the "Planning National Strategies" series that considers the situation and problems concerning natural resources and energy. Minoru Kubo, public relations manager of the Japan Nuclear Cycle Development Institute (JNC), visited China in late March to take his first look at a Chinese experimental fast-breeder reactor, which was being constructed in a Beijing suburb. Fan Zhong, vice president of the Beijing Institute of Nuclear Engineering, explained to Kubo about the experimental reactor. Fang proudly told Kubo of his high hopes for a fast-breeder reactor, saying: "We want to build [a fast-breeder reactor] before the opening of the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008. We want to tell the world that electricity [used in the Games] has been generated by the fast-breeder reactor. That's our goal." JNC is a public corporation supervised by the Education, Science and Technology Ministry.

Daily Times, 5 May 2005

Rice reiterates Iran should not seek nukes

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Tuesday that Iran should not seek to develop nuclear weapons under the pretenses of developing a civilian nuclear programme. "There needs to be a very clear commitment from the Iranians to live up to their international obligations and not to seek nuclear weapons under cover of nuclear civilian power," Rice told reporters after meeting here with EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana. Solana for his part said Iran knew the "consequences" if it did not issue certain guarantees about its nuclear aims, hinting the issue could be brought before the UN Security Council. Rice spoke after a department spokesman renewed a call earlier Tuesday for Tehran to abandon its uranium enrichment programme after Iran reserved the right to pursue such activities despite fears it was working on a nuclear bomb.

Daily Times, 5 May 2005

States wrangle over right to nuclear technology (Carol Giacomo)

The United States and others have accused Iran of a clandestine 18-year effort to use its NPT membership as a guise for acquiring technology needed to produce nuclear weapons. At the heart of this month's United Nations nuclear non-proliferation conference is a fundamental question: Do countries have an unambiguous right to peaceful nuclear energy? It used to be assumed the answer was yes, as Iran insists. But the United States and others recently have shown more willingness to re-think the issue, emphasising crucial conditions and setting new parameters for a debate that is unlikely to be resolved soon. Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi affirmed Tehran's position on Tuesday during the second day of debate at the conference taking stock of the 1970 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, under which Iran and 182 other states renounced nuclear arms. As part of the pact's inherent bargain, the five states officially allowed to retain nuclear arms - the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain - promised to help non-nuclear states acquire peaceful nuclear energy and in time, to scrap their own atomic arsenals.

Daily Yomiuri, 6 May 2005

PLANNING NATIONAL STRATEGIES / Paper fuels Nenergy debate/Bureaucrats rumored to want waste buried without reprocessing

This is the 14th installment in a series of articles in the "Planning National Strategies" series that considers the situation and problems concerning natural resources and energy. House of Representative member Tetsuo Saito of New Komeito glared at Kazumasa Kusaka, then director general of the Natural Resources and Energy Agency, and fiercely criticized him. "This is like stabbing us in the back while we're doing our best to press forward with the issue of nuclear power generation at the Diet. I can't believe this!" Saito said. He was speaking on June 2 at a meeting of a suprapartisan lawmakers study group on long-term policy for natural resources and energy at the House of Councillors Building. Saito, an advocate of nuclear power generation, was talking about an anonymous document that had made the rounds in Nagatacho, the nation's political hub, for about a month.

Reuters, 6 May 2005

N.Korea nukes, Myanmar haunt Asia - Europe meet

KYOTO: Asian and European foreign ministers fretted about North Korea's nuclear threat on Friday, while the European Union pledged to keep pressing Myanmar to release opposition leaders and improve its human rights record. South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon and Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, who met on the sidelines of an Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in the Japanese city of Kyoto, urged North Korea not to do anything to become more isolated at a time when there are

concerns Pyongyang may be about to test a nuclear weapon. "The ministers said any moves by North Korea that deteriorate the situation further would not help and only further isolate itself," South Korean official Park Joon-woo told reporters. The New York Times reported on Friday that U.S. officials were assessing satellite photographs that appeared to show extensive preparations for a nuclear weapons test. On Sunday, North Korea test-fired a short-range missile into the Sea of Japan, fueling worries that it might be trying to merge its missile programs with nuclear weapons.

International Herald Tribune, 6 May 2005

Europe is talking Iran around (Ray Takeyh)

WASHINGTON As the UN nuclear nonproliferation conference proceeds in New York, Iran has once more emerged as an important source of concern. In a defiant speech to the assembled delegates, Iran's foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi, insisted that "Iran, for its part, is determined to pursue all legal areas of nuclear technology, including enrichment." The hardening of Iran's position has led many American policy makers to think that the negotiations between Iran and the European trio of Britain, France and Germany will soon collapse and that time has come for the UN Security Council to contemplate punitive sanctions. But there is a real possibility that Europe's diplomacy will actually produce an accord. Beyond the ebbs and flows of the negotiations and sporadic posturing of Iranian politicians, over the past few months the perspectives of Iran and its European negotiators have gradually converged. The longer the negotiations go on, the more likely it is that the United States, and not Iran, will once more stand isolated.

The Nation, 6 May 2005

Nuclear hypocrisy

Pakistan has again maintained it will undertake obligations under the NPT provided it is recognised as a nuclear state. When the treaty was signed in 1968, it included commitments by the original five nuclear countries to eventually eliminate their lethal stockpiles. On the other hand the NPT ensured other countries broad access to nuclear technology in exchange for pledges to forgo atomic weapons. More than three decades after the five-member nuclear club put its signatures on the NPT, it has not moved an inch towards the cherished goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. There has been a reduction in the number of weapons after the Cold War ended, but nuclear weapons remain integral to the strategic doctrines of all the nuclear five. The US has on the other hand taken measures that have started a new arms race. Despite its having developed into the mightiest military power in history which no country in the world is in a position to challenge, it is developing a new generation of nuclear weapons, more manoeuvrable and destructive than the older ones.

Daily Times, 6 May 2005

UN nuclear conference in 4th day without agenda

UNITED NATIONS: A monthlong conference to review the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty dragged into its fourth day Thursday still without a complete agenda, in an impasse over diplomatic language that mirrors the tense international showdown over Iran's nuclear program. A day earlier, backroom talks on final bits of wording were said to be close to agreement. But on Thursday morning a neutral participant, speaking privately, said it was "looking very bad." A prolonged deadlock might keep the twice-a-decade global gathering from dealing with all but the least contentious issues surrounding the 1970 treaty, by which more than 180 nations pledge not to pursue nuclear weapons, in exchange for a pledge by five nuclear-weapons states - the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China - to negotiate toward nuclear disarmament. The United States wants the conference to focus on Iran's program to enrich uranium via centrifuges, a process that produces fuel for nuclear power plants or, if intensified, material for nuclear bombs. The Iranians say their centrifuges are meant solely for civilian use, but Washington contends the program is a cover for plans to build nuclear weapons.

Daily Times, 6 May 2005

Japan, US prepare to refer Korea to UNSC

TOKYO: Japan and the United States may start preparations in late May to refer North Korea to the United Nations Security Council over its nuclear weapons ambitions, a Japanese newspaper said on Thursday. The two governments may also seek talks with South Korea, China and Russia over the issue, judging that Pyongyang is unlikely to return quickly to the six-party talks it has boycotted for almost a year, the right-leaning Sankei Shimbun said. "We should start preparations in May," the paper quoted a Japanese foreign ministry official as saying of the UN referral, which could lead to sanctions. US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill and Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Shotaro Taniuchi agreed at a meeting last month that the process should begin if Pyongyang did not change its attitude, the paper said. North Korea has said it would treat the imposition of sanctions as a declaration of war.

Daily Times, 6 May 2005

South Korea urges China to do more to revive nuclear talks

SEOUL: South Korea's foreign minister, publicly frustrated over the stalled six-way talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear ambitions, on Thursday said he was looking at China to do more to revive the negotiations. "The prospects for resuming six-way talks are not that bright," Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon said at Incheon Airport before leaving for Japan to attend an Asia-Europe (ASEM) meeting for foreign ministers. "I will call on China to play a more active role (in getting North Korea back to the stalled nuclear talks) and also have in-depth talks with Japan to maintain cooperation." Ban will hold bilateral and trilateral meetings with his Chinese and Japanese counterparts Friday and Saturday on the sidelines of the ASEM forum, according to the foreign ministry. China, an ally and key aid donor of North Korea, hosts the multilateral nuclear disarmament talks. "Recent developments have reached a level that is worthy of considerable concern," Ban told a regular briefing Wednesday, adding efforts to resolve the standoff through dialogue had entered a "critical phase."

The New York Times, 6 May 2005

U.S. Cites Signs of Korean Preparations for Nuclear Test (David E. Sanger and William J. Broad)

WASHINGTON, May 5: White House and Pentagon officials are closely monitoring a recent stream of satellite photographs of North Korea that appear to show rapid, extensive preparations for a nuclear weapons test, including the construction of a reviewing stand, presumably for dignitaries, according to American and foreign officials who have been briefed on the imagery. North Korea has never tested a nuclear weapon. Bush administration officials, when asked Thursday about the burst of activity at a suspected test site in the northeastern part of the country, cautioned that satellites could not divine the intentions of Kim Jong Il, North Korea's leader, and said it was possible that he was putting on a show for American spy satellites. They said the North Koreans might be trying to put pressure on President Bush to offer a improved package of economic and diplomatic incentives to the desperately poor country in exchange for curtailing its nuclear activities.

The Associated Press, 6 May 2005

Experts: Much Nuclear Safety Work Remains

WASHINGTON: Even as the government warns of al-Qaida's determination to obtain nuclear weapons, programs funded by the United States secured less Russian nuclear material in 2004 than the year before, according to a report Thursday by private nuclear analysts. The study on global nuclear threat reduction programs came the day after U.S. and Pakistani officials announced the arrest of al-Qaida's No. 3 operative, Abu Farraj al-Libbi. The Pakistani government believes al-Libbi may have allies in its military's senior rungs, and U.S. experts say those officers may play a role in guarding Pakistani nuclear sites. "The danger of nuclear theft is a global problem. It is not just a Russia problem," said Matthew Bunn, a co-author of the report from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and the Nuclear Threat Initiative. "We need to forge a common nuclear standard for the world because terrorists are going to get nuclear material wherever it is easiest," Bunn added. "Nuclear security is only as strong as its weakest link."

Newindpress, 6 May 2005

When US talks nuclear to India (A Gopalakrishnan)

Media reports have been suggesting that India is about to receive "civilian nuclear co-operation" from the US. While analysts have speculated that this might include the supply of foreign reactors and nuclear safety assistance, the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) have been silent about the details. The questions we need to ask are: What concrete assistance does India need from the US to further our civilian nuclear programme? What does the US want in return? And, what are the short-term and long-term strategic implications of such co-operation? India today has fourteen operating nuclear power reactors and nine more are under various stages of construction or commissioning. Eighteen of these are pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWRs), two are the US-supplied boiling water reactors (BWRs) at Tarapur, two are pressurised water reactors (PWRs) being built at Kudamkulam, and the last one is a Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) of our own design on which civil work has just started.

Daily Times, 6 May 2005

US struggles with North Korea, Iran N-standoffs (Peter Mackler)

While the US administration has declared nuclear non-proliferation a top priority, it has failed to devise an effective strategy for North Korea and Iran. Despite years of efforts to keep North Korea and Iran from developing nuclear weapons technology, the United States and its allies have made little headway, with few viable options on the horizon. Negotiations coupled with economic, diplomatic and security incentives have barely slowed Pyongyang's nuclear arms programme and Tehran's drive to process its own nuclear fuel for possible military use. Both the insular Asian state and hardline Islamic Republic have become increasingly pugnacious. But while Washington insists that no option is off the table, US allies oppose the use of force. So the administration of President George W Bush, already at war in Iraq, has been focusing on diplomatic solutions and struggling to find new means of leverage.

The Nation, 7 May 2005

Pak-India N-talks likely next month (Shaiq Hussain)

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan and India are likely to hold talks on nuclear and conventional CBMs in mid June with officials here expecting the finalisation of agreement on advance warning of missile tests and progress on proposed hotline at the level of foreign secretaries. The last round of expert-level talks on nuclear and conventional CBMs was held in December last year, however, it remained inconclusive and both the sides announced to continue with their parleys in coming months. The officials here said that consultations were on between the two sides to hold the next round of experts' talks on nuclear and conventional CBMs, and the dates would be worked out soon. They added the talks are likely to be held in mid June. An official said Islamabad and Delhi have been holding 'informal talks' on nuclear and conventional CBMs since the last expert-level talks, and it is expected that both sides will finalise a crucial pact on advance warning of missile tests in the next round of formal negotiations.

The Asahi Shimbun, 7 May 2005

Mayors appeal at U.N. for abolition of nukes (Yoshihiro Tai Kazuyo Nakamura)

NEW YORK: The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki renewed their pleas for the abolishment of nuclear weapons in speeches here Wednesday at the review conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the 1945 atomic bombings of the two cities, and it was the first time the mayors of the two cities attended the conference together since the nongovernmental organization Mayors for Peace was established in 1982. "The people of the world are coming to realize that nuclear weapons are incompatible with the survival of the human race and of our planet," said Nagasaki Mayor

Ichio Itoh, holding up a photo of a boy charred in the Nagasaki bombing. Hiroshima Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba held up a blackened fingernail that had fallen off the finger of a hibakusha (an atomic bomb survivor).

Daily Yomiuri, 7 May 2005

PLANNING NATIONAL STRATEGIES—Resources and energy / Local govts imperil N-policy

This is the 15th installment in a series of articles in the "Planning National Strategies" series that considers the situation and problems concerning natural resources and energy. On Feb. 17, Hokushinmaru, a transport ship operated by an Osaka shipping company, pulled alongside a pier at Mutsuogawara Port in Rokkashomura, Aomori Prefecture. Japan Nuclear Fuel Ltd. will conduct four experiments at a nuclear reprocessing plant, currently under construction in the village, by 2006, when the plant is scheduled to start operations. Hokushinmaru was carrying depleted uranium to be used in the third experiment, completing the total shipment of 52 tons of depleted uranium needed for the experiments. However, preparations for the experiments did not always go smoothly. The depleted uranium had been collected in Tokyo from a plant in Tokaimura, Ibaraki Prefecture, and three other processing plants. JNFL needed permission from the Tokyo metropolitan government, which manages Tokyo Port, to use the port before it was shipped to Rokkashomura.

The Korean Herald, 7 May 2005

Doosan preferred for Chinese nuclear plant (Kim So-hyun)

Doosan Heavy Industries & Construction Co. said it has been chosen as the preferred negotiator to build a nuclear power plant in Zhejiang Province, the first step in a possible landmark deal. "The contract and its price have not been finalized yet," a company spokesman said. "The final contract, if signed, would mark Korea's first export of domestically built nuclear reactors." Doosan Heavy, Korea's sole company that specializes in power plants, said late Thursday that its consortium with a Chinese partner signed a memorandum of understanding with Zhejiang's provincial government. Doosan Heavy said the consortium will now begin exclusive negotiations with east-central province to supply two 600,000-kilowatt nuclear reactors to add on to the province's existing nuclear power plants. With China emerging as the world's largest market for nuclear power plant facilities, an export deal would elevate Doosan Heavy's international profile, the company spokesman said.

Dawn, 7 May 2005

Centrifuge parts to be sent to IAEA: PM

KUALA LUMPUR, May 6: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Friday that Pakistan would, under certain conditions, send centrifuge parts for tests by the UN's atomic agency to help determine whether Iran has been secretly developing nuclear weapons. The parts could allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna to determine whether highly enriched uranium contamination found in Iran had originated there, or if it had come from Pakistan. "Yes, we will send these parts under certain conditions," the prime minister said while talking to a group of journalists here. "We have various discussions going on with the IAEA as part of a process which relates to the situation between Iran and various countries. We are willing to cooperate with them to come up with some credible solution to this problem." The prime minister did not detail what conditions would have to be met before the parts are despatched, but his comments appeared to go further than President Pervez Musharraf's statement in March that Pakistan would 'consider' sending the parts to Vienna.

Daily Times, 7 May 2005

Nuclear conference agrees on overdue agenda, Egypt stalls

UNITED NATIONS: Delegates from scores of nations agreed Friday on an overdue agenda for the conference reviewing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, a document that would end a deadlock threatening to undermine the crucial conference at a time of rising nuclear tensions in the world. But Egypt still had problems with the agenda and might hold up the consensus approval, conference organizers said. Iranian-US antagonisms during the first four days of the monthlong conference had stalled adoption of the agenda. "I would like to thank all the delegations for their spirit of cooperation," conference president Sergio de Queiroz Duarte said after announcing a consensus had finally emerged at a morning meeting. The details of the compromise agenda language were not immediately available.

Daily Times, 7 May 2005

'N-test by North Korea will have disastrous impact'

UNITED NATIONS: A North Korean nuclear test would have disastrous political and environmental consequences, UN nuclear watchdog chief Mohamed ElBaradei said on Friday. "I think there will be disastrous political repercussions in Asia and the rest of the world. I think there could be a major environmental fallout which again could lead to dissemination of radioactivity in the region," International Atomic Energy Agency director general Mohamed ElBaradei said in an interview with AFP and another news agency. ElBaradei, whose IAEA inspectors were kicked out of North Korea in December 2002, said Pyongyang's escalation by possibly testing an atomic bomb was "nuclear blackmail".

Reuters, 7 May 2005

N.Korea, China - Japan talks top Asia - Europe meet

KYOTO: Asian and European foreign ministers urged North Korea on Saturday to return to talks on its nuclear weapons ambitions "without any further delay" as concerns grew that Pyongyang was preparing to carry out an atomic test. Early a year has passed since a third round of China-hosted six-party talks on the crisis ended inconclusively, and North Korea has since declared that it possesses nuclear arms. "(The ministers) strongly urged the DPRK to return to the negotiating table of the six-party talks without any further delay, and to make a strategic decision so as to achieve the denuclearisation of the (Korean) peninsula in a peaceful manner through dialogue," said a chairman's statement issued at the end of a two-day Asia-Europe

Meeting (ASEM).

The Guardian, 7 May 2005

Spy photos spot signs of N Korea nuclear test site (Julian Borger and Jonathan Watts)

American officials believe that new satellite photographs of North Korea show intensive preparations for a possible nuclear weapons test, it was reported yesterday. The imagery is said to show tunnels being dug under a mountain in the north-east of the country and then rock and building materials being taken back in, possibly in an effort to contain an underground blast. The pictures also show what appears to be an observation stand a few miles away. Details of the satellite intelligence were reported by the New York Times yesterday, quoting Pentagon and White House officials, who pointed out that the apparent test preparations could be a ruse to pressure the United States into making concessions at the negotiating table. The prospect of a nuclear test by North Korea has alarmed its neighbours, who have spent the past two years trying to head off a confrontation between Pyongyang and Washington that could destabilise the region.

The Associated Press, 7 May 2005

Official: N. Korea Nuclear Test Possible

WASHINGTON: U.S. spy satellites have detected what may be preparations for North Korea's first test of a nuclear weapon, although analysts believe it could be a calculated ruse on Pyongyang's part, a U.S. defense official said Friday. The satellite images show North Korea has dug and refilled a significant hole at a suspected test site in Gilju in the northeastern part of the country, said the official, discussing intelligence only on the condition of anonymity. The hole was dug in a manner consistent with preparations for an underground nuclear test, although it is not known whether the North Koreans deposited a weapon inside, the official said. In addition, the official said, they have built some bleachers a sufficient distance from the hole, presumably for viewing any test. Officials elsewhere in the U.S. government played down the remarks.

The New York Times, 7 May 2005

U.S. Warns North Korea Against Nuclear Test

WASHINGTON, May 6: The White House warned North Korea on Friday that conducting a nuclear test would be "a provocative act," and Japan's foreign minister raised the possibility of requesting United Nations sanctions against the North. The White House statement came a day after The New York Times reported growing concern among administration officials and several intelligence agencies about signs that North Korea might conduct its first nuclear test at a site near Kilju in the northeast. Several officials confirmed those reports on Friday, and two officials with access to the information said satellites were also watching the construction of some platforms and crates hundreds of miles from the possible test site, near a nuclear reactor at Yongbyon.

The New York Times, 7 May 2005

Under Fire at Work, Los Alamos Director Will Move On (William J. Broad)

G. Peter Nanos, a retired Navy admiral who sought to put Los Alamos National Laboratory on a sound management footing but alienated many employees with his brusque, top-down style, is stepping down as director to take a post at the Pentagon. G. Peter Nanos, director of Los Alamos, plans to join the federal Defense Threat Reduction Agency. His departure was announced yesterday by the University of California, which manages Los Alamos, the nation's premier nuclear weapons laboratory, for the federal government. Starting in January 2003, Dr. Nanos worked first as interim director of Los Alamos, in the mountains of New Mexico, and then as permanent director. He pursued a strict agenda that ended up all but shutting down the laboratory from last July to late January.

The Korean Herald, 7 May 2005

'Washington-N.K. war of words will not resolve crisis'

Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon and Chinese counterpart Li Zhaoxing yesterday shared deep concern over the spate of invective exchanged recently between the United States and North Korea and said the open antagonism will not help resolve the crisis over the North's nuclear weapons. They also agreed Pyongyang's repeated comments about its nuclear weapons production would aggravate the confrontation and the North's isolation at a time when hectic efforts are underway to try to get the communist state to end its boycott of the six-party talks on ending the nuclear standoff. Just hours before the Ban-Li meeting, President George W. Bush and Chinese President Hu Jintao had a telephone conversation in which both leaders renewed their commitment to work together to end the nuclear stalemate peacefully. They will meet face to face in Moscow tomorrow ahead of a ceremony Monday to mark the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II.

Khaleej Times, 7 May 2005

North Korea nuclear test would be "provocative": White House

WASHINGTON: The United States warned Friday that any nuclear weapons test by North Korea would be considered a provocative act, as reports suggested the Stalinist state could stage an underground nuclear experiment. The New York Times said in a report that US officials familiar with satellite and intelligence data believed North Korea was building a reviewing stand and filling in a tunnel, signs of a potential underground nuclear test. "I don't want to get into discussing intelligence matters, but what I would say is that if North Korea did take such a step, that would just be another provocative act that would further isolate it from the international community," said White House spokesman Scott McClellan. He said all countries in the region wanted a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. The United States and North Korea's neighbours had been working through multilateral talks to meet the objective, he added.

The Indian Express, 7 May 2005

US cites signs of North Korea preparing for nuclear test

WASHINGTON: White House and Pentagon officials are closely monitoring a recent stream of satellite photographs of North Korea that appear to show rapid, extensive preparations for a nuclear weapons test, including the construction of a reviewing stand, presumably for dignitaries, according to American and foreign officials who have been briefed on the imagery. North Korea has never tested a nuclear weapon. Bush administration officials, when asked on Thursday about the burst of activity at a suspected test site in the northeastern part of the country, cautioned that satellites could not divine the intentions of Kim Jong Il, North Korea's leader, and said it was possible that he was putting on a show for American spy satellites.

The News, 8 May 2005

Nuclear threats not empty: Iran

TEHRAN: Iran warned on Saturday it could pull out of nuclear negotiations with the European Union if progress is not made soon and said its threat to resume some enrichment-related work was not an empty one. The Iranian nation will never give up its rights ... we cannot accept any more time killing, Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told state television. He was speaking in New York on the sidelines of the UN conference on the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). "Based on the (November) Paris agreement, we agreed if negotiations do not reach a result after three months, the talks will end. We are now at this stage and will make decisions soon," he added. Iran insists its nuclear programme will only be used to generate electricity and has rejected EU and US calls for it to abandon for ever plans to produce its own nuclear fuel by enriching uranium.

The News, 8 May 2005

Nuclear cooperation

Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's assertion that Pakistan will send centrifuge parts to be tested by the United Nation's atomic energy regulatory agency reflects the country's resolve towards nuclear non-proliferation and its commitment to peaceful resolution of international disputes. These parts will help the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) determine the origins of the highly enriched uranium contamination that was found in Iran. If the link is established, the role of Pakistani nuclear scientists acting independently of state commands could be explained in the context of nuclear proliferation through backdoor and black market channels. Such blatant leakage of highly sensitive technology and inputs counters Pakistan's capacity to protect its nuclear assets from falling into wrong hands. The blot needs to be cleansed.

Daily Times, 8 May 2005

Mohamed ElBaradei warns against nuclear apocalypse

UNITED NATIONS: If the world does not take steps to limit access to technology for making nuclear bomb fuel, we could be headed for a nuclear apocalypse, the head of the United Nations atomic watchdog said on Friday. Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, has proposed a 5-year moratorium on the enrichment of uranium and production of plutonium, but many countries have balked at the idea. Speaking to reporters at a UN-sponsored conference on nuclear disarmament, ElBaradei said if more and more countries get hold of the technology to make bomb-grade uranium and plutonium, there will be many "virtual nuclear weapon states" that could quickly put together a bomb at any time. "That means in the next 10 to 20 years we'll have many countries who are not officially nuclear weapons states (becoming) virtual nuclear weapon states. That is a good recipe for our self-destruction," he said. Ironically, the United States and Iran are partners in opposing ElBaradei's proposed moratorium on enrichment, a process of purifying uranium to fuel power plants or weapons.

International Herald Tribune, 8 May 2005

Chair of Senate Intelligence Committee Believes North Korea Is Preparing Nuclear Test (Brian Knowlton)

WASHINGTON, May 8: The chairman of the Senate intelligence committee said today that he believed North Korea appeared to be preparing a nuclear test explosion, even as the head of the United Nations nuclear monitoring agency said he believed the North had five or six nuclear weapons in its possession. Senator Pat Roberts of Kansas, chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, was asked on CNN about recent satellite evidence that North Korea was making rapid and extensive preparations to conduct a nuclear test. "I think you've summed it up very well," he said to the interviewer. "Basically, Kim Jong Il believes this is his card to play to stay on the world stage, to make demands," Mr. Roberts said, referring to the North Korean leader. "This is the only card they have to play." Earlier, on the same program, Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, was asked about estimates that Pyongyang has already assembled up to six nuclear weapons. "I think that would be close to our estimation," he said. "We knew they had the plutonium that could be converted into five or six North Korea weapons. We know that they had the industrial infrastructure to weaponize this."

The International Herald, 8 May 2005

North Korea Warned

RIGA, May 7: The White House said Saturday that the United States had a "robust deterrent capability" in the face of worries that North Korea might be planning to test a nuclear weapon. "We do have concerns about North Korea," the White House spokesman, Scott McClellan, told reporters during President Bush's visit to Latvia. "It is shared by our partners in the region. North Korea would only further isolate itself if it took such a provocative step." Mr. McClellan urged North Korea to return to the six-party talks with the United States, South Korea, China, Japan and Russia, which have been stalled for almost a year, with recent efforts to restart them showing little progress. North Korea said in February that it had nuclear weapons. On Thursday and Friday, United States officials said that there had been construction and other events that would be consistent with preparations for a nuclear test.

Reuters, 8 May 2005

N.Korea hints of return to stalled nuclear talks

BEIJING/SEOUL: China and South Korea have called on North Korea to come back to stalled talks aimed at ending its nuclear programs, while Pyongyang hinted on Monday it might be seeking a way to do just that. Chinese President Hu Jintao and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun, in Moscow to attend commemorations marking the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, called on Sunday for a peaceful resolution of the crisis through dialogue, Xinhua news agency and a South Korean official said on Monday. Officials in Washington have said North Korea may be preparing for a nuclear test, while South Korea's foreign minister said last week diplomatic efforts to end the nuclear crisis had reached a "critical moment." In comments late on Sunday, a North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman said Pyongyang wanted to meet U.S. officials to confirm reports Washington was ready to recognize the North as a sovereign state and hold bilateral talks with the United States in the framework of six-country talks, the official KCNA news agency reported. "If there be any request from our side, we only expressed our intention to directly meet the U.S. side to confirm whether those reports were true before making a final determination," the spokesman said, referring to media reports on the U.S. position.

Reuters, 8 May 2005

Russia urges resumption of nuclear talks: KCNA

SEOUL (Reuters) - Russia wants six-country talks on North Korea's nuclear arms program to resume, Pyongyang media on Sunday quoted a Russian diplomat as saying. "I am convinced that all the regional issues including the nuclear issue should be peacefully settled in view of the security of your side and in the interests of its economic development," Russia's ambassador to North Korea, Andrei Karlov, told Minju Joson, one of the North's main newspapers. "In this sense, Russia holds that the Beijing six-way talks should be resumed as they are regarded as a modality most suitable for the discussion on the afore-said issues," Karlov was quoted as saying in a report carried by the official KCNA news agency. Nearly a year has passed since a third round of six-country talks on the crisis ended inconclusively in Beijing. The talks involve the two Koreas, the United States, Japan, Russia and China.

Reuters, 8 May 2005

Iran prepares to resume some sensitive nuclear work

TEHRAN: Iran said on Sunday it was getting ready to resume some uranium enrichment-related work, despite warnings from Washington and the European Union that doing so would see its nuclear case sent to the U.N. Security Council. Iran, which insists its atomic ambitions are peaceful, is threatening to re-start uranium processing but has promised to maintain its freeze on actual uranium enrichment, a process which can be used to make bomb-grade fuel. "We have decided to resume part of our activities in Isfahan," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said, referring to the Isfahan Uranium Conversion Facility in central Iran. "We have still not decided which activities (will be resumed) and when ... We are at a decision-making stage and whether we reach an agreement (with the EU) or not we will do this," he told a weekly news conference. Britain, Germany and France, who are leading the EU's nuclear negotiations with Iran, say a resumption of uranium processing work at Isfahan would violate an agreement struck by the two sides in Paris in November.

The Associated Press, 8 May 2005

Iranians Call for End to Nuke Negotiations

TEHRAN: Iranian hard-liners on Sunday called for an end to nuclear negotiations with European powers and said they opposed any deal imposing limitations on Iran's nuclear program. But Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said Iran will remain committed to talks with Europeans despite a lack of progress. Asefi said Iran has decided to resume certain nuclear activities it voluntarily suspended in November, but actual uranium enrichment – injecting uranium gas into centrifuges – will remain suspended for now despite hard-line calls for its resumption. Enriched uranium can be used to produce warheads, but it also can be used to make electricity, which Iranian officials insist is the sole purpose of their nuclear program. Washington accuses Tehran of trying to build nuclear weapons. Iranian state-run radio quoted Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the hard-line head of parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy committee, as saying Iran should end its suspension of uranium enrichment and that continued nuclear talks with European countries would be a waste of time.

The Hindu, 8 May 2005

Leaders of Asia, Europe ask N. Korea to halt nuclear move (P. S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE: As international concerns rose over the suspected preparations by North Korea to conduct an underground testing of a nuclear weapon, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) urged Pyongyang on Saturday to "make a strategic decision so as to achieve the denuclearisation of the [Korean] peninsula in a peaceful manner through dialogue". The long-winded diplomatic appeal, made by the Foreign Ministers of 38 countries or their representatives at the conclusion of a two-day meeting in Kyoto in Japan, was in effect a call to North Korea to take a "strategic decision" against testing a nuclear weapon. The appeal formed part of a statement issued by the Chairman of the latest ASEM conference - the Japanese Foreign Minister, Nobutaka Machimura. The "careful" political language used by Mr. Machimura is seen in the regional diplomatic circles as a reflection of the position taken by Japan as also some other countries that they had not so far obtained any "confirmation" that North Korea was indeed poised to test a nuclear weapon any time now.

The New York Times, 8 May 2005

Amid Tensions, Bush and Putin Conduct Meeting in Russia (Elisabeth Bumiller)

MOSCOW, May 8: President Bush met tonight with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia in what was widely expected to be a tense encounter after days of recriminations over Russian rollbacks on democracy and the country's actions in World War II,

but the top foreign policy advisers to both men moved swiftly to pronounce the meeting a success. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Sergey V. Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, appeared in an unusual joint briefing at a guest house on the grounds of Mr. Putin's presidential dacha outside Moscow to say that the two leaders had talked extensively about nuclear proliferation and Israel's planned withdrawal from Gaza this summer. Mr. Bush and Mr. Putin even took a brief spin on the dacha grounds in a gleaming 1956 Volga, with Mr. Bush at the wheel. In a photograph that is likely to become a symbol of the goodwill that the White House and Kremlin sought to portray here on a damp spring evening, the two presidents waved from the windows as the car emerged from a forest of birches.

CNN.com, 9 May 2005

IAEA: N. Korea could have 5-6 nuclear weapons

Close treaty loophole allowing Iran enrichment, ElBaradei says

WASHINGTON: The head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog says his agency estimates North Korea could have five or six nuclear weapons and any test carried out by Pyongyang could "open a Pandora's box." Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, was asked on CNN's "Late Edition" whether the agency's assessment was that North Korea now possesses as many as six nuclear bombs. "I think that would be close to our estimation," ElBaradei said. "We knew they had the plutonium that could be converted into five or six North Korea weapons," he said. "We know that they had the industrial infrastructure to weaponize this plutonium. We have read also that they have the delivery system." North Korea has not tested a nuclear device, but recent satellite images indicate Pyongyang may be making preparations for one, a Defense Department official said Friday. That news came just days after North Korea tested a short-range missile, which landed in the Sea of Japan.

Dawn, 9 May 2005

Iran has legitimate right to N-technology: Kharrazi

WASHINGTON, May 8: Iran has a "legitimate right" to nuclear technology and has no plans to permanently halt uranium enrichment, Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told Time magazine. Iran agreed in November last year to suspend its fuel cycle work - the focus of international fears the country may be seeking nuclear weapons - and open talks with Britain, France and Germany. Mr Kharrazi's comments in an interview with the news magazine, published on Sunday, but conducted last week, supported repeated comments from Tehran that it will resume uranium enrichment work if an agreement is not reached with the European Union. Iran said on Sunday that it was preparing a bill to ratify a key nuclear protocol but also stood firm on its intention to resume sensitive nuclear fuel work despite intense international pressure. Asked if there were any circumstances that could lead to a permanent freeze on uranium enrichment, Mr Kharrazi replied: "There will not be any permanent freeze, because (it) is our legitimate right to have this (nuclear) technology and produce what we need for the country. No incentive can substitute for our legitimate right."

Dawn, 9 May 2005

NPT conference faces deadlock (Masood Haider)

UNITED NATIONS, May 8: The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review under way since May 2 is bogged down in the proverbial North-South row over the failure of the signatories to the treaty to keep promises they made to stem the flow of nuclear weapons. The conference delegates have not been able to agree on an agenda as yet and as of Friday they continued to quarrel about priorities for a nuclear regime. "If the NPT conference ends in disagreement, if it fails to reach a consensus, many nations will see this as a sign that the (non-proliferation) regime is unravelling," said Joseph Cirincione of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "Nations with ample technological ability to develop nuclear weapons may be reconsidering their political decisions not to do so," he told the panel in written testimony. At the outset the conference review went into a tailspin when United States ruled out making concessions to induce other countries to accept steps to strengthen the treaty.

Daily Yomiuri, 9 May 2005

PLANNING NATIONAL STRATEGIES / Japan, S. Korea members of different N-clubs

"Can I make a tour of Rokkashomura?" South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Soo Hyuck asked Mitoji Yabunaka, director general of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau of the Foreign Ministry, in April last year. Lee was referring to the nuclear fuel-reprocessing plant that was to be built in the village in Aomori Prefecture. The request was made at a meeting of the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) being held at a San Francisco hotel. TCOG, whose membership is completed by the United States, was meeting to discuss policies regarding North Korea's nuclear development program. Lee told Yabunaka that South Korea "unfortunately has no expertise in the field because of [international] restraints. As a person in charge of nuclear policies, I want to become familiar with fuel-reprocessing and plutonium-extraction processes." Yabunaka declined Lee's request, saying he could not expect to see anything more than what he would see as a regular sightseer. Yabunaka also cited the lack of convenient transportation to the village.

China Daily, 9 May 2005

China, South Korea press for resumption of 6-way talks

China and South Korea have pledged to renew efforts to restart stalled six-party talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear program. Nearly a year has passed since a third round of talks between the South Korea, North Korea, the United States, Japan, Russia and China ended inconclusively in Beijing. North Korea declared in February that it had nuclear arms and would stay away from the talks indefinitely, intensifying a crisis that began in 2002 over what Washington said was its enrichment of uranium that could be used to make weapons. Chinese President Hu Jintao and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun, in

Moscow to attend commemorations marking the 60th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, called on Sunday for a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue through dialogue. Hu urged all parties to try to re-open the six-party talks to make sure the issue stays on the course of peaceful resolution through dialogue. South Korea hoped for sustained peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and expected China to play an active role in resolving the issue, Roh said.

Daily Yomiuri, 9 May 2005

Weaknesses of nuclear nonproliferation regime (Ramesh Thakur)

Over the 35 years of its operation, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty—alongside a host of auxiliary arrangements like the International Atomic Energy Agency's Additional Protocol and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty—has kept the world safe from rampant proliferation of nuclear weapons. The subject of the proliferation, detection and interdiction, use and deterrence, dismantlement and destruction of nuclear weapons is back on the international agenda with a vengeance. The NPT is the centerpiece of the nonproliferation regime which codified the global antinuclear norm. The NPT has produced many real and enduring benefits. But it also suffers from major weaknesses like lack of universality, inadequate verification mechanisms, problems of implementation, and ineffectual enforcement. Some of the NPT's weaknesses are not just intrinsic to it but were intentionally written into it.

The Korean Herald, 9 May 2005

Roh, Hu discuss N.K. in Moscow (Lee Joo-hee)

MOSCOW: President Roh Moo-hyun and Chinese President Hu Jintao met yesterday to discuss how to break the deadlock in the stalled six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program and to review Northeast Asian security and economic cooperation. "The two leaders agreed to make joint efforts to persuade North Korea to return to the six-party talks to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully," Chong Woo-seong, presidential secretary on foreign policy, said. "They also discussed bilateral and multinational cooperation for security and economic development of Northeast Asia," he added. Roh talked with Hu shortly after arriving in Moscow for a ceremony today marking the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. China is the host of six-party talks to end the North's nuclear weapons program and has been trying to get Pyongyang to end its boycott of the negotiations between the Koreans, United States, China, Russia and Japan. After today's ceremony, Roh will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan separately. This is Roh's second visit to Russia since September last year.

The Korean Herald, 9 May 2005

Face reality: why six-party talks must fail

The North Korean nuclear standoff has received much attention since George W. Bush formed a new foreign policy team after last November's presidential election, and both the United States and South Korea have stepped up verbal pressure for Pyongyang to abandon its boycott of the six-party talks. The North has demanded the United States change its hostile policy and proposed direct talks, emphasizing its strangely vague demands with an ambiguous claim about possessing a nuclear deterrent and test threats. The United States initially proposed multilateral talks because it did not want to engage North Korea after the communist state resumed reprocessing plutonium and abandoned the "Agreed Framework" that froze its nuclear program. While this has changed, Washington remains locked into the multilateral process. But the reality is that even if the six-party talks resume, which seems unlikely, there is no chance they will produce any results. There are essentially two reasons: North Korea's unwillingness to completely abandon its nuclear program, and the lack of coordination and the divergence of policy goals among the other five participant countries.

The Hindu, 9 May 2005

Nuclear cooperation to be taken up (Amit Baruah)

MOSCOW: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is expected to raise the issue of civilian nuclear energy cooperation with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday given the Indian decision to move a Bill in Parliament next week to tighten export controls. Dr. Singh, who arrived in Moscow on Sunday evening, will attend the Victory Day military parade at Red Square on Monday morning along with 56 heads of State/Governments. President Putin, who will have a bilateral meeting with Dr. Singh on Monday afternoon, is scheduled to have one-on-one talks only with U.S. President George W. Bush, Chinese President Hu Jintao and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. Senior officials told correspondents accompanying Dr. Singh that India expected friendly governments to take a more sympathetic view of New Delhi's nuclear energy requirements following the introduction of the export control Bill in Parliament. They said the two leaders could also discuss the issue of United Nations reforms - an issue of considerable interest to India given its quest for a permanent seat on the Security Council.

The New York Times, 9 May 2005

Despite Tension, Bush-Putin Meeting Is Called a Success (Elisabeth Bumiller)

MOSCOW, May 8: President Bush met Sunday night with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia in what was widely expected to be a tense encounter after days of recriminations over Russian rollbacks of democracy and the Soviet Union's actions in the World War II era, but the top foreign policy advisers to both men swiftly pronounced the meeting a success. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Sergey V. Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, appeared in an unusual joint briefing at a guest house on the grounds of Mr. Putin's presidential dacha outside Moscow to say the two leaders had talked extensively about nuclear proliferation and Israel's plan to withdraw from Gaza this summer. Mr. Bush and Mr. Putin even took a brief spin on the dacha grounds in a gleaming 1956 Volga, with Mr. Bush at the wheel. In a photograph that is likely to become a symbol of the good will that the White House and Kremlin sought to portray here on a damp spring evening, the two presidents waved from the

windows as the car, purchased by Mr. Putin last year, emerged from a forest of birches.

The New York Times, 9 May 2005

When It Comes to Replacing Oil Imports, Nuclear Is No Easy Option, Experts Say (Matthew L. Wald)

WASHINGTON, May 8: President Bush has proposed reducing oil imports by increasing the use of nuclear power, which he said in a recent speech was "one of the most promising sources of energy." There is a problem, though: reactors make electricity, not oil. And oil does not make much electricity. Nuclear reactors produce about 20 percent of the electricity used in the United States and about 8 percent of the total energy consumed. Oil accounts for 41 percent of energy consumption. Could a few dozen more reactors, in addition to the 103 running now, cut into oil's share of the energy market? "Indirectly, but very indirectly," said Lawrence J. Goldstein, president of the Petroleum Industry Research Foundation, a nonprofit group that studies the economics of oil. People who think nuclear power is a way to reduce oil imports are "confusing several issues," he said. Peter A. Bradford, a former member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, added, "No one knowledgeable about energy policy would link nuclear power and gasoline prices."

Deccan Herald, 10 May 2005

Bill on Weapons of Mass Destruction introduced

NEW DELHI: An over-arching legislation to prohibit unlawful activities in relation to weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their means of delivery and related dual-use materials, equipment and technologies was introduced in Lok Sabha today by Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee. It said India remains committed to prevent non-State actors and terrorists from acquiring WMDs and their means of delivery. The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their delivery systems (prohibition of unlawful activities) Bill, 2005, piloted by Mukherjee on behalf of External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh, said it would provide an integrated legislative basis to India's commitment to prevent proliferation of WMDs. In addition, the envisaged control over the export of WMD-usable materials, equipment and technologies would also fulfil India's mandatory obligations under UN Security Council resolution adopted in April last year.

The Japan Times, 10 May 2005

Nixed Indian visas linked to nukes

The Foreign Ministry has refused to issue visas to 11 Indian scientists since 1998, the year India conducted a nuclear weapons test, according to informed sources. While the ministry declined to disclose the reasons, saying the issue is "a matter of national sovereignty," some believe it is because India has not yet signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the sources said. According to a Kyodo News tally, the visa rejections began in 1998, when India conducted an underground nuclear weapons test. That year, the Foreign Ministry refused to issue a visa to an Indian scientist. There were three rejections in 2003, six in 2004 and one so far this year. Union of Pure and Applied Physics, an association of physicists, is considering a protest to the Japanese government and may block Japan from hosting international conferences backed by the union. A scientist at a Japanese research institution, who had invited an Indian scientist to Japan, quoted a ministry official as saying the visa "will never be granted because the Indian scientist belongs to an institution that has some connection to nuclear weapons." However, the research fields of the Indian scientists are basic sciences, irrelevant to nuclear weapons development, and those in Japan inviting them said the refusal to issue visas is "unreasonable."

The Hindu, 10 May 2005

Putin positive on civilian nuclear cooperation (Amit Baruah and Vladimir Radyuhin)

MOSCOW: At his meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh here on Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin took a positive view of further cooperation in the civilian nuclear sector including possible supply of fuel to the Tarapur plant as well as construction of additional reactors. Their wide-ranging discussions were "far more productive" than anticipated, National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan told presspersons. The Prime Minister told Mr. Putin that India appreciated the setting up of two Russian-built nuclear reactors in Koodankulam, Tamil Nadu, and hoped that such cooperation would be expanded. Energy cooperation figured in a brief interaction Dr. Singh had with U.S. President George W. Bush over lunch hosted by Mr. Putin as part of the 60th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War. Mr. Bush said Dr. Singh's July visit to the U.S. would carry forward the energy dialogue. Referring to the Putin-Manmohan meeting, Mr. Narayanan said progress on the nuclear energy front could be expected sooner than later. Mr. Putin promised to look at "each one of these issues" once the celebrations were over.

The Korean Herald, 10 May 2005

Roh, Putin agree to work on N.K. nukes (Lee Joo-hee)

MOSCOW: President Roh Moo-hyun and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed yesterday to work closely together to persuade North Korea to wind up its nuclear weapons program. In a 10-minute meeting held just before a luncheon in Moscow, Putin detailed to Roh his meeting with U.S. President George W. Bush, South Korea's presidential secretary on foreign affairs Chong Woo-seong told reporters. Putin said North Korea's nuclear problem was also a crucial issue for Russia and that it would put enthusiastic efforts with Korea to imminently resume the six-party talks. The two Koreas, China, Russia, Japan and the United States belong to the disarmament talks that North Korea has been boycotting since last year. Along with China and the United States, Russia is a member of the U.N. Security Council. Washington's idea of referring the North Korean nuclear issue to the council is gaining weight as Pyongyang continues to boycott the six-party talks, stalled since last June.

The Asahi Shimbun, 10 May 2005

Mysteries surround N. Korea nuclear test (Nobuyoshi Sakajiri)

WASHINGTON: Although North Korea is showing increasing signs that it is preparing for a nuclear test, doubts have emerged over whether Pyongyang will actually go through with the potentially destructive move. Some say North Korea might simply be putting on a show to obtain U.S. concessions over the reclusive country's nuclear development programs. Others say the United States is even manipulating information about North Korea obtained through spy satellites to heighten pressure on China to bring Pyongyang back to the six-party talks. Last week, The New York Times said Washington had confirmed suspicious movements in a mountainous area in Kilju, northeastern North Korea. The report said concrete was poured into a tunnel in an apparent step toward testing a nuclear device. In addition, the report said viewing stands were set up near the tunnel, much like the ones for North Korea's test-launch of a Taepodong missile in 1998. The tunnel is similar to the one used in a Pakistani nuclear test in 1998, according to the report.

Dawn, 10 May 2005

Tehran to resume N-activities 'in days'

TEHRAN, May 9: Iran will resume some sensitive nuclear activities "in the next few days", an Iranian official negotiating with the EU said on Monday. "We will relaunch in the next few days uranium conversion installations at Isfahan," said Mohammad Saidi. "It concerns activities that we suspended," Mr Saidi said when asked which activities would be resumed. The plant at Isfahan is used to convert uranium, prior to it being enriched. Enriched uranium can be used for peaceful power generation but also as the explosive core of a nuclear bomb. Iran agreed in November last year to suspend its fuel cycle work - the focus of international fears the country may be seeking the bomb - and open talks with Britain, France and Germany. But the clerical regime has since voiced frustration over the negotiations, in which the EU-3 are offering a package of incentives in return for "objective guarantees" from Iran that it will not develop weapons. And Iran has repeatedly said it will resume the uranium enrichment work if an agreement is not reached with the European Union.

The Washington Post, 10 May 2005

Nuke test 'indispensible' step: N. Korea

SEOUL: A North Korean official told visiting Japanese academics in Pyongyang last week that a nuclear test was an "indispensible" step toward proving the nation's military capabilities to the world and suggested his government might conduct one soon, according to the head of the delegation. Word that North Korea is considering a nuclear test came as the Pyongyang government appeared to hint late Sunday that it is willing to return, under certain conditions, to six-party negotiations aimed at its nuclear disarmament. During those talks - stalled for the past 11 months - North Korea had previously suggested it might conduct a test. But the statement to the Japanese delegation amounted to the first public statement by a North Korean official since intelligence reports circulated about the possibility. Over the weekend, Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, called for efforts to convince the secretive Stalinist state not to go through with a test.

The International Herald Tribune, 10 May 2005

Missing nuclear leadership

Representatives of nearly 190 countries are currently meeting in New York to discuss ways of strengthening the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. It's a shame that neither President George W. Bush nor Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice can find time to attend. Nuclear proliferation is the pre-eminent national security issue of our times. The nonproliferation treaty, signed in 1968, is the main reason that John F. Kennedy's nightmare vision of 15 to 20 nuclear-armed states has been avoided. Instead, there are fewer than 10: the five that already had nuclear weapons when the treaty was signed, and Israel, India, Pakistan and probably North Korea, with Iran threatening to join that list in a few years' time. Israel developed its bomb in the 1960s, but India and Pakistan tested their first bombs in 1998, and North Korea could test at any time. These recent additions to the list are a clear sign that the treaty needs reinforcing, particularly by closing the loophole that now allows countries to legally acquire bomb-making skills and equipment under the guise of civilian nuclear power programs. That is the most important challenge facing this month's treaty review conference. But it cannot be met without committed leadership from the United States.

The Asian Age, 10 May 2005

Hasten NPT's end (Bharat Karnad)

What the great powers have now to consider is whether an inherently leaky system of nuclear non-proliferation is a greater danger to international peace and stability than an overtly nuclear India and Pakistan. When the issue was so posed by this writer at a round table on non-proliferation held in Islamabad some two months back, it was well received. Even the American representative at the table, George Perkovich from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who has co-authored a new but, not surprisingly, "status quo"-tilting non-proliferation manifesto (Universal Compliance: A Strategy for Nuclear Security), conceded that this was a reasonable way to articulate the problem. The most constructive solution was offered by Josef Goldblat from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva, who suggested that a "Group of Eight" - the five so-called "Non-Proliferation Treaty recognised" nuclear powers plus India, Pakistan and Israel, be formally constituted to hammer out a safe and secure nuclear non-proliferation regime, but whether as replacement for the prevailing NPT induced order, he tactfully left unsaid.

The Associated Press, 10 May 2005

Iran Confirms Processing Tons of Uranium Ore

TEHRAN, May 9: Iran confirmed Monday that it had converted 37 tons of uranium into gas, its first acknowledgment of

advances made in the production process for enriched uranium before it formally suspended nuclear activity in November under international pressure. The announcement, which means Tehran is in a position to start enriching uranium quickly if it lifts the suspension, comes as European negotiators are trying to seal an agreement to ensure that Iran's nuclear program does not produce weapons. Enriched uranium is useful in the generation of electricity, which is permitted under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but it also can be turned into nuclear weapons. Iran insists its program has only peaceful purposes, while Washington says Tehran wants to obtain atomic arms. Iran processed the uranium ore concentrate into uranium tetrafluoride, or UF₄, gas before halting enrichment-related activities, Mohammad Saeedi, deputy head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, told The Associated Press. If processed further into uranium hexafluoride gas, the material could be fed into centrifuges and enriched.

The Associated Press, 10 May 2005

N. Korea Dismisses Nuclear Test Reports

SEOUL: North Korea accused the United States on Tuesday of making a fuss by notifying allies of the communist nation's possible preparations for a nuclear test, and maintained it would stay away from international disarmament talks. "The United States is making a fuss saying that it was notifying the International Atomic Energy Agency, Japan and other related countries of its own opinion that our republic may conduct an underground nuclear test in June," the North's main state-run Rodong Sinmun daily wrote in a commentary, according to the country's official Korean Central News Agency. However, the North didn't confirm or deny it was planning such a test. The newspaper said Washington was branding North Korea as a "nuclear criminal" in order to stifle the country. It also said the Bush administration wasn't behaving normally and that the North "cannot deal with" Washington.

JoongAng Daily, 10 May 2005

Pyongyang aide reportedly calls test inevitable (Yae Young-jun, Brian Lee)

TOKYO: A Japanese professor, after a meeting with a senior North Korean official last week, quoted the official as saying that a nuclear weapons test by Pyongyang was unavoidable. Yasuhiko Yoshida, a professor at the Osaka University of Economics and Law, told the JoongAng Ilbo that Pak Hyon-jae, deputy head of the North's Institute for Disarmament and Peace, told a Japanese delegation on a visit to Pyongyang that "a plutonium-based nuclear test is unavoidable" and that the world "would soon know about a nuclear test." Reacting, a South Korean diplomatic source cast doubt on the statement, saying yesterday that North Korea had from time to time used Mr. Pak as a messenger to the outside world, and that the professor's visit was a scheme set up by Pyongyang.

Dawn, 10 May 2005

Pyongyang's bomb (David Ignatius)

HERE'S a chilling scenario from the CIA's former top Asia hand: Within a year, North Korea is likely to test a nuclear weapon, probably in a cave or mine shaft somewhere in the barren northeast of the country. A small amount of radioactive fallout will leak from the test site and drift toward Japan. Financial markets in Tokyo and Seoul will be rocked by the news. Foreign companies in South Korea will weigh whether to pull out dependents or reduce their operations. And Washington will debate whether to impose a blockade or other tough measures to contain the North Korean nuclear breakout. That's the essence of a briefing being given to some major US companies by Arthur Brown, who retired in December as chief of the East Asia division of the CIA's clandestine service. He's now a senior vice-president for the consulting firm Control Risks Group. He says the briefing is based entirely on unclassified material. It mirrors concerns in intelligence circles.

Dawn, 10 May 2005

N-technology for socio-economic development

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) is using nuclear technology in a wide range of socio-economic domains including cancer treatment, agricultural productivity, quality control techniques for product competitiveness, and industrial support services. PAEC member (Physical Sciences) Dr Masud Ahmed said while inaugurating a one-week international technical moot of experts called 'New Techniques in Sealed Sources and Radiotracer Preparation, Injection and Data Logging' on Monday. The conference being attended by noted scientists from 10 Regional Cooperation Agreement (RCA) member countries has been jointly organised by PAEC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). "Based upon our engagements and accumulated expertise in a wide range of nuclear-related applications in socio-economic spheres and our impeccable safety and compliance records, Pakistan is one of the largest recipients of the IAEA technical assistance," Dr Masud said.

The Guardian, 10 May 2005

Pressure to restart N Korea nuclear talks (Ian Traynor)

China, South Korea and the UN's nuclear watchdog yesterday pleaded with North Korea and the US to resume talks as the International Atomic Energy Agency estimated that Pyongyang already had enough material for up to six bombs. While South Korean and Chinese leaders met in Moscow and urged the North Korean regime to return to the table after almost a year of stalemate, Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the IAEA, tacitly called on the US administration to adjust its hard line to allow six-party talks to resume. There were signs last night that the US might have heeded Dr ElBaradei. In an interview with CNN from Moscow, the US secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, said the US "of course, recognises that North Korea is sovereign".

China Daily, 10 May 2005

US offers direct talks with North Korea

The United States sought to coax North Korea back to the negotiating table on Monday by saying it viewed the nation as sovereign and would hold direct talks as part of six-party nuclear discussions. U.S. officials have said this before, but repeating the positions was significant one day after North Korea said it wanted clarification on both points before deciding whether to resume talks about ending its suspected nuclear arms programs. Chinese and South Korean leaders over the weekend called for resolving the matter through peaceful dialogue following a report last week that some U.S. officials believe North Korea may be preparing for a nuclear test. The United States regards the six-way talks among North Korea and South Korea, China, Russia Japan and itself as the best way to persuade Pyongyang to give up nuclear arms in exchange for U.S. security guarantees and economic incentives from others. "The United States, of course, recognizes that North Korea is sovereign," US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told CNN in an interview in Moscow, echoing a statement she first made in March during visit to Japan, China and South Korea.

The Associated Press, 10 May 2005

Blix: U.S. Not Committed to Nuke 'Bargain'

UNITED NATIONS: Washington isn't taking "the common bargain" of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as seriously as it once did, and that's dimming global support for the U.S. campaign to shut down the North Korean and Iranian nuclear programs, the former chief U.N. weapons inspector said. Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton, by questioning the value of treaties and international law, has also damaged the U.S. position, Hans Blix said. "There is a feeling the common edifice of the international community is being dismantled," the Swedish arms expert said. Blix, now chairman of the Swedish government-sponsored Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, spoke with reporters in the second week of a monthlong conference to review the 1970 nonproliferation treaty. Under the 188-nation pact, nations without nuclear weapons pledge not to pursue them, in exchange for a commitment by five nuclear-weapons states – the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China – to negotiate toward nuclear disarmament.

Reuters, 10 May 2005

N.Korea blames U.S. for 'fuss' on nuclear tests

SEOUL: Reports it could soon conduct an underground nuclear weapons test were speculation cooked up by Washington, North Korea said on Tuesday, but the secretive state did not deny outright that one might be planned. Media reports have said spy satellites show North Korea has apparently stepped up activity in its northeastern region of Kilju. The area has been suspected of being where the North would conduct a test, U.S. and South Korean officials have said. "The United States is making a fuss that our republic may proceed with an underground nuclear test in June and it will report its own view to the International Atomic Energy Agency and other countries, including Japan," the North's Rodong Sinmun newspaper said in a commentary. The official KCNA news agency reported about the commentary on its Korean-language service. The South's Yonhap news agency carried the report.

Daily Yomiuri, 11 May 2005

PLANNING NATIONAL STRATEGIES / Approaching nuclear policy a complex task

This is the 17th installment in a series of articles in the "Planning National Strategies" series that considers the situation and problems concerning natural resources and energy. A report on Japan's nuclear activities presented to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna in June concluded there was no sign Japan was using nuclear materials subject to IAEA safeguards against unauthorized purposes, nor that it possessed undeclared nuclear materials or engaged in unreported nuclear activities. After receiving the report, the IAEA agreed to include Japan in its list of nations subject to the integrated safeguards system that involves less stringent nuclear inspections. The system seeks to reduce the number of inspections in countries that are committed to the peaceful use of nuclear materials, enabling the IAEA to concentrate on countries that need heavy monitoring.

The Korean Herald, 11 May 2005

Seoul sees no preparation for N.K. nuke test (Joo Sang-min)

The South Korean government has found no evidence that North Korea is preparing for a nuclear blast test, saying it has neither detected signs, nor received such information from U.S. intelligence authorities, a top government official said yesterday. Earlier, a senior Foreign Ministry official made clear his opposition to a possible U.S. pre-emptive strike on North Korea in the event of no breakthrough being made in the multilateral talks. "So far, we have not seen any signs that could point to North Korea's preparation for imminent explosion tests," the Seoul official told reporters, requesting anonymity. Speculation about a nuclear test mounted after South Korea's Defense Ministry reported last week that Korean and U.S. intelligence have been tracking North Korea's construction of underground tunnels in a northeastern region of Gilju County. Days later, the New York Times reported that U.S. satellites detected construction of some platforms and tunnels, possible pointers to a preparation for an underground nuclear test.

The Times of India, 11 May 2005

The day India became a nuclear power

That day: The Indian government announced it had carried out a series of underground nuclear tests on May 10, 1998. It was the first time India carried out such tests since 1974. The experiments caught the international community and watchdogs unawares and there was widespread outrage and concern over the move.

This year: Almost seven years to the week after India conducted its nuclear tests, it has taken also the first step towards putting in place a comprehensive legislative system to make WMD (weapons of mass destruction) proliferation a criminal

offence,

That day: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee broke the news to journalists in a hastily-convened news conference. "These were contained explosions like the experiment conducted in May 1974," he said. "I warmly congratulate the scientists and engineers who have carried out these successful tests."

This year: The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (prohibition of unlawful activities) Bill, 2005, piloted by defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, is described as an iron-clad commitment of India's promises against proliferation, their means of delivery and related dual-use materials, equipment and technologies.

The Deccan Herald, 11 May 2005

A nuclear non-event (Punyapriya Dasgupta)

The belligerent attitude of America, on enrichment of uranium, poses a danger to the treaty itself. A big international conference - almost as massive as the UN General Assembly - is currently on a 24-day session in New York for the seventh five-yearly review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This famous or infamous agreement - depending on one's point of view - supposedly designed to rid the world of the fear of any recurrence of what happened to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, has secured the adherence, on paper, of as many as 189 of the 191 member-states of the United Nations. India, Pakistan and Israel are the only three holding out for 35 years from the time the treaty came into force.

The Indian Express, 11 May 2005

Pokhran, 7 years after

Although the National Democratic Alliance is boycotting the Parliament these days, there are good reasons for an immediate approval of the bill on tightening domestic law on non-proliferation tabled on Tuesday. The essence of The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities Bill, 2005) (WMD bill) underlines a continuation of the nuclear policy initiated by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. After conducting two rounds of nuclear tests on May 11 and 13 seven years ago, Vajpayee focused on two important and interlinked policies - engage the international system to limit the damage from the fallout of the Pokhran tests and strengthen domestic laws on nuclear non-proliferation. Both were rooted on the principle that India is and must be seen as a responsible nuclear weapon power. Having become a declared nuclear weapon state, India was no longer in the business of confronting the world order but finding ways to promote a political reconciliation.

Khaleej Times, 11 May 2005

Iran dismisses threat of UN Security Council over nuclear plans

TEHRAN: Iran has dismissed as "propaganda" the threat of being hauled before the United Nations Security Council, insisting it has every right to resume sensitive nuclear activities, state media said on Wednesday. "There is no legal basis for sending Iran's nuclear case to the UN Security Council, and this is nothing but media propaganda," Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, a vice president and head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, was quoted as saying. Frustrated by the pace of negotiations with Britain, France and Germany, Iran has said it will back away from a November 2004 deal.

The Washington Post, 11 May 2005

China rules out North Korea ban

BEIJING: China on Tuesday ruled out applying economic or political sanctions to pressure North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program, appearing to undercut a crucial element of the Bush administration's evolving North Korea strategy. The announcement comes just as American intelligence agencies are trying to determine whether North Korea is preparing for a nuclear test. Echoing President Bush's public comments, the Chinese said in a briefing on Tuesday that they still hoped that talks with North Korea would succeed in disarming the country, even though it has boycotted those talks for 11 months. Liu Jianchao, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman, said Tuesday that China rejected suggestions that it should reduce oil or food shipments to North Korea, calling them part of its normal trade with its neighbor that should be separate from the nuclear problem. "The normal trade flow should not be linked up with the nuclear issue," he said. "We oppose trying to address the problem through strong-arm tactics."

The Associated press, 11 May 2005

Iran defends uranium reprocessing

TEHRAN: Iran insisted that its decision to lift a suspension on uranium reprocessing activities should not be cause for alarm, but said Tuesday it wanted to push Europe to make concessions in negotiations over its nuclear program. Reprocessing is an early step in preparing uranium for conversion into the materials necessary to produce fuel for energy - as Iran says its program is designed for. It also can be used to create nuclear weapons, as the United States accuses Tehran of intending to do. Iran suspended reprocessing and the more advanced step of enriching uranium amid fragile negotiations with European nations, which are trying to reach a deal ensuring Iran's nuclear program is peaceful. Those talks are deadlocked. Iranian Vice President Gholamreza Aghazadeh said Iran will not lift its suspension on enrichment but suggested reprocessing could resume as soon as Thursday. He said the resumption is a message to Europeans that Iran cannot continue offering concessions with nothing in return.

The New York Times, 11 May 2005

China Rules Out Using Sanctions on North Korea (Joseph Kahn and David E. Sanger)

BEIJING, May 10: China on Tuesday ruled out applying economic or political sanctions to pressure North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program, appearing to undercut a crucial element of the Bush administration's evolving North Korea strategy.

The announcement comes just as American intelligence agencies are trying to determine whether North Korea is preparing for a nuclear test. Echoing President Bush's public comments, the Chinese said in a briefing on Tuesday that they still hoped that talks with North Korea would succeed in disarming the country, even though it has boycotted those talks for 11 months. Liu Jianchao, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman, said Tuesday that China rejected suggestions that it should reduce oil or food shipments to North Korea, calling them part of its normal trade with its neighbor that should be separate from the nuclear problem. "The normal trade flow should not be linked up with the nuclear issue," he said. "We oppose trying to address the problem through strong-arm tactics."

The Guardian, 11 May 2005

Defiant Iran plans nuclear revival (Ewen MacAskill and Robert Tait)

TEHRAN: The Iranian government threatened to provoke a full-blown international crisis yesterday by confirming that it is to resume its suspended nuclear programme. A British Foreign Office spokesman said such a move would automatically halt two years of negotiations between Tehran and the European trio - Britain, France and Germany - and see immediate referral to the United Nations security council. Sanctions could follow and bring a dangerous standoff between the US, backed by Israel, and Iran. The US, in a view shared by Europe and Israel, suspects Iran is covertly trying to secure a nuclear weapon. Iran claims it only wants nuclear power for civil purposes. Mohammad Saeedi, deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, said yesterday: "The decision to resume some activities has been taken and now we are discussing the timing for resuming. But this decision is imminent as well." Twenty-four hours earlier, he said a decision would be made "within days".

The News, 11 May 2005

Nuclear thoughts

May 11, 1998 will always be remembered as a sad day in the history of South Asia. It was on this day that India tested a nuclear device in Pokhran, bringing the devastating nuclear genie to the neighborhood. It was on this day that the doctrine of peace and nuclear disarmament, so strongly upheld by the founding fathers of India, was ruthlessly trampled by the BJP government in its efforts towards regional hegemony. South Asia entered the nuclear age, its people forced to live under the fearsome shadow of these dreadful weapons. The psycho-political environment of the region changed, as did the threat perception of the two countries whose relationship has always been based on rivalry and antagonism. India's nuclear upper hand over Pakistan did not last more than three weeks. Under the compulsion of balancing the power disequilibrium created by the Indian nuclear tests, Islamabad conducted its own tests on May 28, 1998. The power equation in South Asia was now balanced, but at a huge cost, not just in terms of the people having to live in the nuclear shadow, but also in terms of economic costs as the two countries invest huge portions of their meager resources to maintain and improve their nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

The News, 11 May 2005

Changes wrought by South Asian nukes (M B Naqvi)

The international context of South Asia's nuclear weapons is important. To begin with, India and Pakistan were born as separate nations soon after the World War II ended. This War destroyed old European imperialisms making the world bipolar, characterised by an equally ferocious cold war. The WWII started between European imperialists and Axis of Fascist states. It led to a total victory after the alliance of old European imperialists with the US and a Soviet Union that had burst on the world stage in 1917. German and Italian Fascists, supported by Japan, were defeated. Fascists were aggressive nationalists who wanted to carve out empires of their own by war. The bipolar post- WWII world was mostly dominated by US, the real victor of the 1939-45 war, with the Soviets challenging it.

Dawn, 11 May 2005

Non-proliferation dilemma (Zubeida Mustafa)

The non-proliferation treaty review conference being held in New York since May 2 is the biggest hoax in the history of nuclear disarmament negotiations. There is a lot of sound and fury that is being generated at the moot. But it seems strange that the thrust of the nuclear club's attack is against the supposedly aberrant states in the Third World. At the same time, a blind eye is turned to the inherent inequity envisaged in the treaty that was concluded in 1968 and came into force in 1970. What is more, the haves of the nuclear world appear to be acquiring greater privileges and power while the have-nots are being pushed further against the wall. This inequality in their relationship has been growing with the passage of time causing greater discontent globally.

The Nation, 11 May 2005

US-Iran confrontation (Dr Maqsood UI Hasan Nuri)

Call it, coincidence or fate, Pakistan's security outlook does not seem to be improving. For the last five decades it was the eastern neighbour India that consumed Pakistan's energy and resources to the point of obsession. In the late 1990s it was thought that going nuclear will alleviate most of strategic anxieties, but since 9/11 the security woes have shifted to western borders complicating the security calculus. As if problems in Balochistan, FATA and Northern Areas were not enough, the crescendo of US-Iran war of words is ominous. The US wants Iran to stop enrichment and reprocessing of uranium - citing the latter as a precursor for possible attempt of secret manufacture of nuclear weapons. It has fronted the three EU states to engage Iran in a round of negotiations, failing which it has threatened to invoke the UNSC for clamping sanctions. Iran, on the other hand, claims that it has a legal right to pursue peaceful development of nuclear energy. It has rebutted the US offers of being facilitated in being admitted to WTO and sale of spares for civil aircraft as a "bribe" and vowed that it will not cease its peaceful nuclear programme.

Dawn, 11 May 2005

US undermining NPT, says Blix

UNITED NATIONS: Former chief UN weapons inspector, Hans Blix, said on Monday that the United States ambivalence towards the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty is dimming global support for the US campaign to shut down nuclear programmes of North Korea and Iran. "Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton, by questioning the value of treaties and international law, has also damaged the US position," Mr Blix said at a news conference on the sidelines of the NPT review conference. Mr Blix said: "There is a feeling that the common edifice of the international community is being dismantled." He also cited the Bush administration proposals to build new nuclear weapons and talk in Washington even of testing weapons, ending a 13-year-old US moratorium on nuclear tests.

People's Daily, 11 May 2005

US-DPRK talks in New York still possible: spokesman says

The United States said on Tuesday that the New York talks between officials from Washington and Pyongyang over the resumption of the six-party talks remains possible although "it's not a negotiating channel". "The New York channel obviously exists and it remains open, and we'll use it when we deem it appropriate, as we have in the past," acting State Department spokesman Tom Casey told a news briefing. However, Casey noted, "it's not a negotiating channel, it's not a replacement or substitute for the six-party talks. "We put forward a good proposal at the last round of six-party talks...We'd certainly like to hear back from the North Koreans about that and think another round of six-party talks would be the way to do that." On Nov. 30 and Dec. 3 of last year, officials of the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) had two rounds of talks in New York over the resumption of the six-party talks which was designed to solve the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. In stead of having negotiation with the DPRK, Washington said, the bilateral talks was aimed at telling Pyongyang that the US was ready to resume the six-party talks without precondition.

People's Daily, 11 May 2005

China would be pleased if US, DPRK have direct contact

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said Tuesday that China will be "pleased" if the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) have direct contact in any form. "China is in support of any proposals, measures and steps that are conducive to achieving a nuclear-weapon-free Korean Peninsula, to easing the tension there and to the early resumption of the six-party talks," Liu told a routine press conference. However, he added, the conditions required for the direct contact between DPRK and the US depend on the two parties themselves instead of the Chinese side. "Whether they are within the framework of the six-party talks or not and, provided the U.S. and the DPRK, as main parties concerned, are able to exchanges views on some issues, it would be helpful to resolving the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula," he said. Liu said that any party in the six-party talks should only say or do things conducive to continuing the six-party talks or easing the situation. China hopes all relevant parties should show flexibility, pragmatic spirit and sincerity and push for the resumption of the six-party talks, he noted.

The Times of India, 11 May 2005

US steps out of Pokhran shadow (Chidanand Rajghatta)

WASHINGTON: Almost seven years to the week after India conducted its nuclear tests, the principle scientist who supervised the event and who was denied an American visa soon after will be visiting the United States. Dr R Chidambaram, who is now the Principle Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, will be in Washington on May 19 for talks with the US nuclear establishment. The scientist's post is of the rank of a minister of state. The high-level exchange centers around the proposed cooperation between the two sides on nuclear energy issues, including talks on relevant technologies and ways to get around the roadblocks. Dr Chidambaram was Chairman of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission at the time of the tests and he played a key role in its execution, including on-site supervision. Weeks after the tests, he was scheduled to attend a meeting organized by the American Crystallographic Association in his capacity as vice-chairman of the International Union of Crystallographers. But an enraged Clinton administration denied him a visa despite support for him from the American scientific community. Several other scientists were subsequently denied visas and researchers and engineers working on joint collaborations such as the LCA project were asked to return home.

China Daily, 11 May 2005

Text of North Korean government nuclear statement

North Korea announced on Wednesday it had finished extracting nuclear fuel rods from its Yongbyon plant and increased the size of its atomic weapons arsenal which has raised alarm across the region and beyond.

Following is the text of a statement by the North Korean Foreign Ministry carried in the English-language service of the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). DPRK stands for the state's official title, Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"The relevant field of the DPRK has successfully finished the unloading of 8,000 spent fuel rods from the 5MW pilot nuclear plant in the shortest period recently.

"The DPRK had already declared in Dec. 2002 that it would re-operate the above-said plant and resume the construction of two other nuclear plants, one with a capacity of 50,000 KW and the other with a capacity of 200,000 KW, which had been frozen according to the DPRK-US Agreed Framework, the keynote of which is the provision of light water reactors to the DPRK because the Bush Administration threatened the DPRK with nuclear weapons in violation of the AF.

"Accordingly, the DPRK keeps taking necessary measures to bolster its nuclear arsenal for the defensive purpose of coping with the prevailing situation, with a main emphasis on developing the self-reliant nuclear power industry."

Daily Yomiuri, 12 May 2005

PM urges DPRK to return to talks

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Wednesday night it would be in North Korea's best interests to return soon to the six-nation negotiating table and dismantle its nuclear weapons development program. He was commenting on an official announcement by Pyongyang earlier in the day that it had completed the removal of 8,000 spent fuel rods from a nuclear reactor. Koizumi told reporters at the Prime Minister's Office that the first thing the government would do was try to verify whether the announcement was true. He speculated, however, that North Korea's announcement was a negotiating strategy. In a related development, Shinzo Abe, acting secretary general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, told a press conference on Wednesday that the U.N. Security Council should discuss plans to impose economic sanctions against North Korea if Pyongyang carries out a nuclear test. If North Korea fails to resume talks with the five other participating countries within the framework of the six-way negotiations by the end of June, the North Korean issue should be brought to the Security Council, Abe said.

China Daily, 12 May 2005

DPRK says completes nuclear fuel extraction

SEOUL: North Korea sharply raised the stakes in its nuclear standoff with regional powers on Wednesday, announcing it had finished extracting nuclear fuel rods at its Yongbyon plant and taken steps to expand its atomic arsenal. It was the first time North Korea had effectively confirmed it had been working on its reactor at the Yongbyon nuclear complex north of the capital Pyongyang. Regional powers, notably South Korea, voiced concern and urged it to return to talks designed to end its nuclear ambitions. The North said in February it was pulling out of the six-country talks and confirmed for the first time it had nuclear weapons. It has since said it would enhance its deterrent force, and Washington fears Pyongyang could be preparing a nuclear test. "The relevant field of the DPRK has successfully finished the unloading of 8,000 spent fuel rods from the 5 mw (megawatt) pilot nuclear plant in the shortest period recently," the North's Foreign Ministry spokesman said in a English-language version carried by the official KCNA news agency.

The Asahi Shimbun, 12 May 2005

Japan to seek U.N. pressure if Pyongyang refuses 6-party talks

Japan will seek a statement from the United Nations Security Council chairman urging North Korea to enter six-party talks on its nuclear programs if the framework is still stalled in late June, sources said. Although the chairman's statement is not quite a resolution, it would still put pressure on Pyongyang to return to the talks that have been suspended since June last year, the sources said. "When the UNSC holds meetings, people tend to think that it will discuss economic sanctions or military action," Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura said in a Lower House Security Committee meeting on Tuesday. "But the UNSC also has another option. The option is that it urges North Korea to return to the six-nation talks as early as possible." The Security Council, of course, can discuss imposing economic sanctions against the reclusive country. But the Japanese government believes that other countries, such as China and South Korea, would oppose such a strong move, the sources said. Machimura said Tokyo is also considering holding "five-nation" talks without North Korea.

The News, 12 May 2005

Tasks before NPT Review Conference (Farhatullah Babar)

The month long review conference of the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has opened in New York to examine what changes need to be brought about to the 35 year old international treaty aimed to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. When the Treaty was first signed, there were five nuclear weapons states, nuclear technology was available for free and there was no threat of a nuclear black market. The situation has undergone a sea change since then. The Review Conference is the first after the world transforming event of 9/11 dramatizing the dangers of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists. It is the also first since at least three more countries India, Pakistan and possibly Israel have gate-crashed the nuclear club, the restrictions imposed by the Treaty notwithstanding. The review takes place in the backdrop of a signatory North Korea having pulled out of the Treaty thereby seriously undermining it. Another signatory country Iran is seeking to acquire technologies permitted to it by the Treaty's provisions, but is threatened with sanctions by the nuclear powers thus bringing to the fore the serious imbalance between the rights and obligations of states under the NPT.

The News, 12 May 2005

Iran close to deciding next nuclear step

Iran said it will decide within days whether to resume some sensitive nuclear activities, despite the risk of bringing talks with the European Union to an end and possible UN sanctions. "It (the decision) will come at the end of the week (Friday) at the latest," Ali Agha Mohammadi, a spokesman for the Islamic Republic's Supreme National Security Council, said Tuesday. An Iranian official negotiating with the EU said that a decision on breaking the nuclear freeze had already been taken, and that "we will relaunch in the next few days uranium conversion installations at Isfahan." "It concerns activities that we suspended," said Mohammad Saeedi, the deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization. The plant at Isfahan is used to convert mined uranium "yellowcake" into a feed gas for centrifuges that carry out the enrichment process. Enriched uranium can be used for peaceful power generation but also as the explosive core of a nuclear bomb.

Dawn, 12 May 2005

The proliferation crisis

Events of the past few days have underlined the vulnerability of the international regime that for 35 years has mostly prevented the spread of nuclear weapons. Last week, North Korea, which claims to be a nuclear power and has refused to return to multilateral negotiations about its presumed arsenal, test-fired another missile, dramatizing its ambition to acquire the capacity to attack Japan and the United States. Iran's foreign minister has restated his country's intention to enrich uranium, an advance that would allow Tehran to assemble a nuclear bomb at its discretion. The Bush administration, meanwhile, demonstrated another reason why the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is in danger. It dispatched a mid-level State Department official, rather than Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, to address the foreign ministers who gathered at a major review conference in New York. It thereby signalled that it will not make a serious effort during the month-long forum to build an international consensus behind desperately needed reforms. Once again, the administration's distaste for arms control and international treaties appears to have won out over diplomatic common sense.

Khaleej Times, 12 May 2005

UN nuclear talks break deadlock over Israeli arms

UNITED NATIONS: More than 180 nations hoping to strengthen global protections against the spread of nuclear arms ended a week and a half of paralysis centering on Israel's presumed atomic arsenal on Wednesday and adopted an agenda enabling them to begin their work. The agreement came nearly halfway through a four-week conference reviewing the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which had been deadlocked over a demand by Egypt that the issue of nuclear weapons in the Middle East be on the agenda. A compromise worked out by conference president Sergio Duarte of Brazil added an asterisk to the proposed agenda referring to a separate piece of paper ensuring that the practice of previous NPT conferences, in which the Middle East had been discussed, would be "taken into account." "It was the miracle of diplomacy," Duarte told Reuters. "The next step is the organization of work, and I hope this can be done fairly quickly. "I would like the conference to end in adoption of a declaration that strengthens the NPT in all its aspects, but that will not be easy," he said.

Aljazeera, 12 May 2005

Russia set to send Iran nuclear fuel

Russia plans to make its first delivery of nuclear fuel to Iran at the end of the year or early next year, a senior Russian nuclear official has said. The delivery comes under a landmark agreement to fire up the country's first atomic power station.

The Washington Post, 12 May 2005

European Officials Warn Iran (Dafna Linzer)

European officials notified Iran for the first time yesterday that they will walk away from two years of talks and sign on to a Bush administration strategy for punitive measures against Tehran if it makes good on threats to resume nuclear work in coming days. In a sharply worded letter to Hassan Rouhani, the head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany warned that such work "would bring the negotiating process to an end." The letter added: "The consequences could only be negative for Iran." The letter was an attempt to avert an escalation in the crisis over a program Iran says it developed in secret to produce nuclear energy, not atomic weapons. It appeared to have an immediate effect. After weeks of threats, Iranian officials said they decided to hold off for now on a plan to notify the International Atomic Energy Agency today of their intent to restart a uranium-conversion facility in the town of Isfahan.

International Herald Tribune, 12 May 2005

A stronger model for nonproliferation (Bennett Ramberg)

LOS ANGELES April 24, 1945: "Dear Mr. President, I think it is very important that I should have a talk with you as soon as possible on a highly secret matter. I mentioned it to you shortly after you took office but have not urged it since, on account of the pressure you have been under. It, however, has such a bearing on our present foreign relations and has such an important effect upon all my thinking in this field that I think you ought to know about it without much further delay." (Henry Stimson). The next day, Stimson, the secretary of war, entered the Oval Office to educate the new president, Harry S. Truman, about the portent of a nuclear-weaponized world that the United States would shortly initiate. The memorandum he brought, and the solutions to nuclear proliferation it would stimulate, provide an unfulfilled aspiration for international control of all nuclear activities worldwide. It is an ambition the 189 countries gathered in New York for the month-long Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty review conference ought to ponder.

The Washington Post, 12 May 2005

Atom Agency May Be Asked to Meet on Iran Situation

WASHINGTON, May 11: Leading European nations may call an emergency meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency next week to act against Iran if it resumes some nuclear activities it has suspended, European diplomats said Wednesday. The diplomats said that most recent signs indicated that Iran would probably act soon on its declaration last week that it would revive the processing of uranium for nuclear reactors, a step that Britain, France, Germany and the European Union say would violate a pledge that Iran made last year. "There is a lot of pessimism at the moment," said a European diplomat, referring to the growing sense that Iran would effectively walk away from talks on its suspected nuclear arms program. But European and American officials said there was no consensus yet on exactly what to do if Iran started to carry out its threat, converting uranium tetrafluoride to uranium hexafluoride. The step is a normal part of the process of enriching uranium for use as fuel for nuclear power reactors, but since the West has seized on several pieces of evidence and concluded that Iran has ambitions to become a nuclear arms power, there is a consensus that it wants to proceed to the high level of enrichment necessary to produce weapons-grade material.

BBC.com, 12 May 2005

N Korea's nuclear move condemned

The US and South Korea have condemned North Korea's alleged move to "increase its nuclear arsenal". Washington and Seoul were responding to Pyongyang's statement that it had successfully removed fuel rods from a nuclear reactor at Yongbyon. The rods can be treated to produce plutonium for use in nuclear weapons. A White House spokesman said the move could "only further isolate" North Korea, while South Korea expressed its "serious concern". The North Korean announcement came amid heightened concerns, following reports that the Communist state may be preparing a nuclear test.

The Associated Press, 12 May 2005

N. Korea Says It Will Bolster Nuke Arsenal

SEOUL: North Korea said Wednesday it had taken steps that could allow it to harvest more plutonium for atomic bombs and that it would bolster its arsenal, the communist country's latest provocation amid deadlocked talks over its nuclear program. A North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman said the country had removed 8,000 fuel rods from the reactor at its main nuclear complex at Yongbyon, 50 miles north of Pyongyang. North Korea kicked out international nuclear inspectors in late 2002, making it impossible to verify the claim. If reprocessed, the rods could, after several months, yield enough plutonium for a couple of nuclear bombs, South Korean media reported. The North claimed in February to have nuclear weapons, and the head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog said recently the North previously had enough plutonium for up to six nuclear bombs. North Korea "keeps taking necessary measures to bolster its nuclear arsenal for the defensive purpose of coping with the prevailing situation, with a main emphasis on developing the self-reliant nuclear power industry," said the spokesman, who wasn't further identified in the report by the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

Joong Ang Daily, 12 May 2005

The nuclear treaty's serious problem (Ahn Sung-kyoo)

Once, briefly, nuclear weapons were known as "weapons of peace." This was after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The thinking was that without the atomic bomb, World War II would have dragged on, perhaps costing a million more casualties. But that notion didn't last long, and a more realistic view of nuclear weapons began to set in. For nations of military might, nuclear arms were a powerful temptation. The Soviet Union and Britain successfully tested atomic weapons in 1948 and 1952, respectively; France tasted success in 1960. It was around then that the concept of "nonproliferation" appeared. Poland proposed in 1957 that parts of Eastern Europe be declared nuclear-free zones. In 1958, Ireland proposed a nuclear nonproliferation treaty. Sweden presented a nonproliferation resolution at the United Nations a few years later. Those proposals prompted the United States and the Soviet Union to draw up a rough draft of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1963.

Daily Times, 12 May 2005

Russia to allow UN inspection of N-sites

MOSCOW: Russia said on Wednesday it would allow US inspectors to visit nuclear sites whose security systems are financed by Washington but not sites deemed sensitive. At a summit in Bratislava in February US and Russian Presidents George W Bush and Vladimir Putin agreed to work together to enhance what was described as a "security culture" at nuclear sites. "In sites where technical security means have been installed with US money, we are bound by the agreement to allow American inspectors entry at least three times," Alexander Rumiantsev, head of the Russian Federal Energy Agency, told the daily newspaper Vremia Novostei, quoted by the Ria Novosti news agency. "But on more sensitive sites, those where we look after security ourselves, access will be closed to the Americans." The agreement was signed after Washington voiced fears that nuclear materials were being stolen from poorly protected sites and being sold.

Daily Times, 12 May 2005

IAEA simulates accident at Romanian nuclear power plant

AFUMATI: Sixty member states of the International Atomic Energy Agency took part in a simulated accident at a nuclear power plant in eastern Romania on Wednesday _ a two-day exercise aimed at testing preparedness for a nuclear emergency. The aim of the UN watchdog's two-day exercise is to test national and international preparedness in the case of a nuclear emergency. The exercise began at 6 a.m. (0300GMT) in Cernavoda, a town of 20,000, where there is a Canadian-designed power plant near the Black Sea, said Florin Baciu, head of the radiological emergency sector at the Nuclear Regulatory Authority of Romania. The world's worst nuclear accident occurred at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in 1986 when a reactor exploded and caught fire, spewing radiation over much of northern Europe. In the exercise, participants will pretend a tube, one of 300 in the reactor, broke and leaked onto the floor in the chamber, said Baciu. Local authorities, the government and the Nuclear Regulatory Authority of Romania will respond.

The Asahi Shimbun, 13 May 2005

N. Korea raises the ante again (Hayami Ichikawa)

SEOUL: North Korea's announcement that it has unloaded 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods could be an attempt to prevent its nuclear programs from being discussed at the U.N. Security Council. Pyongyang, experts say, wants the world-particularly the United States -to take it seriously and treat it like a nuclear power. If North Korea's brinkmanship strategy works, they say the country will not only avert dreaded sanctions from the United Nations, but it could also gain the upper hand if the six-way talks resume on its nuclear ambitions. "North Korea is apparently intent on heightening its negotiating power by showing to the United States and other countries that it has already intensified its nuclear development abilities," said Young C. Kim, a professor emeritus of George Washington University in the United States who is staying in South Korea. Although Kim and

others doubt Pyongyang has actually completed the removal of the fuel rods, most agree the situation has grown more intense.

Daily Yomiuri, 13 May 2005

Editorial: N. Korea can't be allowed to possess nuclear arms

North Korea's latest provocative action cannot be overlooked in that it poses an extremely serious threat to Japan's security. Pyongyang has announced it has removed about 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods from a nuclear reactor at Yongbyon. The latest development has raised concerns that the reclusive state may further advance its nuclear weapons program. It is extremely disturbing to imagine the outcome if North Korea has successfully made its nuclear weapons small enough to be loaded into a ballistic missile, while continuing to build such an arsenal. Such a scenario presents a direct threat to Japan, a nuclear-free nation that can be reached by North Korea's Rodong ballistic missiles. This country must step up its preparedness to combat the threat, including further advancing its missile defense program. To ensure this nation's peace and security, the government needs to review the security system in its entirety and improve its defensive capabilities.

The Korean Herald, 13 May 2005

N. Korea action on fuel rods is disturbing: Ban

Roh says solving nuke issue key to making Gaeseong a success

Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon views North Korea's announcement about successfully unloading spent nuclear fuel rods from its Yongbyon reactor as disturbing but not unexpected, while the United States played down the development as just another provocative act. "It is disturbing that such an announcement occurred at a time where relevant countries are expressing concerns over the North Korean nuclear problem," Ban told reporters before attending a dinner in Tashkent hosted by President Roh Moo-hyun on the final night Wednesday of their visit to Uzbekistan. Amid continuing international efforts to try to end the nuclear standoff, Pyongyang turned tensions up another notch by declaring Wednesday it has finished extracting 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods from the Yongbyon reactor, meaning the North can produce more weapons-grade plutonium. Roh met his Chinese and Russian counterparts this week in Moscow to discuss ways to resolve the six-party talks stalemate and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, Washington's top negotiator, is due in Seoul today for a four-day visit and more talks on the issue.

The Indian Express, 13 May 2005

EU's big 3 warn Iran on nukes (Louis Charbonneau)

VIENNA, May 12: France, Britain and Germany have warned Iran that they will break off talks and join Washington in seeking UN Security Council action if Tehran makes good on its threats to resume atomic work, diplomats said on Thursday. The Foreign Ministers of the European Union's three biggest powers sent a toughly-worded letter to Hassan Rohani, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, warning that resuming potentially arms-related nuclear work "would bring the negotiating process to an end", an EU diplomat quoted the letter as saying. "The consequences could only be negative for Iran," the letter said, implying that the trio would back US calls to refer Iran's case to the UN Security Council for possible economic sanctions or other actions. In addition to the three Foreign Ministers, EU Foreign Policy chief Javier Solana signed the letter, an EU diplomat said. The letter proposed "ministerial level talks" between the Iranians, the EU trio and Solana within the next two weeks to break the impasse and avoid a crisis, the diplomat said.

Khaleej Times, 13 May 2005

'Iran may postpone resumption of uranium conversion'

TEHERAN: Iran may postpone resumption of uranium reprocessing, the head of the country's nuclear agency said after Europe increased pressure on Teheran to maintain its suspension of a program that officials fear could result in a nuclear bomb. "No certain day is fixed for resumption of reprocessing. It is possible to postpone it some days," Gholamreza Aghazadeh, the head of Iran's Atomic Organization, told the Teheran state-run television in a live roundtable discussion on Thursday. British Prime Minister Tony Blair said on Thursday he would support referring Iran to the UN Security Council if it breaches its nuclear obligations, sending a strong warning against any resumption of the reprocessing program. Iran announced on Sunday that it would resume some conversion activities within days - Aghazadeh had said earlier it could come as soon as Thursday, expressing impatience with deadlocked negotiations with the Europeans over its nuclear program. The announcement sparked a European warning of "negative" consequences for Iran. Thursday's comments by Aghazadeh, who is also the vice president, suggested the pressure was having some effect - though he insisted Iran would not back down completely from its intention to resume some activities.

International Herald Tribune, 13 May 2005

Blair backs possible UN action on Iran (Alan Cowell)

LONDON: As the European Union warned Iran against resuming its nuclear program, Prime Minister Tony Blair said on Thursday that Britain would support American moves to invoke UN Security Council countermeasures "if Iran breaches its obligations and undertakings." The shift in tone seemed designed to increase pressure on Iran not to revive nuclear enrichment activities suspended since last November. Blair was speaking at a news conference a day after the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany - the European countries negotiating with Tehran on behalf of the 25-country Union - sent a letter to Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Hassan Rowhani, warning that any resumption of nuclear activity "would bring the negotiating process to an end," according to a copy of the letter shown to The New York Times. If the negotiations fail, the dispute will be referred to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and then to the Security Council, a British Foreign Ministry official said, speaking in return for customary anonymity.

The New York Times, 13 May 2005

South Korea Urges the North to Rejoin Talks on Weapons (Norimitsu Onishi)

SEOUL, May 12: A day after North Korea claimed to have extracted weapons-grade fuel from a nuclear reactor, South Korea on Thursday strongly urged North Korea to re-engage in disarmament talks but said it was not time to take the issue to the United Nations Security Council. South Korean officials said they believed that North Korea's declaration was a negotiating ploy in its standoff with the United States and that negotiations could still resolve the nuclear crisis. Asked about the possibility of going to the Security Council, Foreign Minister Ban Ki Moon told the South Korean news media that there had not yet been "consultation among the relevant parties." Mr. Ban, who was on a tour of Uzbekistan with President Roh Moo Hyun, said his government preferred to focus its efforts on the stalled six-nation negotiations over the North Korean nuclear crisis. "There, we should find solution through negotiation," he said. "Referring it to the United Nations Security Council is not desirable until all diplomatic efforts are completely exhausted."

The Washington Post, 13 May 2005

Iran Leaves Door Open For Nuclear Discussions (Dafna Linzer)

Confronted with significant international pressure, Iran signaled yesterday that it was prepared to give negotiations a try before making a final decision about resuming its nuclear program and responded positively to a European offer of a meeting aimed at reducing tensions, U.S., European and Iranian diplomats said. But the crisis over Iran's nuclear efforts was at a sensitive stage, and diplomats on both sides of the Atlantic said they were uncertain whether there was enough common ground for a meeting to take place between Iranian and European officials. U.S. and European diplomats, who discussed the issue on the condition of anonymity, described clear red lines, saying the only way out of the escalation would be a retreat by Iran from plans to quickly restart a uranium-conversion facility at Isfahan. If that does not happen, Prime Minister Tony Blair said yesterday, Britain will support U.S. efforts to involve the United Nations in the dispute.

The News, 13 May 2005

Iran's main nuclear sites

TEHRAN: Iran was locked on Thursday in last-ditch talks with the European Union to find a deal over its nuclear programme, which has aroused widespread international concern focussed on several controversial atomic sites. Following are the facilities considered to be the main sites dedicated to Islamic republic's nuclear drive. These and other related sites have been declared to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and are currently subject to constant supervision. Power plant: The construction of Iran's atomic power plant near the southern coastal city of Bushehr is nearing completion. The project was first launched by the former shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, in the 1970's. The German firm Kraftwerk-Union, a joint venture of Siemens and AEG-Telefunken, was commissioned to build the facility, but pulled out in the midst of Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution. The plant was frequently targeted by Iraqi jets during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

Daily Times, 13 May 2005

UN nuclear talks break deadlock over Israeli arms

UNITED NATIONS: More than 180 nations hoping to strengthen global protections against the spread of nuclear arms ended a week and a half of paralysis centering on Israel's presumed atomic arsenal on Wednesday and adopted an agenda enabling them to begin their work. The agreement came nearly halfway through a four-week conference reviewing the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which had been deadlocked over a demand by Egypt that the issue of nuclear weapons in the Middle East be on the agenda. A compromise worked out by conference president Sergio Duarte of Brazil added an asterisk to the proposed agenda referring to a separate piece of paper ensuring that the practice of previous NPT conferences, in which the Middle East had been discussed, would be "taken into account." "It was the miracle of diplomacy," Duarte told Reuters. "The next step is the organization of work, and I hope this can be done fairly quickly."

Daily Times, 13 May 2005

Russia calls Iran's nuclear programme 'legitimate'

MOSCOW: Iran's intention to restart sensitive nuclear activities earlier frozen under a deal with the European Union is "legitimate" and will not alter Russia's nuclear cooperation with the Islamic state, a Russian nuclear official told the news agency on Thursday. "The fact that Iran has restarted conversion will not have an impact on nuclear cooperation between Russia and Iran," said the official, speaking on condition she not be named. "This does not threaten international security because this uranium will be used for peaceful ends and under the strict IAEA control," the official said, referring to the International Atomic Energy Agency. "It is legitimate and legal," she said, adding that differences between Russia and the United States regarding Moscow's nuclear cooperation with Iran were "narrowing."

The Hindu, 13 May 2005

'Prithvi' test-fired

BALASORE: 'Prithvi' missile was test-fired from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur-on-sea, 15 km from here on Thursday, defence sources said.

The Times of India, 13 May 2005

'India is a responsible N-power'

NEW DELHI, May 12: External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh on Thursday said India will always remain a "responsible" nuclear power and ensure that sensitive technologies do not fall into the wrong hands, especially those of terrorists. Natwar Singh's assertion came in reply to the debate on the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and their Delivery Systems

(Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Bill, 2005 in the Lok Sabha. The House later approved the bill. "India is and will remain a responsible nuclear power. We have adopted the most responsible policy on sensitive and dual-use nuclear and missile-related technologies," Natwar Singh emphasised. The bill provides legislative underpinning to India's commitment to prevent proliferation of WMDs. It also seeks to build upon the regulatory framework related to controls over the export of WMD-usable materials, equipment and technologies.

Sify News, 13 May 2005

Lok Sabha approves nuclear bill

NEW DELHI, May 12: The Lok Sabha on Thursday passed a bill that bans illegal proliferation of nuclear technology. "India is and will remain a responsible nuclear power. We have adopted the most responsible policy on sensitive and dual-use nuclear and missile-related technologies," said Foreign Minister Natwar Singh before lawmakers passed the bill. "We are committed to ensure that these do not fall into the wrong hands, especially the terrorists and non-state actors," he added. The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems bill outlaws the transfer of biological and chemical weapons and their delivery systems. It lays down that a person caught engaging in nuclear commerce or passing on atomic technology could face five years to a life in prison as well as a fine. The bill will become law once it is passed by the upper house of parliament and signed by President Abdul Kalam. The proposed legislation covers Indians in India and abroad and foreigners residing in India.

Reuters, 13 May 2005

Senate Panel Issues Bill Updating U.S Energy Policy

WASHINGTON: A draft Senate energy bill, parts of which will be released on Friday, would boost the nation's emergency oil stockpile, protect the power grid from blackouts and offer tax credits to companies that use wind or solar power to generate electricity. But the most contentious issues such as incentives to boost domestic oil drilling and whether states can allow offshore drilling for natural gas in areas now off-limits have yet to be worked out, Senate Energy Committee aides said. The House of Representatives last month approved its version of energy legislation. President Bush wants Congress to send him a final energy package by Aug. 1. An overall federal spending plan approved recently by Congress limited the energy bill to no more than \$11 billion in tax breaks and incentives. Previous congressional attempts at energy bills would have cost more than double that amount. Republican and Democratic members of the Senate Energy Committee met privately for months to draft the bill.

Reuters, 13 May 2005

China Says U.S. Impeding N.Korea Arms Talks - NYT

NEW YORK: A senior Chinese diplomat on Thursday accused the Bush administration of undermining efforts to revive negotiations with North Korea and said there was "no solid evidence" that Pyongyang was preparing to test a nuclear weapon, the New York Times reported. The comments by Yang Xiyu, a senior Foreign Ministry official and China's top official on the North Korean nuclear problem, reflect growing frustration in Beijing with the Bush administration, the newspaper said in a report from Beijing. Even as the White House presses China to find a solution to the nuclear issue, Chinese officials say, it has hurled insults at North Korea and given its leaders excuses to stay away from the bargaining table, according to the Times. "It is true that we do not yet have tangible achievements" in ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program, Yang said in an interview with the newspaper. "But a basic reason for the unsuccessful effort lies in the lack of cooperation from the U.S. side." Yang said that when President Bush called North Korea leader Kim Jong-il a "tyrant" last month, Bush "destroyed the atmosphere" for negotiations.

The News, 13 May 2005

Rice hopeful over Iran nukes negotiations

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice expressed hope that Iran would accept a deal to scrap any suspect nuclear fuel activities, despite Tehran's announcement it planned to resume them soon. "The Iranians have been making various threats publicly. We are following it very closely," Rice told a Senate committee here, amid speculation Tehran would pursue efforts to eventually develop nuclear weapons. "But it's our hope that the Iranians are going to continue these negotiations because it's really the only reliable way for them to really be a part of the international system and to be accepted there," she said. "The Security Council always remains an option should the Iranians not live up to their obligations," Rice said. "But we are still hopeful that they will recognize where they are." "So we are watching the situation, we are in very close contact with our allies, but we are hopeful that the Iranians are going to take the deal that's being given to them.

Dawn, 13 May 2005

Israel has 400 nuclear warheads: US official

UNITED NATIONS, May 12: A former Pentagon official and whistle-blower, Daniel Ellsberg, said on Wednesday that Israel could have close to 400 nuclear weapons at present. "That's more than Britain, China, India and Pakistan, and probably more than France," said Mr Ellsberg at a press briefing before he addressed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty conference here. He observed that Israeli Technician Mordechai Vanunu revealed in 1986 that Israel had about 200 nuclear weapons. Mr Vanunu has estimated that at the same rate of production Israel had when he left Dimona in 1985, the country should have close to 400 weapons today, Mr Ellsberg said. Mr Ellsberg, who spoke on behalf of the non-profit Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, which promotes the abolition of nuclear weapons, said Israel today was probably the third or fourth-largest nuclear state - behind the United States and Russia, and possibly France.

The Korean Herald, 13 May 2005

U.S. ineffective in pressuring N. Korea to dismantle weapons (Joo Sang-min)

The United States appears to be running out of effective cards to play in forcing North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons program, especially as it is getting little cooperation from China, a major ally of the communist state, analysts said. China reportedly is turning a deaf ear to U.S. appeals to apply economic or political sanctions against North Korea to press the communist state to abandon its nuclear ambitions. Worried about stability in the neighboring country, which is a precondition to its economic developments, Beijing has refrained from using pressure, analysts said. Washington has been discussing with China and Russia the possibility of taking the nuclear issue to the U.N. Security Council, but China, one of the U.N. council's permanent members, has signaled it would veto any such move. Tensions have been mounting recently over the North's nuclear weapons program amid reports that it may be preparing a nuclear weapons test. In February, the North declared that it possesses nuclear weapons and will increase its arsenal as a deterrent against "U.S. hostility."

The Hindu, 14 May 2005

Parliament approves WMD Bill

NEW DELHI: Parliament has approved the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery System (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Bill, 2005 with its passage in the Rajya Sabha on Friday. The Bill seeks to prevent transfer of weapons of mass destruction and their technology from India. The Lok Sabha passed it on Thursday. Replying to discussion, External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh assured the Rajya Sabha that India remained and "will remain a responsible nuclear power." The country was fully committed to safeguarding its security as a nuclear weapons state and deepening its scientific capability to meet security imperatives as well as developmental goals. The Bill sought to check not the development of missile technology but the leakage of technology. "Our policy is not to encourage and induce other nations to develop nuclear weapons." Pointing to vacant benches, Mr. Singh wished that the Opposition members had participated in the debate on the issue of national importance. Responding to a suggestion by Jairam Ramesh (Congress) that confidence-building measures with Pakistan and China in the field of nuclear and missile defence be converted into treaties, he said it could be considered.

The Korean Herald, 14 May 2005

'No evidence N.K. planning nuclear test'

Intelligence chief says U.S., South Korea closely monitoring Gilju tunnels for years. The nation's top intelligence chief said yesterday Seoul and Washington have been closely following North Korea's construction of underground tunnels in a northeastern region of Gilju County for years but there's no evidence of nuclear test plans. "There is no evidence yet on whether (North Korea) has set out for a nuclear test," National Intelligence Service Director Ko Young-koo said at a luncheon meeting with the National Assembly's intelligence committee members, Ko denied recent reports there had been activities such as digging a special tunnel and construction of a reviewing stand, which might indicate the possibility of a test. "We have been closely monitoring (the region) and there have not been any signs that indicate this," Ko was quoted as saying by Uri Party lawmaker Im Jong-in. He said the monitoring had been in place since the late 1990s. Amid teetering hopes of an early resumption of the six-party talks, North Korea announced earlier this week it had completed withdrawing 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods from its Yongbyon nuclear plant.

The Asahi Shimbun, 14 May 2005

Editorial: North Korea nuke threat

Washington, which holds the key, must initiate earnest dialogue with Pyongyang. A candid mutual exchange is the only thing that will get the ball really rolling. Pyongyang has again raised its self-created "tension" another notch. The North Korean Foreign Ministry announced Wednesday that the nation had successfully removed 8,000 spent fuel rods from a 5,000-kilowatt nuclear reactor that has been shut down for a while. By cooling these rods for a few months and reprocessing them, plutonium can be extracted to make nuclear bombs. Speculation is rife that Pyongyang may conduct a nuclear test. A U.S. satellite has detected a tunnel dug into the mountains in northeastern North Korea, together with what appears to be grandstands. The North Korean Foreign Ministry has affirmed the continuation of "measures necessary for building up the nation's nuclear arsenal," indicating that the removal of those fuel rods was for the purpose of increasing the country's nuclear capability. We are truly outraged by North Korea's classic ploy of "engineering" one crisis after another. Pyongyang seems to be deliberately taunting a U.N. conference, held in New York every five years, to review the efficacy of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Daily Yomiuri, 14 May 2005

Govt may propose talks minus Pyongyang

The government is studying proposals to resume the talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program without Pyongyang's involvement, Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura said Friday. The government may make the proposal—aimed at further pressuring the country into returning to the six-nation talks—at a bureau chief-level meeting with the United States and South Korea within the month. "The six-way talks have been suspended for almost a year," said Machimura, who was speaking at the House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Committee. "In the meantime, North Korea has increased tension by claiming it possesses nuclear arms and that it has completed removing nuclear fuel rods from its reactor." The government's chief spokesman, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda, said at a press conference: "Discussing the issue of North Korea's nuclear arms program with the country involved would lead to an advancement toward a solution. The six-nation talks provide the most appropriate opportunity to do so." A Liberal Democratic Party group studying economic sanctions against North Korea is to announce a blueprint within the month for punitive action in case Pyongyang conducts a nuclear test.

Hindustan Times, 14 May 2005

North Korea proposes talks with South Korea

SEOUL: North Korea on Saturday proposed the resumption of inter-Korean dialogue, calling for a working-level contact early next week in the North Korean border town of Kaesong, Pyongyang said. The proposal was contained in a message sent by North Korea's chief delegate to the inter-Korean high-level talks, Senior Councillor of the Cabinet Kwon Ho Ung, to his South Korean counterpart unification Minister Chung Dong-Young. "We have the pleasure to notify you that we will send three delegates and three suite members to Kaesong from May 16 to 17 for the working-level talks," Kwon was quoted as saying in the message. Kwon said the move was "prompted by the desire to put the inter-Korean relations on a normal track at an early date".

The Hindu, 14 May 2005

Iran: bigger threat than the bomb? (Martin Woollacott)

The world can live with Iranian nuclear weapons. But can the United States?

How much would it matter if Iran had the bomb? Merely to pose this question, within the Bush administration, would almost be treason. European countries, for their part, consider it indiscreet to raise it - better to say that a nuclear-armed Iran should be avoided if at all possible. Yet the question of how dangerous a development it would be is crucial. Dangerous enough to justify a war, which is what the United States, and sometimes Israel, seem to think? Dangerous enough for major sanctions, in addition to the American ones already in place, which both those countries certainly would argue? Or merely regrettable and worrying, but not worth making worse by either economic or military action, which is probably the underlying position of the three European nations trying to mediate between the U.S. and Iran over the Iranian nuclear programme?

The News, 14 May 2005

Iran says nuke talks not dead

TEHRAN: Talks between Iran and the European Union could still defuse a confrontation over Tehran's nuclear work, Iranian officials were quoted as saying on Friday, amid warnings Iran risks referral to the UN Security Council. Iran has said it is poised to announce a return to activities related to uranium enrichment. Britain, France and Germany persuaded Iran to suspend such activities late last year to reassure the world it was not seeking nuclear arms as Washington believes. The trio has warned Iran that breaking the suspension would end talks and that they would then back US moves to haul Iran before the Security Council for possible sanctions. Tehran denies US allegations it is developing atomic weapons, insisting its nuclear programme is purely for electricity generation. Despite their frustrations at the pace of talks, Iranian officials said they were not giving up yet. "Iran lays an emphasis on continuing these negotiations but cannot remain indifferent to the future of our energy resources," Ali Aghamohammadi, a member of the Supreme National Security Council, was quoted as saying on state television.

Daily Times, 14 May 2005

NPT talks keep seat for North Korea

UNITED NATIONS: North Korea's seat is being kept warm at a global conference reviewing the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) even though Pyongyang has walked away from the treaty, a key diplomat said on Thursday. The nameplate that would mark North Korea's seat for the month-long NPT review conference at UN headquarters was being held "in the custody" of Sergio Duarte of Brazil, the conference president, in case the reclusive Asian nation changes its mind, Duarte told reporters. Asked precisely where he was keeping it, Duarte joked, "I gave it to my wife for custody." Delegates from the 188 countries that are parties to the 35-year-old agreement are attending the meeting, which opened May 2 and is aimed at strengthening the treaty. But 189 countries have actually ratified it.

Daily Times, 14 May 2005

Europe makes Iran blink on nuclear issue

TEHRAN: Iran appeared Friday to be backing away from its threat to defy an agreement with the European Union and immediately resume sensitive nuclear work, after being warned of UN Security Council action. "It is possible that this resumption is delayed for a while," Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, a vice president and head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, was quoted as saying by state television. He nevertheless said that Iran was "certain" to eventually resume certain activities tied to the conversion of uranium ore - a precursor to enriching for either civilian or military purposes - but did not give any date. Iranian nuclear negotiator Cyrus Nasserli told AFP from the Vienna headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that negotiations were continuing. A spokesman for Iran's Supreme National Security Council, the body charged with handling the Islamic republic's tough nuclear diplomacy, said Iran still wished to officially inform the IAEA that it was resuming conversion at a plant near the central city and ancient Persian capital of Isfahan.

Daily Times, 14 May 2005

Israel says Iran will have nuclear bomb know-how soon

JERUSALEM: Iran will have the technological know-how within six to nine months to build a nuclear bomb, Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said on Friday. "They (the Iranians) have one aim - to achieve the capability to produce a nuclear bomb," Shalom told Israel Radio. "The important question is not whether they will have a bomb in 2009, 2010 or 2011, but when they will have the know-how to produce a bomb. According to our estimates, we are talking about six to nine months," he said. Shalom, whose country is widely believed to have some 200 atomic bombs, said a nuclear Iran would pose "an existential threat" to Israel. Iran has called for the destruction of the Jewish state. Shalom made the comments after France, Britain and Germany warned Iran they would break off talks and join Washington in seeking UN Security Council action if Tehran made good on its threats to resume atomic work.

The News, 14 May 2005

France to extend help to Pakistan in N-tech (Muhammad Saleh Zaafer)

ISLAMABAD: France is engaged in discussions with Pakistan about cooperation in nuclear technology after a lapse of about 30 years. As the confidence increases, Paris will be prepared to provide assistance to Islamabad to meet its power needs. The two countries re-established contacts in a multilateral interaction held in Paris recently where representatives of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) were also present. French Ambassador to Pakistan Pierre Charasse disclosed this to The News in an exclusive interview covering wide range of issues here. He said France is prepared to help Pakistan in developing non-conventional means of production of power including its generation through nuclear and hydel sources. Without going into details of the deal that was called off between Pakistan and France under US pressure in the past, the French ambassador said Pakistan's name must be cleared first with reference to nuclear proliferation and as the country's image improves private sector in France will be prepared to cooperate with Pakistan to fulfil its increasing needs of power generation. France appreciates Pakistan's genuine needs of having more and more power in wake of boosting economic activities.

The News, 14 May 2005

Annan says parties must get North Korea back to nuclear talks

UNITED NATIONS: Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Friday that recent nuclear developments in North Korea and Iran underscore the urgent need to strengthen the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. He expressed concern that delegates from 188 nations meeting at UN headquarters to review the treaty took nearly two weeks just to adopt an agenda and urged them to accelerate their work and start focusing on the important substantive issues. But delegates attending the month-long review conference were still wrangling on Friday over the other key procedural issue, allocating items on the agenda to three main committees and determining how the committees will organise their work. Annan said Iran's announcement this week that it will resume uranium reprocessing and North Korea's claim that it was taking steps that would enable it to harvest more plutonium for nuclear weapons "indicates the urgency of the member states to really take this conference seriously and try to strengthen the NPT." "I am concerned like everybody else that it took two weeks to agree on an agenda," Annan told reporters.

The News, 14 May 2005

The seven-year N-itch hasn't ended (Praful Bidwai)

As I write this on the seventh anniversary of the Pokharan-II tests, there is a visible lack of enthusiasm everywhere in India about celebrating the crossing of the nuclear threshold. Nor are many people making (or rather, inventing) connections between nuclear weapons, security, Great Power status and the ability to influence global affairs. There was no official commemoration of May 11, the first day of the tests, although the day was, rather unfortunately, observed as "Science Day" by the Manmohan Singh government, in keeping with that designation given by the Vajpayee regime through a populist slogan. Among political organisations, the Bharatiya Janata Party alone held a meeting – a tame, poorly attended symposium marked by self-congratulatory speeches. On a prime-time television programme, in which I participated, a majority of those who SMSsed their opinion on Pokharan-II from different cities took a critical view of nuclearisation. The newspapers did not carry, as they earlier did, a spate of articles glorifying nuclear weapons and their supposed contribution to making India a great power.

People's Daily, 14 May 2005

US expects DPRK back to six-party talks: spokesman

The United States on Friday declined to respond to Japan's call for a five-nation talk if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) will not come back to six-party talks to solve nuclear issues on the Korean peninsular. "I think we'll have to see... we all continue to believe firmly that the best way to solve this (nuclear) problem is through six-party talks," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said. "And we're looking for North Korea to come back, and to come back serious, to deal with the issues and to eliminate the nuclear weapons program," Boucher said. US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, Chris Hill, who is visiting Seoul, South Korea, will have talks with South Korean government officials over the nuclear issues on the Korean peninsular, Boucher said. Japan said on Friday the UN Security Council or the five nations involved in the six-party talks should meet to pressure DPRK if the country remained defiant on its nuclear program.

International Herald Tribune, 14 May 2005

US, S. Korea to focus on diplomacy

SEOUL: South Korea and the United States agreed to "strengthened diplomatic measures" to persuade North Korea to return to six-nation nuclear talks, a senior official said here Friday, while dismissing assessments by some U.S. officials that the communist state might be preparing for a nuclear test. The comment on the possibility of a North Korean nuclear test was made in Washington by the deputy foreign minister, Song Min Soon of South Korea, and repeated by the country's intelligence chief in Seoul. Song later traveled with Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, Washington's lead negotiator on North Korea, to Seoul to continue consultations. "There is powerful logic to their coming to the table and agreeing to the proposals which will truly address their needs," Hill said at the airport outside Seoul, when asked about North Korea's chances of returning to talks. "I cannot see how nuclear weapons, in any ways, address any real need of theirs."

The News, 14 May 2005

US nuclear weapons policy is 'immoral' and 'illegal', says former Defence secretary (Kaleem Omar)

KARACHI: Robert McNamara, who served as US secretary of defence under President John F Kennedy and President

Lyndon B Johnson from 1961 to 1968 and as president of the World Bank from 1968 to 1981, and who is the author of several books including "Blundering Into Disaster: Surviving the First Century of the Nuclear Age" (1986) and "In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam" (1999), has characterised current US nuclear weapons policy as "immoral, illegal, militarily unnecessary, and dreadfully dangerous." Writing in the May/June 2005 issue of Foreign Policy, an American bi-monthly journal, McNamara says in an article titled "Apocalypse Soon": "It is time, well past time, in my view, for the United States to cease its Cold War-style reliance on nuclear weapons as a foreign-policy tool...The risk of an accidental or inadvertent nuclear launch is unacceptably high. Far from reducing these risks, the Bush administration has signaled that it is committed to keeping the US nuclear arsenal as a mainstay of its military power, a commitment that is simultaneously eroding the international norms that have limited the spread of nuclear weapons and fissile materials for 50 years."

The News, 15 May 2005

North Korea proposes dialogue with South

SEOUL: North Korea said on Saturday it will return to inter-Korean dialogue, raising hopes here that Pyongyang might come back to six-party talks on ending its nuclear weapons programme. North Korea's chief delegate to the high-level inter-Korean talks, Senior Councillor of the Cabinet Kwon Ho Ung, called for the resumption of the government-to-government talks after a 10-month hiatus. In a message sent to his South Korean counterpart Unification Minister Chung Dong-Young, Kwon suggested the two sides hold talks at the vice ministerial level early next week in the North Korean border town of Kaesong. "We have the pleasure to notify you that we will send three delegates and three suite members to Kaesong from May 16 to 17 for the working-level talks," Kwon was quoted as saying in the message. Kwon said the move was "prompted by the desire to put relations between the two Koreas on a normal track in the idea of 'by our nation itself' at an early date," according to Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency. South Korean Vice Unification Minister Rhee Bong-Jo said he would lead a three-member delegation to the preliminary talks at Kaesong.

Daily Times, 15 May 2005

North Korea and Iran show nuke pact needs update

UNITED NATIONS: Recent moves by Iran and North Korea show how important it is to strengthen the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Friday as he urged delegates to a global conference on the pact to stop bickering and speed up their work. Delegates spent the first week and a half of the four-week conference wrangling over the agenda. North Korea declared this week it had taken spent atomic fuel from a reactor, a process that could give it more material to make nuclear arms, and US officials have said it appeared Pyongyang was preparing for a nuclear weapons test. Iran said it was poised to resume activities related to uranium enrichment, which could enable it to make warheads, although Tehran insisted it wants only to produce fuel for power plants. The recent developments in those two countries "indicate the importance of this conference and the need for member-states to focus on this NPT conference and try and strengthen it and make progress," Annan said.

Daily Times, 15 May 2005

Iran preparing for nuclear talks with EU

TEHRAN: Iran is preparing for direct talks with the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany after backing away from a move to immediately resume sensitive nuclear activities, a senior official was quoted as saying Saturday. Top nuclear official Hossein Moussavian, speaking to Iran's Mehr news agency, said such a meeting could take place in Europe within the next 10 days. "Both sides are preparing the ground for such a meeting. If all the arrangements are worked out, probably it is going to be held in Europe in the middle of the next week," he was quoted as saying. "The aim is to find a successful solution that is satisfactory for both parties," he added. On Friday Iran backed away from kick-starting uranium conversion work, a move that would have violated an agreement with the three European Union nations. Iran's top nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhnaei had been warned in a letter Thursday that such a step would have "consequences" - namely the referral of Iran's file to the board of the International Atomic Energy Agency and then the UN Security Council.

The Japan Times, 16 May 2005

Sharper sense of nuclear safety

The latest annual report from Japan's Nuclear Safety Commission is a troubling reminder that accident prevention remains a key priority for the nation's nuclear power industry. The head of the commission acknowledges in the foreword that last August's tragedy in Mihama, Fukui Prefecture - Japan's deadliest nuclear accident ever - could have been prevented if sufficient precautions had been taken. The accident, which killed five workers and injured six others, involved the rupture of a water pipe in one of the reactors of Kansai Electric Power Co. The affected workers were heavily exposed to superheated steam bursting from the broken section of the pipe. In September 1999, two workers died from radiation exposure at a uranium-purification facility in Tokaimura, Ibaraki Prefecture. The basic assumption is that people are liable to make mistakes. To make up for human shortcomings, a wide array of safety technologies have been developed. But believing that technologies can eliminate all accidents once and for all is wishful thinking. In the nuclear industry, at least in its present stages of development, there is no such thing as absolute safety.

The News, 16 May 2005

Iran's parliament backs nuclear activities

TEHRAN: Iran's parliament took a defiant stand on Sunday, passing a bill that obliges the government to "guarantee" the country's production of its own nuclear fuel. The bill, entitled "acquiring nuclear technology for peaceful purposes" was the latest move by right-wingers, in the face of mounting international demands that Iran abandon its nuclear fuel programme

altogether. The motion, which obliges Tehran "to take action to obtain peaceful nuclear technology, including provision of the fuel cycle for generating 20,000 megawatts of electricity", was approved by 188 out of 205 lawmakers present. The European Union trio, comprising Britain, France and Germany, persuaded Iran to suspend the fuel cycle in November last year to clear the way for talks, but Iranian officials frustrated with the sluggish pace of negotiations have threatened to restart nuclear activities. "The Europeans are trying to turn the suspension into a permanent cessation, which is what we, parliament, are rejecting outright today," lawmaker Kazem Jalali said, following the parliamentary vote, which was broadcast live on state radio.

The News, 16 May 2005

US warns North Korea: nuclear test may lead to penalties

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration warned North Korea on Sunday that conducting a nuclear test would be a serious act of "defiance" and would force the United States and its regional partners to consider new punitive steps against Pyongyang. "Action would have to be taken," US national security adviser Stephen Hadley told CNN's "Late Edition." Washington's warning, coupled with similar pressure from Japan, raised the stakes in the nuclear standoff after North Korea announced last week that it had removed fuel rods from its Yongbyon nuclear reactor, a potential precursor to building more weapons or testing one. Hadley acknowledged the difficulty of assessing whether North Korea was set to conduct a nuclear test, saying it was a "very difficult target" for US intelligence agencies. But he told Fox News Sunday: "We've seen some evidence that says that they may be preparing for a nuclear test. We have talked to our allies about that. Obviously that would be a serious step.

Daily Times, 16 May 2005

North Korea sceptical of US overtures

SEOUL: North Korea has expressed distrust over overtures by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice seeking to bring the communist state back into six-way nuclear talks. A North Korean foreign ministry spokesman said late Saturday Rice's recent comments calling Pyongyang a sovereign state - which was seen by Seoul as a conciliatory gesture by Washington - were just a "ruse." Citing a "hostile" US policy among others, the North has boycotted the six-way nuclear talks - which also include the United States, China, Russia, South Korea and Japan - for 11 months. The spokesman told the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) that Rice appeared on CNN on May 12 to accuse Pyongyang of violating a 1994 nuclear safeguard deal and call it a "terrible regime." "Rice's reckless remarks self-exposed that her loudmouthed recognition of the 'sovereign state' and the like were nothing but a ruse to conceal the US attempt at 'bringing down the regime' of the DPRK (North Korea) and mislead the public opinion," the spokesman said.

Daily Times, 17 May 2005

Japan threatens sanctions against Pyongyang

TOKYO: Japan will impose economic sanctions against North Korea if Pyongyang conducts a nuclear test, a senior leader of the country's ruling Liberal Democratic Party said Sunday. Shinzo Abe, acting secretary general of the party, said a nuclear North Korea is the biggest threat to Japan and it would be "unthinkable" for Tokyo to do nothing in case of Pyongyang's nuclear testing. "If their possession of nuclear weapons is fully confirmed and they conduct a nuclear test, we must bring the issue to the UN Security Council and call for economic sanctions," Abe told Asai TV. Abe, known for his hardline stance on North Korea, met with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice earlier this month to discuss the North's nuclear issues as well as other topics. "We imposed economic sanctions when they fired the Taepodong missile," Abe said, referring to the long-range North Korean missile which flew over Japan into the Pacific Ocean in August 1998.

Daily Times, 17 May 2005

'Nuclear climbdown in the wake of European appeal for talks'

TEHRAN: Iran said Sunday it was postponing its threatened resumption of sensitive nuclear activities, but insisted the climbdown was merely a temporary gesture following European Union appeals for more talks. Shrugging off threats of being hauled before the UN Security Council, the Islamic republic's hardline parliament also voted through a bill pressing the government to master the nuclear fuel cycle - the focus of widespread international concerns that the clerical regime is seeking nuclear weapons. "Iran's decision to resume activities at the Isfahan plant is definitive," Cyrus Nasseri, Iran's negotiator at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), was quoted as saying by the IRNA news agency. "We have to officially announce this by letter to the IAEA, but as the Europeans have demanded a new high-level meeting we have postponed for several days the announcement of the resumption" of conversion activities, he was quoted as saying by IRNA.

Dawn, 17 May 2005

North Korea and the bomb (Afzaal Mahmood)

The prospect of a renewed conflict in the Korean peninsula has greatly increased after the announcement by American officials that North Korea has been preparing to carry out an underground nuclear test since March and could set off a blast as early as June. New satellite photographs show tunnels being dug under a mountain in the north east of the country and building material being taken back in an effort to contain an underground blast. The pictures also show what appears to be an observation stand a few miles away. The prospect of a North Korean nuclear test has naturally alarmed Pyongyang's neighbours who have been trying for the last two years to head off a confrontation between North Korea and the United States as that is bound to destabilize the region. They have been trying to keep diplomacy active and alive. South Korea has even bent over backwards to keep the North in good humour. Its foreign minister has, however, now admitted that the nuclear issue

has reached a "critical moment" and that patience among neighbours is wearing thin.

China Daily, 17 May 2005

Seoul to again press Pyongyang on nuclear talks

South Korea will press North Korea for a second day on Tuesday to return to six-country nuclear talks when a rare high-level bilateral meeting resumes in the North's city of Kaesong, Seoul's top delegate said. In the first high-level meeting in 10 months, South Korea on Monday told the North that it was prepared to make a new and serious proposal if Pyongyang returned to stalled negotiations on ending its nuclear ambitions. Vice Unification Minister Rhee Bong-jo declined to elaborate on what the proposal would include, but said Pyongyang's pledge to return to the six-party talks would be a key requirement in normalizing brittle relations between the two. "To normalize relations, we will stress the point that North Korea must make the decisive move to return to the six-party talks at an early time," Rhee told reporters in Seoul before leaving for the talks.

The Associated Press, 17 May 2005

Russia Says It's Set to Reduce Nuke Arms

UNITED NATIONS: Russia is prepared to reduce its strategic nuclear arsenal below 1,500 warheads, less than the level agreed to with the United States, but Moscow is concerned about nuclear threats on its border, two senior Russian officials said Monday. Anatoly Antonov, director of the Foreign Ministry's department for security and disarmament, and Lt. Gen. Vladimir Verhovtsev, deputy director of the Defense Ministry's department of nuclear safety and security, stressed Moscow's commitment to nuclear disarmament – provided that Russia's security is assured. The May 2002 U.S.-Russia Treaty requiring each side to cut its deployed warheads by about two-thirds, to between 1,700 and 2,200 warheads by 2012, will be the focus of Moscow's efforts over the next decade, Verhovtsev said.

The New York Times, 17 May 2005

'No Nukes,' No More (John Tierney)

The great taboo against nuclear power seems to be over in Washington. This is a mixed blessing. The subject had been off limits to environmentally correct politicians since the spring of 1979, when the Three Mile Island accident inspired the Woodstock of the antinuke movement. More than 65,000 protesters marched on the Capitol to hear energy experts like Jackson Browne and Benjamin Spock – and, of course, Jane Fonda, an authority because of her role in the "The China Syndrome." Celebrities and politicians, warning of meltdowns and cancer epidemics, demanded the shutdown of all nuclear plants. Protesters dressed as mushrooms chanted, "Two, four, six, eight, we don't want to radiate." I went to the rally sympathetic to the movement but left unsure of which was scarier, nuclear power or its enemies.

The New York Times, 17 May 2005

Letting nukes happen

Step by step North Korea and Iran are advancing their capability to build nuclear weapons, and Washington appears to have no clear strategy for stopping them. Given how far along both countries already are in their nuclear programs, neither can any longer simply be coerced into turning back. The only strategy with any real chance of success would offer strong positive inducements for abandoning nuclear weapons development backed up by universally agreed threats of total economic and political isolation if bomb work continued. Perversely, this is the one formula that the Bush administration has refused to seriously consider. Other options range from too little to impossible. Europe is right to warn Tehran that any fresh preparations for uranium enrichment could bring the Iranian issue before the United Nations Security Council for possible sanctions. But those sanctions might be impossible to enforce without an unlikely degree of cooperation from Russia and China.

The New York Times, 17 May 2005

Britain Sees Iran's Threats to Resume Nuclear Activity as 'Serious' (Alan Cowell)

LONDON, May 16: Britain, one of the three European Union nations negotiating with Iran over its nuclear project, has concluded that Iran is "quite serious" in its threats to resume uranium enrichment activities that would be likely to lead to punitive international countermeasures, a senior British official said Monday. The British calculation was made public before meetings that could shape events leading to United Nations Security Council sanctions if Iran restarts nuclear activities suspended last November, as it is threatening to do. Jack Straw, the British foreign secretary, is to fly to Washington on Tuesday to meet with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Iranian officials will meet next week in Europe with the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany, which have been holding talks about the issue with Iran. At first, the European negotiators appeared to pursue a "good-cop-bad-cop" strategy with Iran, relying on the United States to threaten Iran with sanctions and other measures if it resumes enrichment activities.

International Herald Tribune, 17 May 2005

Two Koreas resume talks after 10-month hiatus

SEOUL: South Korea hoped for a favorable response from rival North Korea on Seoul's latest push to get the North back into six-nation negotiations on nuclear disarmament, but there were signs that the atmosphere was souring on the second day of reconciliation talks Tuesday. The first face-to-face talks between the two Koreas in 10 months came during elevated concern over the North's nuclear ambitions following its announcement last week that it removed fuel rods from a reactor, a step toward extracting weapons-grade plutonium. The two sides were scheduled to have a working lunch before wrapping up their talks in the afternoon, but suddenly announced that the two delegations would eat separately. Vice Unification Minister Rhee Bong-jo, head of South Korea's delegation, told reporters that officials reached agreement on South Korea sending officials to Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, in June for the fifth anniversary of an accord from a historic North-South summit, but no

progress was reported on other issues, including the nuclear dispute.

The International Herald Tribune, 17 May 2005

U.S. warns of penalties for Korean nuclear test (avid E. Sanger)

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration has warned North Korea for the first time that if it conducted a nuclear test, the United States and several Pacific powers would take punitive action, but officials stopped short of saying what kind of sanctions would result. "Action would have to be taken," Stephen Hadley, President George W. Bush's national security adviser, said Sunday on the CNN program "Late Edition." Asked earlier on "Fox News Sunday" about recent reports that intelligence agencies had warned that North Korea could conduct its first test, Hadley said: "We've seen some evidence that says that they may be preparing for a nuclear test. We have talked to our allies about that." But he cautioned that North Korea was "a hard target" and that correctly assessing its intentions was nearly impossible.

Daily Times, 17 May 2005

Did Dr Khan operate alone? (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: The Abdul Qadeer Khan network had been in business for 15 years before it was blown, according to a 3,000-word report carried by the Los Angeles Times on Monday. The report by correspondent Douglas Frantz says that after Dr Khan returned from an 'unauthorised' trip from the Gulf in 2000, General Musharraf warned him to obey the rules, but when he failed to do so, he was forced to retire. The matter was not pursued any further. Warnings about nuclear trafficking were ignored by a succession of Pakistani political and military governments. Owing to Dr Khan's popularity, all governments decided to turn a blind eye to his activities. Dr Khan was given a free hand because he was building Pakistan a bomb. Former and current aides to Gen Musharraf state that until late 2003, there was no proof that Dr Khan was selling to other countries the same technology he was acquiring on the black market for Pakistan. The report alleges that Libya paid the network stretched over three continents \$100 million for atomic warhead designs and plans for a bomb factory.

Daily Times, 17 May 2005

Soviet Union had plans for first use of N-weapons in Europe (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: The Soviet Union had plans to attack Western Europe that included being the first to use nuclear weapons, according to a new book of previously secret Warsaw Pact documents published at the weekend. Although the declared aim was to pre-empt NATO "aggression," the Soviets clearly expected that nuclear war was likely and planned specifically to fight and win such a conflict. The documents show that Moscow's allies went along with these plans but the alliance was weakened by resentment over Soviet domination and the belief that nuclear planning was sometimes highly unrealistic. Contrary to Western views at the time, pact members saw themselves increasingly at a disadvantage compared to the West in the military balance, especially with NATO's ability to incorporate high-technology weaponry and organise more effectively, beginning in the late 1970s.

The News, 17 May 2005

Iran to give EU last chance to save atomic deal

TEHRAN: Iran said on Monday it will give the European Union a last chance to salvage a nuclear deal at talks on May 23 before it resumes atomic work which Washington fears is part of a weapons programme. Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told the official IRNA news agency that Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rohani would meet the foreign ministers of France, Britain and Germany on May 23 to try to reach an 11th-hour compromise. "The venue for negotiations has not been determined yet," he said, but senior Iranian nuclear negotiator Hossein Mousavian told the Iran News daily that the meeting would be in Brussels. Iranian officials have been negotiating with the EU trio to try to allay fears that Tehran is seeking nuclear arms. The Europeans last year won Iran's assurance that it would suspend its nuclear fuel cycle activities for as long as talks went on.

Daily Times, 17 May 2005

South Korea asks North to return to nuclear talks

SEOUL: South Korea urged North Korea on Monday to return to talks on its nuclear plans but the North failed to respond and instead asked for food aid and fertiliser, reports from the first senior-level meeting in 10 months said. High-ranking officials from the two Koreas last met for formal talks in July last year. The North stopped contact in anger after a secret airlift to the South of more than 460 North Korean refugees from Vietnam. "North Korea must come forward to resolve the nuclear problem in a direction that serves the stability and interests of all," South Korean Vice Unification Minister Rhee Bong-jo was quoted as telling the North in the northern city of Kaesong on the first of two days of talks. Details came in South Korean pool reports. North Korea declared in February it had nuclear weapons and said this month it had completed extracting spent fuel from a reactor, a move that could yield more material for atom bombs.

Daily Times, 17 May 2005

Iran pessimistic ahead of nuclear talks

TEHRAN: Iran warned on Monday that an emergency meeting next week with the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany may have little chance of resolving mounting tensions over its nuclear programme. Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said the May 23 talks may prove to be the "last round of negotiations" between Iran and the so-called EU-3, insisting that Iran has already decided to resume controversial uranium activities. "The meeting will be held on May 23" and involve the three European foreign ministers and Iran's top nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani, Kharrazi told reporters. "It will take place in a European capital. We are still in discussions on the venue." Britain, France and Germany called a crisis meeting with Iran after Tehran announced it would resume uranium conversion work, a move that would have violated a November 2004 accord

on freezing nuclear fuel work and opening long-term talks.

The Hindu, 18 May 2005

India is a responsible nuclear power: Manmohan

We will not be a source of proliferation of sensitive technologies

NEW DELHI: India is a responsible nuclear power, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reassured the international community on Tuesday. "Our message to the international community is ... loud and clear - India is willing to shoulder its share of international obligation as partner against proliferation provided our legitimate interests are safeguarded," he told a Defence Research and Development Organisation function here. Dr. Singh cited last week's parliamentary approval of the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery System Prohibition of Unlawful Activities Bill. "In the defence field and the nuclear field, our strategic programmes are indigenous and not dependent on external sources of support. Nor can they be the subject of externally imposed constraints. Within these parameters, India is prepared for the broadest possible engagement with the international non-proliferation regime."

The News, 18 May 2005

India and its nukes (M B Naqvi)

Whatever India intended, it flagged off a nuclear arms race with Pakistan by exploding five nuclear devices in May 1998. For Pakistan soon followed suit, exploding six. Earlier, there were some indications that a secret arms race was going on. Frequent testing of different missiles by both gave away the terrible game. The world knew of the Indian nuclear capability since its test explosion in 1974, despite Indira Gandhi's assurance that India would not fabricate nuclear weapons. Missile tests were attributed to its space programme. Between 1974 and 1998 India was known to be developing missiles unrelated to satellites or space programmes. They could only be militarily-oriented. Pakistan believed India was continuing to fabricate nuclear weapons. In hindsight, this seems to be the case. The question of India's motivation crops up insistently. India was one of the leaders of Non-Aligned Movement. Its moral stock was high because of its earlier decision to abjure nuclear weapons. Which is why world was astonished at its PNE (Peaceful Nuclear Explosion) in 1974..

The Korean Herald, 18 May 2005

Seoul pitches incentives to N.K.

GAESEONG: The two Koreas yesterday struggled to strike deals on how to stabilize their strained relations amid repeated promises by the South of "important" incentives if the North returns to the stalled six-party talks on its nuclear weapons program. South Korea saw the talks as an opportunity to bring the North back to the stalled international talks, but the North was reluctant to go beyond the economic aid offered from the South, shunning discussion on the nuclear issue, South Korean officials said. "The North talked about its position, while we did ours. Though we are trying hard, the distance is not being easily bridged," said a member of the three-man South Korean delegation on the second and final day of the first inter-Korean talks in 10 months at Janamsan Hotel. "This meeting is distant from the nuclear issue," a North Korean negotiating member was quoted as saying. The two sides tried to iron out differences over other issues, including resuming minister-level Cabinet talks in Seoul in June, another round of separated family reunions and how much free fertilizer the North will get from the South.

China Daily, 18 May 2005

S.Korea says nuclear talks would allow compromise

SEOUL: South Korea's offer of a major new proposal if North Korea returns to six-country talks on its nuclear programs would allow more room for compromise in the crisis, the South's foreign minister said on Wednesday. South Korea is seeking at bilateral talks this week to urge the North to return to the multilateral table to join the South, China, Japan, Russia and the United States. Foreign minister Ban Ki-moon told reporters a new proposal would be presented once the talks resume. "It will be something closer to compromise, which would allow more room for it to be accepted," Ban said, without elaborating on the details of the proposal. South Korea told the North at bilateral talks on Monday it was prepared to make a serious new proposal. Those rare North-South talks – the first senior-level contact in 10 months – broke on Wednesday without major progress on the nuclear crisis and were to resume on Thursday.

China Daily, 18 May 2005

North and South Korea talks break, no progress

Rare talks between South and North Korea broke for a day on Wednesday without progress on bringing Pyongyang back to international negotiations to end its nuclear ambitions, a top South Korean official said. South Korea pressed the North for two days for a pledge to return to six-country talks, but failed to win its commitment, Vice Unification Minister Rhee Bong-jo was quoted as saying in a pool report from North Korea, where the talks were held. "North Korean nuclear programs are unacceptable," Rhee was quoted as saying. "We made it clear that unless the principle of a nuclear-free Korean peninsula is met, reconciliation and cooperation between the South and North is impossible," he said. South Korean officials would return home for a day on Wednesday and the bilateral talks – the first high-level contact in 10 months – would resume on Thursday, Rhee said, adding the talks had not broken down. Tensions have mounted over North Korea's nuclear weapons plans in recent weeks after some U.S. officials have said North Korea may be preparing for a nuclear test.

International Herald Tribune, 18 May 2005

A warning to Iran

The foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany gave the Iranian regime a much-needed reality check last week when

they signed a letter warning Iran that it will be arraigned before the United Nations Security Council if it carries out a threat to resume enrichment of uranium after a six-month hiatus. Iran's threat was intended either to elicit a better package of rewards for an agreement to forswear uranium enrichment or to force the three European countries to give in to Iran's demand to be permitted to go on enriching uranium. The letter's firm stand is a good thing for the trans-Atlantic alliance, fulfilling Europe's part of a bargain that persuaded the Bush administration to back negotiations with Tehran. And it also instructs President George W. Bush on the necessity of mixing diplomatic engagement with a credible threat of punishment. In addition, the letter can help show Iranian policy makers that their true interest does not lie in a heedless pursuit of nuclear weapons. If Iran's threat to resume enriching uranium was connected to that country's presidential election next month - as part of a scheme to show that Iranians need former President Ali Hashemi Rafsanjani once again as a shrewd deal-maker - the conclusion can only be that Tehran must not rashly break off the negotiations with the Europeans. This is indeed Rafsanjani's public position.

International Herald Tribune, 18 May 2005

The anomalies killing nonproliferation (Ramesh Thakur)

TOKYO: The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty is the most successful arms control agreement in history. Yet eminent commentators warn that it is in grave danger of erosion and complete collapse leading to a cascade of proliferation. The diplomats gathered for a month in New York to review the treaty face difficulties rooted in six major anomalies. First, the definition of a nuclear weapons state is chronological - a country that manufactured and exploded a nuclear device before Jan. 1, 1967. India, Pakistan and Israel could test, deploy and even use nuclear weapons, but cannot be described as nuclear powers. In principle, Britain and France could dismantle their nuclear edifice and destroy their nuclear arsenals, but would still count as nuclear powers. This is an Alice in Wonderland approach to affairs of deadly seriousness. But can the treaty definition be opened up for revision through a formal amendment of the 188-member document with all the unpredictable consequences? If not, whither realism?

The New York Times, 18 May 2005

Europeans Schedule New Talks With Iran on Its Nuclear Plans (Steven R. Weisman)

WASHINGTON, May 17: The leading foreign ministers of Europe have set another round of talks with Iran for early next week, most likely in Paris, amid growing hopes that they can put off a confrontation over Iran's suspected nuclear program until elections next month, European diplomats said Tuesday. The diplomats, speaking anonymously because of the extreme sensitivity of their talks, said that if the talks could proceed in the next month, then it was possible that the victors in the elections might eventually be willing to accept political and economic incentives in exchange for abandoning the nuclear program. The plan to keep the talks going until the elections had long been the objective, but it was in danger of unraveling earlier in the month, when Iran declared at the United Nations that it would resume nuclear activities, then appeared to back away from that threat. The erratic state of talks with Tehran was a focus of a meeting on Tuesday evening between Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the British foreign secretary, Jack Straw, American and British officials said. Also discussed, they said, was how to respond if the talks were to collapse abruptly.

The Associated Press, 18 May 2005

Rival Koreas Extend Talks to Thursday

SEOUL: The two Koreas on Wednesday extended their first direct talks in 10 months for an extra day as South Korea tried to convince the communist North to return to the nuclear bargaining table. The North was clearly resisting any commitment. Vice Unification Minister Rhee Bong-jo, head of the South's delegation, told reporters that Pyongyang's delegation was listening to his entreaties without comment. South Korea's Yonhap news agency, quoting an unidentified Seoul official, said the North did not want any mention of the nuclear issue in a joint final statement. The talks came amid heightened concerns over North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Pyongyang said last week it removed fuel rods from a reactor - a step toward extracting weapons-grade plutonium. There has been speculation that North Korea might be preparing to conduct a nuclear test, which U.S. officials have said would lead to unspecified actions; Japan says it would seek U.N. sanctions.

Khaleej Times, 18 May 2005

Qatar against nuke bombs in Middle East (Gina Coleman)

DOHA: Qatar does not want to see the development of nuclear weapons anywhere in the region, according to the country's Amir, His Highness Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. He was responding to reporters' questions following a meeting in New York City with Mayor, Michael Bloomberg. In addition to meeting the mayor, the Amir, who was on a private visit to the United States to attend his daughter's graduation ceremony, also visited the New York police department, where he was briefed on the city's crime-control efforts. He also met New York Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly. Asked by the American Press about the situation in Iraq, the Amir said what is happening in the country is due to both internal and external factors. He warned that if the current political situation continues as it is, the violence will continue. He voiced the opinion that democracy and the participation of all the concerned parties in the political process are the way to solve the unending cycle of violence.

International Herald Tribune, 18 May 2005

John Tierney: Wrong again on nuclear power (John Tierney)

NEW YORK: The great taboo against nuclear power seems to be over in Washington. This is a mixed blessing. The subject had been off limits to environmentally correct politicians since the spring of 1979, when the Three Mile Island accident in Pennsylvania inspired the Woodstock of the antinuke movement. More than 65,000 protesters marched on the Capitol to hear energy experts like Jackson Browne and Benjamin Spock - and, of course, Jane Fonda, an authority because of her role in the "The China Syndrome." Celebrities and politicians, warning of meltdowns and cancer epidemics, demanded the shutdown of all nuclear plants. Protesters dressed as mushrooms chanted, "Two, four, six, eight, we don't want to radiate." I went to the

rally sympathetic to the movement but left unsure of which was scarier, nuclear power or its enemies. Now some prominent environmentalists are having second thoughts, as reported this week by Felicity Barringer of The New York Times. Given the threat of global warming, they say, encouraging new nuclear power plants may be necessary. And Congress is about to take up proposals to reinvigorate the industry.

Reuters, 18 May 2005

Once Banned, India Seeks Nuclear Help From U.S.

NEW DELHI: India, once hit by U.S. sanctions over its atomic weapons program, is now seeking Washington's help to develop its nuclear power industry as a booming economy spurs energy demand. Chief scientist Rajagopala Chidambaram is in the United States this week to discuss India's case for nuclear power technology, ahead of a visit by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in July after New Delhi passed its own anti-proliferation legislation. India, which has not signed the global non-proliferation pact, is anxious to reassure Washington it can be trusted, especially after the discovery of an international nuclear black market linked to Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of rival Pakistan's atomic weapons program. "We see no reason for non-proliferation concerns to be a barrier to high-technology trade and commerce with our country," Singh said on Tuesday, adding India's safeguards met the best global standards. Washington imposed restrictions on sharing nuclear technology after India and Pakistan conducted tit-for-tat test explosions in 1998 – and as head of Delhi's atomic agency at the time, Chidambaram was banned from the United States.

Daily Times, 19 May 2005

EU and Iran to hold nuclear talks in Brussels next week

BRUSSELS: The European Union renewed pressure on Iran over its nuclear program Wednesday, confirming plans for talks with Tehran next week and warning it could yet haul the Islamic state before the UN Security Council. The foreign ministers of France, Britain and Germany, plus EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, will meet Iranian negotiators in Brussels next Tuesday, European diplomats confirmed. They declined to speculate if the talks can calm a simmering crisis sparked by recent warnings from senior Iranian officials that Tehran is preparing to resume key nuclear activities, in breach of a November agreement with the EU. British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw underlined the high stakes involved in the talks. "We have always made it clear that a reference to the Security Council remains an option if these negotiations fail and we believe that Iran is in breach of its obligations and undertakings," he told reporters in Washington. In Brussels, a diplomat confirmed the Iran negotiations will be held next Tuesday morning, on the second day of regular EU monthly ministerial talks in Brussels. "We do not know what the Iranians are going to say. We will have to wait and see," he said, asking not to be named. But he added: "We hope that we can find a way out of this situation."

Reuters, 19 May 2005

Iran won't give up nukes: Official

TEHRAN: Iran will endure U.N. economic sanctions rather than give up nuclear fuel development, the vice president said Wednesday ahead of a new round of meetings with European countries trying to rein in its nuclear program. Iran is vowing to restart its uranium reprocessing activities, an early stage in preparing raw uranium for either power reactor fuel or a nuclear weapon. At the same time, it has agreed to meet with European countries for one last discussion on the issue next month. Washington believes Iran is secretly developing nuclear weapons under cover of a peaceful nuclear program. Iran denies this, saying its nuclear program is geared merely toward generating electricity, not bomb. The European Union has threatened to take Iran to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions if it resumes nuclear fuel development. "We don't want to be subject to sanctions. We don't want to go to the U.N. Security Council," Vice President Gholamreza Aghazadeh told state-run television. "But if it happens, our leaders and our people will resist as necessary. They will pay the price of sanctions, but I don't believe they will give up these activities."

The Tribune, 19 May 2005

Nuclear power play (Sridhar K. Chari)

It is widely accepted that India's perfect record on nuclear proliferation is better than that of many nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signatories. When passed, the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) 2005 Bill presented in Parliament on May 10 will achieve several goals. At one level it fulfils obligations arising out of India joining the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material in 2002 and the passing of the UN Security Council Resolution 1540 in 2004 aimed at preventing proliferation, especially to non-state actors. At another level, it will become an important diplomatic tool, in not only asserting India's de facto status as a nuclear weapons power, but in sending out a message that that status is being held with responsibility and an appreciation of India's strategic needs and not as part of a confrontational quest for a notional great power status. In addition, the WMD Bill can be an important tool towards ensuring that India's ambitious plan to generate 20,000 MWe (Mega Watt Electrical) of electricity via the nuclear route by 2020 is not thwarted by international restrictions, starving a growing economy of vital energy.

International Herald Tribune, 19 May 2005

Iran wants significant incentives for a deal (Neil MacFarquhar)

TEHRAN Iran and the European Union will not break their impasse over restraining Tehran's nuclear development program unless the Europeans offer significant incentives like a deal for 10 nuclear reactors, a top Iranian negotiator said Wednesday. Hossein Mousavian, a negotiator from the Supreme National Security Council, said Iran would not continue to suspend its uranium enrichment program indefinitely while, he charged, the Europeans, backed by the United States, dragged out the process with no concrete proposals during the talks. "The maximum announced was U.S. readiness to give spare parts for

used airplanes, which is just a joke as the result of three months of negotiations," Mousavian said in an interview Wednesday. The top Iranian negotiator, Hassan Rowhani, is scheduled to meet with the foreign ministers of France, Britain and Germany in Brussels on Tuesday to try to break the deadlock that stalled the last round of negotiations on April 29.

Reuters, 19 May 2005

Seoul Plays Down Hopes On N.Korea Nuclear Talks

SEOUL: South Korea played down on Thursday expectations it might get a firm commitment from North Korea to rejoin stalled talks aimed at ending Pyongyang's nuclear arms development as a rare bilateral meeting entered a fourth day. The United States would be open to more direct engagement with the North if it returns to six-country talks, a key U.S. official involved in the negotiations said in Washington, in an apparent response to growing pressure to be more flexible. Three days of meetings between the two Koreas have failed to produce a formal agreement, which is likely to include farm aid to the impoverished state. The top North Korean delegate was upbeat as he emerged from the morning session, a pool report from the talks said. "An agreement will be reached," Kim Man-gil told South Korean pool reporters at the talks in Kaesong, a North Korean town close to the fortified Demilitarised Zone border bisecting the peninsula. "Look forward to it." On Monday, the South dangled the prospect of a "serious" new proposal if Pyongyang returned to the six-party talks, but the North has so far not taken the bait.

The Korean Herald, 19 May 2005

Inter-Korean negotiators extend talks to third day

GAESEONG: Separate aims and positions, including on the North's nuclear standoff, blocked a full agreement at the first inter-Korean talks in 10 months and the two sides decided to slate a third round of negotiations today. The meeting was due to end on Tuesday after two days of talks but went on until early yesterday morning when the two delegations, who made headway in some areas but remained apart on the nuclear problem and other issues, decided to recess and return today for an additional round. They will attempt to iron out lingering differences such as holding another round of reunions of families separated by the 1950-53 War and a joint event for opening two recently completed cross-border roadways. Seoul promised to provide the North with 200,000 tons of fertilizer aid. In January, the North requested 500,000 tons for its spring farming season, and Seoul negotiators said the remaining amount of aid should be discussed in subsequent talks. "The aid, which is expected to be completed by mid-June, will be transferred via overland and sea routes, and if needed, North Korea's ships will be mobilized," Rhee said.

The Indian Express, 20 May 2005

S. Korea to give North fertiliser, no N-accord

SEOUL, May 19: North and South Korea ended rare bilateral talks on Thursday without agreement on Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions, according to a joint statement. South Korea is to begin shipping 200,000 tonnes of fertiliser to the North on Saturday based on humanitarian concerns, the statement issued in the North Korean city of Kaesong said. The South's proposal to include a formal recognition by the North of the seriousness of the crisis over its declared nuclear weapons arsenal had held up the bilateral talks beyond the scheduled Tuesday end. There was no mention of the crisis in the statement. "The two sides agreed actively to improve South-North relations and to work for peace on the Korean peninsula based on the wish of the entire nation and on the spirit of the June 15 Joint Declaration," the brief three-point statement said. The declaration refers to an agreement signed by the leaders of the two Koreas at an unprecedented summit in 2000 in the North Korean capital, Pyongyang.

The News, 20 May 2005

Pakistan backs EU stand on Iran nuclear issue: Kasuri (Azfar-ul-Ashfaque)

KARACHI: Pakistan wants a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue of Iran and in this regard it fully backs the European Union stand to solve the crisis through negotiations, Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri said on Thursday. "We have a clear policy on Iran's nuclear issue. Iran is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and it has some rights as well as some obligations. Pakistan is in favour of non-proliferation and it fully supports the EU stand on the nuclear issue of Iran," he said at the State Guest House, while, briefing newsmen about foreign policy, Indo-Pak peace process and outcome of his weeklong visit to Australia and New Zealand. Kasuri said Pakistan is a responsible nuclear power and it had also extended full cooperation to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on this issue. He made it clear that as far as the nuclear programme of Pakistan is concerned, the country was not receiving any threat from any quarters. "We are not weak... no one can pressurise us whether it's the issue of Iran's nuclear programme or Indo-Pak relations," he declared.

Dawn, 20 May 2005

Iran firm to restart N-activities

TEHRAN, May 19: Iran's decision to resume some of its sensitive nuclear work is "irreversible" despite the danger of being referred to the UN Security Council, a senior official told AFP on Thursday. His comment followed the European Union exerting pressure on Tehran over its nuclear programme - ahead of crisis talks between the two sides slated for next week - with an EU warning that it could yet haul the Islamic state before the UN Security Council. On Thursday, nuclear negotiator Hossein Mousavian spelled out Tehran's decision and also cautioned that it was "not certain" that the crisis talks will take place next week with the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany. The holding of the talks, he said, were subject to experts from both sides reaching a "mutually acceptable" basis of an agreement over the coming days.

Daily Times, 20 May 2005

India importing material to improve nuclear plants (Iftikhar Gilani)

NEW DELHI: India is pursuing the import of enriched uranium, reactors and other nuclear material in a bid to increase the capacity of its nuclear power plants. India succeeded in its efforts a week ago when a delegation of the 30-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) visited Delhi and examined India's demand for sensitive technology of the uranium reactor from the West. The NSG delegation led by Richard Ekwall, director of the Strategic Exports Control of the Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry, held talks in the South Block with Meera Shankar, additional secretary in the UN division of the External Affairs Ministry and also in charge of disarmament and international security affairs, and other senior officials. This was the third round of talks between NSG and India at which, sources said, India expressed concern over clandestine nuclear proliferation in the region but it was denied dual-use technology for peaceful purposes. The NSG's nod is essential for India to import enriched uranium to run its nuclear power plants at the highest capacity. At present, India is facing an acute shortage of enriched uranium in its nuclear plants, sources revealed.

Daily Times, 20 May 2005

NPT talks clear another obstacle

UNITED NATIONS: Governments hoping to strengthen a global treaty against the proliferation of nuclear arms cleared a final procedural obstacle on Wednesday enabling them to speed their work after weeks of delay. Delegates at a month-long conference on improving the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty spent the past week arguing over how to allocate the meeting's workload among various committees. This came after they spent more than a week wrangling over the agenda of the meeting, which began May 2. Only a week and a half is now left for more than 180 nations attending to come up with a final declaration setting out a path for treaty improvements. After last week's agreement on the agenda, meeting president Sergio Duarte of Brazil sought agreement from delegates on a plan for allocating the workload. Egypt raised a series of objections, which were finally addressed to everyone's satisfaction. At the heart of both disputes was Israel, which is estimated to have about 200 nuclear warheads but neither admits nor denies having the bomb and has never joined the nonproliferation treaty.

The New York Times, 20 May 2005

In Rare Talks, the 2 Koreas Agree to Talk Again Next Month (Norimitsu Onishi)

TOKYO, May 19: Four days of talks between North and South Korea ended Thursday with the North resisting pressure to resume negotiations over its nuclear program, but agreeing to cabinet-level meetings with the South next month. The White House also confirmed Thursday that American and North Korean officials met late last week in New York, the first such meeting in six months. The inter-Korean talks wound up with South Korea agreeing to ship 200,000 tons of fertilizer to the North as aid but failing to get North Korea to agree to any conciliatory message about the nuclear crisis. A joint statement mentioned instead that the two Koreas would "cooperate for the peace on the Korean Peninsula." "We tried to include the North Korean nuclear issue, the largest point of contention, in the joint statement," Rhee Bong Jo, the vice minister of unification, who led the South Korean delegation, told reporters in Seoul. "It is somewhat insufficient, but by stating that South and North Korea would exert joint efforts for the peace of the Korean Peninsula, the South and the North have expressed our active will to solve the North Korean nuclear issue."

Daily Yomiuri, 20 May 2005

N. Korea's N-program issue of urgent concern (Ichiro Ue)

Despite the concerns of the international community, North Korea is continuing its nuclear development programs. The country has announced that it "successfully completed" removing 8,000 spent fuel rods from a graphite-moderated reactor at a nuclear facility in Yongbyon, north of Pyongyang. When the fuel rods are reprocessed, North Korea can extract weapons-grade plutonium from them and produce two nuclear weapons. As International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei has pointed out, North Korea may already possess five or six nuclear weapons as the agency has been unable to conduct inspections in the reclusive nation. Within the international community, most nations remain sanguine over the North's dangerous nuclear development. Some observers describe North Korea's actions as brinkmanship diplomacy, saying that it is a policy Pyongyang has used many times to lure the United States into negotiations, and some say the nation is just trying to increase the returns it can expect when it abandons such activities.

The Korean Herald, 20 May 2005

Koreas agree Cabinet-level talks

GAESEONG: The two Koreas agreed in this border town yesterday to resume cabinet-level talks in Seoul June 21 -24 after a long hiatus but made no progress in defusing nuclear tensions on the peninsula. A three-point statement after the first inter-Korean talks in 10 months said that, apart from setting dates for full ministerial discussions, the two sides agreed a Cabinet-level delegation headed by Unification Minister Chung Dong-young will go to Pyongyang for a ceremony marking the fifth anniversary June 15 of the historic inter-Korean summit and Seoul will provide 200,000 tons of fertilizer aid to the North. But the joint press statement by the vice-ministerial delegations on measures to enhance inter-Korean ties failed to mention the nuclear standoff despite persistent calls by the South for the North to end its boycott of the stalled six-party talks. Chief South Korean negotiator Rhee Bong-jo (right) and his North Korean counterpart Kim Man-gil exchange a joint statement after their talks in Gaeseong, North Korea, yesterday. The Cabinet-level talks in Seoul next month will be the 15th such series of discussions, which the North suspended last summer after the South accepted a large group of defectors and prevented a South Korean group from attending ceremonies marking the 10th anniversary of the death of the North's founder Kim Il-sung.

Aljazeera.com, 20 May 2005

Iran seeks Russias help in nukes standoff

In an attempt to solve the dispute over its nuclear program with the European Union, Tehran has proposed to have Russia carry out the sensitive final enrichment of uranium after Iran has processed it, European diplomats said. "Iran has proposed that Russia enrich the uranium that Iran has converted," a European diplomat said condition of anonymity, adding that with this proposal, Iran is trying to find a way to resume sensitive atomic activities it froze last year under a deal reached with France, Britain and Germany. But the European diplomats rejected the proposal. They said it just meant a temporary measure to ease fears that Iran is trying to build nuclear weapons. They also said they fear that later Iran would want to handle the enrichment itself. Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani is set to meet with foreign ministers representing EU "big three", Britain France, and Germany next week to try to resolve the stand-off over Tehran's nuclear activities.

Daily Times, 20 May 2005

France backs discussing withdrawal of US nuclear weapons

PARIS: Paris backs a call by Berlin to discuss at NATO the withdrawal of the remaining US nuclear weapons stationed in Germany, the International Herald Tribune reported Thursday citing France's defense minister. The Paris-based daily said that in an interview French Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie backed a call made earlier this by her German counterpart Peter Struck for a possible withdrawal in NATO committees. While showing understanding for the demand by Germany's governing center-left coalition for the weapons to be removed, she refused to explicitly call on Washington to withdraw them, the newspaper reported. An estimated 150 US nuclear weapons are stationed on German soil out of a total of about 480 in Europe.

Daily Times, 20 May 2005

US says Iran testing Europeans' resolve on nukes

WASHINGTON: Iran is testing the resolve of France, Britain and Germany to stick together and keep a united front with Washington in talks over Tehran's nuclear programme, a senior US administration official said on Wednesday. "I think what's really going on is a period of testing, with the Iranians testing whether they can kind of break the EU-3 apart or break the EU-3 from us," the official said, referring to the three European states negotiating with Iran. "It's complicated, it's hard, it's going to take some time, I think the EU-3 have a pretty good approach," he said to a small group of reporters on condition of anonymity. The European trio has offered Iran political and economic incentives to stop its uranium enrichment programme, which the United States suspects may be used to produce nuclear weapons. "Iran has thought for a long period of time it could both pursue its nuclear weapons programme and still have relations with the rest of the world, maybe not great relations with us, but good relations with everybody else," the official said. "Russians do not look with favour on the notion of an Iran with a nuclear weapon along with the kinds of missiles they are developing to deliver them. I'm not sure China in its heart of hearts would like to have a nuclear Iran," the US official said.

Reuters, 20 May 2005

Senate Group Warns China Faces Test Over N. Korea

WASHINGTON: A North Korean nuclear test can still be averted but China must agree to join the United States and other Asian nations in a quarantine of the isolated communist state, according to an analysis by the Bush administration's U.S. Senate allies. The paper, released on Thursday to key staff aides by the Republican Policy Committee that advises the U.S. Senate, predicted that a threatened North Korean nuclear weapons test would have sweeping security ramifications and said resolving this crisis peacefully is a "clear test for China." The paper also anticipated possible regional reactions to a test, including accelerated missile defense cooperation between the United States and its Asian allies and the permanent stationing of additional U.S. forces at sea and on land in the region. The analysis said U.S. ally South Korea might mobilize its forces to defend itself against the North and purchase more advanced U.S.-made arms. But it also suggested Seoul, fearing war, might form "some kind of confederation with the North" and ask U.S. troops to leave.

The Washington Post, 20 May 2005

U.S. Envoy Met With North Korean Officials at U.N. (Glenn Kessler and Anthony Faiola)

After a public appeal from North Korea, a State Department envoy met with North Korean officials at the United Nations last week to reiterate Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's recent statement that the Bush administration recognizes the reclusive country's sovereignty, U.S. officials said yesterday. The secret meeting, the first such back-channel communication in five months, was a U.S. attempt to prod North Korea back to six-nation disarmament talks, after similar efforts by such allies as China and South Korea. The North Korean officials did not respond, except to say they would pass the message to leaders in Pyongyang, the capital, but North Korea appeared to dismiss the rare direct assurances. "U.S. recognition of sovereignty is fake," the official KCNA news service quoted a North Korean Foreign Ministry official as saying. The issue is important to the government, which has repeatedly said it is under threat of attack by the United States and frequently seeks reassurances of its status as an equal power.

The Indian Express, 21 May 2005

'EU aims to avert Iran N-crisis' (Louis Charbonneau)

VIENNA, MAY 20: The EU's three biggest powers, eager to avert an international crisis, hope to persuade Iran next week not to resume sensitive nuclear work that could be used for atom bombs, diplomats said on Friday. The European Union wants Iran to keep its uranium enrichment programme frozen at least until its June 17 Presidential election, after which it would hope to resume negotiations with Tehran, EU diplomats said. But the diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the task will not be easy when the Foreign Ministers of France, Britain and Germany meet Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Hassan Rohani, somewhere in Europe next week. "The question is: What will the Europeans offer the Iranians to keep them at the

negotiating table? The Iranians will have to bring something concrete back with them," one diplomat said. Diplomats said the meeting would probably be on Wednesday in Geneva or Brussels, though neither date nor venue was firm.

Daily Times, 21 May 2005

US in new push to force DPRK to resume talks (Anthony Faiola and Glenn Kessler)

TOKYO: Spurred by fears of a possible North Korean nuclear test, the United States and its Asian allies have stepped up a diplomatic offensive to bring the Pyongyang government back to stalled disarmament talks, although analysts say the effort has yet to show any signs of yielding results. With tensions rising in East Asia as North Korea refuses to return to talks aimed at dismantling its nuclear weapons programmes, US officials held a meeting last Friday with North Korean diplomats in New York, US officials confirmed on Thursday. The meeting was first reported by Japan's Asahi newspaper on Thursday. Later, White House spokesman Trent Duffy told reporters travelling with President Bush to Milwaukee that the two countries had "working-level contacts" last week in New York, where North Korea has a representative office at the United Nations. "This channel was used to reiterate the message directly that the North Koreans need to return to the six-party talks without conditions," he said. He said there has not been a response from the North Koreans.

Daily Times, 21 May 2005

'Iran seeks Russian help in nuke dispute'

VIENNA: Tehran has proposed a compromise it hopes could resolve its nuclear dispute with the European Union - having Russia carry out the sensitive final enrichment of uranium after Iran has processed it, European diplomats said. "Iran has proposed that Russia enrich the uranium that Iran has converted," a European diplomat told Reuters on condition of anonymity. He said this compromise proposal was intended to find a way for Iran to resume sensitive atomic activities it froze last year under a deal reached with France, Britain and Germany. European diplomats said they did not like the proposal. They said the idea of Russia carrying out final uranium enrichment was intended as a temporary measure to ease fears that Iran's nuclear intentions were not peaceful. Iran would later want to handle the enrichment itself, they added. Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani plans to meet foreign ministers from the EU's "big three" next week to try to resolve the stand-off over Tehran's nuclear plans. But Iran and the EU have been unable to agree on a date or venue, diplomats close to the talks told Reuters.

Daily Times, 21 May 2005

EU-Iran talks may take place in Geneva

BRUSSELS: Crunch EU-Iran nuclear talks could take place next week in Geneva rather than Brussels as previously planned, an EU source said Friday while stressing that nothing is yet confirmed. Plans for the talks - between the so-called EU-3 of Britain, France and Germany and EU policy chief Javier Solana, and Iran's top nuclear negotiators - are now pencilled in for Wednesday in Geneva, said the source. "We are planning now on Geneva on Wednesday, but it is not confirmed," he said, requesting anonymity. Earlier this week diplomats had said the talks would take place in Brussels on Tuesday. The source said it was difficult to forecast until Monday, when EU foreign ministers are due to meet in Brussels for regular talks. The fact that Iran is on holiday Friday also made it difficult to be precise about plans, he said. "It will all become clear on Monday, when we will have the ministers in," he said. The EU called for the talks after a series of statements from Tehran indicating that Iran is set to resume nuclear enrichment activities, in breach of a November agreement, which paved the way for the talks. The Europeans have made it clear that if Iran breaches the accord it could refer to the issue to the UN Security Council - a move long pressed for by the United States which believes Iran is working to build a nuclear bomb.

The Associated press, 21 May 2005

Iran Said to Be Smuggling Nuclear Matter

VIENNA: Iran is circumventing international export bans on sensitive dual-use materials by smuggling graphite and a graphite compound that can be used to make conventional and nuclear weapons, an Iranian dissident and a senior diplomat said Friday. Graphite has many peaceful uses, including steel manufacture, but also can be used as a casing for molten weapons-grade uranium to fit it to nuclear warheads or to shield the cones of conventional missiles from heat. With most countries adhering to international agreements banning the sale of such "dual-use" materials to Tehran, Iran has been forced to buy it on the black market, Iranian exile Alireza Jafarzadeh told The Associated Press - allegations confirmed by a senior diplomat familiar with Iran's covert nuclear activities. "It is not clear how much governments are involved," Jafarzadeh said later in an interview with Associated Press Television News, adding that he believes Iran is "using front companies to deceive other companies, other entities in foreign countries, and they wouldn't know what the destination would be."

The Korean Herald, 21 May 2005

Seoul to discuss nukes in June talks with N.K. (Joo Sang-min)

Rejecting criticism that this week's inter-Korean talks made no progress in defusing nuclear tensions, Unification Minister Chung Dong-young said he will take the opportunity of ministerial-level talks in Seoul next month with the North to press the isolationist state to return to the six-party talks. Chung also said Seoul will focus on political and military issues in the June 21-24 high-level diplomatic discussion, proposing a resumption of top-level military talks between generals on both sides. General-grade military talks between the Koreas agreed on tension-easing measures last summer near the maritime and overland border areas but have not yet met again to follow up those steps. "Inter-Korean cooperation in political and military areas is weak, though the level of civic and cultural sectors is considerable," said Chung while reporting to senior ruling Uri Party lawmakers on the results of the inter-Korean vice-ministerial talks, which wrapped up Thursday night in the northern border town of Gaeseong.

The Korean Herald, 21 May 2005

Editorial: Outlook for six-party talks

North Korea agreed to normalize inter-Korean relations in return for 200,000 tons of fertilizer to be provided by the South. That sums up the four-day talks held in the North Korean border town of Gaeseong through Thursday. The meeting, which came 10 months after the two sides last met, was a half success in the sense that it resumed the Seoul-Pyongyang dialogue but failed to make any progress on the most important issue - the North Korean nuclear crisis. Heading for Gaeseong, the Seoul delegation pledged efforts to persuade the North to reaffirm the 1992 joint declaration on making the Korean Peninsula a nuclear-free zone. During the meeting, it drew attention by suggesting an "important proposal" regarding the nuclear question. But all that the Seoul negotiators got from their Pyongyang counterparts was an empty-sounding promise to "work together with the South for the peace on the Korean Peninsula." Unification Minister Chung Dong-young tried to put a positive spin on the statement, saying that the agreement would contribute to a peaceful resolution of tensions over North Korea's nuclear program. But it did not contain any commitment by the North to dismantle its nuclear weapons.

People's Daily, 21 May 2005

Russia hails DPRK-S.Korean agreement on cabinet-level talks

Russia hailed on Friday the agreement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and South Korea to resume cabinet-level talks next month, saying it expects the agreement to be helpful in resuming the six-party talks on the DPRK nuclear issue. Moscow highly evaluates the results of the talks between the DPRK and South Korea at deputy ministers' level on May 17-19, the Foreign Ministry said in a press release. At the talks that concluded Thursday, the DPRK and South Korea agreed to hold ministerial talks in Seoul on June 21-24 and joint ceremonies in Pyongyang on June 15 to mark the 5th anniversary of the first-ever inter-Korean summit. The agreement demonstrates "both sides' sincere desire for reconciliation and a dialogue aimed at normalizing relations," the ministry said. "We hope that the accords reached in the course of the talks will create a favorable atmosphere for resuming six-party talks and make an important contribution to resolving the problems of the Korean Peninsula," the ministry said. The cabinet-level talks are the highest-level inter-Korean contact since last summer, when the DPRK called off the previously scheduled meeting amid political and military tension with Seoul.

Reuters, 21 May 2005

North Korea warns Japan over sanctions

North Korea says that its relations with Japan are inching toward a "dangerous phase of explosion" and has reiterated that Tokyo imposing economic sanctions would be tantamount to a declaration of war. Public anger in Japan over Pyongyang's abduction of Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s combined with concern over its nuclear arms programs have led to calls for sanctions against the reclusive communist state. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, however, has been cautious about Tokyo taking that step unless the United States and other countries also act. "The DPRK (North Korea) clearly stated more than once that it would regard any sanctions against it as a declaration of war," said a commentary in the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper carried by Pyongyang's KCNA news agency. "Nevertheless, the Japanese reactionaries are contemplating the application of economic sanctions against the DPRK," the commentary said. "The hostile relations between the two countries are now inching close to the dangerous phase of explosion."

The Hindu, 22 May 2005

Proliferation Security Initiative: New Delhi discussing reservations with Washington (P.S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE: The Indian Navy will participate in the United States-sponsored Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) "provided the Government decides that it is in consonance with our national interest" to do so. In an interview to The Hindu in Singapore on Thursday, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Arun Prakash said India's initial response to the PSI was "conditional." Under discussion with Washington were New Delhi's "reservations," about the "mechanics" of maritime interdictions of vessels suspected to be carrying materials for proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. India was "not involved or asked" when some countries got together to "trigger off this initiative." If, however, India were to join it now, "we would like to be part of the decision-makers in PSI, not a peripheral participant."

Reuters, 22 May 2005

Iran rejects Russian plan

TEHRAN, May 21: Iran said on Saturday it had not considered a proposal that Russia enrich uranium for it - an idea floated as a way out of a deadlock in talks with the EU over Tehran's nuclear programme. Britain, France and Germany were due to resume talks with Iran next week, aiming to persuade it to abandon uranium enrichment - a process needed to make nuclear bombs - in return for economic incentives. Though Tehran has said repeatedly that it will not give up uranium enrichment, diplomats said one idea being floated was for Russia to temporarily enrich uranium for Iran. The diplomats, who declined to be named, said the proposal would buy time for the EU-Iran talks to continue. "We have not discussed it yet," Ali Aghamohammadi of Iran's Supreme National Security Council told Reuters. Aghamohammadi also contested comments by diplomats that Iran proposed the idea of having Russia enrich uranium. "The idea was from Russia," he said. But Moscow denied the idea had been proposed by Russia. "I do not have any information that that we have suggested supplying Iran with fuel," a spokesman for the Russian Atomic Energy Agency said.

The Times of India, 23 May 2004

The Core Is Nuclear: Energy concerns should drive Indo-US ties (K Subrahmanyam)

The Indian bureaucracy has gone into overdrive preparing for the Manmohan Singh-George Bush mid-July meeting in

Washington. The Planning Commission deputy chairman, national security advisor and the foreign secretary will visit Washington to pursue prospects of the US helping India to build itself as a world power in the 21st century. No doubt, Washington too is doing its homework. In this respect, a recent article on Indo-US relations by Ashley Tellis, an India-born American and former staffer of National Security Council when Condoleezza Rice was the national security advisor, deserves attention. Tellis's advice is directed mainly at US decision-makers. He writes: "The greatest risk to the new Bush strategy, therefore, is that the administration may be unable to realise the policy changes needed to make increased Indian access to such technologies possible. This outcome could occur because either the US concludes that creating exceptional carve-outs for India is neither possible nor worth the costs in relation to other objectives or India fails to make itself useful enough to Washington to justify the enormous political investment that would be required to craft the accommodation that satisfies New Delhi.

Dawn, 23 May 2005

DPRK confirms US meeting

SEOUL, May 22: North Korea confirmed on Sunday a rare meeting with the United States had taken place earlier this month and announced it would give its latest position on the nuclear stand-off "when the time is right", state media said. "We will continue to closely watch the US attitude, and when the time is right, we will officially deliver our position to the United States through a New York contact," an unidentified North Korean foreign ministry spokesman said. His comments were in response to a question by the official KCNA news agency and were carried in a report by South Korea's Yonhap. Washington had already confirmed on Thursday that "working-level" talks took place with North Korea on May 13 to urge the hardline communist state to return to talks on ending its nuclear weapons drive.

Reuters, 23 May 2005

Brazil Wary On Nuclear Cooperation With Venezuela

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil said on Monday it was unlikely to cooperate with Venezuela on nuclear energy if any such program involved Iran, as Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez had suggested over the weekend. "Brazil has an accord for developing energy for peaceful ends with Argentina and the United States. There is no accord with Iran or Venezuela," Vice President Jose Alencar told journalists. Alencar is serving as interim president for Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is traveling to Asia. A Science and Technology Ministry spokesman said Brazil had not yet received any formal request for joint work on nuclear energy projects from the neighboring country. "In the view of possible Iran participation, as President Chavez suggested, such a partnership would be risky for Brazil," he said. "Brazil is not interested in cooperating with countries that do not follow international treaties and whose nuclear programs are not monitored by competent authorities," the spokesman added. Chavez, a critic of the United States and a leftist ally of communist Cuba, said on Sunday his government was interested in nuclear energy and could start talks with Iranian partners to study possible atomic projects.

The Associated Press, 23 May 2005

Russian Official: Prevent N. Korean Test

MOSCOW: Russia's military chief of staff called Monday for steps to prevent North Korea from conducting nuclear tests, expressing a sense of urgency amid increasing U.S. concern that Pyongyang may soon conduct a test. "Today it is necessary to do everything possible in order not to allow North Korea to conduct (nuclear) tests," Gen. Yuri Baluyevsky, chief of the general staff of the armed forces, said in televised comments. He did not specify what might be done to prevent it. Baluyevsky, who spoke during a meeting with his Japanese counterpart, Gen. Hajime Massaki, also called for the renewal of six-nation talks aimed at persuading Pyongyang to drop its nuclear weapons program. "We simply must not allow the testing or existence of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula," he said. The statement came amid questions about how nations involved in the dormant six-sided talks with North Korea – the United States, South Korea, China, Russia and Japan – would react if Pyongyang does conduct a test.

The Associated press, 23 May 2005

N. Korea Nuke Test Would Pose Challenges

WASHINGTON: A nuclear weapons test by North Korea would reverberate around the world, altering the nuclear balance in Asia and posing stark new challenges for U.S. policy-makers and military planners. It could also induce China, Russia and other powers to join the United States in seeking U.N.-approved penalties against the hard-line communist country, analysts and diplomats suggest. With U.S. officials increasingly concerned that North Korea may conduct a test soon, how would Washington respond? First, the Bush administration probably would try to involve the United Nations. Less clear is whether President Bush would consider a risky military strike – given North Korean leader Kim Jong Il's million-man army, heavy conventional weaponry and perhaps several nuclear weapons. "The North Koreans are basically hellbent on proving to the world that they need to be taken seriously. That's dangerous," said Rep. Curt Weldon, R-Pa., vice chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. "A North Korean test would embarrass China and might actually rally other nations to our position. But the result might push Kim Jong Il to take whatever steps he felt were necessary to rally his people into war," Weldon said.

China Daily, 23 May 2005

N.Korea considering nuclear talks return - analysts

SEOUL: North Korea's confirmation that its diplomats met U.S. officials is a sign Pyongyang may consider a return to stalled six-country talks on ending its nuclear arms development, analysts said on Monday. North Korea said on Sunday it had spoken with the United States on May 13 at the United Nations and would respond at "an appropriate time" to U.S. efforts to

revive multilateral talks. It was unclear whether its response would include a decision on returning to the talks. It has been almost a year since the last round was held in June 2004, and the North's anti-U.S. rhetoric has grown more strident in recent weeks. Concern has grown among regional powers in recent weeks that North Korea might test a nuclear weapon after it declared in February it had joined the nuclear weapons club. "North Korea had upped the ante," said Koh Yu-hwan, a leading North Korea expert at Dongguk University in Seoul. "But through these contacts, it appears to be shifting to dialogue mode from crisis mode." A separate bilateral meeting between South and North Korea last week brought no progress on restarting the six-way talks, despite Seoul's hope to use the rare meeting to coax the North back to the table. But South Korean officials say they had made their displeasure clear to the North.

People's Daily, 24 May 2005

S.Korean, US presidents to meet on nuclear issue in June: report

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun will meet US President George W. Bush in Washington on June 10 to discuss ways to coax the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) back to the six-party talks on solving the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, South Korean Yonhap News Agency quoted informed source as reporting on Tuesday. "President Roh's Washington visit will be a working visit which will not involve any other functions than the proposed summit meeting between the two leaders," the source said, adding Roh will leave Seoul on June 9 and return home on June 11. The six-party nuclear talks have been suspended since September last year as Pyongyang refused to be present at the planned fourth round of the talks citing Washington's "hostile" attitude. Pyongyang declared in February that it suspended participation in the six-party nuclear talks indefinitely. "We hope the summit meeting will produce a good result if we stress the need to resolve the ... nuclear issue peacefully," the source said.

Khaleej Times, 24 May 2005

Iran wants "positive" proposals from Europeans in nuclear talks

TEHERAN: Iran's foreign minister demanded Tuesday that Britain, France and Germany come up with "positive" proposals during crisis talks on the Islamic republic's nuclear programme. "Iran is standing by its previous position and expects the Europeans to take positive measures," Kamal Kharazi was quoted as saying by the official news agency IRNA. "Iran's position in the negotiations is clear and we want to resolve the problem with an approach that guarantees our interests." Senior officials from Britain, France and Germany were to meet with Iranian counterparts in Brussels on Tuesday for talks aimed at averting an escalation of a standoff with Tehran over its nuclear programme. The Brussels talks aim to prepare the way for negotiations in Geneva on Wednesday led on the European Union-side by the trio's foreign ministers plus EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana. The current crisis surrounds Iran's demand to back away from a November 2004 deal under which it agreed to suspend its uranium conversion and enrichment activities, which Washington believes conceal its nuclear armament intentions.

Leader, 24 May 2005

America's chemical targets

There is a park outside New Orleans with rows of old oak trees and the ruins of a colonial plantation. It is a pleasant place to take a stroll - and it would be an ideal staging ground for a terrorist attack on Chalmette Refining. An attack on the refinery, which has 600,000 pounds of hydrofluoric acid on hand, could put the entire population of New Orleans at risk of death or serious injury. Chalmette Refining, a joint venture of ExxonMobil, is one of more than 15,000 potentially deadly chemical plants and refineries across the United States. More than 100 of them put a million or more people at risk. Many are so inconspicuous - a chlorine plant may be a couple of tanks and access to a railroad line - that the people in the kill zone do not even know to be worried. The worst possible outcomes are chilling. A successful terrorist attack on a chlorine tank could produce, according to a Department of Homeland Security report, 17,500 deaths, 10,000 severe injuries and 100,000 hospitalizations. In Bhopal, India, in 1984, when methyl isocyanate escaped accidentally from a chemical plant, at least 3,800 people were killed and as many as 600,000 injured.

The Korean Herald, 24 May 2005

U.S. must confront N.K. challenge (Jing-dong Yuan)

North Korea seems to be fighting with Iran for the spotlight in the nuclear proliferation suspense drama. Following its May 1 test of a short-range missile, it announced it has just removed another 8,000 spent fuel rods from its 5 megawatt research reactor in Yongbyon to bolster its nuclear arsenal. In addition, news reports mainly from the United States focus on North Korean preparation - or at least gives the impression of plans - for a possible nuclear test. Recently declassified documents reveal how for decades Pyongyang has tirelessly worked on developing its own nuclear arsenal to deter what it views as U.S. aggression. The much talked about nuclear test could still be a ruse, as some point out; but recent developments - North Korea's provocations and U.S. inaction - certainly do not bode well for the now almost defunct six-party talks aimed at defusing and eventually reversing the North Korean nuclear crisis, now in its 32nd month and nowhere closer to a resolution.

China Daily, 24 May 2005

China sees no sign of N.Korea nuclear test

China has no evidence to suggest North Korea will conduct a nuclear test, a senior foreign ministry official said on Tuesday, adding that the next six weeks would be critical for returning to stalled multilateral talks. Concern has been growing North Korea could conduct a test after it declared in February it had nuclear weapons and said this month it had removed fuel rods from its Yongbyon nuclear reactor, a potential precursor to a test. "We also saw some reports that North Korea is going to conduct a nuclear test, however there is no hard evidence proving that," Assistant Foreign Minister Shen Guofang told

Reuters. "If there would be such a nuclear test, it is a serious issue. If it does happen, China will make corresponding responses, but up to now there is no sign that it is conducting such a test," Shen said. Talks hosted by China, including North and South Korea, the United States, Japan and Russia and aimed at dismantling Pyongyang's nuclear programs, have been stalled for nearly a year, but Shen said the next few weeks would be critical for deciding their fate.

The Associated Press, 24 May 2005

'Nuclear Five' Yet to Find Common Ground

UNITED NATIONS: Five years ago, it worked: The major nuclear powers produced a joint statement on ways to reduce the nuclear threat, helping bring a successful end to the 2000 conference to strengthen the nonproliferation treaty. This time around, at the latest of the twice-a-decade treaty reviews, the going looks tougher in closed-door talks on a joint declaration. "The situation has changed drastically in those five years," top Russian delegate Anatoly Antonov said Monday, as the monthlong global conference entered its final week with prospects dimming for significant arms-control initiatives. At the 2000 conference, the five powers' endorsement of the 1996 nuclear test-ban treaty, for example, signaled to states without nuclear weapons that those with them were serious about eventual disarmament. That joint position contributed to a spirit of compromise that led to a consensus final document among the more than 180 treaty members, Antonov said.

International Herald Tribune, 24 May 2005

U.S. efforts on Korea talks bring a response (Choe Sang-Hun)

SEOUL: North Korea said it was seriously studying a U.S. overture for resuming six-nation negotiations on ending its nuclear weapons development, while South Korea said Monday that how North Korea responds to the American initiative could be a turning point in the nuclear standoff. Joseph DiTrani, the U.S. special envoy on North Korea, visited the Communist state's UN mission in New York on May 13 and delivered an official message that Washington recognized the North as a sovereign state and had no intention of invasion. DiTrani then urged North Korea to return to six-nation talks. The visit, the first direct U.S.-North Korea contact in six months, raised hopes that the two main players in the nuclear confrontation might be working toward a compromise to break a yearlong deadlock in nuclear talks. "How North Korea will respond is very important," Kim Sook, the head of the South Korean Foreign Ministry's North American bureau, told KBS radio on Monday. "It will be a watershed in efforts to resolve the North Korean nuclear problem."

Reuters, 24 May 2005

China Sees No Sign Of N.Korea Nuclear Test

BEIJING: China has no evidence to suggest North Korea will conduct a nuclear test, a senior foreign ministry official said on Tuesday, adding that the next six weeks would be critical for returning to stalled multilateral talks. Concern has been growing North Korea could conduct a test after it declared in February it had nuclear weapons and said this month it had removed fuel rods from its Yongbyon nuclear reactor, a potential precursor to a test. "We also saw some reports that North Korea is going to conduct a nuclear test, however there is no hard evidence proving that," Assistant Foreign Minister Shen Guofang told Reuters. "If there would be such a nuclear test, it is a serious issue. If it does happen, China will make corresponding responses, but up to now there is no sign that it is conducting such a test," Shen said. Talks hosted by China, including North and South Korea, the United States, Japan and Russia and aimed at dismantling Pyongyang's nuclear programs, have been stalled for nearly a year, but Shen said the next few weeks would be critical for deciding their fate.

The Hindu, 24 May 2005

India will never be a proliferator of weapons of mass destruction: Kalam (K.V. Prasad)

MOSCOW: President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on Monday said India was a responsible nuclear state. It would never be a proliferator of weapons of mass destruction even though it was not a signatory to the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty. "When we are surrounded by nuclear armed countries, we didn't have any alternative but to become a nuclear weapon state". The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their delivery systems (prohibition of unlawful activities) Bill 2005 confirmed that India would never be a proliferator, Mr. Kalam told a group of leaders at Duma, Russia's Lower House. Mr. Kalam said proliferation was not a good thing. The biggest challenge before youth in both countries was to ensure a nuclear weapons-free world. India consciously adopted the 'no-first use' policy, the President said. It was committed to complete disarmament. To a question on terrorism, he said it could be tackled by promoting value-based education, attacking poverty and raising spiritual content against theology in religion. The university expressed concern over Sunday's bomb attacks in New Delhi and said Russia knew what it was to face the terrorist threat.

The Hindu, 24 May 2005

"New Delhi must open up n-weapons programme" (Vladimir Radyuhin)

MOSCOW: India should open up its nuclear weapons programme as Russia presses for lifting of international restrictions on nuclear technology supplies to India, the Russian envoy to India, Vyacheslav Trubnikov, has said. Speaking on the occasion of President A.P.J. Kalam's visit to Russia, Mr. Trubnikov favoured lifting the ban on nuclear technology transfers to India imposed by the U.S.-led Nuclear Suppliers Group. "My personal view is that India has taken no steps to compromise itself on issue of proliferation of nuclear technologies in contrast to its neighbour," Mr. Trubnikov said in an interview to the Nezavisimaya Gazeta daily published on Monday. "Therefore, our American colleagues are also moving over the view that India's relations with the NSG must be reviewed... We (Russia) should be more active in the NSG. At the same time India should demonstrate more transparency in its nuclear weapons programme. "We must find some solution (to the NSG ban) by working jointly with our partners in the NSG and with India," the envoy said.

Dawn, 24 May 2005

Neighbours forced India to acquire N-arms: Kalam

NEW DELHI, May 23: President Abdul Kalam accused India's neighbours on Monday of forcing it to acquire nuclear weapons even as he hinted at his country's continued rejection of the NPT. News reports quoted President Kalam, on a visit to Moscow, as also calling for closer cooperation between India, Russia and China to boost global prosperity. His remarks on the nuclear issue are being seen as significant since they resemble the controversial explanation given by New Delhi to Washington for the May 1998 nuclear tests when it pointed to China as a threat. Monday's comments by the Indian president had a similar ring, mainly as he appeared to have added Pakistan, without naming it, to the threat that was faced earlier from China. "When we are surrounded by nuclear armed countries, we didn't have any other alternative but to become nuclear," President Kalam was quoted by the Press Trust of India as saying. If he did mean to indicate Pakistan as the reason for going nuclear will add an entirely new element to the Indian stand on the matter. Replying to questions from students and teachers of Moscow University, President Kalam added: "Nuclear weapons is not a good thing and India is for complete disarmament of these weapons."

The News, 24 May 2005

No sign of N Korea nuke test: China

BEIJING: China has no evidence to suggest North Korea will conduct a nuclear test, a senior foreign ministry official said on Tuesday, adding that the next six weeks would be critical for returning to stalled multilateral talks. "We saw some reports that North Korea is going to conduct a nuclear test, however there is no hard evidence proving that," Assistant Foreign Minister Shen Guofang told foreign news agency. "If there would be such a nuclear test, it is a serious issue. If it does happen, China will make corresponding responses, but up to now there is no sign that it is conducting such a test," Shen said.

The News, 24 May 2005

Even if N Korea talks resume, little progress expected

TOKYO: Six-nation talks on ending North Korea's nuclear programme are unlikely to yield progress even if Pyongyang returns to the table as demanded by the dialogue partners, Russia's ambassador to Japan said on Monday. "One can hardly expect noticeable progress at the six-way talks even if they are resumed," Alexander Losyukov told a forum in Tokyo, as quoted by Kyodo News. North Korea's "latest behaviour is clearly showing that there is no respect for the partners, no willingness to negotiate, and after all, no intention to achieve a negotiated solution," he said. The North last took part in talks in June last year and has defied calls from the other dialogue partners - host China, Russia, the United States, Japan and South Korea - to return to talks. After declaring itself nuclear-armed in February, North Korea said this month it had unloaded 8,000 spent fuel rods from its reactor, a step that would allow it to reprocess weapons-grade plutonium for more nuclear bombs. US officials have also said recently there were signs the North is preparing for a nuclear test. South Korea, which on Sunday let North Korean cargo ships take home badly needed fertilizer aid, on Monday urged North Korea to stop delaying and respond sincerely to US efforts to entice it back to the disarmament talks.

Daily Times, 24 May 2005

EU urges Iran to stick with N-suspension

BRUSSELS: The European Union warned Iran on Monday that future relations depended on it respecting its commitment to freeze sensitive nuclear activities. In addition, EU foreign ministers were dismayed at the exclusion of reformist candidates from next month's Iranian presidential election by a conservative Islamic watchdog. Meeting two days before crucial talks in Geneva between the three leading EU powers and Iran, the 25 ministers urged Tehran to stick to its pledge to suspend uranium enrichment and related activities that could help it develop nuclear weapons. "There was a clear reaffirmation that the Iranians have to respect the commitments they entered into last November under the Paris agreement. These commitments cannot be circumvented," Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn told reporters after chairing the meeting, "This is very important for further relations between the EU and Iran."

The Deccan Herald, 25 May 2005

No first use

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in an address to defence scientists recently, projected India's non-proliferation policy to the world, after Parliament had passed the bill on Weapons of Mass Destruction and their delivery systems earlier this month. The timing of the Bill and the prime ministerial pronouncement on non-proliferation may appear to be unconnected, but could it be really so? Coincidentally, both these developments occurred soon after the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) member countries concluded their acrimonious struggle and agreed on an agenda for their 2005 Review Conference at New York. The proceedings of the NPT Review Conference and Preparatory Conferences earlier have amply demonstrated that the treaty is in on the verge of turning moribund. It faces a crisis of compliance and legitimacy, since it failed to apprehend the operation of the Pakistan-led proliferation network, and later even an inability to neutralise it.

The Times of India, 25 May 2005

Pokhran was a mistake (P R Chari)

May can well be dubbed the month for nuclear tests in South Asia. On May 18, 1974, India conducted its so-called peaceful nuclear explosion in Pokhran. Coincidentally, it conducted its Shakti series of nuclear tests on May 11 and 13 in 1998. Thereafter, Pakistan conducted its own series of nuclear tests on May 28 and 30. In hindsight, it would appear that India has emerged a loser. New Delhi's spin doctors argued that the nuclear tests were designed to challenge the discriminatory nuclear disarmament regime and establish India's claim to great power status. But the official reason provided was security

compulsions. Seven years later, the question is whether the nuclear tests added to or eroded India's national security. If a balance sheet were drawn up, the negatives would far outweigh the positives. Far from assuring India's national security, the nuclear tests have made it more vulnerable to invasion and border confrontations. There are two reasons given to claim that the nuclear tests strengthened India's national security. First, they put in place a credible state of nuclear deterrence between India and Pakistan. True, a non-weaponised deterrent state existed between them earlier, premised on their ability to nuclearise at will.

Hindustan Times, 25 May 2005

US clears stand on its overtures to India, Pakistan

The friendly overtures made to India on possible civilian nuclear cooperation and to Pakistan regarding military development, do not contravene provisions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), according to the US administration. Andrew K Semmel, principal deputy assistant secretary of state in the Bureau of Non-proliferation, has said while the US remained concerned about nuclear proliferation in South Asia, it was committed to the principles of the NPT and is encouraging India and Pakistan to stop testing and develop safeguards. Speaking at the 2005 Review Conference on the NPT on Monday, Semmel said "non-compliance" was the primary challenge facing NPT and in recent years, the treaty's parties had faced significant challenges, particularly from states that had cheated on obligations and defied the international community. "The US shares the view that the conference should reinforce the goal of universal NPT adherence. That goal is for Israel, India, and Pakistan to eventually join the treaty as non-nuclear weapon states," Semmel said.

The Indian Express, 25 May 2005

EU3 divided ahead of Iran N-talks (Louis Charbonneau)

UNITED NATIONS, May 24: Signs of a split between the European Union's three biggest powers have emerged on the eve of nuclear talks with Iran, with Germany opposing British and French preparations to take action against Tehran at the United Nations, European diplomats said on Tuesday. The Foreign Ministers of France, Britain and Germany meet with Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Hassan Rohani, on Wednesday in Geneva to press Tehran to maintain a freeze of activities that could be used to develop nuclear weapons. The trio warned Rohani this month that resuming any activities related to uranium enrichment—a process of purifying fuel for nuclear power plants or weapons—would prompt them to refer the case to the UN Security Council for possible economic sanctions. European diplomats close to the talks said on condition of anonymity that French and British officials have already begun preparatory work on a proposal to refer Iran to the Council at the June meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency if Tehran restarts any enrichment-related work.

The News, 25 May 2005

North Korea doesn't rule out pre-emptive attack

SEOUL: North Korea on Tuesday refused to rule out a pre-emptive attack, even amid signs that it may be willing to return to the nuclear bargaining table. The North poured out anti-US rhetoric, a tactic it has used in the past before entering negotiations, claiming that Washington's "hostile policies" led it to develop nuclear weapons as a deterrent, and warning against any attack to dislodge its leadership. "The United States should be aware that the choice of a pre-emptive attack is not only theirs," the North's official news agency quoted the Cabinet newspaper Minju Joson as saying. "To stand against force with force is our unswerving method of response." The commentary came amid a flurry of contacts aimed at convincing the North to resume six-nation talks, suspended since the third round ended last June, on its nuclear programme. Washington is awaiting a response to an overture it made May 13, days after the North announced it had removed fuel rods from a reactor, a possible step toward extracting weapons-grade plutonium, at North Korea's office at the United Nations.

The News, 25 May 2005

Nukes' seventh anniversary-III: The successes and failures of Pakistan's nukes (M B Naqvi)

From the start Pakistan's nuclear programme was military-oriented and India-specific. The initial proposition was that Pakistan was a weaker rival of India and had business to transact with India that could require application of military force. The ambivalent nature of India-Pakistan relations is known, with its three wars and three semi-wars. Pakistan was decisively defeated in 1971 and concluded thereafter that there is no future in conventional wars with India because it is richer and can always outspend Pakistan. Pakistan therefore decided to go nuclear to offset India's advantages. When exactly Pakistan started its nuclear programme does not signify; it was sometime in 1970s. Pakistan succeeded in the middle of the 1980s in enriching uranium. That key success led to other successes and soon Pakistan was able to fabricate nuclear weapons, admitting only its major components in 1990. But it was able in 1986 to threaten India with a nuclear riposte to the likely extension of India's exercise Brass Tacks into a thrust into Sindh, as was feared.

Dawn, 25 May 2005

Nuclear talks on knife-edge, says Iran

BRUSSELS, May 24: Iran warned on Tuesday that there was only a 50 per cent chance of success in crunch nuclear talks with European Union negotiators beginning on Wednesday. Speaking after official-level talks to prepare for formal negotiations in Geneva, a top Iranian official was blunt about the difficulties. "We are at the most difficult part of the negotiation," said Hossein Moussavian after the closed-door Brussels talks.

Daily Times, 25 May 2005

NPT summit enters final week without progress (Michael Adler)

A month-long UN conference on fighting the spread of nuclear weapons headed into its final week Monday with time running

short towards fixing the ailing nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The 188 nations meeting at United Nations headquarters in New York are trying to reach agreement in three committees that cover the so-called three pillars of the NPT - disarmament, verification of safeguards on national nuclear programs and the peaceful use of atomic energy. Diplomats said that lack of agreement could result in a summary statement at the closing session Friday from the chairman of the NPT review conference, Brazilian Sergio Duarte that would signal a failure to make significant progress. Such a disappointment would come at a critical time in the fight against proliferation, with concern high about alleged nuclear weapons programs in North Korea and Iran.

Daily Times, 25 May 2005

Iran says nuclear talks with EU harder than ever

BRUSSELS: Negotiations between Iran and the European Union on the Iranian nuclear programme are more difficult than ever and the chances of averting a breakdown are only 50-50, a senior Iranian negotiator said on Tuesday. The foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana will meet top Iranian negotiator Hassan Rohani in Geneva on Wednesday to try to rescue the talks, with Iran threatening to resume suspended uranium processing which the West says could help it develop a bomb. "Our chance for success in tomorrow's meeting is 50-50. I think these talks were more difficult and complicated than ever. There is no guarantee for reaching an agreement," Hossein Mousavian, one of the Iranian negotiators and member of Supreme National Security Council, told reporters after preparatory talks with European officials in Brussels.

The Nation, 25 May 2005

Indian nuclear proliferation (S. M. Hali)

It is a pity that India, which has played a major role in defaming Dr Abdul Qadeer and Pakistan for alleged nuclear proliferation and spares no occasion for defaming both, is itself guilty of proliferation activities. The spine-tingling expose of two Indian Nuclear Scientists, Dr Y S R Prasad and Dr Surendar Chaudhary, on whom the international nuclear watchdog IAEA is keeping a close watch, following the imposition of sanctions by the US State department for their nuclear proliferation activities is a clear cut example of Indian irresponsibility in the nuclear arena. Highly credible diplomatic sources, close to the UN agency have revealed that the IAEA has been closely studying the reports about the nuclear proliferation activities by Indian nuclear scientists who remained at the helm of affairs in India's state nuclear programme for years. Sources indicate that the two Indian nuclear scientists were not only themselves involved in these proliferation activities but were in fact running a worldwide network called Prasad-Chaudhary Proliferation Network.

Reuters, 25 May 2005

U.S. Head Of N. Korea Nuclear Consortium Let Go

WASHINGTON: The executive director of the U.S.-led international consortium formed to implement a nuclear deal with North Korea has been let go, a development likely to be viewed as a weakening of support for dialogue with Pyongyang, diplomatic sources said on Tuesday. The executive director, Charles Kartman, a former U.S. negotiator with the North, has been a strong proponent of discussions with the isolated communist state and has long been viewed with suspicion by key members of the Bush administration. The board of the consortium – the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization or KEDO – decided at its board meeting on Tuesday not to renew Kartman's contract, which was up in April, KEDO sources said. The board, which includes representatives of South Korea, Japan and the European Union, has asked Kartman to stay on for three months while a successor is chosen. The board "expressed its gratitude for Ambassador Kartman's willingness to stay on during a transition period," one KEDO source said.

The New York Times, 25 May 2005

Iran and Europeans Jockey for Meeting on Nuclear Issue on Wednesday

PARIS, May 24: Iran and its European negotiating partners struggled in preliminary talks on Tuesday to salvage their nuclear agreement after threats by Iran to resume activities banned by the accord. Iranian negotiators met with senior Foreign Ministry officials of Britain, France and Germany and a senior European Union official to lay the groundwork for a crucial high-level meeting in Geneva on Wednesday. That meeting will bring together Hassan Rowhani, the cleric who is Iran's senior nuclear negotiator, on one side and the foreign ministers of the three European countries along with Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief. In the talks on Tuesday, the Europeans reiterated their warning to Iran in a letter this month that they would end their two years of negotiations and begin punitive action if Iran resumed nuclear activities frozen under the November 2004 accord, a European official said.

The Associated Press, 25 May 2005

House Votes for Temporary Nuclear Storage

WASHINGTON: Fearing more delays in the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste project in Nevada, the House wants the Energy Department to establish temporary storage for commercial reactor waste at one or more federal sites around the country. The directive was included as part of a \$29.7 billion spending bill that passed the House late Tuesday. It still awaits Senate action. The measure also provides \$4.7 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers, mostly for water and dam projects, and money for maintaining the nuclear weapons stockpile and other Energy Department programs. The spending bill calls on the Energy Department to produce a plan for aboveground storage for spent reactor fuel from commercial nuclear power plants within four months at one or more federal sites, and to begin accepting waste by October 2006. It provides \$10 million for the program with a stipulation that more can be requested if needed. It also calls for the department to step up its research into new technologies to reprocess used reactor fuel to reduce the amount of disposable waste. Nuclear nonproliferation advocates

have criticized reactor waste recycling. Fuel reprocessing was abandoned by the nuclear industry in this country in the 1970s because of nuclear proliferation concerns.

The Washington Post, 25 May 2005

Europeans Open Talks With Iran on Nuclear Program (Dafna Linzer)

European officials who met with Iranian negotiators yesterday to discuss the country's nuclear program went further than the Bush administration had wanted by leaving open the possibility that Tehran could conduct preliminary work with uranium in the future, said diplomats from several countries involved in the talks in Brussels. But the uranium work could come only as part of a final agreement, and for now Iran was urged to maintain a freeze of its nuclear program while negotiations continue, they said. It is unclear whether Iran will comply with the request, which will be the subject of a high-level meeting among the Europeans and Iranians today in Geneva. The Europeans have made it clear that if Iran resumes conversion work now, it will spell the end of their negotiations and could lead to action by the U.N. Security Council – something the Bush administration has been pushing for and the Iranians hope to avoid.

The News, 25 May 2005

Brazil won't cooperate with Venezuela

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil said on Monday it was unlikely to cooperate with Venezuela on nuclear energy if any such program involved Iran, as Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez had suggested over the weekend. "Brazil has an accord for developing energy for peaceful ends with Argentina and the US. There is no accord with Iran or Venezuela," Vice President Jose Alencar told journalists. Alencar is serving as interim president for Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is traveling to Asia. A Science and Technology Ministry spokesman said Brazil had not yet received any formal request for joint work on nuclear energy projects from the neighboring country. "In the view of possible Iran participation, as President Chavez suggested, such a partnership would be risky for Brazil," he said. "Brazil is not interested in cooperating with countries that do not follow international treaties and whose nuclear programs are not monitored by competent authorities," the spokesman added. Chavez, a critic of the United States and a leftist ally of communist Cuba, said on Sunday his government was interested in nuclear energy and could start talks with Iranian partners to study possible atomic projects. Chavez said Venezuela and other Latin American countries, primarily Brazil and Argentina, could develop nuclear energy as an alternative power source for civilian purposes.

Hindustan Times, 25 May 2005

US wants India, Pak, Israel to be non-nuclear weapon states

The United States wants India, Pakistan and Israel to "eventually" become non-nuclear weapon states, but recognises that it is an impossible goal now. US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Non-proliferation, Andrew K Sammel, in a statement to the 2005 Review Conference on NPT in New York said: "The United States shares the view that the Conference should reinforce the goal of universal NPT adherence. That goal is for Israel, India and Pakistan to eventually join the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon States." "The situation in South Asia also poses unique challenges. Let me reiterate that the United States remains committed to NPT universality. We recognise, however, that India and Pakistan may not join the Treaty for the foreseeable future," the statement, released in Washington on Tuesday, said. "We remain deeply concerned by the dangers posed by nuclear weapons and their delivery systems in South Asia and do not believe they enhance regional security."

Forbes, 25 May 2005

'N Korea Asia's biggest security issue'

LONDON: North Korea's nuclear ambitions remain the 'most daunting security issue' facing Asia, while the risk of a Sino-US confrontation over Taiwan has increased, a leading think-tank, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said today. Six-nation talks about North Korea's self-professed nuclear programme have made 'almost no progress' since they began in 2003, the IISS said in its annual report. 'North Korea's efforts to build nuclear weapons remains the most daunting security issue facing the region,' it said. Pyongyang has boycotted the nuclear disarmament talks, which also involve the US, South Korea, Russia, Japan and China, since June last year, and this February declared itself to be a nuclear-armed country. Nonetheless, the continued stand-off has had some positive benefits for Washington, the IISS said. 'Pyongyang's roguish behaviour had the effect of strengthening Japan's, South Korea's and China's relationships with the US,' it said.

The Indian Express, 26 May 2005

US wants India, Pakistan to ink NPT

WASHINGTON: The US wants India, Pakistan and Israel to "eventually" become non-nuclear weapon states, but recognizes that it is an impossible goal now. US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for non-proliferation, Andrew K. Sammel, in a statement to the 2005 review conference on NPT in New York said: "The United States shares the view that the conference should reinforce the goal of universal NPT adherence. That goal is for Israel, India and Pakistan to eventually join the treaty as non-nuclear weapon states." "The situation in South Asia also poses unique challenges. Let me reiterate that the United States remains committed to NPT universality. We recognize, however, that India and Pakistan may not join the treaty for the foreseeable future," the statement, released in Washington, said. "We remain deeply concerned by the dangers posed by nuclear weapons and their delivery systems in South Asia and do not believe they enhance regional security."

Daily Times, 26 May 2005

US and NATO's nuclear policies 'immoral'

UNITED NATIONS: US and NATO nuclear policies are immoral, dangerous and destructive of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, a former US Defense Secretary from the Vietnam War era, Robert McNamara, said on Tuesday.

McNamara, who spoke at a conference taking stock of the 1970 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, was defense secretary in the 1960s under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. He was the architect of early US policy in the Vietnam War. "If I were to characterise US and NATO nuclear policies in one sentence, I would say they are immoral, illegal, militarily unnecessary, very, very dangerous in terms of the risk of inadvertent or accidental launch and destructive of the non-proliferation regime that has served us so well," he said. McNamara, 88, said the month-long conference should strengthen the treaty and "ensure that North Korea and Iran do not become nuclear powers." But he added, "I believe there is a high probability that the conference will fail to achieve those objectives."

Daily Times, 26 May 2005

Tehran says US pressure obstacle to EU-Iran nuclear deal

GENEVA: An Iranian negotiator warned on Wednesday that US pressure was an obstacle to reaching an agreement between EU countries and Iran over Tehran's controversial nuclear programme during talks in Geneva. "The Europeans want to find a solution, but their room for manoeuvre is restricted because of their transatlantic political ties," Iranian negotiator Cyrus Nasseri told AFP. The world community must "do everything" to stop Iran from one day gaining access to nuclear weapons, Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, whose country currently holds the EU presidency, said on Wednesday. "Everything must be done to avoid having a new country in this very precarious region of the world acquiring a nuclear bomb," Asselborn told reporters on the sidelines of a Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Security Forum meeting in the central Swedish town of Aare. His comments came on the same day as the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany were to meet with Iran's top negotiator Hassan Rowhani in Geneva for crucial talks aimed at avoiding an escalation of Tehran's standoff with the West over its nuclear programme. Iran has described those talks as a "last-ditch meeting" to avoid referring Iran to the UN Security Council - and into Washington's diplomatic line of fire - if the talks fail.

Dawn, 26 May 2005

McNamara for no-war pact with N. Korea

UNITED NATIONS, May 25: Robert McNamara, who was US defence secretary during the Vietnam war, on Tuesday called on the Bush administration to give 'negative security assurances' to North Korea and Iran in order to stop their nuclear enrichment programme. "North Korea should be assured that US is not looking for a regime change and should be offered a non-aggression pact" in order to gain its compliance, he said. Addressing a press conference on the eve of the conclusion of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) on Tuesday, Mr McNamara stressed that the 'situation is very dangerous' vis-a-vis proliferation of nuclear weapons and asked nations to take decisive action on the issue to contain the problem. He said if the NPT conferences failed to achieve its objective of controlling nuclear proliferation and nuclear disarmament, the UN Security Council may have to step in to stop proliferation.

Haaretz.com, 26 May 2005'

The U.S. removes the nuclear brakes (Reuven Pedatzur)

Under the cloak of secrecy imparted by use of military code names, the American administration has been taking a big - and dangerous - step that will lead to the transformation of the nuclear bomb into a legitimate weapon for waging war. Ever since the terror attack of September 11, 2001, the Bush administration has gradually done away with all the nuclear brakes that characterized American policy during the Cold War. No longer are nuclear bombs considered "the weapon of last resort." No longer is the nuclear bomb the ultimate means of deterrence against nuclear powers, which the United States would never be the first to employ. In the era of a single, ruthless superpower, whose leadership intends to shape the world according to its own forceful world view, nuclear weapons have become a attractive instrument for waging wars, even against enemies that do not possess nuclear arms. Remember the code name "CONPLAN 8022." Last week, the Washington Post reported that this unintelligible nickname masks a military program whose implementation could drag the world into nuclear war.

The Korean Herald, 26 May 2005

Editorial: Coming Roh-Bush talks

It takes little imagination to guess that Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions and the Seoul-Washington military alliance will be the key issues of discussion when President Roh Moo-hyun meets President George W. Bush next month. No other issues are so serious and so pressing as to draw immediate attention from the two leaders. Both Seoul and Washington agree North Korea has become a greater threat to regional security since it declared on Feb. 10 that it possesses nuclear weapons. It is now believed to be in the process of extracting additional weapons-grade plutonium from spent fuel rods. More ominous still, Pyongyang is suspected of preparing to conduct an underground nuclear test. But there is a widening gap between Seoul and Washington on how to approach the nuclear problem. Washington, which says it cannot wait indefinitely for North Korea to return to the six-way talks, is apparently considering abandoning diplomatic negotiations as an ultimate means of solution, but Seoul is opposed to talking about any alternative at this time.

Deccan Herald, 26 May 2005

Concreting on Kalpakkam Fast Breeder Reactor done in record time

The Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited (BHAVINI), which has been entrusted with the task of constructing the 500 MW Fast Breeder Reactor Project by the Department of Atomic energy (DAE), achieved an important milestone on Wednesday night when it completed 5,000 cubic metres of continuous concreting in a record five days time at the Nuclear Island Connected Buildings (NICB) Raft Foundation here. The FBR, which would be a source of energy security for India in the coming years, would come up on this raft and the total project cost was estimated at around Rs 3,492 crore. This was the largest ever concreting done by any industry or by any contractor in the country, a jubilant and beaming Mr Prabhat Kumar,

Project Director of BHAVINI told visiting mediapersons from Chennai after conducting them around the construction site. This 5,000 cubic metres, which was approximately equal to 12,500 tonnes of concrete, was done without interception and was the largest volume of concreting done in India after the 3,200 cubic metres of concreting done during the construction of one of the units of the Tarapur power plant in Rajasthan.

Indian Express, 26 May 2005

2-month breather for Iran nuke deal (Parisa Hafezi & Thomas Atkins)

GENEVA, May 25: The European Union and Iran agreed to a two-month breathing space for a deal on the Iranian nuclear programme on Wednesday, deferring any immediate referral of Tehran to the United Nations Security Council. In what were billed as make-or-break talks, the EU appeared to have won a commitment from Iranian negotiators that Tehran would continue temporary suspension of nuclear activities agreed between the two sides last November. In return, the Foreign Ministers of Britain, France and Germany promised to provide Iran with detailed proposals by the end of July on how the EU would keep its side of that bargain, which is supposed to lead to a final deal. "The EU has offered to give Iran a detailed proposal.... We believe we could reach a final agreement within a reasonably short time," said Iran's chief negotiator Hassan Rohani. He warned that terms of Wednesday's pact still had to be approved by the government in Tehran, which has repeatedly declared it is preparing to resume some nuclear work.

Hindustan Times, 26 May 2005

Indian, Swiss nuke centres to enhance cooperation

GENEVA: India and a major European nuclear facility signed a Statement of Intent designed to significantly enhance existing levels of cooperation and give Indian scientists access to the latest in nuclear-related technology. The Statement of Intent was signed in the presence of President APJ Abdul Kalam on Wednesday by Anil Kakodkar, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), and Robert Aymar, director of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, the place where the World Wide Web was created. The sprawling European Organisation for Nuclear Research facility, a part of which extends into neighbouring France, is known by its French acronym CERN. The statement enjoins on both sides to draft a new protocol to the existing Cooperation Agreement that will "extend the existing collaboration between the Government of India and CERN to include, in particular, collaboration in novel technologies required for accelerator projects of the next generation". The signing ceremony took place after Kalam was taken on a tour of the research centre, including to parts of a 27-km-long tunnel some 110 metres underground, where work on a Large Hadron Collider (LHC), one of the most advanced particle accelerators in the world, is currently under way.

Daily Times, 26 May 2005

EU to offer Iran new proposal

GENEVA: The European Union will offer Iran a detailed proposal by the end of July on how to resolve their differences over Tehran's nuclear programme, said Iran's chief negotiator Hassan Rohani said on Wednesday. At the end of three hours of talks in Geneva, Rohani said that he was confident a final deal between the sides could be achieved in a reasonably short time. "We believe that we could reach a reasonable agreement within a reasonably short time," he said, adding that Iranian negotiators would be reporting back to the Tehran government on the EU offer.

The New York Times, 26 May 2005

Europe Gets Iran to Extend Freeze in Nuclear Work (Elaine Sciolino)

GENEVA, May 25: The foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany persuaded Iran on Wednesday to continue its freeze on nuclear activities, averting a diplomatic crisis that could have led to punitive international measures against Iran. In exchange, the Europeans offered to present Iran with detailed, step-by-step proposals by early August at the latest on how to move toward consensus on the shape of Iran's nuclear program. Last November in Paris, Iran agreed to suspend all of its uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities while it negotiated the economic, nuclear, political and security benefits it would receive. Despite the progress on Wednesday, the Europeans and the Iranians remain far apart on their ultimate goals. The Europeans want to prolong the freeze in Iran's enrichment activities until it becomes permanent, doling out trade, political, economic and security rewards, including access to nuclear energy, along the way. The Iranians, by contrast, insist the freeze is only temporary. Iranian officials have pointed out that they are not required under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to freeze these activities and are doing so on a voluntary basis to show good will.

Hindustan Times, 25 May 2005

World's police must prepare to face bioterrorism: Interpol

NICOSIA: The world's police forces must prepare to face the threat of bioterrorism, the Interpol's president said in Nicosia on Wednesday. "We, as police, cannot afford to be unprepared for the eventual use of biological weapons by terrorist groups," Jackie Selebi told 182 delegates attending the 34th Interpol European Regional Conference. Selebi warned, "Failure in this area is not an option. The consequences of such failure are too dire to contemplate." Police are better suited than military or other organisations to fight terrorism, Selebi said. "Police are able to detect, investigate, and arrest suspects," he said. "This is the only way to win the war against terrorism. Other methods can cause problems." Selebi said his words weren't meant as a critique of the US military's "war on terror" or the US-led invasion of Iraq. Interpol began stressing the urgency of preparing for the bioterror threat last March, during the world police agency's first global bioterrorism conference in Lyon, France. "Each member state of Interpol must be prepared for such an eventuality," he said.

The Guardian, 27 May 2005

Deadlock feared in nuclear treaty talks (Julian Borger)

WASHINGTON: A global conference to review the non-proliferation treaty is due to end today, almost certainly in deadlock, jeopardising what is seen as the best chance of containing the spread of nuclear weapons. Observers at the month-long conference in New York said there was broad agreement on how to tighten the 35-year-old treaty but substantive agreement had been blocked by hardline positions adopted by the US and Iran. The US rejected references in any final text to the comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT), which Bill Clinton was the first US president to sign, in 1996, but which was never ratified by the Senate. The Bush administration has said it will stick to its moratorium on nuclear tests but would not accede to a global treaty outlawing them. Iran has opposed all attempts to constrain or even mention its nuclear programme, which it says is purely for peaceful purposes but which many countries fear could be a front for a weapons programme. "Why this conference matters is that it is a chance for all the member countries to come together and breathe new life into the treaty," said Joseph Cirincione, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "What you see is that the vast majority of the countries are in basic agreement ... but they have been blocked by an uncoordinated but parallel action by the US and Iran."

The Associated Press, 27 May 2005

N. Korea Denies Nuclear Testing Reports

SEOUL: North Korea has denied reports that it might be preparing to test a nuclear weapon, calling them a U.S. "fabrication." U.S. officials said earlier this month that North Korea appeared to be digging tunnels and building a reviewing stand in the northeast and said these could be preparations for a nuclear test. At the time North Korea criticized the report, which was based on spy satellites, but did not deny it. "The U.S. leadership has recently ... come out with a fabrication that there are some kind of missile tests and signs of an underground nuclear test," the Korean Central Television Station, the North's only nationwide network, said late Thursday. KCTS said the United States continued to use "very bellicose, abusive language" toward North Korea. "Our army and people do not want a war or relations (with the United States) to worsen, but we also would not beg for dialogue and peace under any circumstances," KCTS said. The communist North has stepped up its anti-U.S. rhetoric in recent days, repeating claims that Washington is preparing to unseat leader Kim Jong Il and refusing to rule out a pre-emptive attack of its own.

China Daily, 27 May 2005

US making plans if North Korea abandons talks

The Pentagon said on Thursday it was preparing for the possibility that North Korea had decided to abandon six-party nuclear talks and a top official said diplomacy with Pyongyang would soon have to produce results. At a congressional hearing, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill and Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Richard Lawless – the Bush administration's senior Asia experts – kept up the pressure on Pyongyang to return to the negotiating table and promised U.S. "flexibility" if it did. But they indicated American patience was wearing thin and the impasse could not go on forever. However, Washington is also aware that any other U.S. options for dealing with the growing nuclear problem are grim. Hill and other officials have repeatedly said the administration would consider "other options," including military options, if the talks collapsed or if Pyongyang tested a nuclear weapon. For nearly a year, North Korea has boycotted China-hosted six-party talks aimed at persuading it to abandon nuclear weapons-related activities. Other states involved are South Korea, Japan and Russia.

The Guardian, 27 May 2005

America's broken nuclear promises endanger us all (Robin Cook)

Bush has done his utmost to frustrate talks on the non-proliferation treaty

Not a day goes by without a member of team Bush lecturing us on the threat from weapons of mass destruction and assuring us of the absolute primacy they give to halting proliferation. How odd then that the review conference on the non-proliferation treaty will break up this evening, barring an 11th-hour miracle, with no agreed conclusions. And how strange that no delegation should have worked harder to frustrate agreement on what needs to be done than the representatives of George Bush. The tragedy is that, for all its faults, the non-proliferation treaty has hitherto been the best barrier put up by the international community against the spread of nuclear weapons. With the support of all but a handful of nations, the treaty provided a robust declaration that the development of nuclear weapons is taboo. That peer-group pressure has since resulted in more countries abandoning nuclear weapons than acquiring them.

Daily Times, 27 May 2005

Rowhani pleased with new EU nuclear plan

GENEVA: Iranian chief negotiator Hassan Rowhani on Thursday said he was pleased with a European Union offer to come up with new, concrete proposals to solve a dispute over Iran's controversial nuclear programme. The previous day, Iranian officials and the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany managed in a last-ditch meeting in Geneva to avert a collapse of talks. "We liked the idea," proposed by the EU, Rowhani told reporters shortly before leaving Switzerland for Iran. The European ministers, representing the 25-nation EU, agreed with Iranian negotiators that they would make new proposals to Tehran in late July or August on cooperation in civilian nuclear power and trade ties. Iran in turn pledged to maintain a suspension of its uranium enrichment programme agreed in Paris last November, amid fears that Tehran's plans would allow it to develop a nuclear bomb. "Up to now, each time we have asked the Europeans to make clear proposals they have ducked the issue and taken time," he said. "This is the first time they have committed to making overall proposals." The EU ministers had sought a September deadline, but in the end accepted a request by Iranian negotiators in Geneva to bring it forward.

Daily Times, 27 May 2005

Centrifuges sent to IAEA, says FO

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has sent centrifuge components to the International Atomic Energy Agency to assist its investigation of Iran's nuclear programme, Foreign Ministry spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani told the Geo news channel on Thursday. Jilani said that Pakistan had sent "old and discarded parts of centrifuges," accompanied by Pakistani experts to the United Nations' nuclear agency. IAEA spokesman Mark Gwozdecky in Vienna confirmed that the testing and analysis of Pakistani samples was underway. Diplomats said that the IAEA had received centrifuge components for testing that could help agency experts determine whether the traces of highly enriched uranium came in on black market equipment originating from Pakistan or was a result of activities within Iran. Last year, the disgraced chief of Pakistan's nuclear programme Abdul Qadeer Khan confessed to supplying sensitive nuclear technology to Iran, as well as North Korea and Libya. Khan is accused of having operated an international black market in nuclear weapons technology. He was pardoned by President General Pervez Musharraf but now lives under house arrest.

The News, 27 May 2005

Serious 'give-and-take' needed to break N Korea impasse: S Korea

TOKYO: A South Korean minister said on Thursday that "serious give-and-take" was needed to break the nuclear impasse with North Korea and that Seoul had a proposal, a week after failing to get Pyongyang back to disarmament talks. "We plan to make an important proposal that would solve the nuclear problem in an essential way if six-way talks are resumed," South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-Young said on a visit to Tokyo. "The North Korean nuclear issue must be solved through serious give-and-take negotiations," he said. "North Korea should promise to abandon its nuclear program and accept thorough inspections while the United States would guarantee the current regime and normalize relations," he said. But he refused to disclose details of the proposal, saying it was "not the right time."

The News, 27 May 2005

Iran awaiting objective guarantees from Europe: Kharrazi

BEIRUT: Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi on Thursday said Tehran was expecting European negotiators to present proposals within the next two months for its nuclear programme, and defended his country's quest for the technology for peaceful purposes. He made the comments in Beirut a day after Iranian and European negotiators met in Geneva. British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said at the time that Iran had reaffirmed its commitment not to seek to develop nuclear weapons. Straw said the Europeans agreed to present Tehran with more proposals in about two months and that Iran would continue to freeze its enrichment programme until an agreement is reached. Straw did not say what the proposals might be. Hasan Rowhani, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, said on Wednesday that they would include economic, political and nuclear elements. Kharrazi said Iran still had to decide whether to allow the Europeans the two months they require for coming up with a proposal, but did not elaborate further. "We still have to decide on that, if we are going to wait for two months' time or reject it," Kharrazi said.

The New York Times, 28 May 2005

Month of Talks Fails to Bolster Nuclear Treaty (David E. Sanger)

WASHINGTON, May 27: A monthlong conference at the United Nations to strengthen the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty ended Friday in failure, with its chairman declaring that the disagreements between nuclear-armed and non-nuclear states ran so deep that "very little has been accomplished." The conference, which takes place every five years, had once been seen as a chance to deal with gaping loopholes in the treaty that have allowed a resurgence in the spread of nuclear weapons. But in the months leading up to the meeting, it became clear that little progress was likely, and in the end the bickering between the United States, which wanted to focus on North Korea and Iran, and countries demanding that Washington shrink its own arsenals, ran so deep that no real negotiations over how to stem proliferation ever took place. The gulf was so wide that the chairman, Sergio Duarte of Brazil, mused Friday on the question of whether the main treaty to limit the spread of nuclear arms, signed in 1970, was actually further weakened by the session. Asked what the fundamental cause of the failure was, he said, "I think you can write several books on that."

The Associated Press, 28 May 2005

Nuclear Plants Lack Warning Sirens, Study Says

MIDDLETOWN, May 27: More than two dozen nuclear power plants across the country lack sirens that would warn of a nuclear emergency if electricity was also blacked out, a report by the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission has found. Twenty-eight plants lack backup power for sirens that are supposed to alert residents in a 10-mile radius of trouble, the commission said. Seventeen plants have full backup for the systems, while 18 others have at least some sirens that would remain operable during a power failure. The commission released the information Wednesday as part of its response to a coalition of 17 advocacy groups and elected officials that petitioned the commission in February for information about the siren systems. "Basically, we have an inoperable emergency system at a majority of the sites," said Paul Gunter, director of the Reactor Watchdog Project for the Nuclear Information and Resource Service, which is based in Washington. Plants that lack any backup power for sirens include the Indian Point plant just north of New York City and the Davis-Besse plant near Toledo, Ohio. At Three Mile Island in Middletown, the site of a March 28, 1979, partial meltdown that remains the nation's worst nuclear plant accident, only 19 of the 96 sirens would operate if power went out.

The Hindu, 28 May 2005

Global nuclear meet offers no new action plan

UNITED NATIONS, May 28. (AP): After a month of near-paralysis, a global conference to tighten controls on the spread of nuclear arms adopted a final report Friday offering no new action plan at a time of mounting nuclear tension in the world. The

188-nation meeting, reviewing the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, produced weeks of divisive debate over issues ranging from Iran's uranium centrifuges, to Israel's nuclear capabilities, to U.S. weapons plans. But it yielded no consensus recommendations for concrete steps to rein in atomic arms. The disagreements even kept the conference president, Sergio de Queiroz Duarte, from issuing a summary statement endorsing nonproliferation principles. "It would be very difficult for me in the face of so many divergencies, wide differences," the Brazilian diplomat told reporters. Dispirited diplomats and disarmament campaigners lamented a lack of political will. "We have witnessed intransigence from more than one state on pressing issues of the day," Canadian Ambassador Paul Meyer told conference delegates. "It's a tragic lost opportunity," British arms-control advocate Ian Davis told reporters.

The News, 28 May 2005

EIBaradei praises Iran for keeping nuclear freeze

UNITED NATIONS: The head of the UN atomic watchdog praised Iran on Friday for not following through on its threats to resume suspended nuclear activities that could be used to develop weapons. After a meeting on Wednesday with the foreign ministers of France, Britain and Germany, Iran agreed to continue the suspension of its nuclear fuel program, which Washington and its European allies fear may be intended for atomic bombs. "I see it as quite positive that Iran has agreed to continue with the suspension, not to take any unilateral measures outside of the international agreement with the Europeans and with the (IAEA) board," Mohamed ElBaradei, the International Atomic Energy Agency's director-general, told Reuters in a telephone interview. In return for continuing the freeze, the Europeans promised to provide Iran with detailed proposals by early August on how the European Union would keep its promise to provide economic and political incentives, which should lead to a final deal. Tehran froze its entire uranium enrichment program, which could produce fuel for either nuclear power plants or weapons, in November after agreeing to begin talks with the EU's three biggest powers on possible incentives for shutting down its atomic fuel program permanently.

The Nation, 28 May 2005

Centrifuges to Vienna

The delivery of uranium samples and centrifuge components by Pakistan to the International Atomic Energy Agency should bring to a final stage the US story accusing Iran of entertaining nuclear weapons ambitions. And, as maintained by Mr Khurshid Kasuri, it should lead to the clearance of the charge that it had been involved in enriching uranium to weapons grade. Mr Kasuri's point obviously is that once these samples and components are analysed and compared with those discovered in Iran during an IAEA inspection in 2003, it would become clear whether the traces of highly enriched uranium found on the Iranian centrifuges were the residue of its reprocessing by Iran or had come with the components it admitted it had bought from the international black market through South Asian dealers. According to the Foreign Office spokesman, the sensitive consignment was despatched to Vienna in the custody of a team of Pakistani scientists, who would be cooperating with IAEA experts in the analysis and testing process and when that is over, would bring it back to Pakistan.

Khaleej Times, 28 May 2005

Iran examines EU offer on N-issue

TEHERAN: Iran is still examining the European Union's latest offer to solve a dispute over its nuclear programme and could yet resume uranium conversion if it rejects the new proposal, Teheran's top atomic official said yesterday. "We will restart (work at the) the Isfahan (uranium) conversion plant, and the fuel cycle is our (non-negotiable) red line," Hassan Rowhani said, replying to a question on what will happen if Iran refuses to accept the EU plan. The Isfahan plant is used for uranium conversion, a precursor stage in nuclear enrichment, a process that the EU wants Iran to renounce as it can be used to develop nuclear weapons. "Since the European proposal was a new one and it is up to the regime's officials to make a decision, we brought it to Teheran. If not accepted we will begin enrichment in Isfahan," he added, quoted by the Irna news agency. Rowhani also warned the Europeans that if "they want to drag out the negotiations, we will begin the enrichment in Isfahan." His comments come after Iranian officials and the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany on Wednesday managed in a last-ditch meeting in Geneva to avert a collapse of talks.

Dawn, 29 May 2005

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

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

Dawn, 29 May 2005

Iranian govt obligated to develop N-fuel cycle

TEHRAN, May 28: Iran's constitutional watchdog approved a bill on Saturday that obliges the government to develop a nuclear fuel cycle - a step opposed by Washington. The bill, passed by Iranian parliamentarians on May 15, calls on the government to take action to obtain peaceful nuclear technology, including provision of the fuel cycle for generating 20,000 megawatts of

electricity'. State television reported that the conservative Guardian Council, composed of six religious figures and six lawyers, had approved the bill, passing it into law. The bill does not say when Iran should produce the nuclear fuel, and most analysts see it as a bargaining chip in talks with France, Germany and Britain, which are trying to get Iran to end its work on making nuclear fuel. Iran has frozen its work on the nuclear fuel cycle, giving the EU trio until early August to propose a compromise. Iran has so far been unimpressed by the economic incentives offered by the three EU powers and has said it will never surrender its fuel programme in return for such 'carrots'. Iran insists it has every right to turn uranium ore mined in its central deserts into fuel for nuclear power stations such as the one being built with Russian help at Bushehr.

Dawn, 29 May 2005

Attack on Iran to spell disaster, says Musharraf

BERLIN: Iran is very anxious to obtain a nuclear bomb, President Pervez Musharraf said in an interview published on Saturday, while stating his opposition to any pre-emptive attack on the fellow-Muslim nation. Asked by Germany's Der Spiegel weekly how to prevent Iran from developing a military nuclear programme, Musharraf said: "I do not know. They are very anxious to have the bomb." But a pre-emptive war against Tehran would lead to "a disaster considering the current state of the world," the Pakistani leader said. "It would provoke a rebellion in the Muslim world. Why open up new fronts?" he was quoted by the weekly as saying. Musharraf insisted that Pakistan, which already has nuclear weapons, was against proliferation. Unlike Pakistan, which said it developed its defensive nuclear programme because it shares a border with nuclear-armed archrival India, "Iran does not have common borders with Israel," he said. "We were really threatened," Musharraf added.

The News, 29 May 2005

President Musharraf wrongly quoted on Iran's N-Programme: FM Spokesman

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Sunday said that President Pervez Musharraf had been incorrectly quoted by a German magazine, which reported him as saying Iran wanted nuclear weapons. "The President has not been correctly reported," foreign ministry spokesman Jilil Abass Jilani told. Jilani said that President was asked whether Iran was anxious to develop a nuclear bomb, to which the President replied that he "does not know", Jilani said. Iran on Sunday demanded that Musharraf explain his claim that Tehran was keen to obtain a nuclear bomb – a statement that was at odds with the clerical regime's repeated denials. In an interview with Germany's Der Spiegel magazine published on Saturday, Musharraf was quoted as saying that Iran was "very anxious to have the bomb" – something Iran said it hoped was a misquote. In a major turnaround, Pakistan on Thursday confirmed that it had sent some parts of an old centrifuge to the UN's atomic agency to help it establish whether Iran had been secretly developing nuclear weapons. The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) requested the parts in connection with its investigations to determine whether contamination found at Iran's nuclear facilities had come from Pakistan or any other source, a foreign ministry official said.

Daily Times, 29 May 2005

Failure of NPT moot 'distressing'

UNITED NATIONS: UN nuclear chief Mohamed ElBaradei said on Friday the failure of a UN non-proliferation conference to adopt new measures to fight the spread of nuclear weapons was "distressing" and that world leaders must now focus on the issue. "The conference after a full month ended up where we started which is a system full of loopholes, ailing and not a roadmap to fix it," ElBaradei told AFP by phone from Vienna as the review conference on the 188-nation nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty ended at UN headquarters in New York. The 150 nations attending were unable to agree on any new steps to stem proliferation, despite growing concern about the spread of nuclear weapons in the era of the war on terror and the difficulties of key organizations such as ElBaradei's Vienna-based watchdog International Atomic Energy Agency in stopping this. IAEA inspectors were kicked out of North Korea in 2002 and the agency has been unable in over two years of investigating Iran to determine whether US charges that Tehran is secretly developing nuclear weapons are true or false. Meanwhile, a smuggling network run by the father of Pakistan's atomic bomb Abdul Qadir Khan has supplied Iran, North Korea and Libya with illicit nuclear technology and materials.

Daily Times, 29 May 2005

Iran says US, Israel are the real nuclear threats

UNITED NATIONS: The United States and Israel represent the real nuclear threat to the world, not Iran, Tehran's chief envoy to the United Nations said on Friday after an abortive conference on controlling nuclear weapons. Javad Zarif, Iran's ambassador to the UN, said the United States never intended to scrap its nuclear arsenal, despite promising to eventually disarm when it signed the 1970 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the landmark arms control pact. Zarif, in an interview with Reuters, said Israel, which is widely believed to have nuclear weapons, was the threat to the Middle East region. "There is unanimity on the threat that is posed not only by Israeli nuclear weapons but by its aggressive policy (in general)," he said. Washington is backing efforts by Britain, France and Germany to persuade Tehran to halt its nuclear fuel programme, which they fear may be intended to make atomic bombs. Iran denies this, insisting its programme is peaceful. Zarif dismissed as hollow US pledges in 1995 and 2000 reaffirming its commitment to scrap its nuclear arsenal. "The US never had any intention of living up to its commitments under Article 6 of the treaty," he said.

The New York Times, 29 May 2005

'Across Iran, Nuclear Power Is a Matter of Pride' (Neil MacFarquhar)

TEHRAN, May 28: From nuclear negotiators to student dissidents, from bazaar merchants to turbaned mullahs, Iranians agree: the right to develop nuclear power is a point of national pride. "For a country to have nuclear energy means that it has made progress in all other fields as well, so other countries have to respect its technology," said Nilufar, 29, a graduate student

in energy management at the prestigious Sharif Industrial University. Nilufar, covered in black so only her face was showing, agreed to be interviewed on such a delicate topic only if her family name was not used. Ehsan Motaghi, a 26-year-old seminary student in Isfahan, cited a parable from Imam Ali, the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law and the inspiration for the Shiite branch of Islam, which most Iranians follow. "They can offer me everything from the earth and heaven, but in exchange if they want me to do so much as take the food from an ant's mouth that is his right to eat, I won't do it," he said. "Achieving the peaceful use of technology is really a matter of pride and we will not stop this for anything."

The Associated Press, 29 May 2005

Cheney: China Key to Ending N. Korea Nukes

WASHINGTON: Vice President Dick Cheney said the United States is relying on China to persuade North Korea to end its nuclear weapons program, despite Beijing's reluctance to exert pressure on its neighbor. Talks involving China, the United States, Russia, Japan and South Korea have been sidelined for nearly a year, even as North Korea says it is building atomic bombs. Cheney said China could have a big impact on reviving the stalled talks because it shares North Korea's longest border and is its chief trading partner. "The Chinese need to understand that it's incumbent upon them to be major players here," Cheney said in a taped interview with CNN's "Larry King Live" scheduled to air Monday night. Chinese officials have said they do not want to impose sanctions or other economic pressure on North Korea because they don't believe they would be effective. They have said they prefer to resolve the dispute through continuing dialogue. Cheney said the nations involved in the six-party talks are trying to make North Korea understand that they will cut off relationships with the outside world, including trade, if they do not end nuclear ambitions. But he acknowledged they have had trouble making the case.

Tehrantimes.com, 29 May 2005

Iran entitled to peaceful use of nuclear energy: Khatami

TEHRAN: President Mohammad Khatami said here on Saturday that in view of the ongoing progress in the world today, Iran is also entitled to peaceful use of nuclear technology. "Iran's activities in the field of nuclear energy are peaceful and free from any ambiguity," said Khatami in a meeting with Iran's ambassador and permanent envoy to the UN and its specialized agencies in Vienna Mohammad-Mehdi Akhundzadeh before the diplomat assumes his new assignment. Khatami said Iran accepts talks with Europe as a principle and has thus far extended its utmost cooperation in that field. He also referred to the important position of Iran as the energy hub of the region, including in oil, as well as membership in OPEC. Akhundzadeh provided President Khatami with a brief account of his mission and on the key role of Iran in the international relations, the influential role of Iran in the UN development and its future structure. Akhundzadeh had earlier served as director general of the Legal and International Affairs Department at Foreign Ministry and Iran's ambassador to Pakistan.

Aljazeera, 29 May 2005

Iran council approves nuclear plan

In a move aimed at strengthening Tehran's hand in negotiations with the EU, Iran's Guardian Council approved a measure passed by the parliament earlier this month demanding the government to develop nuclear technology, including uranium enrichment, the state-run TV and radio service, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting reported on Saturday. The Guardian Council, which must check all bills before they are made into law, evaluated the measure and found it not to be unconstitutional, said a spokesman for the council. The law does not force the Iranian government to resume uranium enrichment immediately, but it insists that the Islamic Republic must pursue its nuclear goals regardless to the mounting international pressure. The move comes as a clear challenge to European Union; trying to persuade Iran to suspend its nuclear program, a lawmaker said. "Approval of the parliamentary legislation into law by the Guardian Council means Europeans should forget the idea of asking Iran to permanently freeze its nuclear activities forever," said Nayereh Akhavan, a conservative lawmaker.

International Herald Tribune, 30 May 2005

Kofi A. Annan: Break the nuclear deadlock

UNITED NATIONS, New York Regrettably, there are times when multilateral forums tend merely to reflect, rather than mend, deep rifts over how to confront the threats we face. The review conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which ended on Friday with no substantive agreement, was one of these. For 35 years, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, or NPT, has been a cornerstone of our global security. With near universal membership, the treaty has firmly entrenched a norm against nuclear proliferation and helped confound predictions that today there would be 25 or more countries with nuclear weapons. But today, the treaty faces a dual crisis of compliance and confidence. Delegates at the month-long conference, which is held once every five years, could not furnish the world with any solutions to the grave nuclear threats we all face. And while arriving at an agreement can be more challenging in a climate of crisis, it is also at such times that it is all the more imperative to do so. Let me be clear: Failure of a review conference to come to any agreement will not break the NPT-based regime. The vast majority of countries that are parties to the treaty recognize its enduring benefits. But there are cracks in each of the treaty's pillars - nonproliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear technology - and each of these cracks requires urgent repair.

Dawn, 30 May 2005

Iran asks Musharraf to explain nukes comment

TEHRAN: Iran on Sunday asked President Pervez Musharraf to explain his claim that Tehran was keen to obtain a nuclear bomb, a statement that was at odds with the clerical regime's repeated denials. In an interview with Germany's Der Spiegel magazine published on Saturday, Musharraf was quoted as saying that Iran was 'very anxious to have the bomb' - something

Iran said it hoped was a misquote. 'We hope that the Pakistanis explain that this report was distorted,' Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters. 'I would say there was a distortion, and it is unlikely that such comments were made. Asefi added that he believed it was 'very unlikely that President Musharraf said such a thing, because he knows better'. 'It is not the business of other countries to comment in this regard. It is up to us to say what we are seeking and not seeking. We are insisting we are not seeking such weapons,' Asefi said. Iran has been subject to more than two years of investigations by the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), after it emerged the country had been covering up its activities for 18 years.

Dawn, 30 May 2005

Iran N-bomb comment denied

ISLAMABAD, May 29: President Gen Pervez Musharraf did not say that Iran was very anxious to acquire a nuclear bomb, foreign office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani categorically stated here on Sunday. "The president has not been quoted correctly," the spokesman said when Dawn sought his confirmation on President Musharraf's reported comment on Tehran's nuclear ambition in an interview with Germany's Der Spiegel weekly. The German weekly had quoted the president as saying: "I do not know. They are very anxious to have the bomb," when apparently asked how to prevent Iran from developing a military nuclear programme. The interview was published on Saturday. According to the spokesman, when President Musharraf was asked if Iran was anxious to obtain a nuclear bomb, the president merely repeated the question posed to him and then said: "I don't know." The spokesman expressed his disappointment at the wrong attribution of the statement on a sensitive issue to President Musharraf. In this context he underlined that Pakistan had always supported an EU-Iran dialogue and peaceful resolution of Tehran's nuclear programme issue. In the interview to the German weekly President Musharraf had reportedly opposed a preventive war against Iran and warned that it could be disastrous.

Dawn, 30 May 2005

NPT talks' failure

The failure of the nuclear non-proliferation conference in New York should surprise no one. Given the sharp differences among the 188 members who are signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), only a miracle could have secured a consensus on re-writing the 1968 NPT. The aim before the conference was to plug the loopholes in the NPT that allow the non-signatories to seek to develop nuclear weapons. From this point of view, the drafters of the treaty are nearly four decades behind time. The basic flaw is the original treaty itself, for instead of striving for a nuclear-free world, the NPT legalized the nuclear monopoly of a few nations. Those who possess them are also permanent members of the Security Council with a veto, and they expect all other nations of the world not to aspire for a nuclear status. In 1974, India tested a nuclear device, and in 1998, following the Indian nuclear tests, Pakistan also followed suit. All along, Israel has been developing nuclear weapons with the full knowledge and support of some Nato nations. France gave Israel a nuclear reactor, and the Americans one day discovered that the uranium "stolen" from one of their reactors had landed in Israel.

The Asian Age, 31 May 2005

India-U.S. nuclear mismatch (Dr A. Gopalakrishnan)

Dr A. Gopalakrishnan says that neither does the U.S. possess crucial nuclear safety experience of direct relevance to India, nor does India need its assistance. Civilian nuclear cooperation between India and the US is said to be one of the topics for discussion when our Prime Minister visits Washington in mid-July. The officials of the ministry of external affairs (MEA) are quite upbeat about this, the department of atomic energy (DAE) maintains a stoic silence on the matter, and the media analysts in the country anticipate a more optimistic outcome than everyone else. But, no official in India or the US is willing to provide a clear picture on what exactly is being discussed. In this regard, the central questions we need to ask are these: What concrete assistance does India need from the US to further our civilian nuclear programme? In relevant areas, are the foreign policy stances of the two countries close enough to warrant the successful initiation of any meaningful nuclear cooperation, without India having to make unacceptable compromises? What is it that the US wants in return from us for this cooperation? And, what are the short-term and long-term strategic implications of such cooperation?

The New York Times, 31 May 2005

Rice to Discuss Antiproliferation Program (David E. Sanger)

WASHINGTON, May 30: The Bush administration is preparing to discuss for the first time details of the early fruits of its efforts to join forces with other nations in intercepting weapons and missile technology bound for Iran, North Korea and Syria, according to several administration officials. Some details are expected to be presented to foreign diplomats at the State Department on Tuesday by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the officials said. Many of the diplomats are from the 60 or so nations that have joined President Bush's Proliferation Security Initiative, an effort to use a patchwork of national laws and agreements with other countries to intercept suspected weapons shipments in ports and on the high seas. The timing of the presentation is significant because Mr. Bush's aides, in conversations where they insisted on anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject, are talking with increasing urgency about using similar techniques to cut off North Korea's main sources of hard currency: shipments of weapons, illegal drugs and counterfeit currency.

The Asahi Shimbun, 31 May 2005

Monju nuke reactor ruled safe to run

A distraught Miwako Ogiso, secretary-general of the plaintiffs group in the Monju court case, holds a banner that says "unfair ruling" in front of the Supreme Court in Tokyo. Ruling that safety has not been compromised, the Supreme Court on Monday overturned a lower court decision and approved the government's plans to operate the troubled Monju fast-breeder nuclear

reactor in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture. At issue was whether appropriate safety assessment procedures had been in place when government approval was granted in 1983 to build Monju, a state-designed prototype nuclear reactor project. "It cannot be said that there had been anything amiss," Justice Tokuji Izumi said. "No fatal errors or glaring omissions could be found. Therefore, (Monju) cannot be deemed illegal." The Supreme Court thus revoked a Nagoya High Court branch's nullification of the government approval. Residents mostly living near the Monju site filed the lawsuit in 1985 to quash the original approval of the fast-breeder reactor, which uses highly toxic plutonium. Their safety concerns intensified after sodium leaked from the reactor's cooling system in December 1995. The plant has since been shut down.

The Asahi Shimbun, 31 May 2005

Editorial: Nuclear nonproliferation

Fresh diplomatic efforts needed to kickstart the NPT. The review conference on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) held in New York came to a close without any agreement being reached. The conference was held under difficult conditions. North Korea, which had bolted from the treaty, says it has nuclear weapons. Though Iran is still a party to the treaty, there is persistent suspicion that it is engaged in nuclear development. Furthermore, the nuclear black market appears to be spreading ominously. Representatives of nearly 190 countries gathered to discuss implementation of the nuclear nonproliferation regime, which has many loopholes. The review conference was assigned the job of finding a way to reconstruct, if only slightly, this important treaty. In the face of a disappointing outcome, Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), expressed regret by saying, "The conference after a full month ended up where we started." Conference participants were highly critical of the Bush administration's policies. They said the U.S. government had put up major obstacles by not stopping the development of new types of nuclear weapons, turning its back on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and refusing to listen to the opinion of non-nuclear countries. But other factors came into play, too.

The Korean Herald, 31 May 2005

Top nuclear negotiator travels to U.S. (Lee Joo-hee)

Seoul's key foreign policy and security officials leave for Washington today to meet U.S. counterparts to discuss the North Korean nuclear standoff and to prepare for the June Korean-U.S. summit. Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon and Cheong Wa Dae's National Security Adviser Kwon Chin-ho make a four-day visit a week before the planned summit between Presidents Roh Moo-hyun and George W. Bush on June 10. Song is scheduled to meet State Department and National Security Council officials, including Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, his counterpart at the stalled six-party nuclear talks. Kwon will meet Stephen Hadley, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other officials, Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Kim Man-soo said. Kwon will focus on arrangements for the summit between Roh and Bush, who are expected to have an in-depth discussion on North Korea's nuclear problem and recent developments in the Korea-U.S. alliance. It is Roh and Bush's fourth round of summit talks. North Korea's nuclear standoff reached a new level earlier this month when the informal channel of contact between Washington and Pyongyang through the North's U.N. delegation was revived.

The Japan Times, 31 May 2005

Editorial: A blow to the NPT

Thirty-five years ago, governments acknowledged the threat posed by the spread of nuclear weapons and agreed on a Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Negotiations were spurred by the fear that the number of nuclear powers was set to expand exponentially; rather than a world of five nuclear "haves," there might be dozens. The NPT worked: Today, there are still only five nuclear-weapons states, and there are just three "gray states" that are believed to have weapons outside the NPT framework. In recent years, the treaty's loopholes have become increasingly apparent. Fortunately, the NPT has a mechanism that allows for periodic review. The most recent such conference just concluded. Unfortunately, it was a failure. Deep divisions among treaty signatories prevented any action to plug those holes. The collapse of the review conference does not herald the end of the NPT, however. It does mean that concerned governments must redouble efforts to find consensus on ways to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime. It is estimated that there are over 30,000 nuclear weapons scattered throughout the world. Five countries have the overwhelming majority of those weapons: the United States and Russia have most of those, but China, Britain and France are also among the NPT nuclear-weapons states. Three other states – India, Pakistan and Israel – are widely assumed to have arsenals of their own. North Korea and Iran are trying to build their own nuclear weapons.

The Japan Times, 31 May 2005

Pyongyang eyes nuclear test (Keizo Nabeshima)

The issue of North Korea's nuclear-weapons development could reach a critical stage in June, one year after the suspension of six-party talks. U.S. intelligence says Pyongyang might conduct a nuclear test that month. Will the North return to the table and rejoin a process aimed at ending its nuclear program? Or will it test a nuclear weapon and bring the dialogue to a halt once and for all? The six-nation forum stands at a crossroads. In February, shortly after President George W. Bush entered his second term, North Korea declared that it possessed nuclear weapons and announced that it would "indefinitely suspend" the six-party talks. Pyongyang seeks direct talks with Washington to get a U.S. security guarantee for Kim Jong Il's regime. On May 13, a meeting between U.S. and North Korean working-level officials signaled Washington's willingness to accept the North Korean request for security assurances. The Bush administration has recognized North Korea as a "sovereign state," making it clear to Pyongyang that the United States has "no intention of attacking" that country.

International Herald Tribune, 31 May 2005

Now in rehearsal, the unthinkable (Sam Nunn and Pierre Lellouche)

LJUBLJANA: On Tuesday, we will conduct an exercise called Black Dawn before NATO's Parliamentary Assembly. In this simulation, a jihadist terrorist network acquires nuclear material, constructs a crude nuclear device, and detonates the bomb outside the gates of NATO headquarters. More than 300 representatives from NATO countries will witness a fictionalized account of this almost unthinkable tragedy: hundreds of thousands of casualties, severe global economic disruptions, and untold environmental and societal suffering in Brussels and across Europe. Out of this nightmare scenario, two fundamental truths are clear: Catastrophic terrorism can and must be prevented, and Europe can and must do more to prevent it. Though fictional, the Black Dawn scenario is based on real-world facts. Radical terror groups continue to plot attacks against targets in Europe and the United States and take a special interest in technologies that can inflict mass casualties, including nuclear weapons. The key ingredient needed for an atomic bomb, highly enriched uranium, is stored and used at civilian research reactors across the globe, including more than 50 sites in and around Europe, and many of these are poorly secured. The hardest part of building a crude nuclear device is obtaining the nuclear material.

Khaleej Times, 31 May 2005

France ready to help Libya with nuclear programme: Tripoli

TRIPOLI: France told Libya on Monday that it is prepared to help Libya develop its civilian nuclear energy programme, according to an official Libyan source. French Ambassador to Tripoli, Jean-Luc Sibiude, handed Libyan Foreign Minister Abdelrahman Shalgham an official note announcing France's readiness to cooperate with Tripoli on its nuclear power projects, the Jana news agency reported. A French delegation is expected here soon to work out the details of this cooperation. In Paris, a diplomatic source said France had "examined a request from Libya. We are going to enter into some form of cooperation with this country". France's favourable response to Tripoli's overtures was indeed communicated to the Libyan authorities by the French ambassador, he added. During a visit by President Jacques Chirac last November, Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi told the French head of state that his nation had renounced weapons of mass destruction and hoped that the transfer of technology would permit the oil-rich nation to develop a nuclear programme for peaceful means.