

The Hindu, 1 May 2008

Pat for India at IAEA convention

India got a pat on its back at a key IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) convention for steps taken to ensure foolproof safety of its 17 operating nuclear plants and six under construction with probability of any untoward incident being extremely remote. The country's first national report on nuclear power plants safety came in for all-round appreciation at the fourth Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety in Vienna under the IAEA aegis, said Chairman of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) S.K. Sharma on Wednesday. The convention lauded India for its work on probabilistic safety assessment which demonstrates that the probability of any untoward incident is extremely small (less than 0.000001 per year), Mr. Sharma told PTI.

The Indian Express, 1 May 2008

'N-deal shouldn't be hostage to Indo-Iran ties'

A former US government official has said while the civilian nuclear deal between India and the United States could well end up with the next administration, a new American President is not likely to scuttle what has been achieved of it. "I certainly hope that wouldn't happen," said Bruce Riedel, a former senior official of the National Security Council in-charge of Asia, when asked if a new President is likely to scuttle the civilian nuclear initiative. Riedel also said in an interview to the Council on Foreign Relations that American-Indian relations, including the nuke deal should not become hostage to New Delhi's ties with Iran.

The Times of India, 1 May 2008

US planned to nuke China in 1958

The United States Air Force had considered a plan to drop nuclear bombs on China during a confrontation over Taiwan in 1958 but it was overruled, declassified documents showed on Wednesday. When he learned about it, President Dwight Eisenhower instead required the air force to initially use conventional bombs against Chinese forces if the crisis escalated, according to previously secret US air force history. The president's instructions seemingly astounded the air force top brass but the author of one of the studies released said policymakers recognized that atomic strikes had "inherent disadvantages" because of the fall-out danger in the region as well as the risk of nuclear escalation.

The Indian Express, 2 May 2008

Rice raises new doubts about Iran's nuclear program

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice raised fresh doubts Thursday about the nature of Iran's nuclear program, saying if the clerical state really wanted only an avenue to peaceful atomic energy it could quickly have it. Instead, Iran is stonewalling on an attractive deal to trade away only the part of the program that could result in a nuclear weapon, Rice said ahead of a gathering of the U.N. nations that have presented a carrot-or-stick package to Iran. "I continue to suspect this is not at all about a civil nuclear program," Rice told reporters traveling with her. Iran's insistence that it be able to enrich uranium on its terms seems at cross-purposes with that goal, Rice said.

The Times of India, 2 May 2008

Iran goes to UN over Hillary's remarks

Iran complained to the United Nations on Wednesday about US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's comment that the US could "totally obliterate Iran in retaliation for a nuclear strike against Israel. Iran's deputy ambassador to the UN sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and the president of the Security Council expressing Iran's condemnation of "such a provocative, unwarranted and irresponsible statement. The New York senator had said she wanted to make clear to Tehran what she was prepared to do if she becomes president in the hope that this warning would deter any Iranian nuclear attack against the Jewish state. "I want the Iranians to know that if I'm the president, we will attack Iran (if it attacks Israel), she said.

The Indian Express, 2 May 2008

US lawmaker questions Pak's N-weapons security

Concerned over security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, a top Democratic lawmaker has raised serious questions about Islamabad being in possession of such warheads especially in the context of a "dramatic" rise of Islamic fundamentalism in that country. "Pakistan possesses nuclear weapons. It has an unstable government and a dramatic rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Many people have called it ground zero as far as terror is concerned" Democratic Senator Diane Feinstein said at a Senate Sub Committee hearing on Energy. "If you ask some of us what is the most threatening nuclear situation, we'd have to say it's Pakistan in terms of those nuclear facilities..."

The Indian Express, 2 May 2008

Break in the logjam? (Arundhati Ghose)

One cannot over-emphasise the significance of the interview given by India's former National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, to a TV channel, in which he categorically stated that he was convinced, after discussions with government officials and scientists, that the Indo-US 'deal' would not affect India's strategic programme. Read together with his earlier qualified support to the deal, that if he were to get credible guarantees from the government "about the integrity of what we had left behind three and a half years ago" he would advise the government to go ahead with the deal, his recent statement gets added meaning. Mishra has always been particular in clarifying that he was not a member of, and that his views did not necessarily reflect those of any political party. In other words, his views were offered as independent assessment.

The Indian Express, 3 May 2008

China's new n-submarine base sets off alarm bells

China has deployed its latest Jin class nuclear submarine at a massive new military facility at Sanya on the Hainan Island in South China Sea - its newest and nearest naval base to India. While the Indian Navy had been aware about the upcoming military facility for some time, satellite images for the first time show the extent of the base and the fact that the Jin Class submarine, which carries 12 nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles, has been deployed at Hainan. This has raised concern as the Chinese naval base, complete with an underground facility that can hide the movement of submarines from spy satellites, is barely 1,200 nautical miles from the strategic Malacca Strait and an access route to the

Indian Ocean - a region that New Delhi considers its personal security responsibility.

The Indian Express, 3 May 2008

Agreement reached on incentives for Iran on nuclear program

World powers agreed Friday to try again to lure Iran to the nuclear bargaining table with a repackaged set of carrots to accompany the stick of U.N. sanctions. Diplomats said the offer contained no major new enticements, but was meant to remind the clerical regime that talking is still an option. The central terms of a 2006 compromise stand: Iran could trade away worrisome elements of its nuclear program for economic and political incentives and the possibility of a better relationship with archrival Washington. Iran turned down that invitation, saying it came with insulting strings attached, and Western diplomats were hard-pressed to say why the response would be any different today.

The Korea Herald, 3 May 2008

Final nuke list 'in two weeks'

North Korea could submit its final nuclear programs declaration within a fortnight as differences over a plutonium program to be included in the list have been narrowed, sources said yesterday. The North could give China the declaration in one or two weeks, paving the way for six-party talks to reconvene by the end of this month, the sources said. "At the latest discussion, North Korea was extremely enthusiastic, asking what they needed to do to get off the list of states sponsoring terrorism," an official said on condition of anonymity. The Washington Times reported on Thursday that Pyongyang tentatively agreed during a visit by U.S. officials last week to give the United States thousands of records dating back to 1990 from its Yongbyon nuclear reactor.

The Hindu, 4 May 2008

UPA-Left committee on N-deal to meet Tuesday

The UPA-Left Committee on the Indo-US nuclear deal would meet here on Tuesday with the Left parties, providing outside support to the Congress-led ministry, sticking to their guns and the government saying it would seek the sense of Parliament on the matter. At their meeting on May six, the UPA and its Left supporters are slated to discuss the state of government's negotiations with the IAEA on an India-specific safeguards agreement for implementing the nuclear deal. "We will consider what the government will report to us on its talks with the IAEA. On that basis, we will take the issue forward," a senior Left leader told PTI when asked about the stand they would take at the upcoming meeting.

The Hindu, 4 May 2008

Sense of House needs to be taken on n-deal: panel

A Parliamentary Committee on Science and Technology has expressed the opinion that the civilian nuclear agreement with the U.S. has to be looked at from the larger perspective of national security and interest. In its report tabled in Parliament earlier this week, the Standing Committee observed: "Indo-U.S. nuclear agreement has caused serious concerns with regard to our foreign policy and security related issues on which our Parliament had to debate several times. The sense of the Parliament needs to be taken into consideration." The Committee's observations come at a time when the United Progressive Alliance-Left joint committee on the India-U.S. nuclear deal is scheduled to

meet here on May 6.

The Indian Express, 4 May 2008

Chinese n-submarines: Cabinet security panel to meet, Navy chief to brief NSA Narayanan

Caught on the backfoot over the extent of development of Sanya strategic facilities by China on Hainan Island in South China Sea, the UPA government is expected to convene a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) shortly with Navy Chief Admiral Sureesh Mehta preparing a detailed brief for National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan. Government sources confirmed to The Sunday Express that Admiral Mehta, who returned from his US trip on Friday night, would be briefed by Navy's intelligence and operational chiefs on Monday, after which the strategic implications would be taken up with Narayanan. Although the Indian Navy and Narayanan were aware of the Sanya naval facility on Hainan Island, the presence of four access tunnels on the mouth of the deep water base has come as a rude shock as it has serious strategic ramifications in the Indian Ocean.

The Hindu, 5 May 2008

UPA-Left panel meet tomorrow

The United Progressive Alliance (UPA)-Left Committee on the India-U.S. nuclear deal would meet here on Tuesday, with the Left maintaining that there would not be any change in its total opposition to the 123 agreement. The Left expected the government to explain what it had achieved in negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). "We don't know whether they will request us to allow them to take the safeguards agreement for ratification by the IAEA. But the Left is firm in its stand. We are opposed to the 123 civil nuclear agreement with the U.S.," said a senior Left leader. "We will consider what the government reports to us on its talks with the IAEA. On that basis, we will take the issue forward," said another leader.

The Hindu, 5 May 2008

Agni-III launch on May 7

The long-range nuclear-capable, surface-to-surface Agni-III ballistic missile is scheduled to be launched on May 7 from the Integrated Test Range on Wheeler Island, off the Orissa coast. This will be the third test of the missile having a range of more than 3,500 km. The first conducted on July 9, 2006 failed to meet the mission objectives, while the second trial held on April 12, 2007 ended in a roaring success. Top DRDO sources told The Hindu on Sunday that the proposed launch would be a "validation test" for higher performance in terms of weight and payload capacity. Apart from new software for navigation and guidance controls to achieve better accuracy, an improved re-entry material would be tested.

The Indian Express, 6 May 2008

N-deal meeting: Cong hopes Left is 'reasonable'

On the eve of the meeting of UPA-Left committee on Indo-US nuclear deal, PM Manmohan Singh said the Government was ready to discuss any matter. "We will discuss whatever issue our colleagues will like to raise," Singh told reporters at Rashtrapati

Bhavan on Monday. According to AICC spokesperson Manish Tewari, the Government has made an honest attempt to address the concerns of the Left. "But the fact of the matter is that the Left has allowed the Government or the Government has been able to persuade the Left to bring the deal to a stage whereby the draft agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is in place," Tewari told reporters.

The Hindu, 6 May 2008

Our forces can take care of security interests: Antony

Reacting to reports of China building a nuclear submarine base to increase its capabilities in the South China Sea, Defence Minister A. K. Antony on Monday said the Indian armed forces were capable of taking "full care of our security interests." Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Sureesh Mehta said India's concerns were the same as those of other nations in the region. What was of concern was the intense activity in the region to build nuclear submarines. India too was constructing a nuclear submarine, called Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV). It was also negotiating with Moscow for leasing two Russian nuclear submarines, the first of which could arrive next year.

The Indian Express, 7 May 2008

Left opposing nuclear deal as if Govt signing a pact with the devil: Advani

Leader of Opposition L K Advani on Tuesday accused the UPA government of not celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Pokhran-II nuclear blasts "due to animus towards the NDA" even at the cost of showing "disrespect" to former prime minister Indira Gandhi who took the first step towards making India a nuclear weapon state. Addressing a well-attended rally at the National College grounds, Advani said that this "distressing move" not only amounted to showing "disrespect" to Dr Homi Bhabha and other scientists but also the Indian armed forces who contributed to the Shakti series of nuclear tests on May 11-13, 1998. "This was one single step that made the world view India with respect among the comity of nations," he said.

The Hindu, 7 May 2008

Government seeks Left 'clearance' to cross IAEA stage

At the eighth meeting of the United Progressive Alliance-Left Committee on New Delhi-Washington civil nuclear cooperation on Tuesday, the government sought Left "clearance" to go ahead with clinching the India-specific safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Seeking further clarifications on the safeguards agreement, the Left parties said they would give their response later. "First, let us get the clarifications before the next meeting and only after that we will let the government know about our response," a top Left leader told The-Hindu after the meeting here, which lasted nearly two hours. External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who is also the convener of the committee, read out a brief statement in the presence of CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury.

The Hindu, 7 May 2008

Still committed to nuclear deal, says Saran

Prime Minister's special envoy Shyam Saran has denied that the government had not anticipated the opposition to the nuclear deal when it signed the July 18, 2005, statement

with the United States. He said the draft text of the safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had been almost agreed upon, but the government would go "through the political process" before inking it. During discussions in Parliament, after the signing of the Manmohan Singh-George Bush statement, concerns were expressed, but none found fault with the separation plan and other aspects.

The Hindu, 7 May 2008

Russia and U.S. sign nuclear pact

Russian and U.S. officials signed an important agreement on civilian nuclear power on Tuesday that will give the U.S. access to Russian technology and could hand Moscow lucrative deals for storing spent fuel. The deal, signed on the eve of Dmitry Medvedev's inauguration as President, signals a reversal in U.S. policy on cooperating with Russia on nuclear issues. Cooperation had cooled in recent years, mainly due to disagreements over how to handle the perceived nuclear threat from Iran. "The U.S. and Russia were once nuclear rivals," U.S. Ambassador William Burns said after a signing ceremony. "Today, we are nuclear partners with unique capabilities and unique responsibilities for global nuclear leadership."

Gulf Daily News, 7 May 2008

Iran's N-plant to start in September

Iran's first nuclear power plant located on the shores of the Gulf could come online as early as September, it emerged yesterday. Director General of the Iranian Foreign Ministry's Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), Dr Seyed Rasoul Mousvi, said he sees "no further delays" in the plant going on stream and producing its first power in the next four months. "The Russians, who are setting up the plant, have said they have all they need," he said. "It is only a matter of time." "We have all the sanctions from international bodies, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)," he added. He also dismissed safety fears expressed by countries in the region, including Bahrain, and said the plant would first be verified by the IAEA.

The Indian Express, 8 May 2008

N-deal: Manmohan hopes good sense will prevail

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday said he was still hopeful that "good sense will prevail" over the Indo-US nuclear deal. Singh, when asked about the fate of the deal, said, "We are discussing it and hope that good sense will prevail. I am negotiating in good faith." The PM's remarks come a day after the Left-UPA meeting on the deal in which the Government sought Left's support in going ahead with securing the India-specific safeguards agreement with the IAEA. Asked about concerns over the build up of Chinese nuclear submarines in India's vicinity, the PM said all precautions will be taken to protect the country. "It is a matter of great pride for our nation," he said.

The Indian Express, 8 May 2008

Govt admits lack of fuel delayed start-up of two n-power units

With Left allies blocking Government moves to secure the India-specific safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the uncertainty over the Indo-US nuclear deal has begun impacting the country's nuclear power plants. Fuel

shortage has forced the Nuclear Power Corporation to delay commissioning of two new units at the Rajasthan Atomic Power Station (RAPS). The two new units - RAPS 5 and 6 of 220 MWe each - were to be commissioned by February this year (RAPS 5 in August 2007 and RAPS 6 in February 2008). At a meeting last month to discuss the status of all power units in the north, official records show that NPCIL has admitted that these units are "delayed due to fuel problems".

The Hindu, 8 May 2008

Agni-III test-fired successfully

India's credible nuclear deterrence capability received a boost on Wednesday with the successful test-firing of Agni-III ballistic missile, which is capable of striking targets 3,500 km away, from the Wheeler Island, off the Orissa coast. The missile soared into the sky from a rail-mobile launcher at 9.56 a.m., carved a parabolic arc with its stages igniting and jettisoning on time, and a dummy payload splashing 3,000 km away in the Indian Ocean. The missile climbed to an altitude of 350 km and reached a velocity of over 4,000 metres a second. As the re-entry system plunged into the atmosphere, it worked to perfection, withstanding a searing temperature of over 2,500 degrees Celsius. The entire flight lasted 13 minutes and 20 seconds.

Tehran Times, 8 May 2008

No incentive can convince Iran to forgo its nuclear rights: envoy

Iran's Ambassador to Russia Gholam-Reza Ansari said here Wednesday that no incentive can replace and be equal to Iran's nuclear rights. Ansari told Radio Echo Moscow, "We just want our rights in the field and principally we are not seeking any concessions in that connection." Asked about the 5+1 group package of incentives proposed to Iran, Ansari said, "Though having no information about content of the Group's package, we hope that the incentives will in spirit be different from what has been offered to Iran over the past few years." He said that Iran has always been for dialogue on the nuclear issue and it should be said of course that talks on rights and sovereignty of a country is meaningless.

International Herald Tribune, 8 May 2008

U.S. declines to help present nuclear deal to Iran

World powers will in the coming days offer a revised package of incentives to Iran but Washington has refused to send its own envoy to help present the deal, diplomats and a U.S. official said on Thursday. Diplomats said the package, aimed at getting Iran to halt its nuclear work, could be delivered on Friday or over the weekend, most likely in Tehran, by the European Union's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana. In a change from normal protocol, political directors from France, Britain, Russia and China - permanent members of the U.N. Security Council - and Germany would probably go with Solana, diplomats said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Hindu, 9 May 2008

France for nuclear pact with India

France was looking forward to "large-scale nuclear co-operation" with India in the civilian arena once India reached a satisfactory agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), French Ambassador to

India Jerome Bonnafont said here on Thursday. France was even "ready to sign" a nuclear agreement with India, but only after India agreed to a safeguards agreement with the IAEA and received exemption from the NSG. "A bilateral agreement has already been technically finalised," Mr. Bonnafont told The Hindu. "The negotiators have said we have to come to a positive outcome as far as the technical content of the agreement is concerned."

The Hindu, 9 May 2008

India's latest strategic weapon (Editorial)

With the flawless flight of Agni-III on Wednesday, a powerful new weapon - and one that can be built upon in the years to come - is practically ready to enter India's strategic arsenal. While Agni-I can reach places 700 km away and Agni-II can take its warhead some 2,000 km, the all-solid, two-stage Agni-III missile has a range of over 3,500 km. Thus, the new missile will give the country's strategic forces the ability to strike well beyond the immediate neighbourhood. Moreover, adding a small third stage to the Agni-III configuration would produce a missile with a range of 5,000 km or more. Given DRDO's proven solid propulsion capabilities, this should pose no major problem.

The Indian Express, 10 May 2008

Go ahead with deal, says Kalam, won't hurt sovereignty

Two days before the tenth anniversary of Pokharan-II, one of the key figures behind the 1998 display of India's nuclear capability, former President A P J Abdul Kalam has said the country should go ahead with the civilian nuclear deal with the US as it "does not compromise India's sovereignty". He said India can "any time withdraw, if any national security need arises in future". Underlining that all of India's nuclear reactors were uranium-based, Kalam, in an email interview to The Indian Express, said since the country did not have enough uranium resources, it should look to getting it from countries which have it in abundance.

The Hindu, 10 May 2008

U.S. gag order on nuclear deal

With the India-U.S. civilian nuclear agreement remaining stalled, the State Department has issued a "virtual gag order," asking Congress to keep even unclassified information "secret," for fear that public disclosure could "torpedo" the deal. Lynne Weil, a spokeswoman for the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said the State Department provided a lot of information on the deal, but the panel agreed not to disclose the answers because "some data might be considered diplomatically sensitive." However, The Washington Post said on Friday that the deal was in "such desperate" straits that the State Department had imposed the "unusually strict condition" asking the lawmakers to "keep secret" the answers it had provided.

The Hindu, 10 May 2008

DRDO readying design for 5,000 km-range Agni-V

Riding on the success of the test-firing of the 3,500 km range, nuclear-capable Agni-III surface-to-surface ballistic missile, the DRDO scientists team involved in the Agni project is planning to complete the design for the first developmental flight of Agni-V (

5,000 km) in two years. Besides, the team also proposes to equip Agni-V in the later stages with multiple warheads and anti-ballistic missile counter measures. Talking to reporters here on Friday, Agni's programme director and Advanced Systems Laboratory director Avinash Chander said, "We are getting ready for the 5,000 km system. Designs are in progress."

The Indian Express, 11 May 2008

After Kalam OK to n-deal, SP signals a rethink: Let UPA give us new facts

The day Prime Minister Manmohan Singh welcomed former President A P J Abdul Kalam's endorsement of the Indo-US nuclear deal and said he hoped the country would listen to this "voice of wisdom," the Samajwadi Party hinted its willingness to review its strident stance against it provided the UPA government "shared details" with it as it has done with the Left. "So far, all facts related to the deal that we have got have come from Left parties. But if the government discusses with us and brings some more facts, we will go through them. If we get an invitation from the UPA to discuss matters related with the nuclear deal, the party will consider it," said Samajwadi Party General Secretary Amar Singh after a meeting with the PM today.

The Indian Express, 11 May 2008

10 years after n-tests, Pokharan museum could do with a loan waiver, its school with teachers

On Sunday, when the country quietly marks 10 years of the nuclear tests that pushed it into the N-weapon nations club, the dusty town of Pokharan, where the journey began, will be praying for a Rs 5-lakh waiver to pull its "Shakti Sthal" out of debt. At Khetolai village, just six kilometres from Ground Zero, children will be hoping that their school gets more teaching staff, especially for the senior section which has just one lecturer. The five nuclear blasts that shook Pokharan town are at best a fading recollection. The only memorial dedicated to the event - a museum named "Shakti Sthal Shaurya Sanghralay" after Ground Zero which is actually 30 km away - has been turned into a garden restaurant in an effort to repay an accumulating bank loan.

The Hindu, 11 May 2008

Sign the deal only after Left parties agree to it: NCP

Unhappy with the "big brother" attitude of the Congress towards junior allies in the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on Saturday said the India-U.S. nuclear deal should be signed only after the Left parties agree to it. Though the NCP is in favour of the deal, the draft political resolution - discussed at its extended working committee meeting here - clearly spells out the party's opposition to any confrontation with the Left parties over it. "Coalition dharma demands that decisions should be taken by consensus among the coalition partners, not by majority opinion of partners." Time and again in the draft resolution, the NCP has faulted the Congress for taking unilateral decisions.

The Hindu, 11 May 2008

Benazir was a courier in illegal nuclear arms trade, says book

Benazir Bhutto once played an active role in furthering Pakistan's clandestine nuclear

programme by personally taking CDs to and from North Korea on an official trip as Prime Minister, reveals a book by her Oxford college mate and journalist Shyam Bhatia who subsequently kept in regular touch with her. It was in the 90's that North Korea offered to provide long range missiles to Pakistan to offset the imbalance with India's integrated guided missile development programme then led by A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. Writing in "Goodbye Shehzadi" (princess), Mr. Bhatia says by 1993, Pakistan was under the spotlight as never before [on bartering enrichment technology for missiles], with Russia, India and western secret services monitoring every nuance of Pakistan's military research.

The Hindu, 11 May 2008

North Korea delivers nuclear papers

North Korea has delivered 18,000 pages of data on its nuclear weapons programme; and a delegation of five U.S. officials, carrying these documents in sealed boxes, crossed over to South Korea across the de-militarised zone on Saturday. The team was led by Sung Kim, director of the U.S. State Department's Office of Korean Affairs; and he made no substantive comment, at the Panmunjom Crossing, pending an evaluation of the papers by Washington. After the team crossed into South Korea, the U.S. State Department said the hand-over of the nuclear papers marked "an important first step" towards the verification of the completeness and correctness of the promised declaration by North Korea about the totality of its atomic arms-related activities.

The Hindu, 12 May 2008

"Vajpayee displayed courage"

The former President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, was on Sunday all praise for the "courage" shown by the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in deciding to go for the Pokhran tests in March 1998. "Mr. Vajpayee gave us the permission within a week of assuming the political office to establish India's expertise," he said here. Mr. Kalam said the testing was a "defining moment" in the country's history, next only to adopting the path of economic liberalisation in 1991.

Tehran Times, 12 May 2008

Iran-IAEA to resume talks today

Iran and the UN nuclear watchdog will hold new talks today over Tehran's long-running nuclear standoff with the West. The meeting would be the third since March 3, when the UN Security Council issued a third resolution imposing sanctions on the Islamic Republic for refusing to freeze its uranium enrichment program, which Iran says has civilian applications. "The IAEA delegation headed by Herman Nackaerts, the director for safeguards operations, starts its technical and specialist talks with Iranian experts on Monday," Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, said.

The Hindu, 13 May 2008

'Nuclear deal must for energy security'

As the energy demand in the country was growing by leaps and bounds, the India-United States nuclear deal was important to meet the nation's energy needs and get access to

uranium from abroad, Minister of State for Power Jairam Ramesh told journalists on the sidelines of a NTPC function here on Monday. Mr. Ramesh said the country faced severe uranium shortage and its nuclear plants were running at only 50 per cent capacity. To get access to uranium reserves and sources around the world, it was important that the deal materialised. "We have to rely on outside sources for uranium supply as our domestic production is not enough to meet our present and future needs," he added.

The Hindu, 13 May 2008

Government disowning Pokhran II: BJP

The Bharatiya Janata Party has charged the Congress-led government with disowning Pokhran II by ignoring the 10th anniversary of the nuclear explosions that had put India among nations with nuclear weapons. BJP spokesperson Ravi Shankar Prasad went even further, saying the United Progressive Alliance government had cut back on funds available to the nuclear energy programme; it had put in cold storage the country's inter-continental ballistic missile programme; and the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme has been closed. "Our charge is that India's nuclear deterrent capability is being compromised," he added.

VOA News, 14 May 2008

White House: No Security Guarantees for Iran in Nuclear Talks

The White House says security guarantees are not being considered in talks with Iran regarding its disputed nuclear program. Speaking from Israel where he is traveling with U.S. President George Bush, White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe told VOA that the best way for Iran to guarantee its security is to stop threatening to wipe Israel off the map and to stop trying to destabilize Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon. Earlier Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urged world powers to give security guarantees to Iran to help resolve the Iranian nuclear situation. Lavrov said the powers also should ensure Tehran has a better place in Middle East negotiations.

The Washington Post, 15 May 2008

Gates: U.S. Should Engage Iran With Incentives, Pressure

The United States should construct a combination of incentives and pressure to engage Iran, and may have missed earlier opportunities to begin a useful dialogue with Tehran, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said yesterday. "We need to figure out a way to develop some leverage . . . and then sit down and talk with them," Gates said. "If there is going to be a discussion, then they need something, too. We can't go to a discussion and be completely the demander, with them not feeling that they need anything from us." In the meantime, Gates told a meeting of the Academy of American Diplomacy, a group of retired diplomats, "my personal view would be we ought to look for ways outside of government to open up the channels and get more of a flow of people back and forth."

The Indian Express, 17 May 2008

Nuclear deal hopes fading: Karat

Terming the Left parties' blockade on the Indo-US nuclear deal as a "success", CPI(M) on Friday said as the prospects of operationalising the deal "fade away", the attacks discrediting the party were being stepped up to urge the Government to go ahead with the

deal. Hailing the elections to the Constituent Assembly in Nepal as a setback to the US diplomacy, party general secretary Prakash Karat said these "reverses" had come at a time "when in India opposition to the strategic alliance with the US has made progress with the success registered so far in blocking the Indo-US nuclear deal".

The Times of India, 17 May 2008

India in China's nuke crosshairs

China has more worrying news for us. Latest satellite pictures have identified a large area in central China with 58 launch pads for nuclear-capable ballistic missiles which apparently target north India and south Russia. Coming soon after the discovery of the sheer extent of China's underground nuclear submarine base at Hainan Island in South China Sea, it's yet another reality check for the Indian defence establishment. TOI had highlighted earlier this month how Hainan had jolted the Indian establishment, with navy chief Admiral Sureesh Mehta expressing concern about the number of nuclear submarines and long-range missiles "in our neighbourhood". The new satellite pictures show 58 launch pads and command and control facilities spread over a 2,000 sq km deployment area near Delingha and Da Qaidam in the northern parts of Qinghai province.

The Times of India, 17 May 2008

China testing nuclear plants for quake damage: Report

Chinese authorities have implemented an emergency nuclear safety plan following the giant quake in Sichuan province, French nuclear experts disclosed. The French experts of the Institute for Radiological Protection and Nuclear Safety (IRSN) said several nuclear installations not used for electricity generation were located in the south-western province at the epicentre of the quake. These included a manufacturing site for nuclear weapons which handles unstable chemical elements found in tritium, plutonium and uranium, as well as a nuclear reactor. The IRSN said that given the effects of Monday's 7.9-magnitude quake, "it is not possible at this stage to exclude damage to these installations." However, no radioactive leaks had yet been found, the Paris-based monitoring organisation said, citing memos from China's National Nuclear Safety Administration (NNSA).

The Times of India, 17 May 2008

Push It Through (Editorial)

There is hope yet for the nuclear deal. CPI leader A B Bardhan's recent statement that the Left would withdraw support from the government but not pull it down if it went ahead with the deal, opens an interesting window of opportunity. CPM bigwigs have remained studiously non-committal, with Sitaram Yechury claiming he has not seen Bardhan's televised interview when he made the statement, while Prakash Karat limited himself to saying there was no change in his party's position. As things stand, the Left supports the government from outside. If it were to withdraw that support but not take that to its logical conclusion - voting with the BJP to pull down the government - the UPA government can still continue in the few months left in its term.

The Indian Express, 19 May 2008

I'm very hopeful that N-deal will happen: Lalu

Hoping that the Indo-US nuclear deal will go through, Railway Minister Lalu Prasad has claimed that "most misunderstandings" with the Left on the issue have been cleared. "I am very, very hopeful that the deal will happen which is in India's favour," said the RJD leader, who was in Kuala Lumpur on a three-day visit to witness the signing of the one million-dollar contract awarded by the Malaysian Government to public sector company IRCON. The minister said the atmosphere during the discussions with the Left was very "cordial". "We have been discussing queries by the Left. It has been a very, very cordial atmosphere. When they want more clarification, we have cleared most misunderstandings," he said.

The Indian Express, 19 May 2008

NPCIL omits 'import', 'shutdown' from n-fuel records

The gravity of nuclear fuel shortage is something the country's nuclear power establishment would never openly admit. The Indo-US nuclear deal was expected to ease the situation and make imports of fuel possible so that our existing plants could be run at higher capacity rather than the average 40-50 per cent PLF, on account of shortages. But given the current stalemate on the Indo-US nuclear deal, and with fresh indigenous supplies not forthcoming, the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) has been forced to change its position and has got words such as "import" of fuel, "shutting of units" deleted from recorded minutes on the status of their upcoming nuclear units.

The Hindu, 19 May 2008

Nuclear facilities safe and secure, says China

All the nuclear facilities in the earthquake-hit areas are safe and secure, said a senior military officer on Sunday. Ma Jian, Deputy Director of the Combat Department of the General Staff Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), said nuclear facilities had been put under strict protection by forces of the armed police and PLA immediately after the earthquake struck on May 12. "I could say in a responsible manner that all these facilities are safe and secure," said Mr. Ma. "There is no problem at all." To a question about whether military facilities in Sichuan were affected, Mr. Ma said some of the facilities were slightly affected. The military has conducted a thorough inspection of all the facilities and garrisons involved and found no major damage to the facilities, he added.

Hindustan Times, 19 May 2008

Go on, bite the bullet (Rajdeep Sardesai)

...'Legacy' is an important context in which historians judge pms. Nehru's legacy lay in establishing the foundations of a modern democracy; Indira built on the idea of strong nationhood; Rao could claim to have ushered in economic liberalisation; Vajpayee will perhaps see Pokhran II as a decisive moment and even V.P. Singh in his one year could claim to have bequeathed reservation politics to future generations. In his fifth year as PM, Singh must surely wonder how history will judge him. An honest, well-intentioned person may be a character certificate, it cannot be a legacy. Which is why the next few weeks in the Indo-US nuclear treaty negotiations could be critical. The treaty, in a sense, could define his prime ministership. Does he have the political courage to defy the left and press ahead with the treaty? Or will he choose survival over personal conviction?

The Hindu, 20 May 2008

Nuclear deal is not dead but down to last days: Mulford

While the New Delhi-Washington civilian nuclear deal is "not dead," it is "down to the last days," David Mulford, U.S. Ambassador to India, said on Monday. If Indian approval came through by June, the U.S. Congress would still be able to process it, he added. During a visit to The Hindu office here, Mr. Mulford made it clear that while Congress could rework its timetables, time was running short. "We're clearly at the point where there is, practically speaking, only a very narrow window to complete the process." The U.S. administration earlier indicated that India's decision to go forward had to come through early this year to meet the schedule prescribed by Congress when it passed the Hyde Act.

The Hindu, 20 May 2008

'Nuclear deal will have little effect on broad framework of bilateral ties'

...in the case of the civil nuclear agreement, we have not yet completed that agreement - and people say, "Well, isn't that going to damage the relationship"? The answer to that, I think, is that it will have very little effect on the broad exterior part of the relationship. I think at the heart of the relationship, it's unlikely to have a significant impact, but I don't think you can say it won't have any, simply because there is a level of trust that is built up between the two partners on things and both sides have degrees of discretion in what they can do. So whether or not the same breakthrough feeling on discretionary issues will persist, or will suffer a period of setback or pause, I just don't think anybody can really know. But none of this will, in my view, change the essential direction and health of the relationship.

The Hindu, 21 May 2008

Fate of nuclear deal in hands of Left: Minister

Union Minister of State for Commerce Ashwani Kumar on Tuesday acknowledged that the fate of the controversial India-U.S. nuclear deal was now in the hands of the Left parties. Though their opposition to it was "incomprehensible" the government had no intention of bypassing them, he said. While insisting that it was the "best negotiated" deal and had "overwhelming" public support, Dr. Kumar made clear that the government would not push it through unless all its allies agreed on it. Was there any prospect at all of the deal being signed during the current term of the Bush administration and in accordance the timetable set by Americans? "Whether it will happen or not, I can't say. I hope that the government interlocutors will be able to persuade our allies," Dr. Kumar said.

The Korea Herald, 21 May 2008

Steps quicken on nuke talks

Chief nuclear negotiators from South Korea, Japan and the United States said Monday that the denuclearization talks on North Korea would speed up over the next few weeks. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said after a trilateral meeting in Washington that he anticipated North Korea to submit the declaration of its nuclear programs soon. "We expect to have a quickening pace in the next few weeks," Hill said.

"I think we are getting to the point where the declaration is coming." As part of the accelerating negotiation, Hill said he would travel to meet his counterparts in Moscow and Beijing. He said he did not plan to visit Pyongyang.

The Hindu, 22 May 2008

India, the NSG and cluster bombs (Siddharth Varadarajan)

The Indo-U.S. nuclear deal is not part of the principal agenda of the Nuclear Suppliers Group which is meeting this week in Berlin for its annual plenary. Though Indian negotiators have finalised the draft of an India-specific safeguards agreement, the lack of domestic political consensus means the government is not yet in a position to submit the agreement to the International Atomic Energy Agency Board for formal approval. Vienna being a porous place, one can safely assume the United States has a pretty good idea of what India and the IAEA secretariat have negotiated. New Delhi, on the other hand, is completely in the dark about what kind of exemption the Bush administration is prepared to seek from the nuclear cartel's export guidelines for India.

The Indian Express, 23 May 2008

Still hopeful of nuclear deal: Foreign Secy

Days ahead of a crucial Left-UPA meeting on the Indo-US civil nuclear deal, Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon said the Government is still hopeful that the deal will come through. However, he refused to comment on when India would approach the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). The Foreign Secretary said it would be wrong to speculate on when India would approach NSG as "we are still doing political work here in India?". Answering a query on whether the deal will be called off due to lack of political consensus, he said there is still hope for a comeback.

The Indian Express, 23 May 2008

No n-deal in UPA report card

While Prime Minister Manmohan Singh kept mum on the Indo-US nuclear deal in his speech at the fourth anniversary celebrations of the UPA Government on Thursday, the "Report to the People: 2004-08" released by the PM had a passing reference to the issue. "Indo-US cooperation now spans a wide spectrum, including high technology, space, agriculture, education, trade and economic linkages, and there is a prospect of civil nuclear cooperation," is how the 63-page report describes the nuke deal.

The Hindu, 23 May 2008

Nine scenarios for the nuclear endgame reality check (Siddharth Varadarajan)

After four rounds of shadow-boxing in the coordination committee on the Indo-United States nuclear deal, it has become obvious that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh does not have a credible strategy to deal with either the concerns of the Left parties or his own government. When the committee was first mooted last November, it was officially meant to parse and then approve or reject the draft safeguards agreement being negotiated with the International Atomic Energy Agency. But though the draft has been ready for some time now, the government has chosen not to share the text. While confidentiality is an issue, the government knows it cannot proceed without taking the Left into confidence.

The Hindu, 24 May 2008

Nuclear-capable Prithvi-II test-fired successfully

Nuclear-capable, 350-km range surface-to-surface ballistic missile, Prithvi-II, was successfully test-fired in a "strategic mode in a completely user configuration" by the Army from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Balasore, off the Orissa coast on Friday. The liquid-fuelled missile, carrying a dummy payload of 500 kg, lifted off from its mobile launcher at 10.26 a.m., zoomed to a peak altitude of 43.5 km and zeroed in on the impact point, 350 km away in the sea, following a flight time of 483 seconds. Ships equipped with ranging systems and located near the impact point recorded the entire event. All the radar systems at the ITR - Long Range Tracking Radar, Konarak and Multi-Function Tracking Radar, Paradeep - tracked the vehicle and confirmed the normalcy of the trajectory.

The Hindu, 24 May 2008

Better than Pakistani variants

The Prithvi-II missile, results showed, was more accurate than Pakistani variants. The surface-to-surface Prithvi-II achieved single digit accuracy which was better than the results achieved by the Pakistan Army for missiles of the same range. The close to zero circular error probability was achieved due to an improved aided inertial navigation system, said sources here. The 350 km-range missile also has the features to deceive anti-ballistic missiles. The missile was taken from routine production and was part of the Army's efforts to familiarise itself with its features. The missile covered 350 km in just over eight minutes reaching a peak altitude of 43.5 km.

The Hindu, 24 May 2008

Australia plans joining consensus of NSG, IAEA

Australia could consider joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and the International Atomic Energy Association in arriving at a consensus to provide India uranium for its power plants if the 123 agreement with the U.S. is ratified by Parliament. The statement assumes significance as it comes on the heels of the Indian government conceding that uranium shortage was affecting the functioning of nuclear plants, especially the Rajasthan Atomic Power Plant. "The Labor Party has a strong policy of not exporting uranium to any country that has not signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT). We have made this clear to Indian officials that we are bound by the party policy. But if the 123 agreement is passed by Indian Parliament we could consider joining a consensus of the NSG and IAEA," Australian Foreign Minister Steve Smith told a group of Indian journalists on a trip sponsored by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Times of India, 24 May 2008

British N-sub crashes after 'tracing paper blunder'

A British nuclear submarine crashed into the seabed after tracing paper was used to help plot its course during a training exercise, obscuring vital symbols from student commanders, reports said on Friday. The hunter-killer sub HMS Trafalgar needed five million pounds worth of repairs after the incident, which occurred off the coast of

western Scotland. Three crewmen were injured after the 5,200-tonne submarine steered into the seabed at a depth of 165 feet off the Isle of Skye in 2002, according to a ministry of defence inquiry report cited by press reports. The trainee officers were undergoing a test called "Pressure Cooker," to simulate a real-life situation. As well as tracing paper, Post-It notes were also stuck on maps while the sub's satellite navigation system was turned off.

Tehran Times, 25 May 2008

Iran will respond in kind to 5+1 package: Mottaki

Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki said here on Saturday that Iran will respond to the 5+1 group's package in the same way that it responds to Tehran's proposals. "Tehran's approach toward the 5+1 group's proposals package will respond in kind to the way they deal with Iran's proposals package," Mottaki said in a question-and-answer session with students at Shahid Beheshti University. The West has announced that it will carefully study Iran's package, therefore "whenever their package would be submitted to Iran, we will study it," he explained.

The Indian Express, 25 May 2008

Diplomats: China is middleman between NKorea, IAEA

The U.S. has agreed to share documents on North Korea's secretive nuclear program with the U.N. nuclear monitor and is ready to enlist China as the middleman in the delicate process, diplomats have told The Associated Press. At issue are 18,500 pages of documentation provided by Pyongyang earlier this month. Washington plans to scrutinize the technical logs from the North's Yongbyon reactor to see if North Korea is telling the truth about a bomb program that it has agreed to trade away for economic and political rewards. Two diplomats, speaking separately to the AP recently, said that Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill agreed to the plan with Chinese officials and Mohamed ElBaradei, chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in the past two weeks.

The Indian Express, 26 May 2008

IAEA: Iran may be withholding info in nuke probe

Iran may be withholding information needed to establish whether it tried to make nuclear arms, the International Atomic Energy Agency said Monday in an unusually strongly worded report. The tone of the language suggesting Tehran continues to stonewall the U.N. nuclear monitor revealed a glimpse of the frustration felt by agency investigators stymied in their attempts to gain full answers to suspicious aspects of Iran's past nuclear activities. A senior U.N. official familiar with the investigation into Iran's nuclear program said none of the dozens of agency reports issued in that context had ever been as plain spoken in calling Tehran to task for not being forthright. He agreed to discuss the report only if granted anonymity because he was not authorized to comment to the media.

The Hindu, 27 May 2008

UPA-Left committee meet postponed

The meeting of UPA-Left Committee on nuclear issue, scheduled for Wednesday, has been postponed, putting back further a decision on whether India should sign the

safeguards agreement with IAEA. The meeting is now expected in the first half of next month. External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who is the convenor of the committee, said the meeting has been deferred due to "unavailability of some members" of the panel. The meeting, eighth since November last, was to discuss whether India should sign the safeguards agreement with IAEA, negotiations for which have already been concluded. Due to the postponement, India will miss a possible chance of discussing the safeguards agreement with IAEA Board of Directors at its scheduled meeting early next month.

The Indian Express, 27 May 2008

Uranium fuel for Kudankulam n-reactor arrives

The first consignment of uranium fuel for the soon-to-be-commissioned Unit-1 of Kudankulam nuclear reactor in Tamil Nadu has arrived from Russia, a statement from the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) said. The Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project, a result of a 1988 bilateral agreement between India and the then USSR, comprises two units of 1,000 MW each, both of which are in advanced stages of completion. Unit-1, for which the fuel arrived on Sunday, is now scheduled to be commissioned by June next year, a year and half later than its targeted December 2007 deadline. The second unit, scheduled to be operational by December this year, would be commissioned only by March 2010.

The Times of India, 27 May 2008

N-deal not dead, India tells NSG

Within the country, the UPA government has not managed the promised consensus on the India-US nuclear deal with the Left parties, even postponing the next UPA-Left committee meeting scheduled for May 28. But internationally, the government is signalling to its interlocutors that it is not giving up just yet. At last week's plenary meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in Berlin, Indian officials briefed the grouping on the state of play on the nuclear deal and the IAEA safeguards agreement. The briefing was done by senior officials of the DAE and Venkatesh Varma, MEA's pointperson on the IAEA safeguards negotiations. The message from India was that the deal was not dead and would be completed. The briefing was done on the sidelines of the meeting, and concentrated on the safeguards agreement.

The Times of India, 27 May 2008

Iran still refusing to suspend uranium enrichment: IAEA

Iran is continuing to defy UN demands that it suspend uranium enrichment, the UN atomic watchdog said on Monday. "Contrary to the decisions of the (UN) Security Council, Iran has not suspended its enrichment related activities," the International Atomic Energy Agency wrote in its latest report on Tehran's disputed nuclear drive. In all, Iran was operating about 3,500 uranium-enriching centrifuges at its main nuclear site in Natanz, the report said. The Islamic republic has told the IAEA it hopes to have some 6,000 centrifuges up and running by the end of the summer, a target which agency experts have no reason to doubt, a senior official close to the Vienna-based watchdog said.

International Herald Tribune, 27 May 2008

UN nuclear agency reports 'serious concern' over Iranian program

The International Atomic Energy Agency, in an unusually blunt and detailed report, said that Iran's suspected research into the development of nuclear weapons remained "a matter of serious concern" and that Iran continued to owe the agency "substantial explanations." The nine-page report, released Monday, accused the Iranians of a willful lack of cooperation, particularly in answering allegations that its nuclear program may be intended more for military use than for energy generation. Part of the agency's case hinges on 18 documents listed in the report and presented to Iran that, according to Western intelligence agencies, indicate the Iranians have ventured into explosives, uranium processing and a missile warhead design - activities that could be associated with constructing nuclear weapons.

The Hindu, 28 May 2008

France for promoting nuclear energy to fight climate change

France is quite keen on nuclear energy being included as a mitigation measure under the Kyoto Protocol to tackle climate change though the European Union (EU) is not in favour of it, according to a French diplomat. A formal pitch is yet to be made in this direction. This assumes significance in the light of the fact that France has initialled an agreement with India on nuclear civil cooperation, which can be formalised only after it signs a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) changes its rules. Along with the U.S., France promotes nuclear energy as an alternative to fossil fuels, which lead to global warming with disastrous effects. This perception could lead to a nuclear civil cooperation with India in a specific programme, the diplomat said.

The Indian Express, 28 May 2008

N-deal: Cong readies for final showdown

With the Left making noises about reviewing support to the UPA Government regardless of the Indo-US nuclear deal, there is growing restlessness in the ruling Congress camp about the need to take a final call on the deal. Many top Congress leaders are of the view that since abandoning the deal is no guarantee for the Left's support till the end of the Government's tenure, it should think of going ahead with the deal that could be showcased as a UPA achievement in securing energy security for the country and providing power to farmers. There are also indications that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh desires to express himself on the deal and to this end a high-level meeting of officials involved in negotiations could be held shortly.

The Hindu, 28 May 2008

Time for action on the civilian nuclear deal (M.R. Srinivasan)

Abdul Kalam, former President of India, spoke recently at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Mumbai. For the first time, he openly endorsed India entering into civil nuclear energy cooperation with the United States of America and other advanced countries. In his earlier statements, he had emphasised the importance of developing thorium as a source of energy production in view of its relative abundance in India. From the time of Homi Bhabha, the long-term importance of thorium has been well recognised. But what

some of the nuclear experts who have suggested that we should shun the uranium option and work solely on the thorium option have overlooked is this basic fact. An adequate programme of first generation nuclear reactors using natural or enriched uranium is an inescapable technological necessity if we are to produce plutonium in adequate quantities to launch a substantial programme of thorium utilisation.

BBC News, 28 May 2008

Brown expands nuclear ambitions

Gordon Brown has said the UK needs to increase its nuclear power capacity - raising the prospect of plants being built in new locations. The prime minister said that with oil prices soaring, it was time to be "more ambitious" for nuclear plans. No 10 sources said it was "open" as to whether new sites might be needed. Ministers announced in January they backed new plants, but the focus was on replacing existing nuclear capacity as plants reached the end of their life. And a review of possible sites published at the same time focused on 14 locations where there have been nuclear power plants before. Since then Business Secretary John Hutton has said he wants the nuclear industry to go beyond replacing its 23 ageing reactors, which provide 20% of the UK's electricity.

The Indian Express, 29 May 2008

N-deal: Delhi debates, others do it

While the Indo-US nuclear deal gets delayed over Left opposition and the domestic programme faces a severe uranium crunch, international nuclear politics has only gained momentum in the past month with all key powers, including Russia and China, securing deals to expand civilian nuclear commerce in the face of rising oil prices and to counter climate change. Last week, Russia and China, the two countries with which the Left wants India to forge a stronger alliance, signed a \$1-billion nuclear deal which, among other things, commits Russia to construct a uranium enrichment plant in China. The deal was signed during the visit of new Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to China.

The Indian Express, 29 May 2008

McCain vows to back Indo-US nuclear deal

Stroglly backing the stalled civilian nuclear deal with India, presumptive Republican presidential candidate John McCain has said it will strengthen the US' ties with the world's largest democracy and further involve New Delhi in non-proliferation efforts. "I support the US-India Civil Nuclear Accord as a means of strengthening our relationship with the world's largest democracy, and further involving India in the fight against proliferation," McCain said in a major foreign policy speech at the University of Denver, Colorado. McCain, 71, who has sealed the Republican nomination for the November presidential elections said the US should engage actively with both India and Pakistan to improve the security of nuclear stockpiles and weapons materials.

The Indian Express, 29 May 2008

Sonia's choice (K. Subrahmanyam)

...Rajiv Gandhi wanted to integrate India technologically with the world. He laid the foundation of India's nuclear weapons programme and of the expansion of its civil nuclear programme by initiating negotiations with Russia on the Kudankulam project.

Are we going to sustain and nurture his legacy or are we going to wind it up because the Left threatens to withdraw its support to the government if India were to continue the Rajiv legacy of technologically integrating with the world? All this for a few more months in office?...People all over the country understand that the decision on nurturing Rajiv Gandhi's legacy of the nuclear issue rests wholly with Sonia Gandhi. Manmohan Singh would have gone ahead with it on his own. She should now listen to her inner voice and not depend upon the advice of her veteran party advisors.

Gulf Daily News, 29 May 2008

End nuclear row call by GCC-EU

Top GCC and EU officials called for diplomatic solution over the Iranian nuclear programme. They reaffirmed the importance of reaching a negotiated solution to the crisis and urged for full compliance with the requirements set by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This comes as part of a joint communique issued at the end of the 18th session of the EU-GCC Joint Council held recently in Brussels. The officials said that the international community was united and determined to uphold the authority of the IAEA and the UNSC. They emphasised their commitment to fully implement all relevant UNSC resolutions.

The Times of India, 29 May 2008

Iran must explain IAEA nuclear report: Rice

Iran has much to explain about a new report by the UN nuclear watchdog that says its alleged research into nuclear warheads remains of great concern, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Wednesday. The International Atomic Energy Agency report issued earlier this week in Vienna said Tehran should provide more information on its missile-related activities and was holding back information on high-explosives testing relating to its nuclear programme. "I think right now the Iranians have a lot of explaining to do about the IAEA report, which essentially sees them as not cooperating on some very important dark questions that the international community has about their programmes," Rice told reporters on her plane on the way to an international conference on Iraq in Stockholm.

The Hindu, 30 May 2008

UPA-Left panel to meet on June 18

The UPA-Left joint committee on the India-U.S. nuclear deal will meet here on June 18. The meeting, scheduled for May 28, was put off as some Ministers were travelling abroad. The new date was fixed after mutual consultations and the Left parties were informed by the government on Thursday. The meeting is expected to further discuss India-specific safeguards agreement, which the government negotiators finalised with the IAEA.

The Korea Herald, 30 May 2008

Weeks to pass before nuclear talks open

North Korea's final declaration will need more work before it can be submitted to the six-party talks, which are likely to take weeks to reopen, involved parties said. After two days of bilateral talks with North Korean counterpart Kim Kye-gwan, chief U.S.

negotiator Christopher Hill said in Beijing on Wednesday that he hoped they would be able to yield an "overall timeframe." "We're certainly moving ahead but I'm not prepared at this time to announce any timetable," Hill told reporters. Hill also said that a declaration would not come before technical meetings that would be held in the next few weeks. Sources here said the technical meetings likely refer to setting a mechanism for the verification of the declaration.

The Hindu, 31 May 2008

A. Q. Khan denies selling nuclear technology

For four years, Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, has lived in the shadows, confined to his Islamabad home since a tearful televised confession in which he admitted selling nuclear technology to Iran, North Korea and Libya. On Thursday, the 76-year-old scientist returned to the spotlight with a bold new twist: that he had not meant a word of his earlier admission. In his first western media interview since 2004, Mr. Khan said the confession had been forced upon him by President Pervez Musharraf. "It was not of my own free will. It was handed into my hand," he said. More worryingly, he swore never to cooperate with investigators from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), despite persistent fears that nuclear technology traded by his accomplices could fall into terrorist hands.

The Indian Express, 31 May 2008

UPA Govt to 'rekindle' debate over nuclear disarmament

Twenty years after former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's plan on disarmament was presented at the United Nations General Assembly, the Congress-led UPA Government is rolling out the red carpet for a host of experts to revive a debate over "de-weaponisation" of nuclear power states. A two-day international conference on "Towards a World free of Nuclear Weapons" will be organised by the Indian Council for World Affairs, a Ministry of External affairs think-tank, in association with Centre for Strategic and International Studies on June 9 and 10. Interestingly, this coincides with the 20th anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi's famous speech at the UNGA on June 9, 1988, which was titled, "A world free of nuclear weapons".