

ASIA-PACIFIC MEET / U.S., JAPAN, S. KOREA ISSUE JOINT STATEMENT

Scrap n-programme, Pyongyang told

LOS CABOS (MEXICO), OCT. 27. The United States, Japan and South Korea have demanded that North Korea quickly dismantle its nuclear weapons programme as the U.S. President, George W. Bush, worked to isolate Pyongyang. In a joint statement,

Mr. Bush, the Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, and the South Korean President, Kim Dae-jung, reaffirmed a commitment for a peaceful Korean peninsula free of nuclear weapons. "The three leaders called upon North Korea to dis-

mantle this programme in a prompt and verifiable manner," the statement said.

The statement spelled out no consequences for inaction. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said diplomatic and political pressure would be applied and that there has been no discussions yet on economic penalties or other sanctions.

North Korea triggered a crisis by admitting earlier this month it had violated a 1994 agreement with the U.S., Japan and South Korea to control its nuclear programme. U.S. officials believe the programme has spawned one or two nuclear bombs.

The three leaders agreed that "North Korea's relations with the international community now depend upon prompt and visible actions to dismantle its programme to produce highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons."

Mr. Bush, who has been threatening military action against Iraq over Baghdad's suspected weapons of mass destruction, said in the statement that the U.S. "has no intention of invading North Korea."

The leaders met on the fringes of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

Mr. Bush is seeking a common strategy for dealing peacefully with the North Korean challenge by consulting key allies in Asia as well as Russia and Europe.

He received a pledge to seek a nuclear-free Korean peninsula on Friday from the Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, at the Bush ranch in Texas. China is North Korea's biggest provider of economic aid. — AP, AFP



COLLECTIVE DISAPPROVAL: The U.S. President, George Bush, the South Korean President, Kim Dae-jung (left), and the Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi (right), in Los Cabos, Mexico, on Saturday. — AP

NEWS 11/10

U.S. gives space to ISRO

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 29. While India and the U.S. have a long way to go in resolving their differences on proliferation, the Bush administration has come up with at least one positive gesture in last week's bilateral talks on issues relating to weapons of mass destruction.

Washington has promised New Delhi that it will no longer put political obstacles in the way of potential customers who want to launch their satellites, which do not have American components, on India's space vehicles.

As India's space launch programme gathered momentum in recent years, it came up against a big problem. Many nations have been keen to put their satellites into orbit using the cheaper fare offered by the Indian Space Research Organisation's work horse, PSLV. But they could not overcome American pressure not to use Indian launch vehicles.

Now with the U.S. agreeing to end its objections, PSLV should find a lot more takers on the space market. Of course, the U.S. will remain opposed to India launching satellites that have American parts.

Meanwhile, discussion on other issues of interest to India, for example, loosening the controls over the transfer of dual use technologies and expanding high technology trade, will continue. The U.S. Under Secretary for Commerce, Kenneth Juster, will be here in a few weeks to discuss the subject.

While the movement on technological cooperation remains somewhat slow, it is in the political realm that there is some interesting advance. While the rest of the world is decrying the new National Security Strategy document issued by the Bush administration, India has some reasons to be pleased.

The annual assessment of national security strategy by the White House is mandat-

ed by the U.S. Congress. In its first assessment of the international situation, the Bush administration has elevated India to the category of major powers, along with Russia and China.

In the past, the Clinton administration used to lump India along with Pakistan in the regional context of South Asia and the problem of nuclear non-proliferation. Year after year, the Clinton document used to say, the U.S. will seek to "cap, reduce and eliminate over a period of time", the

nuclear and missile capabilities of the two nations.

DIPLOMATIC NOTEBOOK

In a document that is so focussed on threats to America from weapons of mass destruction, the Bush administration now just points to the remaining differences with India on nuclear and missile programmes, and talks of an effort to defuse military tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad.

In its discussion on ties with major power centres, the Bush administration starts with its treaty-allies in Europe and Asia, and moves on to discuss relations with Russia, India and China in that order.

On India, the administration says, "we have a common interest in the free flow of commerce, including through the vital sea lanes of the Indian Ocean... (and) share an interest in fighting terrorism and in creating a strategically stable Asia".

Is South Asia heading for a new season of peace? After the talks that have begun on ending the tragic civil war in Sri Lanka, expectations are quite high that India and Pakistan might begin to talk after the elections in Kashmir and Pakistan are over in the next couple of weeks.

Optimism is also rising on the prospects for a serious engagement between the Chi-

nese Government and the Tibetan exiles. Two envoys of the Dalai Lama who were recently in China for consultations in Beijing and Lhasa were back in Dharamshala last week to brief the exiled leadership. Formal talks on Tibetan demands for autonomy could begin next year, most probably in July according to reports from Dharamshala.

Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama's representative in the U.S. who led the team to China, in a statement from Dharamshala expressed optimism on future engagement with Beijing. "His Holiness (the Dalai Lama) welcomed the positive gesture of the leadership in Beijing in receiving our delegation and was very pleased that a renewed contact has been established," he said in the statement.

Much of the diplomatic activity is humdrum. But a departure from routine can be used effectively to signal political displeasure. The Bush administration has not done the usual courtesy of congratulating the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, on his election victory. Nor has the U.S. President, George W. Bush, acknowledged the letter from the Chancellor apologising for the comment of one of his Ministers comparing the American President to Hitler.

The Bush administration is very upset with Mr. Schroeder for whipping up anti-American sentiment to squeak through the elections. At the NATO meeting over the weekend in Europe, the German Defence Minister was late in showing up at a special briefing on Iraq organised by the Americans.

By the time he turned up, the American Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, had conveniently departed.

An embarrassing formal meeting between the two Defence Ministers has been avoided.

Some suspect Mr. Rumsfeld was never interested in seeing him.