

IRAN N-PROGRAMME ■ US had demanded that Moscow stop construction of a new nuclear facility

Bushehr no threat to proliferation: Russia

AGENCIES
BISHKEK, APRIL 20

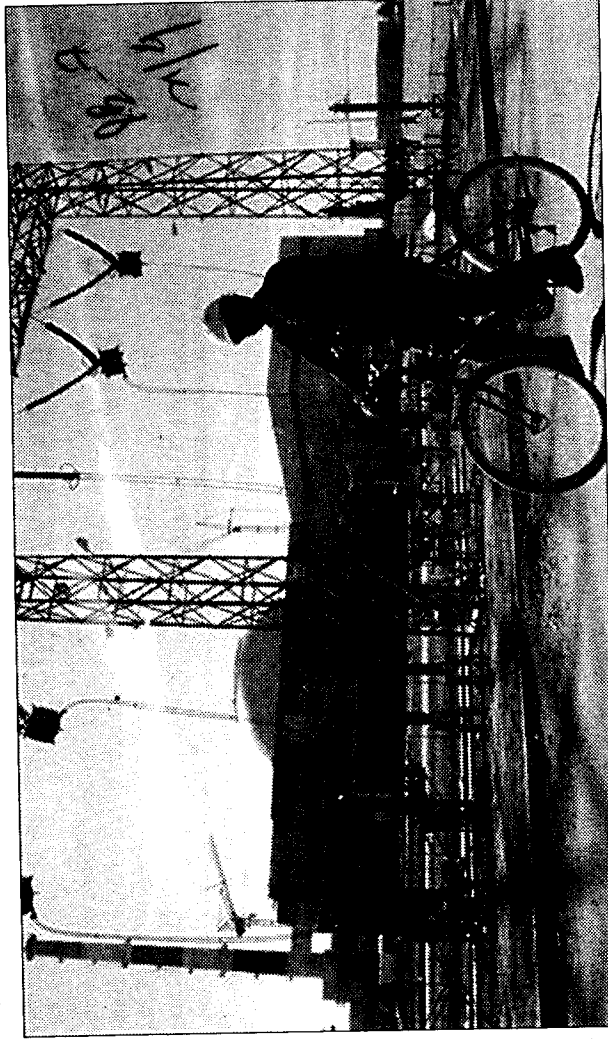
A NUCLEAR power station being built by Russia in Iran presents no threat, Moscow's top nuclear official said here on Thursday following a US demand for the project to be shut down.

"The building of the Bushehr nuclear power station does not threaten the non-proliferation regime," Rosatom Nuclear Agency head Sergei Kiriyenko told journalists in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek.

US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns said during a visit to Moscow on Thursday that "it is important for countries to stop cooperation with Iran on nuclear issues, even on civilian nuclear issues like the Bushehr facility."

"Many countries are continuing to permit the export of dual-use materials that could be used, and we think in some cases are being used, to help the growth of Iran's nuclear industry," Burns said.

"It is the view of my government that it would be appropriate now for those individual gov-



The under-construction nuclear power station at Bushehr in Iran

ernments to stop that practice and no longer permit it."

Meanwhile, the prospect of the US using force to halt Iran's nuclear programme is empty talk, Iranian Defence Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar said on Thursday.

"The US has been threatening Iran for 27 years and this is not new for us. Therefore we are

never afraid of US threats," Najjar told reporters during a visit to neighbouring Azerbaijan. "If you take into account the fact that they are not doing anything, it shows this is just talk," he said.

"We are ready to resolve all issues through negotiations (but) if we are confronted with something, we are ready to deal with it," the minister added.

Iranian nuclear negotiators were in Moscow on Thursday but there was no word on who they were meeting or what they were discussing. Late on Wednesday the delegation met representatives of the so-called EU3—Britain, France and Germany, but a British diplomat said there had been no breakthrough.

Blair rules out invasion of Iran

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, APRIL 20

BRITISH Prime Minister Tony Blair said today that no one is talking about invading Iran, but argued that the international community must send a strong, unified message in the dispute about Tehran's nuclear programme.

Asked in the House of Commons whether he would rule out a military attack on Iran, Blair said: "I've said constantly Iran is not Iraq. Nobody is talking about military invasion." But Blair said: "I do not think it is time to send a message of weakness" because Iran's President has called for Israel to be wiped off the map and there has been at least tacit acceptance by Tehran "for young people signing up to be suicide bombers directed at US, UK

and Israeli targets." Earlier, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said that while Iran was showing signs of responding to international pressure over its nuclear programme, he doubted Tehran would meet the UN Security Council's deadline for ceasing uranium enrichment.

"We are working on the basis that Iran will not meet the proposals from the security council within the 30-day deadline," he said in an interview from Saudi Arabia.

However, he said Iran had "responded more than I think people see." For example, they were threatening total withdrawal from the operation of the inspectors. That hasn't actually happened.

I think Iran is feeling some of the pressure, as well as its President making belligerent statements," Straw said.

ইরান নিয়ে রাইসের ফোন রুশ মন্ত্রীকে

ওয়াশিংটন, ২৫ মার্চ: ইরানের পরমাণু বোমা তৈরির রাস্তা বন্ধ করতে আমেরিকা যে পথে এগোতে চাইছে রাশিয়া তাতে অন্যতম বড় বাধা হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে। অচলাবস্থা কাটাতে তাই মার্কিন বিদেশ সচিব কন্ডোলিজা রাইস গত কাল ফোন করেন রুশ বিদেশমন্ত্রী সের্গেই লাভরভকে।

রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে ইরানের বিরুদ্ধে ঠিক কী ভাষায় প্রস্তাব নেওয়া হবে, আপাত ভাবে বিরোধ সেটা নিয়েই। প্রত্যাশিত ভাবেই ব্রিটেন ও ফ্রান্স সহযোগীর ভূমিকায় থাকলেও ইরানের বিরুদ্ধে কড়া ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার প্রশ্নে রাশিয়া ও চিনকে এখনও পর্যন্ত পাশে পাশে না আমেরিকা। অথচ ইরানের পরমাণু অস্ত্র তৈরির রাস্তা বন্ধ করতে হলে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের পাঁচ স্থায়ী সদস্যের একমত হওয়াটা অত্যন্ত জরুরি। কারণ, পরমাণু শক্তিশ্রম এই পাঁচটি দেশই নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে তোলা যে কোনও প্রস্তাবে ভেটো দেওয়ার অধিকারী।

গত কয়েক সপ্তাহ ধরে প্রচুর আলোচনা চালিয়েও ইরান সম্পর্কে রাশিয়ার নরম মনোভাব বদলাতে পারেননি মার্কিন কূটনীতিকরা। এর পরই ময়দানে নামেন মার্কিন বিদেশ সচিব রাইস। মার্কিন উদ্যোগের প্রতি সমর্থনের ভিত্তি মজবুত করতে আগামী

সপ্তাহে জার্মানি, ফ্রান্স ও ব্রিটেনে যাওয়ার পরিকল্পনা রয়েছে তাঁর।

রাইস জানিয়েছেন, লাভরভের সঙ্গে কথা বলে তিনি সন্তুষ্ট। রাইস আরও জানান, সময় নষ্ট না করে বিষয়টি নিয়ে আরও আলোচনা চালাতে রাশিয়া সম্মত হয়েছে। রাইসের সঙ্গে কথা বলার পর রুশ বিদেশমন্ত্রী অবশ্য পরিষ্কার জানিয়েছেন, পশ্চিমী দেশগুলি নিজেদের পছন্দ মতো একটা খসড়া তৈরি করে এনে বলবে এটাই এক মাত্র পথ, আমরা তা মেনে নিতে পারি না।

যে খসড়াটির কথা লাভরভ বোঝাতে চেয়েছেন, মার্কিন মদতে সেটি তৈরি করেছিল ব্রিটেন ও ফ্রান্স। রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের কূটনীতিকরা জানাচ্ছেন, ব্রিটেন ও ফ্রান্স এ বার ওই খসড়াটিতে কিছু মাজাঘষার কথা ভাবছে। আগামী সোমবারের মধ্যেই তারা সে কাজ সেরে ফেলবে বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে।

এ দিকে রাশিয়া ও চিনের অবস্থানকে পুরোপুরি সমর্থন জানিয়েছে ইরান। রাশিয়া ও চিনের বিদেশমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে গত কয়েক দিন ধরেই টেলিফোনে আলোচনা করছেন ইরানের বিদেশমন্ত্রী মানৌচের মোস্তাকি। এই আলোচনার ফাঁকেই ইরানের মনোভাব তিনি জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন।— এ পি, এ এফ পি, রয়টার্স

ANADOLU BAZAR MATRANA

Russian spy gave Saddam war plans: US

TIM REID

Washington, March 25: The Russian government had a spy inside the US military command who passed information to Saddam Hussein on America's war plan in the opening days of the invasion of Iraq, the Pentagon announced yesterday.

The explosive revelation

was based on Iraqi documents captured since the fall of the dictator and were set last night to trigger a major diplomatic incident between Washington and Moscow.

The Russian spy, who was not named, passed detailed information on US troop movements through the Russian ambassador in Baghdad, who sent the information to Sad-

dam's personal secretary. The first document is a handwritten account of a meeting with the ambassador in Baghdad, who in March 2003 was Vladimir Titorenko, that details his description of the composition, size, location and type of US military forces arrayed in the Gulf and Jordan.

It includes the exact num-

ber and locations of tanks, armoured vehicles, aircraft, missiles, helicopters, aircraft carriers and other forces. The ambassador also described the positions of two Special Forces units.

The second document, dated March 25, 2003, five days after the invasion began, is a typed account, signed by Hamam Abdel Khaleq, the

deputy foreign minister, which states that the Russian ambassador had told the Iraqis that the US was planning to deploy its force into Iraq from Basra in the south and up the Euphrates and would avoid entering major cities on the way to Baghdad — exactly what happened.

The documents also state: "Americans are also planning

on taking control of the oil fields in Kirkuk."

Referring to the Russian mole inside US Central Command, the document adds that the information was obtained by the Russians from "sources at US Central Command in Doha, Qatar".

The intelligence, the document states, was that American forces were moving to ct

off Baghdad from the south, east and north, that US bombing would concentrate on Baghdad and that the assault on the Iraqi capital would not begin before about April 15. Baghdad fell about a week before that date.

The report notes Russian business interests in Iraq's oil industry. Titorenko also appears in documents released

by the Volker Commission, which investigated the UN oil-for-food scandal.

The revelations were contained in a 160-page report by the US military's Joint Forces Command, the *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, assessing the Iraqi view of events in the opening months of the war, from March to May 2003.

THE TIMES, LONDON

THE TELEGRAPH

Russia spied for Saddam: Pentagon

OLIVER Burkeman and AP
New York, March 25

RUSSIA FUNNELLED intelligence on American troop movements in Iraq to Saddam Hussein during the early days of the war, according to documents contained in a Pentagon report released on Friday night. But on Saturday, Russia denied the allegation.

The documents, apparently from Saddam's regime, seized by the Americans, described how Russia collected crucial plans from "inside the American central command", and channelled it via Moscow's ambassador in Baghdad, Vladimir Titorenko.

The Pentagon did not explicitly vouch for the authenticity of the documents, but a spokesman said they seemed to be part of a pattern of Russia acting in accord with its economic interests.

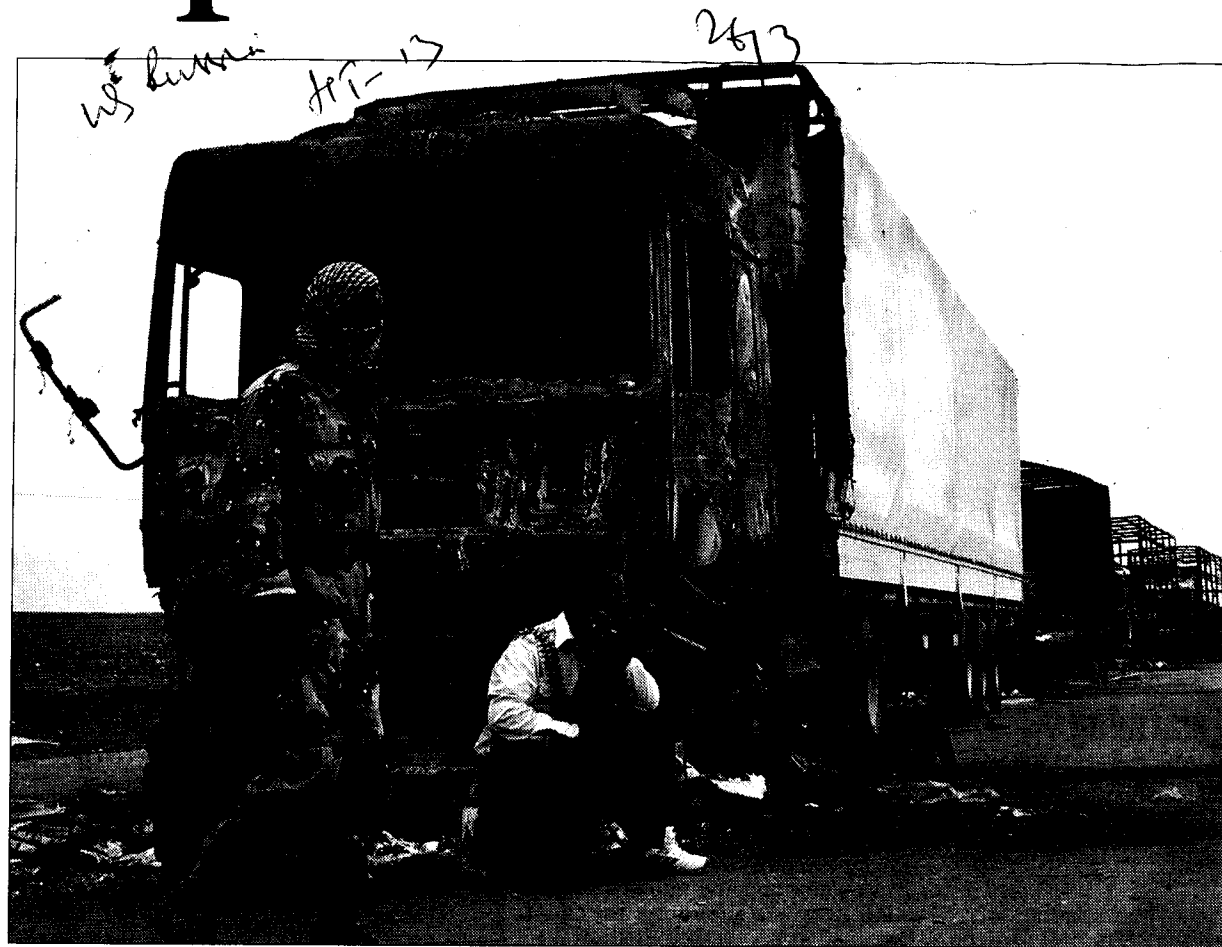
Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for Russia's UN mission in New York, called the report "absolutely ridiculous". "Somebody wants to say something, and did — and there is no evidence to prove it," she said, adding that the US government had not shown Russia the evidence cited in the report.

Brigadier-General Anthony Cucolo, closely involved with the Pentagon's Iraq Perspectives report, told a press conference, "I see it as a follow-on to economic interests." The report concluded that Saddam's regime believed Russia and France "would act on behalf of their own economic interests in Iraq to block any UN Security Council actions to authorise an invasion."

The information in the report makes it difficult to get a clear picture of the Russian spy operation. It says a captured Iraqi document cited "information that the Russians have collected from their sources inside the American Central Command in Doha," in Qatar. The documents also leave unclear who may have been the sources at Central Command's war-fighting headquarters, which is at Camp As Saliyah just outside Doha. No Russians were authorised to be at the closely guarded base.

Among the information the Iraqis said they received from the Russians, some of which proved inaccurate, was:

- That the movement of US troops



Iraqi policemen take up position near one of the trucks torched by insurgents in Mosul, Iraq, on Friday.

into southern Iraq from Kuwait was a diversion. In fact it was the main avenue of attack, supported by special forces entering from Jordan and paratroopers flying into northern Iraq.

- That the ground assault on Baghdad would not begin until the Army's 4th Infantry Division was in place, around April 15. In fact, the 4th Infantry, whose originally planned invasion route from Turkey was blocked by the Turkish government, was not yet on Iraqi territory when the Baghdad ground assault began April 7. Thus, the information actually reinforced a US deception effort.

- That the main focus of US ground forces moving toward Baghdad from the southwest was the area around

the city of Karbala. (This was true)

- That U.S. troops moving through southern Iraq would not attempt to occupy cities but instead bypass them. (This was true and was a central feature of an invasion plan.)

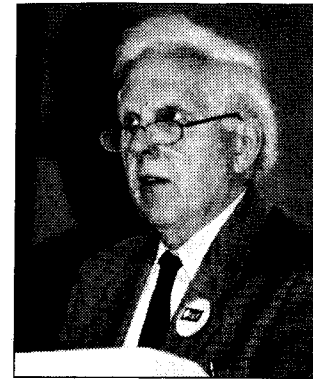
The study notes that some information obtained by Iraq from Russian sources was false, raising at least the possibility that it was circulated as part of a deliberate American campaign intended to fool or demoralise Iraqi troops and leaders. Military officers have disclosed separately that false war plans were part of this campaign, and it remains unclear whether any Russians may have played into this strategy.

The Guardian

Zarqawi steps down

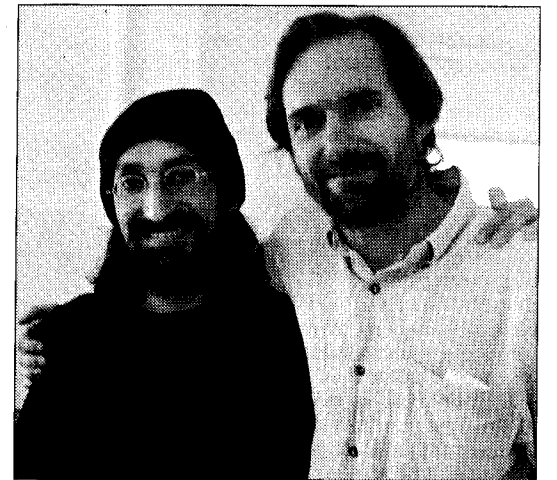
ABU MUSAB Al Zarqawi, the Jordanian terrorist who headed the al-Qaida in Iraq, has lowered his profile in recent months, and his group claims to have submitted itself to the leadership of an Iraqi. In postings on websites, al-Qaida in Iraq claims to have joined five other guerrilla groups to form the Mujahideen Shura. The group, announced in January, is said to be headed by an Iraqi named Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi. Since then, the al-Qaida in Iraq has stopped issuing its own proclamations.

The New York Times



REUTERS

Norman Kember (above), Harmeet Sooden (right) and Jim Loney (extreme right).



Hostage guards got cold feet after Fox was shot

Jonathan Steele, Ewen MacAskill and Richard Norton-Taylor
Amman/London, March 25

BRITISH HOSTAGE Norman Kember and two of his Canadian colleagues owe their freedom to a rift among their Iraqi kidnapers, a source close to the rescue operation said on Friday.

The source said their guards got cold feet when more senior and ruthless members of the group turned up at the house in Baghdad and took away a fourth hostage, Kember's American colleague, Tom Fox, and shot him dead.

Kember, 74, arrived home in Britain on Saturday. Before leaving Baghdad, he said, "I have had a shave, a bath and a good English breakfast. I'm looking forward to getting home." However, the head of the British army, Gen. Mike Jackson, expressed disappointment that Kember did not thank his saviours.

Kember and the two Canadians were found bound in a house in western Baghdad on Thursday morning in an SAS-led operation. The kidnapers had fled.

Although Tony Blair praised the brav-

ery of British soldiers and the intelligence work, a source said it was nervousness on the part of the guards that led to a tip-off to the British authorities.

The militants responsible for Fox's murder were part of either the Jaish al-Mujahideen or al-Jabha al-Islamiya, while Kember's guards were motivated by money rather than politics. The guards played a significant role in allowing the authorities to find the hostages, which is why it was a soft operation.

He said the "higher-ups" who took Fox did not initially intend to kill him. Examination of his body found dumped by a road two weeks ago did not show signs of torture, as first reported, the source insisted. Nor did he seem to have been killed execution-style. It was more likely that there was a scuffle or an attempt to run away which led to his death.

British officials said MI6 and military intelligence officials had debriefed Kember to try to find clues to the location of other hostages, and about the tactics, weaponry and other details of the insurgent group.

The Guardian

Persisting myths about Russia-U.S. ties

The complicated reality of bilateral relations
is compounded by persisting myths.

Boris Makarenko

THE AGGRAVATION of the Iranian nuclear problem alongside the active preparations for the G8 summit makes one think about the long road covered by Russia-U.S. relations since their anti-terrorism honeymoon began in 2001. Do the two countries have a future together?

Political statements and expert commentaries on both sides of the ocean are not optimistic and are filled with mutual suspicions and accusations. Worse still, the complicated reality of bilateral relations is compounded by persisting myths.

The first level of myths concerns the "doves" and "hawks" in the United States. Washington and Moscow like to scrutinise differences in the views on Russia of "Old Dick" Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, of the aggressively anti-Russian Senate lobby led by John McCain, and the balanced position of the White House. The essence of the problem is: Russia is just small change when it comes to the internal political struggle in the U.S.

America has never had a Vice-President as active in foreign and domestic policy as Mr. Cheney. Bureaucratic logic forces the Secretary of State to protect her field (foreign policy) from the Vice-President, who, according to the logic of political life in America, should be nothing more than a figurehead. And the Russian issue is only one of many fields of inside struggle in the administration.

Mr. McCain's team started accumulating sleaze about Russia in 2000, hoping to use it in the struggle not against Russia, but against Democratic candidate Albert Gore, the partner of Viktor Chernomyrdin in the Russo-American commission on economic and technological cooperation. However, Republican candidate George Bush snatched the Russian card from Mr. McCain. Refusing to stop fighting for the White House office, the Senator is now applying it against the outgoing President, even though both are Republicans.

The second group of myths concerns "bad America and good Europe." This is not as simple as it may seem at first glance. Contradictions between the Old and New Worlds became a reality after the demise of the Soviet Union, as proved by the French-German opposition to the U.S. operation in Iraq. Moreover, Europe is more interested in constructive relations with Russia than with its overseas partner, the U.S.

There is also a difference between Old Europe and some new members of the European Union (Poland and the Baltic countries), which want to accumulate political capital by playing the pro-American tune (which irritates Paris and Berlin).

Playing on these contradictions is a

logical occupation for Russian diplomacy, but it should see their true scale. There is a long list of issues on which Europe and America differ as much as a "good cop" differs from a "bad cop." This includes the issue of energy security. Europe did not cry out about the gas crisis in Ukraine, though it was more worried over Russia's stance than the U.S. Another issue concerns the critical view of Russia's internal problems, in particular the law on non-governmental organisations. Importantly, Europe is acting like a police officer and not as Russia's defence attorney.

What will we have if the multitude of these myths is laid to rest? Paradoxically, the answer is provided in the report, "Russia's Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do?" recently published by the Council on Foreign Relations. According to the authors of the report, the West, and in particular the U.S., should diversify their attitude to relations with Russia, opting for a method described as "selective cooperation."

The report goes too far in some ways and offers quite a few biased opinions, not to mention recommendations, but the general trend of future West-Russia relations is clear.

The U.S. will try to mount pressure on Russia by minimising its differences with Europe. For example, it may try to preserve the G7 within the G8, meaning that even though Russia remains a member of the club of industrialised nations, the U.S. will first come to terms with the G7 on ways to develop relations with Russia. Or it may call on Europe to coordinate a common stand on energy security and attitude to Russia's internal political development.

This stand, which is presented as pragmatic, is actually fraught with problems for the West.

First, the goal of attaining "the complete unity" of Europe and America for pressuring Russia is hardly attainable, because the Old World has taken a widely different stand on this issue.

Secondly, the Bush administration could go too far in spreading democracy. It may play the democracy card against Russia with excessive zeal, which may increase tensions.

Fortunately, there are signals of a different order, such as the pledge of the U.S. President to personally control Russia's WTO accession talks (contrary to the recommendations of the Defence Policy Board), which promise a positive solution to the problem.

Though chances for improvement in mutual relations are slim, the limits of deterioration have been clearly outlined. Russian and American diplomacy can act within the "corridor of possibilities," trying to build up trust and mutual understanding where possible. — RIA Novosti

24 MAR 2005

THE HINDU

Russian fuel for Tarapur, US protests

HT Correspondents

New Delhi/Washington, March 15

A RUSSIAN offer of nuclear fuel to India has upset the United States, prompting a prompt assurance by India that everything is above board.

Less than a fortnight after George W. Bush's visit and on the eve of Mikhail Fradkov's trip to India on Thursday, Russia has agreed to supply fuel for the Tarapur 1 and 2 nuclear power reactors.

The US immediately indicated its reservations, reminding India any such step should be taken only after India fulfils its obligations under the deal inked during Bush's visit. The US was to supply the fuel, but it could not do so until India completed its separation plan and the US Congress amended its legislation.

India on Wednesday clarified that the Russian move was not in violation of the guidelines of the NSG, the 44-nation group that exports nuclear material. "There is no violation of NSG guidelines and Russia has approached NSG under the Safety Exception Clause," external affairs ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna said. Moscow also informed the US that its planned export of 60 tonnes of fuel would be "safety-related".

In Russia's view, India's agreement with the US on civilian nuclear power cooperation will make the sale permissible under the guidelines of the NSG.

It had last supplied fuel for Tarapur in 2001. The fuel will permit TAPS 1&2, already under international safeguards, to continue producing nuclear power for the power grid, Sarna said.

Fuel levels at Tarapur are at "dangerously low" levels and India has been scouting around for fuel for the nuclear power plant after the July 18 agreement with the US. NSG guidelines permit exports to countries without UN-approved safeguards on all reactors — such as India — only if the exports are needed to prevent or correct "a radiological hazard to public health and safety which cannot reasonably be met by other means".

The Russian Prime Minister will be accompanied by, among others, Sergei Kiriyenko, the head of Russia's atomic energy agency. India and Russia will sign several banking and cooperation agreements.

N-TRIANGLE



US had, during Bush's visit, agreed that a third party could provide India fuel, as Washington would first have to change its laws

RUSSIA stepped in, but the US reminded India that it first needs to complete its separation plan

INDIA and Moscow both assured the US that the planned fuel export would be 'safety related'

16 MAR 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Hamas victory a blow to U.S., says Putin

Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW: The Hamas victory in the Palestinian election is a "big blow" to the United States, Russia's President Vladimir Putin said.

"The vote is a big blow to U.S. efforts in the Middle East, a very serious blow," Mr. Putin said at his annual press conference in the Kremlin on Tuesday.

The Russian leader suggested that this setback was due to Washington's tactics of trying to win unilateral advantages in West Asia.

"If we are to resolve problems in the Middle East, we should act in concert and refrain from asking this or that side to pull chestnuts from the fire," Mr. Putin said. "We should sit down together, heed each other and take coordinated decisions."

He said Moscow's attitude to Hamas was different from that of the U.S. and Western Europe in that Russia has never branded Hamas as a terrorist group.

In another jibe at the U.S. President Mr. Putin condemned the U.S. role in the foiled armed revolt in Uzbekistan's Andijan last year.

"We know better than anyone what happened there, who and how prepared the revolt," Mr. Putin said.

He strongly came out against "coloured revolutions" in Central Asia.

"We do not want a second Afghanistan in Central Asia, we do not want revolutions there. What we need is evolution that would assert democratic values but would not result in Andijan-kind explosions," the Russian leader said.

US blasts Russia for energy war

'Ukraine May Be Planning To Join Nato'

Washington: The US state department on Sunday expressed concern over Russia's decision to cut off gas supplies to Ukraine, saying the move raises questions about the "use of energy to exert political pressure."

"The US regrets the Russian decision to cut off gas from Russia to Ukraine, with potential effects on gas supplies elsewhere in Europe," state department spokesman Sean McCormack said in a statement.

"Such an abrupt step creates insecurity in the energy sector in the region and raises serious questions about the use of energy to exert political pressure," McCormack said, adding that the US has told both nations it supports a gradual move towards market pricing for energy supplies.

However, according to Russian analysts, Moscow's move will reveal how dependent Ukraine is on cheap gas, but Ukrainian President Yushchenko could be the ultimate winner.

"The gas war is an electoral strategy by Yushchenko," said Sergei Markov, a political analyst close to the Kremlin.

The cut-off seems at first a double success for the Kremlin, ensuring future increased budget receipts and a weakening of Yushchenko's leadership ahead of key parliamentary elections in March and just over a year since he came to power against a Russia-backed candidate.

But Markov, who advised Yushchenko's rival Viktor Yanukovich, said the Ukrainian president could in fact be strengthened by the dispute.

Markov's analysis was echoed by a Russian foreign affairs ministry statement released on Sunday that accused the Ukrainian leadership of seeking to make political gain from the crisis by casting Russia as an "enemy".

Another Russian political analyst, Viktor Kremenyuk from the US-Canada Institute in Moscow believes the Ukrainian president wants to build up tension with Moscow to fulfill his strategic objectives, including joining the NATO.

"What mars this bid is a Russia-Ukraine agreement on the port of Sebastopol and the cooperation between Russian and Ukrainian defence enterprises," the analyst said. Agencies



Ukrainian President Yushchenko (right) with his Prime Minister

Europe shivers with price fears

Millions of families throughout Europe could soon be victims of a bitter gas war between Russia and Ukraine. Britain, which is dependent on imports of both gas and electricity, is unlikely to escape at least indirect effects.

And consumer groups warned last night that energy bosses could seize on the uncertainty to push bills still higher. Domestic prices have already soared by around a third in two weeks, leaving many families facing energy bills of more than £1,000 a year. UK energy minister Malcolm Rennie insisted on Sunday there was no immediate threat to gas supplies, but he admitted that there could be "concern about short-term energy supplies". Major European countries joined together on Sunday to plead with the Russians and Ukrainians for an end to the "energy war". An emergency meeting of energy officials from 25 European states will take place this week to discuss emergency action plans.

The official consumer body Energywatch fears the crisis will mean a significant energy bill for Britain's 25 million households.