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Shift in U.S. Stance Shows Power of Seven-Letter Word

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By Glenn Kessler
Washington Post Staff Writer
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The Bush administration's decision to consider sitting down with the Iranian government underscores a central truth of diplomacy today: Nuclear weapons buy leverage.

For six years, President Bush and his aides have dismissed the idea of talking with Iran about its nuclear programs, and until last year gave little support to European efforts to restrain Iranian nuclear activity. Attempts by former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami, a moderate, to foster a dialogue were rejected, and even back-channel moves failed to gain traction.

Now, in perhaps the biggest foreign policy shift of his presidency, Bush has approved the idea of sitting down at the table with the Iranian government -- one headed by a former student radical who denies the Holocaust. Attached to the U.S. offer was a stern condition: a verified suspension of Iran's nuclear enrichment operations. But the offer overturned a long-standing taboo, and it came from an administration stocked with officials who have made little secret of their desire to overthrow the government in Tehran.

The administration made this move at a moment of weakness. The president's public opinion ratings are among the lowest ever recorded for a modern president, and oil prices have reached record levels, in part because of the confrontation with Iran. The high price of oil, in turn, has enriched the Iranian treasury.

Iran recently announced it had learned how to achieve a key aspect of enriching uranium -- sooner than expected -- raising the stakes in the confrontation. Even so, the lingering fallout from the administration's decision to attack Iraq has made it increasingly difficult to win the support for sanctions on Iran from critical nations such as Russia and China.

A key factor in Bush's decision yesterday is the influence of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who announced the offer in a televised news conference. Since becoming secretary of state last year, Rice has worked assiduously to make certain that the United States does not maneuver itself into becoming the world's enemy No. 1, as it did on the Iraq war.

When Rice made her first trip overseas as secretary last year, to Europe, she had expected to hear a lot of concern about Iraq. Instead, she later said, she was surprised to learn that the confrontation over Iran's nuclear program was a bigger concern -- and that the United States was considered the problem.

She very quickly won Bush's approval for a public shift in policy: active support of the European negotiating track. The support included withdrawing the U.S. objection to Iran's application to the World

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/31/AR2006053101931_pf... 7/5/2006

Trade Organization and allowing Iran the potential to purchase civilian aviation spare parts.

At the time, Rice insisted that the decision to support the Europeans did not mean the Americans would join the talks. (Lower-level U.S. officials on occasion have talked to Iranian counterparts about Afghanistan and Iraq.)

"We've made very clear that we have a lot of other problems with the Iranians," Rice said when she announced the decision in March 2005. "We've also made very clear that we don't intend to do anything to legitimize the Iranian regime. And so what we're looking at here is helping the Europeans in their diplomacy, not shifting policy toward Iran."

But the Iranians walked away from those talks, and the administration slowly found itself drawn into a different stance as the diplomacy unfolded. Rice needed to win over the Russians and Chinese -- and keep the Europeans in line -- so she quietly dropped the objections to the Iranian desire for nuclear power. Previously, the administration had insisted Iran had no need for nuclear power because of its vast oil and gas reserves. But to placate other nations, U.S. officials retreated from that insistence.

"The Iranian people believe they have a right to civil nuclear energy," Rice said yesterday. "We acknowledge that right."

Over the past two months Bush and Rice, along with Vice President Cheney and national security adviser Stephen J. Hadley, have considered the question of whether the time was right for the United States to sit at the talks. Once Bush received assurances earlier this week from leaders of China, Russia and other nations that if this offer were rejected they would accept a harder line against Iran, U.S. officials decided to go forward with the plan.

Rice said yesterday that she advocated this decision in part because of echoes of the concerns that she heard on her first trip -- that the United States was not serious about resolving this issue with diplomacy.

Conservatives in the administration have chafed at the shifts, suggesting it shows weakness on the part of the United States because Iran apparently has been able to make significant progress in nuclear energy -- with little apparent consequence.

Rice made this new move just as it appeared the European effort was on the verge of collapsing through division and lack of leadership. The Germans, eager to strike a deal with Iran, have been the most adamant that the United States needed to join the talks.

"If this is what it takes to get Russia and China to join in sanctions, so be it," one administration skeptic said. "But I am most concerned that we will end up renegotiating with ourselves again."

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Rice, Rumsfeld in Baghdad on support mission

AGENCIES
Baghdad, April 26

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush dispatched America's top two foreign policy officials to Iraq on Wednesday in separate, surprise missions calculated to demonstrate a strong show of support for the country's emerging new government.

Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld arrived unannounced for a daylong series of meetings with top US commanders and the newly selected Iraqi leaders. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice flew in from Turkey a few hours later to shore up the US show of support. "We just want to make sure there are no seams between what we're doing politically and what we're doing militarily," Rice told reporters en route to Iraq. "Secretary Rumsfeld and I are going to be there together because a lot of the work that has to be done is at that juncture between political and military."

She and Rumsfeld huddled with the US ambassador and other top US military and civilian officials for lunch and then planned to meet jointly with the newly designated prime minister. Rice scheduled a separate one-on-one meeting with him later.

Asked whether the breakthrough agreements last weekend to name Jawad al-Maliki as prime minister and to fill six other top government posts moves US officials closer to implementing the expected troop reductions this year, Casey replied, "It certainly is a major step in the process."

Rumsfeld, who appeared with Casey before reporters, said one of the subjects they had discussed was engaging the emerging Iraqi government in talks on the future of military bases and the division of security responsibilities between American and Iraqi troops.

"There is no question but that as the new government is



Rice and Rumsfeld
Desert safari



Senate blow for Bush

THE US Senate voted on Wednesday to divert some of the money President George W. Bush requested for the war in Iraq to instead increase patrols against illegal immigrants on the nation's borders and provide the Coast Guard with new boats and choppers. An amendment cutting the Iraq request by \$1.9 billion to pay for new aircraft and patrol boats, as well as checkpoints along the Mexico border was adopted on 59-39 vote.

AP, Washington

formed and the ministers are in place, that it's appropriate for us to begin discussions with the new government about the conditions on the ground and the pace at which we'll be able to turn over responsibility in the provinces," Rumsfeld said.

Donald Rumsfeld is given backing over Iraq war

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Charlie Savage

WASHINGTON: Supporters rallied around U.S. Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld on Sunday, saying he is being made a scapegoat for the difficult situation in Iraq by retired generals who have called for his removal.

In comments that echoed a Pentagon memo circulated to Mr. Rumsfeld's supporters, retired General Richard B. Myers, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and key Republican members of Congress insisted that Mr. Rumsfeld's critics were wrong to blame the military chief for problems in Iraq.

More Democrats also joined the fray. They asserted that the Defence Secretary had planned poorly and had led with arrogance, and that the combination had been largely to blame for the failure to stabilise postwar Iraq. They said it is time for change at the Pentagon.

War of words

The war of words renewed the political controversy surrounding Mr. Rumsfeld, who came under an unusual public attack last week by six retired Iraq war generals.

Among the criticisms was that he had refused to send enough troops to Iraq for the occupation



• Rumsfeld is being made scapegoat, say supporters

• Democrats also join the fray

• Gen. Myers also backs Defence Secretary

to succeed.

On ABC's "The Week" on Sunday, Gen. Myers rejected assertions that Mr. Rumsfeld had intimidated him and other senior military leaders into signing off on the Defence Secretary's plan to go into Iraq with a light force, against their better judgment.

"I don't believe that is correct at all," Gen. Myers said. "One of the things about Secretary Rumsfeld and working for him is you have tremendous access, and you can present your argu-

ments." Gen. Myers added that it was inappropriate for uniformed military officers to criticise civilian leaders in public. "When it's all said and done," Gen. Myers said, "in our system the civilian control of the military means the civilians make the decision ... and we live by those decisions."

Dispute

But the dispute among the retired generals became fodder for members of Congress of both parties, including several who are potential candidates for their party's 2008 presidential nomination.

On CBS's "Face the Nation," for example, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, a likely Democratic presidential contender, said Mr. Rumsfeld had "mis-managed" the Iraq war and that he should "should step aside".

What you're seeing is deep frustration in the military," Richardson said, "deep frustration within our troops who are not getting enough armour. ... It is obvious that Secretary Rumsfeld did not listen to them. That's why we're in this morass."

Senator George Allen said Mr. Rumsfeld had been a victim of "scapegoating" by Bush's political enemies. —New York Times News Service

Iraqi sectarian strife serious: US study

By Eric Schmitt &
Edward Wong

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Washington: An internal staff report by the US embassy and the military command in Baghdad provides a sobering province-by-province snapshot of Iraq's political, economic and security situation, rating the overall stability of six of the 18 provinces 'serious' and one 'critical'. The report is a counterpoint to some recent upbeat public statements by top American politicians and military officials.

The report, 10 pages of briefing points titled "Provincial Stability Assessment," underscores the shift in the nature of the Iraq war three years after the toppling of Saddam Hussein. Warnings of sectarian and ethnic frictions are raised in many regions, even in those provinces generally described as non-violent by American officials.

There are alerts about the growing power of Iranian-backed religious Shiite parties, several of which the United States helped put into power, and rival militias in the south. The authors also point to the Arab-Kurdish fault line in the north as a major concern, with the two ethnicities vying for power in Mosul, where violence is rampant, and Kirkuk, whose oil fields are critical for jump-starting economic growth in Iraq.

The patterns of discord mapped by the report confirm

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that ethnic and religious schisms have become entrenched across much of the country, even as monthly American fatalities have fallen. Those indications, taken with recent reports of mass migrations from mixed Sunni-Shiite areas, show that Iraq is undergoing a de facto partitioning along ethnic and sectarian lines, with clashes sometimes political, sometimes violent taking place in those mixed areas where different groups

meet. The report, the first of its kind, was written over a six-week period by a joint civilian and military group in Baghdad that wanted to provide a baseline assessment for conditions that new reconstruction teams would face as they were deployed to the provinces, said Daniel Speckhard, an US ambassador in Baghdad who oversees reconstruction efforts.

The writers included officials from the American embassy's political branch, reconstruction agencies and the American military command in Baghdad, Speckhard said. The authors also received information from State Department officers in the provinces.

The report was part of a periodic briefing on Iraq that the State Department provides to Congress, and has been shown to officials on Capitol Hill, including those involved in budgeting for the reconstruction teams. It is not clear how many top US officials have seen it; the report has not circulated widely at the Defence Department or the National Security Council, spokesmen said.

A copy of the report was provided to The New York Times by a government official in Washington who opposes the way the war is being conducted and said the confidential assessment provided a more realistic gauge of stability in Iraq than the recent portrayals by senior military officers.



The report also points to the Arab-Kurdish fault line in the north as a major concern, with the two ethnicities vying for power

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Iran to allow inspections with a rider

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Associated Press

TEHERAN, April 29: In an apparent bid to keep its nuclear programme from coming to a sanctions vote in the UN Security Council, an Iranian nuclear official said today that Teheran was ready for a conditional return to intrusive inspections but that uranium enrichment would continue.

"If the issue is returned to the International Atomic Energy Agency, we will be ready to allow intrusive inspections," Mohammed Saeedi, Iran's deputy nuclear chief, told a state-run television today.

Mohamed ElBaradei, IAEA chief, confirmed in a report yesterday that Iran has successfully produced enriched uranium and has defied a UN Security Council deadline to halt all activities related to uranium enrichment.

The IAEA report brought swift reactions yesterday from nations concerned with Iran's nuclear development.

US President George W Bush said the world was concerned about Iran's "desire to have not only a nuclear weapon but the

capacity to make a nuclear weapon."

Mr Bush added that he was not discouraged by Iran's vow to defy world pressure, saying: "I think the diplomatic options are just beginning." US Ambassador Mr John Bolton took a tough line, saying: "The IAEA report shows that Iran has accelerated its efforts to acquire nuclear weapons although, of course, the report doesn't make any conclusions in that regard. We're ready to proceed; we're ready to move expeditiously," Mr Bolton said.

"...They have to comply or the Security Council is free to take other steps," he said. Mr ElBaradei's report may spark a divisive debate in the Security Council when foreign ministers of its five permanent members plus Germany meet at the UN headquarters in New York on 9 May to discuss the next step.

France and Britain have joined the USA in supporting strong action against Iran, while Russia and China want the IAEA to take the lead in finding a diplomatic solution.

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THE STATESMAN

ইরান: যবনিকা কম্পান

ইউরেনিয়াম সমৃদ্ধ করার প্রক্রিয়া বন্ধ রাখার যে নির্দেশ রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের নজরদারির সংগঠন আই এ ই এ বা আন্তর্জাতিক পরমাণু জ্বালানি সংস্থা ইরানকে দিয়াছিল, প্রেসিডেন্ট মাহমুদ আহমদিনেজাদ তাহা ঔদ্ধত্যের সহিত অগ্রাহ্য করিয়া চলিয়াছেন। ইরানের শীর্ষ ধর্মীয় নেতা আয়াতুল্লা আলি খামেনেইও ইরানকে পরমাণু শক্তিধর করিয়া তোলার সংকল্প ঘোষণা করিয়াছেন। ইরানের এই প্রচেষ্টা বানচাল করিতে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র যদি পরমাণু কেন্দ্রগুলিতে আক্রমণ হানে, তবে ইরান তাহার জবাব দিবে এবং বিশ্বের সর্বত্র মার্কিন স্বার্থে প্রত্যাঘাত করিবে। আন্তর্জাতিক পরমাণু সংস্থা নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের কাছে ইরান বিষয়ক রিপোর্ট জমা দিবার প্রাক্কালে এ ভাবে ইউরেনিয়াম সমৃদ্ধকরণের সার্বভৌম অধিকার লইয়া ইরানের রাষ্ট্রনায়কদের চড়া সুর পরিস্থিতিতে রীতিমত জটিল করিয়া তুলিয়াছে। নিরাপত্তা পরিষদ ইরানের অসহযোগিতা সম্পর্কে নিঃসন্দেহ হইলে অর্থনৈতিক অবরোধ জারি করিতে পারে। আবার রাশিয়া ও চিনের বাধ্য পরিসদ হাত গুটাইয়া থাকিলে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র ইরানি পরমাণু কেন্দ্রগুলিতে বিমান হানা চালাইতে পারে।

আমেরিকা যে ইরানকে 'শিক্ষা' দিতে বিমানহানায় সীমিত ধ্বংসক্ষমতার পরমাণু বোমাও ব্যবহার করিতে পারে, এমনও শানা যাইতেছে। আবার ইরান বোমা বানাইবার প্রযুক্তি আয়ত্ত করিয়া ফেলিয়াছে এবং এই প্রযুক্তি রফতানি করিতে পারে, এই হুমকিও ইরানি নেতারা ভাসাইয়া দিতেছেন। বর্তমানে দুনিয়ায় সবই সম্ভব। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র যে আফগানিস্তান ও ইরাকে আগ্রাসন চালাইবে, গান্ডা লড়াইয়ের কালে তাহা অনুমান করা অসম্ভব ছিল। অথচ তাহা ঘটিয়াছে। পরমাণু শক্তিধর পাকিস্তানের পরমাণু বিজ্ঞানী বিদেশে বোমা বানাইবার প্রযুক্তি রফতানি করিলেও মার্কিন প্রশাসন সে দেশের প্রতি নরম মনোভাব লইয়াছে। অথচ ইরান জ্বালানির জন্য পরমাণু প্রযুক্তি আয়ত্ত করিলেও 'ইসলামি বোমা'র জুজু দেখিয়া তাহাকে নিরস্ত করিতে বিমান হানার পরিকল্পনাও সম্পূর্ণ। বিশেষজ্ঞরা অবশ্য বলিতেছেন, বোমা বানাইবার প্রযুক্তি আয়ত্ত করিতে ইরানের আগামী দশক লাগিয়া যাইবে। কিন্তু মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র তাহা মানিবে কেন? রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের নিরাপত্তা পরিষদকে দিয়া ইরানের বিরুদ্ধে অর্থনৈতিক অবরোধ জারি করাইবার উদ্যোগে আমেরিকা ছাড়াও ব্রিটেন ও ফ্রান্স রহিয়াছে। কিন্তু রাশিয়া ও চিন এ ধরনের বাড়াবাড়ির বিরোধী। এবং অংশত জার্মানিও। তাহারা নিরাপত্তা পরিষদকেই এই বিতর্কের ভিতরে টানিয়া আনার পক্ষপাতী নয়। পরিবর্তে আন্তর্জাতিক পরমাণু জ্বালানি সংস্থার নজরদারদের দিয়া ইরানের পরমাণু কর্মসূচি নিয়ন্ত্রণ করিতে চাহে।

নিরাপত্তা পরিষদকে দিয়া অর্থনৈতিক অবরোধ জারি করাইতে না পারিলে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র একতরফা ভাবেই ইরানের জ্বালানি কেন্দ্রগুলিতে বোমারু হানা চালাইতে পারে। এ ধরনের একতরফা হামলার ঐতিহ্য তাহার আছে এবং একমেক বিশ্বের অধীশ্বর হিসাবে এ জন্য জবাবদিহির দায়ও তাহার নাই। এই প্রক্রিয়াতেই আফগানিস্তান ও ইরাক আক্রান্ত হইয়াছে। দুইটি অ্যাডভেঞ্চারই বিপর্যয়, তবে তাহাতে পেন্টাগন ও মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র নির্মাতাদের চৈতন্য ফেরে নাই। ইসলামি বিপ্লবের ফলে মার্কিন ক্রীড়নক রাজা শাহ রেজা পল্লবির উৎখাত হওয়া ও ইরানে মার্কিন স্বার্থের হানি ওয়াশিংটন কখনও ভুলিতে পারে নাই। প্রতিশোধ গ্রহণের একটা তাগিদ মার্কিন রাষ্ট্রনায়কদের থাকিয়াই গিয়াছে। এ জন্যই জর্জ বুশ কথিত 'শয়তানি অক্ষ'-এ উত্তর কোরিয়া ও ইরাকের সহিত ইরানও অন্তর্ভুক্ত হয়। তবে পশ্চিম এশিয়ায় স্থায়ী শান্তির যে পথচিত্র বহু বাগাডম্বরের সহিত প্রচারিত, ইরান আক্রান্ত হইলে তাহার দফা রফা হইয়া যাইবে। আফগানিস্তান ও ইরাক আগামী বহু কালের জন্য অস্থিরতা ও মাৎস্যন্যায়ের মধ্যে চলিয়া গিয়াছে। প্যালেস্টাইনে হামাস ক্ষমতাসীন হওয়ায় আমেরিকা-ব্রিটেন-ফ্রান্স-ইজরায়েল যে ভাবে তাহাকে ভাতে মারার উপক্রম করিয়াছে, তাহাও কোনও শান্তির টোটকা নয়। ইহার সঙ্গে ইরানকে শায়েস্তা করার আধিপত্যকামিতা যুক্ত হইলে ইসলামি দেশগুলিতে পশ্চিমী গণতন্ত্র রফতানির গা-জোয়ারিই তাত্ত্বিক ভাবে বৈধতা পাইবে।

Tehran remains defiant

Report puts Iran in dock

Vienna, April 28 (Reuters): The world's nuclear watchdog said in a report circulated today that Iran has ignored a UN Security Council call to suspend all nuclear fuel enrichment and has accelerated the programme.

The report, which diplomats passed to Reuters, was sent to the Security Council which could eventually impose sanctions on Iran. Tehran has said its enrichment policy is irreversible. It has vowed to withstand any consequences, whether financial penalties or military attack. Iranian officials were not immediately available for comment.

However, hours before details of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report emerged, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran would pay no heed to any UN measure designed to rein in its nuclear programme. "Those who want to prevent Iranians from obtaining their right, should know that we do not give a damn about such resolutions," he told a rally in northwest Iran.

President George W. Bush said he wanted peaceful persuasion to prevail. "It's very important for the Iranians to understand there is a common desire by a lot of nations in this world to convince them, peacefully convince them, that they ought to give up their weapons ambitions," Bush said.

The IAEA report confirmed that Iran had flouted the Security Council's demands. "Iran was supposed to suspend, but since they continue to do experiments, they have not suspended enrichment efforts," said a senior official close to the IAEA.

The IAEA also said Iran had done little during a 30-day grace period to answer questions meant to determine whether its nuclear programme is purely civilian.

The report said IAEA tests confirmed Iran's claim this month to have enriched uranium with a cascade of 164 centrifuges to the low level needed to fuel nuclear power plants. It must be purified to a much higher level for bomb-making.

Iran was also building two new cascades of 164 centrifuges at its underground enrichment plant.

Diplomats said questions persisted over Iranian research on advanced "P-2" centrifuges, documents on how to design an atomic bomb core, and intelligence reports of links between uranium ore processing, high-explosives tests and a missile warhead design.

Mark Fitzpatrick, nuclear analyst at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, said interest in IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei's report focused on how it assessed Iran's claims to rapid progress toward mastering the enrichment process.

Iran missiles can hit Europe: Israel

Tensions Mount As Teheran Remains Defiant Ahead Of UN Deadline To Halt Uranium Enrichment

Jersusalem/Teheran: Iran has received a first batch of BM-25 surface-to-surface missiles that put European countries within firing range, Israel's military intelligence chief, Maj Gen Amos Yadlin, was quoted as saying in the Haaretz daily on Thursday.

The missiles, purchased from North Korea, have a range of 2,500 kilometres and are capable of carrying nuclear warheads, the paper reported.

Meanwhile, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Thursday that Teheran would not abandon uranium enrichment, a day before the United Nations nuclear watchdog reports on whether Iran has complied with demands that it halt this sensitive atomic work.

"We have obtained the technology for producing nuclear fuel ... no one can take it away from our nation," Ahmadinejad told a rally in northwest Iran, adding that such a step could not be 'imposed' on Iran.

Israeli security officials confirmed the Haaretz report. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Yadlin has warned of the new

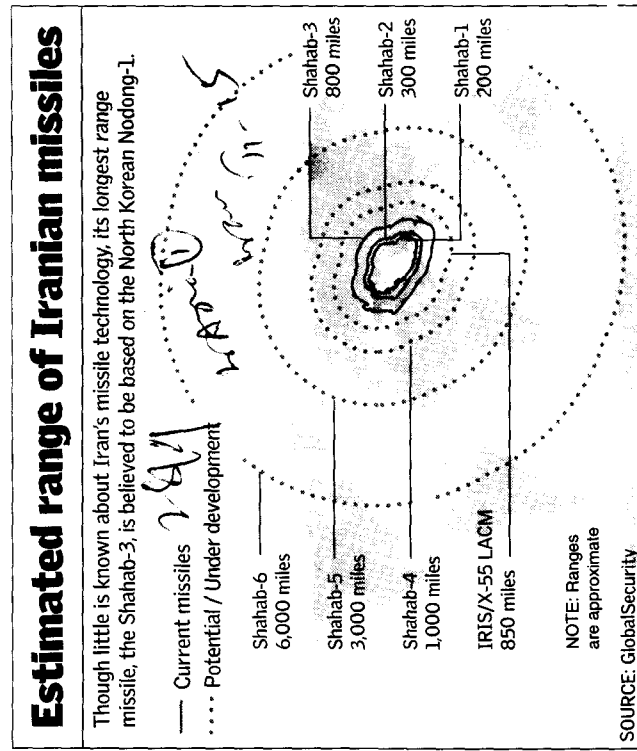
Iranian missiles in several recent interviews to the media. Iran already has missiles capable of reaching Israel, but the BM-25 missiles are a significant upgrade over its existing top of the line missiles—the Shihab-4 and Shihab-3. Those missiles spurred Israel to develop its Arrow 2 anti-ballistic missile system, which is can intercept the Iranian missiles.

Israeli concerns have been heightened in recent months by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's calls to wipe Israel "off the map."

Iran has also tested several long-range missiles in recent weeks, including a "top secret" missile capable of being fired from all military helicopters and jet fighters, the Iranian state-run television reported.

Iran also tested the Fajr-3, a missile it said can avoid radar and hit several targets simultaneously using multiple warheads. Iran also has tested what it calls two new torpedoes.

American intelligence officials have said that Iran is at an advanced stage of developing a missile that can carry a nuclear warhead. The United States has informed the International Atomic Energy Agency of the details of the Iranian missile pro-



gramme.

On Tuesday, Israel launched a satellite meant to spy on Iran's nuclear programme. The satellite, launched from Russia, is designed to

In Vienna, Iran's nuclear chief presented no new proposals in an 11th-hour meeting with the UN atomic agency despite the clock ticking on a Friday United Nations deadline for Teheran to stop enriching uranium, diplomats said.

The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Agency, Vice President Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, "just rattled around on Iran's previously stated positions. He did not propose anything new," said a diplomat, who asked not to be identified due to the sensitivity of the issue, about talks in Vienna. His comment was confirmed by another diplomat close to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency.

Aghazadeh met with IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei, who is to file a report to the Security Council on Friday on whether Iran has honoured the Council's calls for it to suspend enrichment and cooperate fully with IAEA inspectors trying to determine if Teheran is engaged in secret atomic weapons work, as the US alleges. The Security Council has set a 30-day deadline—running out Friday—for Teheran to suspend enrichment and cooperate with the IAEA's over three-year investigation. AGENCIES

Iran buys Korean missiles

24 Apr
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78/4

Agence France Presse

JERUSALEM, April 27: Iran has purchased North Korean long-range ballistic missiles capable of hitting Europe, the head of Israel's military intelligence was reported today as saying.

Some of the missiles, which have a range of 2,500 km and are known in the West as BM-25, have already arrived in Iran, General Amos Yadlin said in a lecture yesterday in comments reported by the *Haaretz* newspaper.

While Iran already had missiles capable of hitting arch-enemy Israel and US bases in the Middle East, the new weapons pose a threat for countries elsewhere in the region and in Europe that now come into Iranian range, *Haaretz* said. The new ground-to-ground missiles operate on liquid fuel. They were originally manufactured in the Soviet Union, where they

Abbas proposal

HELSINKI, April 27: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas today said he would contact Israeli leaders with an offer to restart peace talks after they form a new government. ■ AP

were adapted for use by submarines and able to carry a nuclear warhead.

After the Soviets retired the missiles from service, they sold them to the North Koreans, who developed them to carry a heavier payload, *Haaretz* said.

Iran's medium-range Shahab-3 missiles, with a range of 2,000 km, already put Israel and US bases in the Middle East within reach. Several weeks ago, Iran successfully test-fired a new high-speed underwater missile capable of destroying huge warships and submarines.

ইরান-আমেরিকা ঝুঁকি মধ্যপন্থা নিচ্ছে ভারত

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৫ এপ্রিল: এক দিকে ইরানের কড়া মনোভাব, অন্য দিকে আমেরিকার ঝঁশিয়ারি। আপাতত এ দুইয়ের মধ্যে ভারসাম্য রক্ষা করতে উঠেপড়ে লেগেছে ভারত। যেমন আজই আন্তর্জাতিক নিয়ম মেনে ইরানের পরমাণু প্রকল্প চালানো উচিত, এ কথা বলার পাশাপাশি তেহরানের বিরুদ্ধে শক্তিপ্রয়োগে অনিচ্ছার স্পষ্ট ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছে দিল্লি।

ইরানের পরমাণু প্রকল্প নিয়ে আন্তর্জাতিক পরিস্থিতি ক্রমেই উত্তপ্ত হয়ে উঠছে। ইরানি প্রেসিডেন্ট মামুদ আহমেদিনেজাদ কাল স্পষ্ট জানান, রাষ্ট্রপঞ্জের নিরাপত্তা পরিষদ তেহরানের উপরে নিষেধাজ্ঞা আরোপ করলে তার ফল ভাল হবে না। আজ সে দেশের জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা প্রধান এবং পরমাণু বিষয়ক মধ্যস্থতাকারী আলি লারিজানি বলেন, নিষেধাজ্ঞা আরোপ করলে আইএইএ-র সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক ছিন্ন করবে ইরান। আর যদি ইরানের বিরুদ্ধে সেনা অভিযান চালানো হয়, তবে গোপনে পরমাণু প্রকল্প চালানো হবে। লারিজানি খোলাখুলি বলেন, পরিস্থিতি চরমে উঠলে তেল অর্থনীতির উপরেও বিরূপ প্রভাব পড়বে।

ইরানের তরফে এই সাফ কথার পাশাপাশি আমেরিকা আজ ফের ঝঁশিয়ারি দিয়েছে। আগামী শুক্রবার আন্তর্জাতিক পরমাণু শক্তি সংস্থার প্রধান মহম্মদ এলবারাদেই ইরানি পরমাণু প্রকল্প নিয়ে যে রিপোর্ট জমা দেবেন, তা নেতিবাচক হবে বলে মন্তব্য করেন আইএইএ-তে মার্কিন রাষ্ট্রদূত জর্জ শুলং। তাঁর মতে, ইরানের সাম্প্রতিক অবস্থান থেকেই পরিষ্কার, আইএইএ-র সঙ্গে কোনও রকম সহযোগিতা করতে তেহরান রাজি নয়।

ইরানি পরমাণু প্রকল্প নিয়ে গোড়া থেকেই বিপাকে ভারত। কৌশলগত দিক থেকে পরমাণু শক্তির ইরান ভারতের পক্ষে বিপজ্জনক হতে পারে। কিন্তু ইরান নিয়ে কঠোর মনোভাব দেখালে তা দেশের অভ্যন্তরীণ রাজনীতিতে সমস্যা সৃষ্টি করবে। তেল ও গ্যাস পাইপলাইনের বিষয়েও ইরানের উপরে ভারত নির্ভরশীল। আন্তর্জাতিক ক্ষেত্রে ব্রিটেন ও ফ্রান্স আমেরিকার অবস্থানের সঙ্গে এক মত হলেও রাশিয়া এবং চিনের মতো দেশগুলি কিন্তু তেহরানের বিরুদ্ধে কড়া ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার বিপক্ষে। কিছুটা সেই সুরে আজ বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের এক মুখপাত্র বলেন, “বারবার আমরা ঘোষণা করেছি যে, ইরানের পরমাণু প্রকল্প সংক্রান্ত বিষয়টি আলোচনার মাধ্যমেই ফয়সালা করতে হবে। ...ভারতের পক্ষে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ওই এলাকায় কোনও রকম সংঘর্ষ বা শক্তিপ্রয়োগ হলে উদ্বেগ-উত্তেজনা আরও বাড়বে।”

26 APR 2008

ANADARAZAR PATRIKA

Iran may pull out of IAEA

AGENCIES

Tehran, April 24

IRANIAN PRESIDENT Mahmoud Ahmadinejad hinted on Monday that Iran would consider withdrawing from the UN nuclear agency if membership produced no benefit. "What has more than 30 years of membership in the agency given us?" he asked rhetorically at a press conference. "Working in the framework of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the agency is our concrete policy," he added. "(But) if we see that they are violating our rights, or they don't want to accept (our rights), well, we will revise."

The UN's International Atomic Energy Agency has accused Iran of failing to answer all questions about its nuclear program and reported the country to the Security Council for non-compliance with its demands.

The Security Council has given Iran until Friday to suspend enrichment of uranium, a process that can produce fuel for nuclear reactors material for nu-

ish state should be wiped off the map." He has said Europe should find a home for Israelis, who should not live on Palestinian land. "Open the doors and let the Jews go back to their own countries," he said on Monday.

Ahmadinejad added that Europeans should jettison their "anti-Semitism" to enable Israelis to "return" to their continent, and "allow Palestinians to live freely." Ahmadinejad often gives long, rambling speeches but Monday was one of the rare occasions when he allowed foreign journalists to question him. He seemed to enjoy the encounter, making jokes and putting questions to the reporters.

He dismissed all speculations of talks with the United States on Iraq, saying that there was no need for such talks now that a permanent Iraqi government was in place. Iran and the US had previously agreed to discuss how to stabilise Iraq, where a four-month-old deadlock over forming a government of national unity was broken on Saturday.



Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (right) and its oil minister Kazem Vaziri-Hamaneh in Tehran on Sunday.

clear warheads. But Iran's foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki rejected the deadline, comparing the war of nerves to Iran's struggle from the 1950s onwards to wrest its oil industry from British control. Iranians, he asserted, were once more standing "firm and united".

Ahmadinejad on Monday fired another salvo at Israel, calling it

Blair for strong reply

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair insisted on Monday that Britain and the US were not discussing military action against Iran, but said a "strong signal" needed to be sent to Tehran over its nuclear programme. He, however, rejected a suggestion that Britain would automatically support any future US-led military intervention in Iran. "Iran is not Iraq. But a very strong signal is needed, because some of its president's comments are unjustifiable," he said.

AP, London

Soccer for women

IRANIAN WOMEN will be allowed to attend soccer matches for the first time since the 1979 Islamic revolution, Iran's president said in a decree on his web site on Monday. They would sit in a separate section.

AP, Tehran

Car bomb blasts rattle Baghdad

Fifteen killed, 100 wounded in violence; police discover 20 bullet-riddled bodies

BAGHDAD: Seven car bomb explosions and shootings killed 15 persons and wounded 100 in Baghdad on Monday as Washington stepped up pressure for Shia Premier-designate Jawad al-Maliki to form a government and halt Iraq's slide into civil war.

Police also discovered bodies of 20 Iraqis, apparent victims of sectarian killings. "All the men had bullets in their heads," an Interior Ministry official said.

The latest wave of violence came as U.S. President George W. Bush stepped up pressure on Mr. Maliki to quickly form a national unity government, with the U.S. military facing one of its bloodiest periods in Iraq since the 2003 invasion.

About 60 U.S. servicemen have been killed in Iraq this month, taking the military's death toll since the invasion to 2,392.

More than four months after the December election for Iraq's first full-term post-Saddam government, political leaders have yet to form a working Cabinet after months of bickering over who should be the next Prime Minister.

On Saturday the deadlock appeared broken when Mr. Maliki was nominated by the dominant Shia bloc, the United Iraq Alliance, as a compromise candidate after the withdrawal of outgoing Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari's candidacy.

On Sunday, Mr. Bush telephoned Mr. Maliki, as well as re-elected President Jalal Talabani and new Parliament Speaker Mahmud Mashhadani, urging them to form a national unity government.

"I told them they have awe-



DEADLY HAVOC: Iraqi policemen survey the wreckage of a vehicle after two car bombs exploded outside Mustansiriya University in Baghdad on Monday. - PHOTO: AFP

some responsibilities to their people," Mr. Bush said. "They have a responsibility to defeat the terrorists. They have a responsibility to unite their country and I believe they will."

Heavy U.S. military casualties and an upsurge in sectarian violence alongside the long-running Sunni Arab militancy have

emerged as the major obstacles to U.S. hopes of withdrawing its 130,000 troops three years after the invasion.

Saddam link to massacre

Meanwhile, the prosecution in the trial of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Monday wrapped up its evidence

against him after a new report by handwriting experts that linked him to the massacre of Shia villagers in the 1980s.

After a 90-minute session with Mr. Hussein and his seven co-defendants all in court, the trial was adjourned for three weeks to May 15, when the defence is expected to start pre-

senting witnesses. The tribunal's chief investigative judge Raed al-Juhi said the prosecution had "finished submitting evidence, though we cannot say that it has rested its case."

"The process of prosecution will continue until a verdict is passed," Mr. Juhi said. - AP, AFP

25 APR 2008

THE HINDU

Iran raises pitch before key session

Tehran, April 23 (Reuters): Iran's decision to enrich uranium is irreversible, its foreign ministry said today in defiance of international demands it halt all nuclear work.

Iran, accused by western nations of seeking nuclear bombs, said this month it had enriched uranium for the first time to a level used in power stations.

"Iran's uranium enrichment and nuclear research and development activities are irreversible," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told a weekly news conference.

Western nations have threatened to seek sanctions on Iran if it does not stop enrichment. The US has not ruled out military action, a step other western states, as well as Russia and China, oppose.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is due to report by April 28 on whether Iran is complying with a UN demand that it halt enrichment, a process that can have civilian and military uses.

"If the (IAEA) report contains expert assessment, there will be nothing left to worry about," Asefi said.

"However, if the report comes out and somehow puts pressure on Iran or speaks with a language of threats, naturally Iran will not abandon its rights and it is prepared for all possible situations and has planned for them," he said.

Iran says its nuclear programme is purely for generating electricity. Western nations say the only way for

Tehran to prove it is not seeking atomic bombs is to renounce all sensitive nuclear technology.

French foreign minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said he was very worried by Iran's latest statement, but said a military option was not on the agenda.

"When I see this declaration today that tells us that the enrichment is irreversible, we are extremely concerned," he told Paris radio station Radio J.

Top US congressional intelligence committee members said Washington did not have enough intelligence to know if Iran was capable of producing nuclear weapons in the near future.

"We've got a long way to go in rebuilding our intelligence community... We don't have all of the information we would like to have," House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman Peter Hoekstra, a Republican, said.

Jane Harman, a senior Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, also said US intelligence was thin. "Just the fact that the Iranian government is making a lot of noise doesn't prove their capabilities," she said.

Iran has stoked worries in the West by saying it is pressing ahead with research and development on advanced P-2 centrifuges, which can enrich uranium faster than its existing P-1 units.

"So far, we have never used P-2 centrifuges," Asefi said. He added that Iran was still discussing a plan to enrich uranium on Russian soil.

24 APR 2006

THE TELEGRAPH

Iran's 'deal' with Russia

ASSOCIATED Presse
Tehran, April 22

IRAN'S ENVOY to the UN nuclear watchdog agency said on Saturday the Islamic republic had reached a "basic deal" with the Kremlin to form a joint uranium enrichment venture on Russian territory, state-run television reported.

Ali Asghar Soltanieh, envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency, "spoke of a basic agreement between Iran and Russia to set up a joint uranium enrichment firm on Russian soil," Iranian state television reported.

It remained unclear, though, whether Iran would entirely give up enrichment at home, a top demand of the West, or whether the joint venture would complement Iran's existing enrichment

BROTHERS IN N-ARMS

programme. Enriched uranium can be used to fuel nuclear reactors that generate electricity or to make atomic bombs.

"Only issues regarding technical, legal and financial matters remain to be resolved which need more deliberation and exchange of views," the television quoted Soltanieh as saying in Moscow on Saturday.

Soltanieh made the comment on the sidelines of an energy conference. Russia and state television gave no details on the deal. In February, Iran and Russia announced that they had reached a "basic agreement" to establish a

joint uranium enrichment venture in Russia, but details were never worked out. Iran has vowed it would never give up its right under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty to enrich uranium and produce nuclear fuel.

The US has accused Iran of using its civilian nuclear programme as a cover to build weapons. But, Tehran denied it, saying its programme is geared merely to generating electricity. The UN Security Council has given Iran until April 28 to cease uranium enrichment. The council has the power to impose economic and political sanctions.

But Iran has rejected the council's demand and announced early this month that it had enriched uranium with 164 centrifuges — a step toward large-scale production.

Jawad Maliki endorsed as Iraq's Prime Minister

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Sunni groups welcome nomination; Talabani wins second term

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: After months of wrangling, Iraq is poised to have a national unity government headed by Shia leader Jawad Al Maliki.

Parliament convened on Saturday and elected Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani President for a second term. Mr. Talabani then asked Mr. Maliki to form the next government.

"I would like to inform the brothers and sisters that we decided unanimously to endorse our dear brother... to head the Cabinet," he said.

Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani, a Sunni Arab was elected Speaker, while posts of two Deputy Speakers went to Khalid al-Attayah, a Shia, and Aref Tayfour, a Kurd.





Shia leader Abdel Adel Mehdi and Tariq Al Hashemi, a Sunni were slated to become Vice-Presidents.

In its meeting on Friday, six out of the seven constituents of the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), Iraq's main Shia grouping agreed on Mr. Maliki's nomination. The representative of Fadilah party, led by Shia cleric Moqtada Al Sadr said that despite reservations, his group would not oppose Mr. Maliki's candidature.

Mr. Maliki has been a close ally of Ibrahim Al Jaafari who had been UIA's first choice for Prime Minister. Mr. Jaafari decided to step down after Iraq's Sunni and Kurdish groups op-

Quest for new Iraqi Prime Minister

Embattled Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari has cleared the way for Shia leaders to withdraw his nomination for a second term, a step that could mark a breakthrough in the months-long effort to form a new government

	<p>► Dec 18: Iraq holds general election. Shia United Iraqi Alliance wins 130 of 275 seats in Parliament. Negotiations begin to form coalition government of Shia, Sunni Arab and Kurdish parties</p>	
	<p>► Feb 12: Ibrahim al-Jaafari elected Prime Minister by just one vote. He is rejected by Sunnis and Kurds, who blame him for rise in secular violence</p>	
	<p>► Feb 22: Meet at Ashrafia mosque - major Shia shrine in Baghdad - sparks reprisal attacks against Sunnis</p>	
	<p>► Mar 16: Parliament meets briefly but fails to reach deal to form government</p>	
	<p>► Apr 7: More than 1,000 Iraqi civilians reported killed in violence in past month</p>	
	<p>► Apr 21-22: Shia alliance votes on al-Jaafari's candidacy. Possible other candidates are Jawad al-Maliki and Ali al-Adeeb - members of al-Jaafari's Daawa party - deputy speaker of Parliament Hussain al-Shahrastani and Vice President Adil Abdul-Mahdi</p>	

Ibrahim al-Jaafari *Jawad al-Maliki*
Hussain al-Shahrastani *Adil Abdul-Mahdi*

Source: Wire agencies Pictures: AP © GRAPHIC NEWS

posed his name. The Americans had also declared their opposition to the candidature of Mr. Jaafari, who has had a long association with Iran.

Mr. Maliki also belongs to the Daawa party and is its deputy leader. However, unlike Mr. Jaafari who had spent several years in exile in Iran, Mr. Maliki had spent most of his time outside Iraq in Syria. This was in the eighties when the Iran-Iraq war had begun and he had to flee the country because the Ba'athist regime had threatened Daawa party leaders with death.

Analysts point out that Mr. Maliki's relatively loose ties with

Iran were a factor in his nomination. In comparison, Ali Al-Adeeb, another possible candidate, belonged to a family of Iranian origin.

Mr. Maliki, since his return from exile, has been an important member of the "de-Ba'athification" committee that was involved in purging Ba'ath party loyalists of the former President, Saddam Hussein. He also served on the panel that drafted the constitution, and had been appointed as Deputy Speaker of the Interim National Assembly.

Mr. Maliki's nomination has not faced any opposition from Sunni groups, who are slated for

a prominent role in the new composite government. "We welcome the choice of Maliki and believe that we can now form a national unity government in Iraq which will be non-sectarian," Zhafer al-Ani of the Sunni Iraqi Accord Front was quoted as saying. Observers point out that while nominating Mr. Maliki, the Shias have dropped their objections to Mr. Mashhadani, a known Sunni hardliner, who has been appointed Speaker.

Kurdish leaders also did not object to Mr. Maliki's nomination. Mr. Maliki's next challenge would be to appoint officials for the powerful oil, interior, defence and finance ministries.

11 bodies found

AP reports: Suspected militants on Saturday set off two bombs in a public market in northern Iraq, the second one timed to hit emergency crews arriving at the scene, and the blasts killed at least two Iraqis and wounded 17, police said.

The bodies of 10 Iraqis who apparently were tortured and killed in captivity also were found in other areas of Iraq, police said. In the market attack, the first bomb exploded in the middle Muqadiyah, a town about 90 km north of Baghdad, causing a large fire, police said.

When fire engines arrived, the second bomb went off, killing a firefighter and a civilian, and wounding 17 civilians, police said.

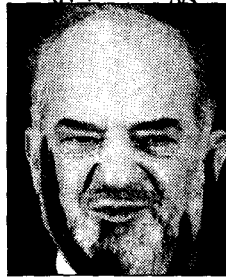
2 APR 2006

THE HINDU

Jaafari ready to step down

Baghdad, April 20

IRAQI LEGISLATORS on Thursday postponed parliament until Saturday for the second time in a week to allow wrangling political blocs more time to agree on a



government of national unity.

Speaker of parliament Adnan Pachachi made the announcement hours after embattled Prime Minister Ibrahim Al Jaafari said his Shia Alliance should decide whether he should resign, a step that could break a months-long deadlock.

Iraq's Shia Alliance said it would hold a new internal vote for a nominee for prime minister, raising the possibility that Jaafari will be pushed aside to end a deadlock over the government.

"The general chamber in the Alliance will vote on this issue as it did previously. That will be soon," Alliance member Hussain Al Shahrastani said at a news conference.

"Leaders of political parties have agreed to postpone parliament. There are still some issues that have not been resolved yet," Pachachi told a news conference. The assembly has sat only once since elections in December.

Jaafari has been under growing pressure from within his own UIA, as well as from other parliamentary blocs, to withdraw his candidacy in the face of a consistent failure since December elections to agree on a cabinet.

Jawad al-Maliki, spokesman for the prime minister's Dawa party, told reporters that "circumstances and updates had occurred" prompting Jaafari to refer the nomination back to the alliance "so that it take the appropriate decision."

He said the prime minister was not quitting but "he is not sticking to this post".

The United States hopes a government comprising Shias, Sunni Arabs and Kurds will foster stability and set the stage for an eventual withdrawal of the US troops from the region.

It has grown increasingly anxious as Iraqi politicians bicker over forming a government seen as the best hope to avert a civil war.

Agencies

Crackdown on women in Iran over dress code

Offenders could be punished with fines or two months in jail

Robert Tait

TEHRAN: Iran's Islamic authorities are preparing a crackdown on women flouting the stringent dress code in the clearest sign yet of social and political repression under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

From Thursday police in Teheran would be under orders to arrest women failing to conform to the regime's definition of Islamic morals by wearing loose-fitting *hijab*, or headscarves, tight jackets and shortened trousers exposing skin.

Offenders could be punished with fines or two months in jail. Officers will also be authorised to confront men with outlandish hairstyles and people walking pet dogs, an activity long denounced as un-Islamic by the religious rulers.

The crackdown coincides with a bill before Iran's conservative-dominated Parliament proposing that fines for people with TV satellite dishes increase from £60 to more than £3,000.

Millions of Iranians have illegal dishes, enabling them to watch western films and news channels.

The dress purge is led by a Teheran city councillor, Nader Shariatmaderi, a close ally of Mr.

Ahmadinejad who helped to plan last year's election victory.

Loosely arranged headscarves — exposing glamorous hairstyles — and shorter, tight-fitting overcoats (*manteaus*) became a symbol of the social freedoms that flourished under the reformist presidency of Mohammad Khatami.

During his election campaign, Mr. Ahmadinejad dismissed fears that his presidency might herald a forced reversal, saying Iran had more urgent problems.

However, Mr. Shariatmaderi denounced the trends as "damaging to revolutionary and Islamic principles".

"We are looking for a social utopia to live in but in the last couple of months, our attention has wavered," he told fellow councillors.

"In the present international situation, people must unite under known principles."

Clampdown

The clampdown recalls the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic revolution, when women wearing lipstick were often confronted by female vigilantes wiping their faces clean with handkerchiefs, which were said to often conceal razor blades.



Iranian women stand at a bus station on a street in Teheran on Tuesday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

The new campaign will hold taxi agencies accountable for their passengers' attire, police will be able to impound cabs carrying women dressed "inappropriately." Agencies guilty of repeat offences will be closed.

Police have reportedly been stopping women motorists recently whose *hijab* was judged inadequate. Police have also raided fashion stores and seized brightly coloured *manteaus*.

Teheran's police chief Morteza Talai said the campaign would try to

clamp down on people making "the social environment insecure."

Young women shopping in north Teheran's fashionable Tajrish neighbourhood on Wednesday, however, were uncowed.

Matin (24), a nurse, was wearing a gaudily patterned light-blue scarf pushed back to reveal sunglasses and bleached blond hair.

Her tight, short black *manteau* with intricate gold patterns seemed designed to provoke the ire of the authorities. But she was unrepentant.

"I'm a married woman and it should be my husband who tells me what and what not to wear. He likes the way I dress," she said.

Surprisingly, Narges Asgari (20), a dressmaker wearing an all-encompassing black *chador*, was also critical. "I don't think people will listen because they want to take decisions themselves," she said.

"Clothes depend on the culture of their families. I wear the *chador* because, in my family, it's something we accept." — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006

2 1 APR 2006

THE HINDU

Iraq tussle takes new turn

Leading Shia alliance for fresh talks over Premier

Atul Aneja

2/19/06
10-15

DUBAI: The tussle over the formation of a national unity government in Iraq has entered its next round with the leading Shia alliance deciding to hold fresh talks over the appointment of its Prime Ministerial candidate. The United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) — a combine of seven Shia groups, which has won maximum seats in the parliamentary elections, had chosen Ibrahim Jaafari for the post of Prime Minister in February.

But on Thursday, Mr. Jaafari said the UIA should meet afresh to confirm his appointment, which the rival Sunni and Shia groups have opposed.

The meeting is slated for Saturday.

A UIA official, Jawad Al-Maliki, quoted Mr. Jaafari as saying "You have chosen me and I return back this choice to you to decide what you see appropri-

ate".

- **Jaafari for confirmation of his appointment**

- **Meeting slated for Saturday**

- **U.S. for early resolution of the standoff**

"You'll find me totally prepared to accept your decision for the sake of the unity of the Alliance."

Mr. Maliki clarified that Mr. Jaafari was not stepping down, but was "not sticking to this post."

On Wednesday, Mr. Jaafari had said submitting his resignation was "absolutely not" in his plans.

Faced with the new developments, the Parliament session, which was scheduled for Thursday, has been put off by two days. The UIA leader Abdel Aziz Al-

2/19

Hakim, who belongs to the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), was now expected to play a key role in making the final decision on Mr. Jaafari's candidature.

The United States has been pressing the UIA leadership to end the standoff over Mr. Jaafari's appointment.

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad has been quoted as saying U.S. President George Bush "doesn't want, doesn't support, doesn't accept" Mr. Jaafari to be the next Prime Minister. Analysts point out that Mr. Jaafari has been opposed because of his past linkages with Iran, where he spent several years in exile and for his "socialist tendencies."

The logjam over the formation of a new government comes in the wake of difficulties in starting the proposed direct negotiations between Iran and the United States on Iraq.

2 1 155 2006

THE NEWSPAPER

Russia, China reject sanctions

To wait for IAEA report on Iran

Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW: Russia and China have balked at endorsing U.S.-pushed sanctions against Iran at a meeting of major powers in Moscow. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow would not be rushed into any action against Iran.

"We are convinced of the need to wait for the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, to present a report on Iran's nuclear programme at the end of the month," Mr. Lavrov said after a late evening talks on Tuesday between the permanent five members of the U.N. Security Council — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — plus Germany. He stressed that the report must first be discussed at the IAEA's Board of Governors before going to the U.N. Security Council.

The U.S. at the meeting reportedly pushed for invoking Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter, which would entail sanctions

and even the use of force against Iran, but Russia and China refused to go along.

Mr. Lavrov said the big powers called on Iran to comply with the IAEA demand to halt uranium enrichment and answer the agency's outstanding questions on its nuclear programme.

"We all agreed that Iran needs to take urgent and constructive steps in response to the decisions of the [IAEA] Board," he said.

The IAEA is to report by April 28 on Iran's compliance with the demand.

Experts said there was still a chance Teheran could agree by the deadline to freeze uranium enrichment for five to 10 years in exchange for the right to take part in an international consortium that will enrich nuclear fuel for Iran either on foreign or Iranian territory. Mr. Lavrov is believed to have discussed this compromise in a telephonic conversation with Iran's Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki on Monday.

20 APR 2006

FILE 100000

Tehran tries to buy US arms illegally

19 APR 2005

JOHN Pomfret
Los Angeles, April 18

THE IRANIAN government has intensified efforts to illegally obtain weapons technology from the US, contacting with dealers across the country for spare parts to maintain its ageing American-made air force planes, its missile forces and its alleged nuclear weapons programme, according to federal law enforcement authorities.

Over the past two years, arms dealers have exported or attempted to export to Iran experimental aircraft, machines used for measuring the strength of steel, which is critical in the development of nuclear weapons, assembly kits for F-14 Tomcat fighter jets; and a range of components used in missile systems and fighter-jet engines.

"Iran's weapons acquisition programme is becoming more organised," said Stephen Bogni, acting chief of the Arms and Strategic Technology Investigations Unit of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "They are looking for more varied and sophisticated technology. Night-vision equipment, unmanned aircraft, missile technology" and weapons of mass destruction.

Calls to the Iranian mission to the United Nations were not returned.

"Most of the material the Iranians are seeking is ageing technology, but it's technology that could still hurt the US and its allies today," said Serge Duarte, acting special agent-in-charge of ICE, investigations in San Diego. That city and Los Angeles are believed to be the two centres of the illicit Iranian weapons trade.

Since 2002, there have been 17 major cases involving the illegal shipment of weapons technology to Iran, outpacing the 15 cases involving China, the other main culprit seeking US military goods, according to data provided by the department of homeland security. Since 2000, the US government has instituted 800 export investigations involving Iran.

Although arms dealers work nationwide, many of the Iranian cases have connections to Southern California, which remains a centre for aeronautics and is home to the biggest concentration of Iranians outside of Tehran.

Federal agents said the main method for obtaining US technology is not through espionage but through simple business deals. "We're talking about the Iranian government putting out shopping lists to brokers and greedy businessmen," Bogni said.

LATWP

Moscow still against curbs

RUSSIA ON Tuesday strongly opposed sanctions against Tehran ahead of six-party consultations on Iran's vexed nuclear issue. "We are sure that it is impossible to lift our concerns about Iran with the help of force or sanctions," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said.

The statement came a few hours before senior diplomats from six world powers met in Moscow to discuss the Iran issue. The political directors from Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the US held talks over a working dinner at a Russian foreign ministry residence in central Moscow.

The UN Security Council voted on March 29 to give Iran 30 days to suspend its uranium enrichment activities. Iran announced last week that it had already successfully enriched a small amount of uranium for use as nuclear fuel.

Agencies, Moscow



Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (left) at a military parade in Tehran on Tuesday. REUTERS

WASAW

' Hamas, Iran & Syria form axis of terror'

ASSOCIATED Press
UNHQ, April 18

1914

ISRAEL HAS warned that a new "axis of terror" — Iran, Syria and the Hamas-run Palestinian government — is sowing the seeds of the first World War of the 21st Century. But the Palestinians accused Israel of an escalating and indiscriminate military campaign that targets civilians and entrenches its occupation.

The Israeli and Palestinian envoys traded charges at an open Security Council meeting, which took place on the day that a Palestinian suicide bomber struck a packed fast-food restaurant in Tel Aviv, killing nine people in the deadliest bombing in more than a year.

Recent statements by the Palestinian government, Iran and Syria, including one by Hamas on Monday defending the suicide bombing, "are clear declarations of war, and I urge each and every one of you to listen carefully and take them at face value," said Israel's UN Ambassador Dan Gillerman.

"A dark cloud is looming above our region, and it is metastasising as a result of the statements and actions by leaders of Iran, Syria, and the newly elected government of the Palestinian Authority," Gillerman warned. It was the first time the Israeli ambassador has warned of a possible new war.

Gillerman told the Security Council that Monday's "horrific act of terrorism as well as the ones that preceded it are the direct result of the new axis of terror" comprising Iran and Syria and the "terrorist organisations they have been harbouring, nurturing, financing and supporting, namely Hamas and Hezbollah."

His warnings of a new war indicate the growing threat that Israelis face from the new anti-Israeli governments in Iran and the Palestinian territories, and Syria's refusal to crack down on Hamas and Hezbollah.

THE END OF THE LINE

Recognise ground realities: Iran

Talks on nuclear crisis to begin in Moscow today

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: Iran has counselled the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany to recognise new ground realities and not to issue threats ahead of their nuclear dialogue that begins in Moscow on Tuesday. "I think the era of threats and bullying is over. I believe the current situation should be taken into account," said Ali Larijani, head of Iran's supreme national security council. Mr. Larijani's remarks follow President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declaration on April 11 that Iran had broken into the nuclear technology club after successfully carrying out uranium enrichment on its own.

On another occasion, Mr. Ahmadinejad had stressed that Iran, from now on, would negotiate from a position of strength.

18/4
• Don't issue threats, says Teheran

• Firm on uranium enrichment

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had said Iran could be subjected to the provisions of Chapter seven of the U.N. charter, which provided for a range of punitive options including economic sanctions and military action.

Mr. Larijani reiterated that Iran would not cease uranium enrichment, defying the U.N. Security Council's demand that it should cease all uranium enrichment activities, till it was established that it was not pursuing nuclear weapons. The state-run Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) quoted Mr. Larijani as

10-15
saying that, "Iran believes suspension of nuclear research would not be wise. We will continue research within the IAEA framework."

The Security Council wants Iran to stop enrichment by an April 28 deadline. Deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation Mohammad Saidi also said Iran would pursue enrichment.

Mr. Larijani said that the Moscow talks could yield positive results "if the proposals were rational and with perspective". Russia and China, while seeking Iran's compliance to a nuclear freeze have opposed imposition of sanctions or military action against Teheran so far. China's Deputy foreign minister Cui Tiangkai, who has just concluded a visit to Teheran, has advocated "patience" to resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis.

THE HINDU

Spurt in Iraq violence

American soldier casualties on the rise

BAGHDAD: Police on Monday recovered 17 bullet-riddled bodies in Baghdad as rebels killed nine persons in fresh attacks across the country.

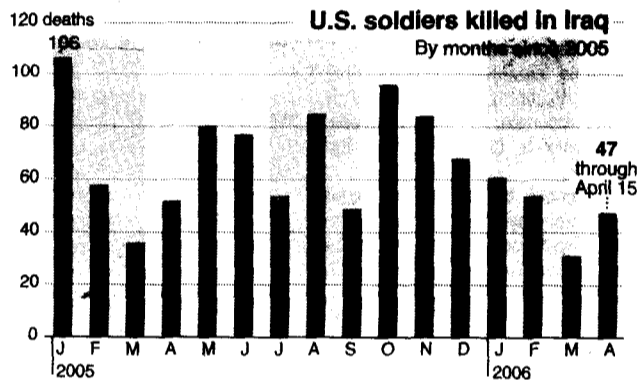
Twelve bodies of men shot to death were found in Baghdad's notorious Dura neighbourhood, while three corpses were recovered in the capital's Al-Shuala district and two more in the Shia Kadimiyah neighbourhood, said an Interior Ministry official.

"Of the 12 bodies found in Dura, two were found inside a foreign car, while five next to the car," the official said.

Hundreds of bodies have been recovered in the last two months across Iraq since sectarian clashes erupted between the Shias and the Sunnis after the bombing of a Shia shrine in the northern town of Samarra on February 22.

Iraq's Sunni leaders claim that most of the corpses have been identified as Sunni Arabs allegedly shot to death by Shia-

Last month 31 U.S. service members died in Iraq, but the number of fatalities in April is already nearing 50.



SOURCE: AP research

AP

led Interior Ministry forces.

Meanwhile, the trial of the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, on charges of crimes against humanity has been adjourned until April 19, chief judge Rauf Abdel Rahman said

on Monday. The trial was adjourned to give the prosecution more time to verify signatures, said to be those of the defendants, on execution orders against 148 Shias from the village of Dujail. — AFP

18 APR 2006

THE HINDU

17. APR 2006

Iran expanding N-facilities: report

REUTERS

Vienna, April 16

IRAN HAS expanded its uranium conversion facilities in Isfahan and reinforced its Natanz underground uranium enrichment plant, a US think tank said, amid growing concern over possible US military action.

Talk of a US attack has topped the international news agenda since a report in New Yorker magazine said this month that Washington was mulling the option of using tactical nuclear weapons to knock out Iran's subterranean nuclear sites.

Former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said on Sunday that any US attack on Iran over its nuclear programme would plunge the region into instability. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan also warned that US military intervention in Iran

Tehran's suicide bombers ready to strike

TEHRAN HAS trained suicide bombers to attack British and American targets if Iran's nuclear sites are attacked, a newspaper reported on Sunday. The main force — the Special Unit of Martyr Seekers in the Revolutionary Guards — was first seen in Iran last month when members marched in a military parade, dressed in uniforms with explosive packs around their waists and detonators held high. *The Sunday Times* said. Dr. Hassan Abbasi, head of Iran's Center for Doctrinal Strategic Studies in the Revolutionary Guards, said 29 Western targets had been identified. "We are ready to attack US and British sensitive points, if they attack our nuclear facilities," Abbasi said. He said some sites were "quite close" to Iran's border with Iraq. **AP**

was not the best solution to resolve the nuclear standoff.

The Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) said in an email with commercial satellite photos attached sent to news media that Iran has built a new tunnel entrance at Isfahan, where uranium is processed into a feed material for enrichment.

Just two entry points existed in February, it said.

"This new entrance is indicative of a new underground facility or further expansion of the existing one," said ISIS, led by ex-UN arms inspector and nuclear expert David Albright.

ISIS also released four satellite images taken between 2002

and January 2006 it said showed Natanz's two subterranean cascade halls being buried by successive layers of earth, apparent concrete slabs and more earth and other materials. The roofs of the halls now appear to be eight metres underground, ISIS said.

The revelations came one week after Iran announced it had enriched uranium for use in power stations for the first time, stoking a diplomatic row over Western suspicions of a covert Iranian atomic bomb project. Iran says it seeks only nuclear energy for its economy.

The Security Council, wielding the threat of sanctions against Iran, has urged Tehran to halt enrichment activity and asked UN nuclear watchdog chief Mohamed ElBaradei to report on the Iranian response on April 28. Iran stood its ground during a visit by ElBaradei last week.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Deadlock persists over Iraq Premier post

Talks achieve no breakthrough

IRAQ: The Speaker of Iraq's Parliament announced on Sunday that he was postponing a planned session "for a few days," signalling that talks among political leaders had achieved no breakthrough on the issue of who will head the next government.

Speaker Adnan Pachachi had said the 275-member Assembly would meet on Monday to try to jump-start the stalled process of forming a new government four months after parliamentary elections.

But Shia officials said they saw no purpose in convening Parliament until all parties had agreed on the new Prime Minister and other posts which require legislative approval. Sunni and Kurdish politicians oppose the Shia choice of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari to head the next government.

Al-Jaafari has refused to step down, and Shia officials have been reluctant to try to force him out for fear of shattering

their political alliance.

4 U.S. Marines killed

Four U.S. Marines died in combat in Anbar province west of Baghdad, the U.S. military said on Sunday.

All four died on Saturday, the military said in two separate statements.

U.S. casualties have begun to rise this month following a sharp drop in March, which saw the lowest number of American dead in Iraq since February 2004. Last month, 31 U.S. service members died in Iraq, but fatalities in April have already passed 40.

A car bomb exploded on Sunday near a Shia mosque south of Baghdad, killing at least 10 persons and injuring about 25, police said.

The blast occurred in the market in Mahmoudiya, about 30 km south of Baghdad, a short distance from the mosque, police Capt. Rasheed al-Samaraie said. — AP

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17 APR 2006

THE HINDU

Freeze demands rejected

No retreat, says Iran

MICHAEL THEODOULOU

London, April 13: Tehran mocked international demands that it suspend uranium enrichment today as the head of the UN nuclear watchdog sought in vain to cool Iran's growing confrontation with the world.

A senior Chinese envoy will take up the diplomatic baton tomorrow after today's apparently fruitless mission by Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran's hardline President, set the tone even as ElBaradei arrived in Tehran.

He declared that the Islamic republic would not retreat "even one iota" after triumphantly announcing on Tuesday that it had mastered the art of uranium enrichment and would proceed now on an industrial scale. "Our answer to those who are angry about Iran obtaining the full nuclear cycle is one phrase: Be angry and die of this anger," he said.

After talks with ElBaradei, Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, dismissed UN demands that it freeze its nuclear programme as "not very important".

ElBaradei said that he could not confirm Iran's claims that it had enriched uranium to 3.5 per cent, the level used to fuel nuclear power stations. "Our inspectors have taken samples. They will report to the [IAEA] board," he said.

Ahmadinejad's statement oozed defiance, and a belief

that the world now had to deal with the new reality that Iran is a nuclear power. "The situation is completely changed. We are a nuclear state," he said. "We will not hold talks with anyone about the Iranian nation's right [to enrichment]."

Tehran insists that its programme is solely for generating electricity, vehemently denying western charges that its real goal is atomic weapons.

Iranian newspapers have hailed the apparent breakthrough on uranium enrichment, but differ over the wisdom of confronting the international community.

Hardline dailies scoffed at the apparent impotence of the West, saying that it had been "checkmated" by Iran. "What can they do with Iran now?" demanded the conservative *Jam-e-Jam*. The ability to enrich uranium had put Iran on an "irreversible path", it said.

One even joked that ElBaradei was welcome to join in the celebrations of Tehran's breakthrough.

THE TIMES, LONDON



Mohamed ElBaradei in Tehran. (Reuters)

17 APR 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Nuclear arms in Iran could be years away

Teheran lacks the skills, materials, and equipment to make good on its immediate nuclear ambitions, feel experts.

William J. Broad, Nazila Fathi and Joel Brinkley

WESTERN NUCLEAR experts said on Wednesday that Teheran lacked the skills, materials, and equipment to make good on its immediate nuclear ambitions, even as a senior Iranian official said that Iran would defy international pressure and rapidly expand its ability to enrich uranium.

Muhammad Saeedi, the deputy head of Iran's atomic energy organisation, said Iran would push to put 54,000 centrifuges on line — a dauntingly vast increase from the 164 which, it said on Tuesday, it had successfully used to enrich uranium to levels that could fuel a nuclear reactor.

Still, nuclear analysts said on Wednesday that the claims did little or nothing to alter current estimates of when Teheran might be able to make a single nuclear weapon, which some analysts have said could be as late as 2015 or even 2020.

Iran's announcement brought criticism from several Western nations and to a lesser degree from Russia and China. The Bush administration took the opportunity to press for "strong steps" against Iran, hoping to use the country's clear statement of defiance to persuade reluctant countries such as Russia and China to support tough international penalties.

But Russian officials said they had not changed their opposition to such penalties. Nuclear analysts said Iran's boast that it had enriched uranium using 164 centrifuges meant that it had now moved one small but significant step beyond what it had been ready to do nearly three years ago, when it agreed to suspend enrichment while negotiating the fate of its nuclear programme.

"They're hyping it," said David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington, a private group that monitors the Iranian nuclear programme. "There's still a lot they have to do."

Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. al-Rodhan of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington called the new Iranian claims "little more than vacuous political posturing" meant to promote Iranian nationalism and a global sense of atomic inevitability.

The nuclear experts said that Iran's claim on Wednesday that it would mass-produce 54,000 centrifuges echoed boasts that it

• Estimates of when Teheran might be able to make a single nuclear weapon could be even 2020

• Bush administration calls for "strong steps" against Iran

• Russia advises against a rush to judgment

made years ago. Even so, they noted, the Islamic state still lacked the parts and materials to make droves of the highly complex machines, which can spin uranium into fuel rich enough for use in nuclear reactors or weapons.

It took Teheran 21 years of planning and seven years of sporadic experiments, mostly in secret, to reach its current ability to link just 164 spinning centrifuges in what nuclear experts call a cascade. Now, the analysts said, Teheran has to achieve not only consistent results around the clock for many months and years but even higher degrees of precision and mass production.

It is as if Iran, having mastered a difficult musical instrument, now faces the challenge of making thousands of them.

On Wednesday, Mr. Saeedi said the Islamic state was moving rapidly toward its atomic goals. "We will expand uranium enrichment to industrial scale at Natanz," he was quoted as saying by the ISNA student news agency in a reference to Iran's main enrichment facility.

Mr. Saeedi said that Iran would start operating the first of 3,000 centrifuges at Natanz by late 2006, with further expansion to 54,000 centrifuges. "We have no problem in doing that," he told ISNA. "We just need to increase our production lines."

Oil markets jittery

The news from Iran, which holds 10 per cent of the world's oil reserves, has made oil markets very nervous in recent days and contributed to a spike in oil prices to nearly \$70 a barrel on Tuesday. Oil futures on the New York Mercantile Exchange closed at \$68.62 a barrel on Wednesday.

Since the beginning of the year, the diplomatic crisis has prompted fears that Iran might be tempted to restrict its oil sales, provoking a price spike that would cause economic havoc around the world. Iranian officials have repeatedly said that they might use their country's "oil weapon" in a confrontation with the West.

More realistically, many traders fear that any international penalties against Iran might hurt Iran's oil industry, slow investments, or remove sorely needed barrels from oil-hungry markets. The Russian stance against penalties, despite the crisis atmosphere, highlighted the obstacles still facing Washington in its effort to force a halt to Iran's nuclear programme.

A senior aide to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia said on Wednesday that any effort to employ broad penalties against Teheran would backfire because "Iran's current President will use them for his benefit, and he will use them to consolidate public opinion around him."

The United States is urging members of the Security Council to approve new travel and financial restrictions on Iran's leaders.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Wednesday that the U.N. Security Council must consider "strong steps" to induce Iran to change course. "The Security Council will need to take into consideration this move by Iran," she said about Tuesday's announcement. "It will be time when it reconvenes on this case for strong steps to make certain that we maintain the credibility of the international community."

In Iran on Tuesday, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced in an elaborate ceremony that Iranian scientists had successfully enriched uranium to 3.5 per cent — a level of purity that, if enough could be made, might fuel a nuclear reactor. While Iran hailed the step as a first, the nuclear experts said that Teheran had in fact been doing periodic enrichment experiments with centrifuges for seven years, since 1999.

On Wednesday, Iran's state-run television was dominated by programmes about the enrichment claim in what seemed like a highly organised effort to mobilise public support for the nuclear programme. One channel showed a reporter stopping people on the street to ask if they had bought pastry to celebrate the news. Another showed nuclear sites and uranium mines. Television

news said that schools around the country celebrated the success and rebroadcast the announcement of Iran's President hailing the enrichment step.

While Iran has sharply raised its nuclear claims in the past two days, nuclear analysts said that it appeared to be roughly where it was expected to be on the road to learning how to enrich uranium on an industrial scale, and still had years of hard work ahead of it to attain its highly ambitious goals.

Mr. Albright said he was not surprised that the Iranians had got a group of 164 centrifuges up and running and had begun to introduce uranium gas into them for enrichment. "There's still a lot they have to do," he said, to perfect the operation of the cascade of centrifuges. A report that he and his colleagues made public late last month suggested that Iran would need six to 12 months to master that process, and Mr. Albright said in an interview that he stood by that rough estimate as accurate.

His March report said that Iran had parts for perhaps 1,000 or 2,000 centrifuges beyond the ones already in operation, and that Iran is not likely to produce enough highly enriched uranium to make a nuclear weapon until 2009 at the earliest.

American intelligence agencies estimate that Teheran is five to 10 years away from having enough material to make a single nuclear weapon.

Several Western nations criticised Iran's recent announcements as needlessly provocative.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said they were "deeply unhelpful," and his German counterpart, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, said Iran was "going in precisely the wrong direction."

"For China, we are concerned about the events and the way things are developing," said Wang Guangya, China's ambassador to the United Nations. But he added: "In spite of this, I believe diplomatic efforts are still under way."

In Moscow, a Foreign Ministry spokesman called Iran's push to expand uranium enrichment "a step in the wrong direction." But Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov later tempered that. He inveighed against any possible military action against Iran and advised against a rush to judgment, saying Iran had "never stated that it is striving to possess nuclear weapons." —New York Times News Service

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THE HINDU

Iran: ElBaradei for political solution

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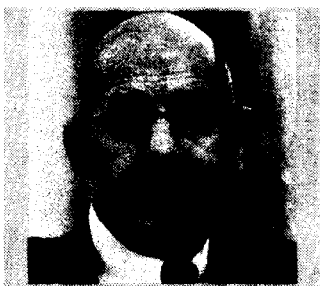
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IAEA chief optimistic about his visit

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Mohamed ElBaradei has called for a political solution to end Iran's nuclear crisis, two days after Teheran declared that it had produced enriched uranium on its own. "The time is right for a political solution and the way is negotiations," Mr. ElBaradei said soon after he arrived at Teheran's Mehrabad International Airport.

The IAEA chief said he was optimistic about the outcome of his visit to Iran. Soon after Mr. ElBaradei arrived, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stressed that the world must come to terms with the new ground realities in Iran. "Today, our situation has changed completely. We are a nuclear country and speak to others from the position of a nuclear country," the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) on Thursday quoted him as saying. "We won't hold talks with anyone about the right of the Iranian nation [to enrich uranium]." He had declared on Tuesday that Iran had successfully produced enriched uranium for the first time, but stressed that his country had no



- Way out is negotiations, says IAEA chief
- We are a nuclear country: Ahmadinejad
- U.S. has no options, says Iran

intention of producing nuclear weapons.

"Our answer to those who are angry about Iran achieving the full nuclear fuel cycle is just one phrase. We say: Be angry at us and die of this anger." Mr. ElBaradei said that he would try to persuade Iran to meet the demands for confidence-building measures, including suspension of uranium enrichment "until outstanding issues are clarified."

U.S. Secretary of State Condo-

leezza Rice had telephoned Mr. ElBaradei before he emplaned for Teheran. The IAEA will on April 28 report to the U.N. Security Council on whether Iran has met its demand to halt all uranium enrichment activities.

Anticipating heavy international pressure, Iranian officials have begun airing ways to overcome the impasse. Iran's nuclear chief Gholamreza Aghazadeh said the U.S. had no option but to recognise Iran as a nuclear power. But he said Iran was ready for western participation in its enrichment facilities, to ease fears about diversion of nuclear material for weapons. "The best way to get out of this issue is for countries that have concern become our partners in Natanz in management, production and technology. This is a very important confidence-building measure," he told state-run television.

The Iranian former President, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, said in an interview to *Al Hayat* newspaper that the proposed talks between Iran and the U.S. over Iraq could be expanded to cover the nuclear issue as well. "We don't have a mandate to discuss the nuclear issue with the Americans ... but if the talks on Iraq go in the right direction, there might be a possibility for that issue."

Meanwhile, China was sending its nonproliferation expert to Iran and Russia in the light of the new situation. China's Assistant Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai was slated to leave on Friday. "Recently, there were some developments of the Iranian nuclear issue," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao. China and Russia have expressed strong concern over Iran's announcement on Tuesday, but have reiterated that they opposed punitive measures against Teheran.

U.S. calls for action

WASHINGTON: The White House on Thursday urged the U.N. Security Council to take measures against Iran but carefully sidestepped questions on the possibility of sanctions.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan told reporters that U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice "talked about how it's time for the Security Council to

take additional steps on the diplomatic front if Iran continues down the current path that they are on."

Iran's announcement "only further isolates the regime, and we are consulting with the Security Council, we are consulting with our friends and allies, who are also concerned about this issue," Mr. McClellan said. — AFP

14 APR 2006

THE HINDU

Iran to take up large-scale enrichment of uranium

Jubilation at home, concern in Arab neighbourhood and Israel

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: Iran's dramatic announcement that it had broken into the nuclear technology club has led to jubilation at home but raised concerns in its Arab neighbourhood and Israel.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had on Tuesday declared that Teheran had "joined the club of nuclear countries," as its scientists had produced "enriched uranium needed to the degree for nuclear power plants." He said that the "laboratory-scale" nuclear fuel cycle work had been completed.

Without spelling out a time frame, Iran's deputy nuclear chief Mohammad Saeedi said on Wednesday that his country intended to take up large-scale uranium enrichment involving 54,000 centrifuges. "We will expand uranium enrichment to industrial scale at Natanz," Mr. Saeedi said over state-run television. He said Iran had informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations' nuclear monitoring arm, that it planned to install 3,000 centrifuges at its enrichment facility in Natanz by late 2006.

Iran would then aspire to position 54,000 centrifuges, in the plant. Mr. Saeedi said that 54,000 centrifuges would produce enough enriched uranium that could power a 1000-megawatt atomic power plant like the one in Bushehr, which is nearing completion in collaboration with Russia. Iranians have been insisting that they do not intend to build atomic weapons.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's declaration has been widely welcomed inside Iran. "Iranians are feeling that this accomplishment — even if it's for civilian nuclear use — is showing the West that a Third World country can attain regional super-power status," Iason Athanasiadis, a Teheran-based columnist told



EXPLOSIVE ISSUE: Artists perform as they hold up small containers holding enriched uranium after Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speech in Mashad, 924 km east of Teheran on Tuesday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

The Hindu. Among Iran's neighbours, Israel has responded cautiously to the Mr. Ahmadinejad's assertion. The Chief of the Israeli defence forces, Dan Halutz told a local radio station that, "The Iranians are still not there. It will take time until they have a nuclear ability and time is there for dialogue to stop the programme." Former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres also advocated patience to deal with the situation. Seeking to soothe anxieties in the Arab neighbourhood, the

head of Iran's supreme national security council, Ali Larijani is on a visit to Saudi Arabia. On April 7, Iran offered its Gulf neighbours, a non-aggression pact, soon after it concluded military exercises in the Strait of Hormuz—the channel through which the bulk of the region's oil is exported.

Russia urges calm

Vladimir Radyuhin reports from Moscow:

Russia warned against fanning passions over Iran's urani-

um enrichment claim even as it urged Teheran to suspend all nuclear work.

"I would rather not jump at conclusions because on too many occasions passions have been whipped up on the issue of Iran's nuclear programme," Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Wednesday commenting on Teheran's announcement that it had enriched uranium for nuclear fuel.

He recalled that the U.N. nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, had

not found Iran in violation of its non-proliferation obligations.

"IAEA is the main authority on Iran. As of to date the agency has not established any proliferation threats from Iran, even though it continues to clarify remaining questions," Mr. Lavrov said expressing the hope that the current visit of IAEA head Al Baradei to Teheran would facilitate efforts to defuse the Iran crisis.

The Russian Foreign Minister also reiterated Moscow's opposition to military action against Iran.

THE HINDU

13 APR 2006

THE HINDU

পরমাণু শক্তিদ্বর ইরান

আমেরিকা, রাশিয়া এবং ব্রিটেন-ফ্রান্স-জার্মানির আপত্তি অগ্রাহ্য করিয়া ইরান পরমাণু গবেষণা চালু রাখিয়াছে। প্রেসিডেন্ট মহম্মদ আহমেদিনেজাদের সর্বশেষ ঘোষণা অনুযায়ী ইউরেনিয়াম সমৃদ্ধ করার প্রযুক্তিও ইরানের করায়ত্ত। এই প্রযুক্তি আয়ত্ত করিলেই সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে পরমাণু বোমা বানানো যাইবে, এমন নয়। তবে ইরান নিজেই ইউরেনিয়াম সমৃদ্ধ করার প্রযুক্তি আয়ত্ত করায় তাহার পরমাণু শক্তিদ্বর হইবার সম্ভাবনা বা শঙ্কা নিশ্চিত অনেক বাড়িয়া গেল। কুভাবতই আমেরিকা ও ইউরোপে ইহার প্রতিক্রিয়া বিরূপ। প্রাথমিক মস্তব্যে আমেরিকা ও রাশিয়া প্রায় একই ভাষায় জানাইয়াছে, ইরান ভুল দিশায় চলিতেছে। তাহাকে সংযত করার পন্থাপদ্ধতি নির্ণয় করিতে অচিরে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে আলোচনার যোগ্যতা লইতেছে আমেরিকা।

ইরানকে পরমাণু শক্তিদ্বর হইতে দিতে পশ্চিমী শক্তিদ্বরদের প্রধান আপত্তির হেতু তাহাদের একটি শঙ্কা যে মোল্লাতন্ত্র শাসিত এই রাষ্ট্রের হাতে পরমাণু বোমা 'ইসলামি বোমা' হইয়া উঠিতে পারে। এই বোমা প্রধানত ইহুদি রাষ্ট্র ইজরায়েলকে ধ্বংস করিতে ব্যবহৃত হইতে পারে, এই আশঙ্কাও যথেষ্ট। এ জন্যই অতীতে সাদ্দাম হুসেন শাসিত ইরাকের পরমাণু প্রকল্প ইজরায়েলি বোমাক হানায় চূর্ণ হইলেও মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র কিংবা ইউরোপীয় দেশগুলি সেই জায়নবাদী আগ্রাসন সমর্থন করে। আর এ বার তো ইরানের নবনির্বাচিত প্রেসিডেন্ট ইজরায়েলকে এই গ্রহ হইতে মুছিয়া ফেলার অঙ্গীকার প্রকাশ্যে ঘোষণা করিয়াছেন। সেই ব্যক্তিকে যখন ইরানকে পরমাণু প্রযুক্তি আয়ত্তকারী দেশ বলিয়া ঘোষণা করেন, তখন তেল আভিভ-এর উদ্বেগ স্বাভাবিক। ফলে ইজরায়েলও হাত গুটাইয়া থাকিবে, এমন সম্ভাবনা কম, যদিও সমরাভিযান অভিযুক্ত নয়। ইরাকে 'গণতন্ত্র' প্রতিষ্ঠা করিতে গিয়াই মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র জেরবার। ইরানকেও যদি পশ্চিম এশিয়ার জ্বলন্ত অগ্নিকুণ্ডে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করিতে হয়, তবে অত দমকল জোগান দেওয়া কঠিন। বরং রাশিয়া যে বিকল্পের সন্ধান করিতেছে, পরমাণু জ্বালানি কমিশনের তদারকির অধীনে ইরানের পরমাণু গবেষণা কর্মসূচিকে আনিয়া আন্তর্জাতিক তত্ত্বাবধান ও নজরদারির সেই পথটিই শ্রেয়। মনে রাখা দরকার, উত্তর-ঔপনিবেশিক যুগে প্রতিটি সার্বভৌম রাষ্ট্রেরই আত্মমর্যাদা আছে, যাহা রক্তচক্ষুকে মর্যাদাহানিকর বলিয়া মনে করে। আলোচনার মাধ্যমে মীমাংসায় পৌঁছানোর চেষ্টাই শ্রেয়।

সেই চেষ্টা ব্যর্থ হইলে ইরানের বিরুদ্ধে অর্থনৈতিক অবরোধ রচনার উদ্যোগ শুরু হইতে পারে। এই মর্মে আন্তর্জাতিক সংস্থায় ভোটভুক্তির উপক্রম হইলে ভারতের পুনরায় অস্থিত্তিতে পড়ার সম্ভাবনা। ইরান যে ভাবে পরমাণু কর্মসূচি রূপায়ণ করিতেছে, একদা ভারতও একই ভাবে আন্তর্জাতিক খবরদারি অগ্রাহ্য করিয়া সেই পথেই অগ্রসর হইয়াছিল। পরমাণু প্রসাররোধ চুক্তিতেও নয়াদিল্লি স্বাক্ষর করে নাই, পরমাণু বোমাও ফাটাইয়াছে। একদা নিজে যাহা করিয়াছে, আজ ইরান তাহা করিতেছে বলিয়া তাহার বিরুদ্ধাচরণে নৈতিকতার যুক্তি নাই, তবে সামরিক, রণনৈতিক যুক্তি থাকিতে পারে। পাকিস্তানের পর আরও একটি নিকট প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রকে পরমাণু শক্তিদ্বর হইতে না-দেওয়ার যুক্তি। কিন্তু নয়াদিল্লির শাসক গোষ্ঠীর অস্তিত্ব যে বামপন্থীদের সমর্থনের উপর নির্ভরশীল, তাহারা পরমাণু প্রক্ষে ভারতের ইরান-বিরোধিতাকে মার্কিন তোষণের প্রমাণ রূপে শনাক্ত করিয়াছেন। তাহাদের বিরোধিতায় মনমোহন সিংহ বিপাকে পড়িতে পারেন। আবার মার্কিন কংগ্রেসে ভারত-মার্কিন পরমাণু চুক্তির বিরোধীরা যুক্তি ফাঁদিতে পারেন, ইরানকে যে 'অপরাধ'-এর জন্য শাস্তি দেওয়ার উদ্যোগ, একই অপরাধের জন্য হোয়াইট হাউস নয়াদিল্লিকে পুরস্কৃত করে কী রূপে? পরমাণু শক্তিদ্বর হওয়ার পারসিক উদ্যোগ অতএব রকমারি জটিলতার জন্ম দিতেছে।

Sunnis reiterate rejection of Jaafari

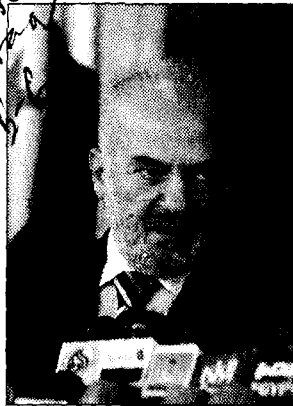
MARIAM KAROUNY

BAGHDAD, APRIL 10

IRAQ'S biggest Arab Sunni bloc said on Monday its rejection of Ibrahim al-Jaafari as Prime Minister was final, stepping up pressure on his Shi'ite Alliance to break a deadlock over forming a unity government.

Dhafir al-Ani, spokesman for the Iraqi Accordance Front, said the bloc had informed the Alliance of "the continuation of our stand" to reject Jaafari. Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurdish leader, officially informed the Alliance on Sunday that the Kurdish bloc would not drop its opposition to Jaafari. The Alliance was expected to meet on Monday to make a final decision on Jaafari.

The United States and Britain will be watching Monday's political developments very closely after repeatedly urging Iraqi leaders to bury their differences and fill a political vacuum that is fuelling violence. A planned meeting between the United States and Iran on stability in Iraq had raised hopes that the neighbouring power could use its influence over fellow Shi'ites leading the Iraqi government and help push the political



Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari. AP

process forward.

But US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, who will represent Washington in the talks, said on Sunday the meeting will not be held until after an Iraqi government was formed.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak hit a raw nerve among Iraqis when he said in comments broadcast by al Arabiya satellite channel on Saturday that civil war had started in their country. The Shi'ite-led Iraqi government, eager to project an image of unity, strongly criticised Mubarak, after he said Shi'ites were more loyal to Iran than their own Arab countries, echoing accusations made by Iraqi Sunnis. —Reuters

1 1 APR 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

Announcement of Iraq parliament cancelled

REUTERS

BAGHDAD, APRIL 6

A PRESS conference at which officials were expected to announce the date of the next session of Iraq's Parliament was cancelled today, organisers said, dealing another blow to efforts to form a government.

No official reason was stated but the cancellation appeared to be another setback in efforts to form a new government four months after parliamentary elections.

Acting Parliament Speaker Adnan Pachachi, who was to have made an announcement at the press conference, said discussions on holding the session which were supposed to conclude this morning are continuing.

Pachachi said he had expected Parliament to meet at the end of next week. The deadlock has been focused on PM Ibrahim al Jaafari, who is resisting intense

Militant captured: US military

► BAGHDAD: Iraqi forces have captured the prime suspect in last year's kidnapping of Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena, the US military said in a statement on Thursday. Mohammed Hila Hammad Obeidi, also known as Abu Ayman, was arrested in southern Baghdad on March 7 but the announcement was delayed pending DNA tests to verify his identity, the US command said in a statement. Abu Ayman is believed to have led the Secret Islamic Army in Babil province south of Baghdad and is said to have close ties to Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. He was an aide to the chief of staff of intelligence during Saddam Hussein's regime, it said. It said Ayman was behind the February 2005 abduction of Sgrena, who worked for a Leftist newspaper in Italy.

The US statement also said Abu Ayman was responsible for assassination attempts against Iraqi officials and for other kidnappings but offered no further details. —AP

pressure from both rivals and senior members of his dominant Shi'ite Alliance.

The Alliance has engaged in a series of talks aimed at ending the crisis, which has left a political vacuum and prompted the US and Britain to urge feuding Iraqi leaders to bury their differences.

Technically the "first" session was not adjourned earlier this month, a legal ploy that gives parliament an open-ended timetable to elect a speaker, which the constitution says should happen at the first session.

Once the speaker is chosen, the new constitution sets a 30-day timetable for forming a government, though there is dispute over whether this should apply to the first parliament.

The struggle to choose a parliament speaker, prime minister and ministers has disappointed Iraqis, who hoped that post-war Iraq's first full-term government would start tackling a Sunni Arab insurgency and rising sectarian violence.

09 APR 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

69 killed in blasts at Shia mosque in Baghdad

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U.S. forces tighten security as fears of civil war grow

BAGHDAD: At least 69 persons were killed and 130 wounded in three suicide blasts as worshippers were leaving a Shia mosque in the Iraqi capital after Friday prayers, state television said.

The blasts took place outside Baghdad's Baratha mosque where the imam, or prayer leader, Sheikh Jalaluddin al-Saghir, is an MP with the Shia United Iraqi Alliance, the largest bloc in the Iraqi Parliament.

Immediately after the attack, Iraqi authorities appealed on state television for blood donations.

Iraqi and U.S. military forces quickly cordoned off the entire area as dozens of pick-up trucks, ambulances and private vehicles started to ferry the victims to hospitals.

Victims were also carried away in handcarts and blankets, as men, beating their chests in grief, searched for relatives who had attended the prayers at the mosque.

Patches of blood and dozens of shoes were left scattered outside the entrance of the mosque where the bombers blew themselves up in the midst of the departing worshippers.

Sectarian violence

The triple attack followed a car bombing on Thursday that killed 10 persons in the Shia shrine city of Najaf and came amid a political deadlock as Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari



DEADLY FRIDAY: Rescuers remove a body from inside a mosque after suicide bombings in central Baghdad on Friday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

refuses pressure to step down.

The latest bombings evoked memories of the February 22 dynamiting of a Shia shrine in the northern town of Samarra that triggered Shia reprisals against Sunnis across Iraq.

Hundreds died in the ensuing tit-for-tat killings between the two religious groups, raising fears of a civil war.

In Thursday's attack in Najaf, a car bomb exploded close to the revered Imam Ali shrine and near the offices of senior cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

In his Friday sermon, Mr. Al-Sadr blamed the U.S. forces for Thursday's Najaf bombing.

"This is not the first time that

the occupation forces and their death squads have resorted to killings," the cleric said referring to the Najaf bombing.

Mr. Al-Sadr also blamed the U.S.-led coalition forces for Iraq's recent wave of communal violence, charging that the United States was "killing religious Shiite clerics in order to start a sectarian strife". — AP, AFP

Iran has missiles to carry N-warheads

CON COUGHLIN

London, April 7: Iran has successfully developed ballistic missiles with the capability to carry nuclear warheads.

Detailed analysis of recent test firings of the Shahab-3 ballistic missile by military experts has concluded that Iran has been able to modify the nose cone to carry a basic nuclear bomb. The discovery will intensify international pressure on Tehran to provide a comprehensive breakdown of its nuclear research programme.

Last week, the UN Security Council gave Iran 30 days to freeze its uranium enrichment programme that many experts believe is part of a clandestine attempt to produce nuclear weapons.

Iran denies it is trying to acquire a nuclear arsenal. But ballistic missile experts advising the US say it has succeeded

in re-configuring the Shahab-3 to carry nuclear weapons.

The Shahab-3 is a modified version of North Korea's Nodong missile which itself is based on the old Soviet-made Scud. The Nodong, which Iran secretly acquired from North Korea in the mid-1990s, is designed to carry a conventional warhead. But Iranian engineers have been working for several years to adapt the Shahab-3 to carry nuclear weapons.

The Shahab 3 has a range of 1287 km, enabling it to hit a wide range of targets throughout West Asia — including Israel. Apart from modifying the nose cone, Iranian technicians are also trying to make a number of technical adjustments that will enable the missile to travel a greater distance.

Western intelligence officials believe that Iran is receiving assistance from teams of Russian and Chinese experts with experience of developing nuclear weapons. Experts who have studied the latest version of the Shahab have identified modifications to the

nose cone.

Instead of the single cone normally attached to this type of missile, the new Shahab has three cones, or a triconic, warhead. A triconic warhead allows the missile to accommodate a nuclear device and this type of warhead is normally found only in nuclear weapons.

According to the new research, the Iranian warhead is designed to carry a spherical nuclear weapon that would be detonated 609 metres above the ground, similar to the Hiroshima bomb.

US defence officials believe that the warhead could hold a version of the nuclear bomb Pakistan is known to have developed.

The development of the Shahab-3 is just one element of a wide-ranging missile development programme.

In 2003, the Iranians concluded another secret deal with North Korea to buy the Taepo Dong 2 missile, which has a range of 3539 km and would enable Iran to hit targets in mainland Europe.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

0 / APR 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Jaafari says he will not be forced out: Report

6/4
Y. G. ...
Vice-President Joins Chorus For Iraqi Prime Minister To Step Down

London/Baghdad: Embattled Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari insisted to a British newspaper on Wednesday that he will not give up his claim to head the country's next government even as Iraqi vice-president Adil Abdul-Mahdi called for him to step aside, becoming the most senior Shiite official publicly to endorse demands for a leadership change to halt the slide toward civil war.

Jaafari's candidacy for the premiership is one of the main stumbling blocks in talks to set up a coalition government.

Sunni and Kurdish parties as well as others in Jaafari's dominant Shiite bloc have called for him to step down because of his failure to curb growing sectarian violence. He has also come under fire because of perceived sectarian leanings of his ministers.

But in comments echoing those he made to the New York Times last week, Jaafari, a former medical doctor, told The Guardian newspaper he would not give way to other candidates who have wider support. "There is a decision that was reached by a democratic mechanism and I stand with it... We have to protect democracy in Iraq and it



Supporters of Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari

is democracy which should decide who leads Iraq," he was quoted as saying.

He added, "Everyone should stick to democratic mechanisms no matter whether they dis-

agree with the person."

Jaafari edged out Mahdi—said to be Washington's preferred candidate for premiership—by just one vote in hustings for the contest in February.

Mahdi told BBC television late on Tuesday he had urged Jaafari to step down because he had failed to get the approval of minority political groups in parliament and was facing rejection from his own United Iraqi Alliance (UIA).

"The country is already in crisis and we have to find an end to that," he said.

Asked whether al-Jaafari should withdraw his nomination, Mahdi said, "Yes, after such a time of naming him, not getting approval from others now in UIA (the dominant Shiite political bloc), there is some rejection so I think he should step aside."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw visited Baghdad last weekend and held talks with Jaafari, Mahdi and Iraq's Kurdish head of state Jalal Talabani.

Jaafari told The Guardian of Rice and Straw's pleas for a swift end to the dispute to prevent further violence, "I heard their points of view even though I disagree with them." Agencies

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

IRAN'S NATIONALISM

Is America Close To Breaking Its Pledged Word?

By SUBROTO ROY

Ayatollah Khomeini was the Ho Chi Minh of Iran. Ho Chi Minh was both a communist and a Vietnamese nationalist, but America's Presidents from Eisenhower to Nixon failed to see the latter. Khomeini was both a devout Shia Muslim and an Iranian nationalist yet America's Presidents from Carter to W. Bush refused to see his Revolution being as much about Iranian nationalism as about creating an Islamic Republic. As a general rule, Western countries allow for nationalism among other Western countries but often not among non-Western countries. Immanuel Kant's dictum of treating everyone as an end in himself/herself and not as a means towards one's own ends, is applied in intra-Western international relations but often not when the West deals with others. But Indians did not have to be communists to sympathise with Vietnam's struggle against first France and then America, and Indians do not have to be Shia Muslims to sympathise with Iran's struggle against an impending Anglo-American aggression. The opaque Manmohan-Montek deal-making with America on behalf of India's people may need to be set aside in such a context — while it might benefit several dozen businesses on both sides and several hundred bureaucrats may become even fatter with bribes, it may have next to nothing to do with any dimension of India's national interests.

US pledge 1981, policy 2006

On January 19 1981, the Government of the United States signed what came to be called the Algiers Accord, the first point of which stated: "Non-Intervention in Iranian Affairs: The United States pledges that it is and from now on will be the policy of the United States not to intervene, directly or indirectly, politically or militarily, in Iran's internal affairs." This was part of a comprehensive truce between Revolutionary Iran and the USA in regard to the war-like conditions then prevailing between them. That pledge now seems about to be broken. British newspapers reported on 2 April 2006 that the Blair Government is holding "secret talks" with its own Chief of Defence Staff, Chief of Defence Intelligence and others to discuss "an American-led attack, designed to destroy Iran's ability to develop a nuclear bomb... if Tehran's leaders fail to comply with United Nations demands to freeze their uranium enrichment programme." This is despite the British foreign minister saying last month "that a military attack against Iran was 'inconceivable'".

The author is Contributing Editor, The Statesman

America's "National Security Strategy" of 16 March 2006 states the policy clearly: "We may face no greater challenge from a single country than from Iran. For almost 20 years, the Iranian régime hid many of its key nuclear efforts from the international community. Yet the régime continues to claim that it does not seek to develop nuclear weapons. The Iranian régime's true intentions are clearly revealed by the régime's refusal to negotiate in good faith; its refusal to come into compliance with its international obligations

people. Our strategy is to block the threats posed by the régime while expanding our engagement and outreach to the people the régime is oppressing."

Attack scenario

In one scenario, America will make a surprise cruise-missile attack on Iranian buildings "suspected" of producing biological weapons. If the Iranians respond in any way other than total submission, it will be sufficient to launch a major bombing of Iran's military facilities using B-2 bombers based in Diego Garcia,



by providing the IAEA access to nuclear sites and resolving troubling questions; and the aggressive statements of its President calling for Israel to 'be wiped off the face of the earth'. The United States has joined with our EU partners and Russia to pressure Iran to meet its international obligations and provide objective guarantees that its nuclear program is only for peaceful purposes. This diplomatic effort must succeed if confrontation is to be avoided. As important as are these nuclear issues, the United States has broader concerns regarding Iran. The Iranian régime sponsors terrorism; threatens Israel; seeks to thwart Middle East peace; disrupts democracy in Iraq; and denies the aspirations of its people for freedom. The nuclear issue and our other concerns can ultimately be resolved only if the Iranian régime makes the strategic decision to change these policies, open up its political system, and afford freedom to its people. This is the ultimate goal of U.S. policy. In the interim, we will continue to take all necessary measures to protect our national and economic security against the adverse effects of their bad conduct. The problems lie with the illicit behaviour and dangerous ambition of the Iranian régime, not the legitimate aspirations and interests of the Iranian

England and other American bases, possibly using nuclear "earth penetrating" weapons to attack underground facilities. Of course it is not impossible the British and Americans are merely setting up a bluff to scare the Iranians into complying without a fight, but the existence of aggressive war plans and preparations cannot be doubted.

Now it is possible the Americans will say they are not bound by the pledge made in the Algiers Accord in January 1981. In breach of all diplomatic law, Iran had taken 66 Americans captive while seizing the US Embassy in Tehran on 4 November 1979. (Six others escaped with help of the Canadian and Swedish embassies.) Of the 66, 13 women and black Americans were released two weeks later; one man was released due to ill-health in July 1980. The remaining 52 including two women and one black American were released after 444 days on 20 January 1981 by the terms of the Algiers Accord, just before Ronald Reagan took over as President of the United States. Eight American military personnel had been killed on 25 April 1980 in a failed attempt to rescue them. The official designations of the 52 captives included 10 military attachés; 6 "communications and electronics specialists"; 8 political and adminis-

trative officers, and 12 diplomatic/consular staff; in addition there were 12 guards and 4 others. Even if the US Embassy in Tehran was a den of spies as the Iranians claimed, the Revolutionary Government could have ordered them all to leave and to have ended diplomatic relations with the USA in accordance with international law. What explained Iran's anger for such a brazen violation of international law to have occurred? That was the age before terrorism, nor was Iran a player in the conflict between Israel and the Arabs.

Iran's anger stemmed from having felt being used by Britain, America and Soviet Russia for half a century before the 1979 Khomeini Revolution — from having been made merely the means towards the ends of others, in violation of the Kantian dictum. It was almost as if Britain and America had said to Iran and the entire Middle East, "We invented the internal combustion engine and the automobile which uses it, and we also discovered the petroleum that runs it; the mere fact you happen to sit on this petroleum does not make you own it; we own it too and we will take it by force whenever necessary." During the Cold War, the USSR followed suit, and now after the Cold War has ended, the new Russia is a Western ally in the same kind of attempted domination over non-Western countries like Iran (or Pakistan and India, who get sold a lot of useless weapons to fight each other with).

Mossadeq the democrat

Specifically, if the USA says it signed the 1981 Algiers Accord under duress, Iran could say it had been cheated into signing the 25 year agreement of September 1954 with an international oil consortium led by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Iran would receive 50% profit on Iranian oil exported, after paying the Company £25 million in compensation for having nationalised it in 1951 under the democratic government of Mohammad Mossadeq. Mossadeq had broken off diplomatic relations with Britain, but was overthrown by an Anglo-American coup d'état in August 1953, and replaced by the compliant General Fazlollah Zahedi and Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Arthur Mills-paugh, an American invited by the Iranians to help their public finances, once wrote: "Persia cannot be left to herself, even if the Russians were to keep their hands off politically. ...Persia has never yet proved its capacity for independent self-government." Mills-paugh's 1925 book titled *America's Task in Persia* seems to have remained the handbook of Western policy towards Iran. Khomeini's Revolution was its antithesis.

Iran steps up military exercises in key area

Teheran sending a message it can influence global economy

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: Persisting with its show of strength, Iran has tested a land-to-sea missile as well as a "flying boat", near the Strait of Hormuz — an area through which large quantities of Gulf oil are exported.

The Iranians on Tuesday test-fired the Kowsar missile. On Friday, Iranian military commanders said they had tested a missile designed to carry multiple warheads. Analysts say that throughout the course of their on-going military exercises at the strategic junction of the Gulf and the Sea of Oman, the Iranians have been sending a clear

message that they have the capacity to influence the global economy, in case they are subjected to a military attack.

Route of oil tankers

On Monday, Iran had tested a high-speed rocket-propelled torpedo, demonstrating its capability to target submarines. Tuesday's missile test showed it had the capacity to hit surface ships. Observers point out that the location of the exercise has been significant as oil tankers heading towards overseas destinations pass through the Strait of Hormuz — a bottleneck that opens into the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Sea. Any disruption of

supplies is likely to send the price of oil into a spiral. Already Brent crude oil futures on Monday jumped to \$67.93 a barrel — the highest after Hurricane Katrina, after the Iranians declared that they had tested their high speed torpedo, Hoot (whale), in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's naval manoeuvres are taking place against the backdrop of growing tensions with the West over Teheran's nuclear programme. Iran has so far defied the 30-day ultimatum of the U.N. Security Council to halt all uranium enrichment activity. There have been suggestions in the United States that Iranian nu-

clear facilities could be subjected to air strikes. Reiterating that there was no change in its nuclear stance, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said on Tuesday that his country would persist with its atomic programme, as was its right, as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"There are two paths available to us: that of understanding, cooperation, dialogue and work within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and that of confrontation. The Islamic republic prefers the former," he said.

05 APR 2006

THE HINDU

Iran in space club, West jittery

Question Now Being Asked Is If Teheran's Efforts Are Simply Part Of Its Drive To Expand Its Technical Prowess Or An Attempt To Add A Building Block To Its N-Programme

By William J Broad & David E Sanger

The spacecraft is small by world standards: microsatellite of a few hundred pounds. Launched in October by the Russians for an oil-rich client, it orbits the earth once every 99 minutes and reportedly has a camera for peering down on large swathes of land.

But what makes this satellite particularly interesting is not its capabilities, which are rudimentary, but its owner: Iran. With last year's launching and another planned in the next few weeks, Teheran has become the newest member of the international space club.

The question now asked in Washington and other capitals is whether Iran's efforts are simply part of its drive to expand its technical prowess or an attempt to add another building block to its nuclear programme. In that sense, it is the newest piece of the Iranian atomic puzzle.

To some government analysts and other experts in the West, Iran's space debut is potentially worrisome. While world attention has focused on whether Iran is clandestinely seeking nuclear arms, these analysts say the launchings mark a new stage in its growing efforts to master a range of sophisticated technologies, including rockets and satellites. The concern is that Teheran could one day turn such advances to atomic ends.

"It may appear tempting to dismiss Iranian efforts" as relatively crude, said Dr John B Sheldon, an analyst at the Centre for Defence and International Security Studies in Britain who recently wrote a report on Teheran's space programme. "But Iran has already

Iran's Upward March

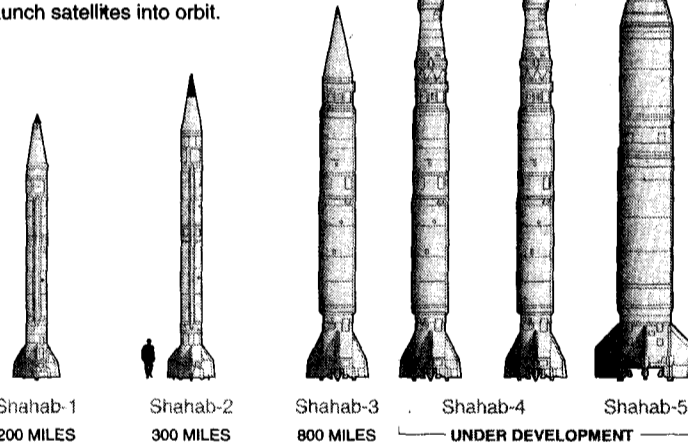
Iran's rocket program began in the 1980s, during the war between Iran and Iraq. Tehran's first missile, the Shahab-1, was a version of the Scud missile that could propel one-ton warheads roughly 200 miles. Successive generations of the Shahab have increased that range.

MISSILES IN OPERATION

Iran's most powerful missile is the Shahab-3, with a range of 800 miles.

MISSILES UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Multistage rockets believed to be under development could propel warheads 2,000 or more miles, or launch satellites into orbit.



Source: Charles P. Vick, GlobalSecurity.org

demonstrated a persistence and patience that would indicate it is prepared to play a long game in order to achieve its ambitions."

Iran has publicly rejected the goal of developing unconventional arms. It says its space and rocket efforts are either entirely peaceful, aimed at improving the state's

telecommunications and monitoring natural disasters (strong earthquakes shook Iran on Friday), or are military efforts meant to enhance its defences with conventional weapons.

But some Western analysts note that such technologies can also have atomic roles. While Iran now

depends on Russia to launch its satellites into orbit, it has vowed to do so itself, and is developing a family of increasingly large rockets.

In theory, the biggest could hurl not only satellites into space but warheads between continents.

Dr Anthony H Cordesman, a military analyst at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington who wrote a recent report on Iran's nuclear effort, said Teheran's bid to develop new rocket and space technologies might be nothing more at this point than its exploring of technological options, at times quite modestly, as in its recent effort to launch experimental satellites.

"That doesn't mean the potential should be minimised," Cordesman said. "We know these states can achieve technical surprise."

On Sunday, Iran said it test-fired a fast underwater missile that could evade sonar and on Friday announced that it had launched a new rocket that can carry multiple warheads and elude radar. The military actions, accompanied by film clips on state television during a week of naval maneuvers, seemed calculated to defy growing pressure on Teheran.

So far, American officials say they have not protested Iran's space programme. Nor has the US urged Russia a key player in the current negotiations with Iran over its efforts to enrich uranium to halt the launchings. But a senior American official said the United States was "taking another look" at pressing Moscow to end the space assistance as a way of pressuring Iran to stop the enrichment of nuclear material. NYT News Service

05 APR 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Shi'ites urge Jaafari to step down

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, April 1. — Calls emerged today within the Shi'ite alliance for Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari to step aside as the bloc's nominee for another term as pressure mounted from Sunni Arab and Kurdish politicians for the Shi'ites to pick another candidate.

One prominent Shi'ite politician, former minister of state for National Security Qassim Dawoud, openly called for al-Jaafari to withdraw his candidacy.

Shi'ite officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, said others within the Shi'ite alliance were open to replacing al-Jaafari. But they denied media reports that the Shi'ite alliance had already asked al-Jaafari to step aside.

"There is a current (within the Shi'ite alliance) that is calling on the Prime Minister to withdraw his nomination because the political process has reached a deadlock," Mr Dawoud said. "I personally asked that he withdraw his nomination." Opposition to al-Jaafari, a



An Iraqi at the funeral of his relative in Baquba city, north-east of Baghdad, on Saturday.

AFP

former physician who spent years in exile in Iran and Britain, has begged down talks among Shi'ite, Sunni and Kurdish politicians over formation of a new national unity government following the 15 December elections. US officials

are pressing the Iraqis to move quickly to set up such a government to curb the violence and pave the way for USA other coalition troops to begin heading home.

Iraq ambush

Gunmen attacked a minibus returning home when they were ambushed last night.

Tehran tests superfast sub-sea missile

War games amid row

Tehran, April 2 (Reuters): Iran has test-fired a sonar-evading underwater missile that can outpace any enemy warship, a senior naval commander told state television today during a week of war games in the Gulf.

Western nations have been watching developments in Iran's missile capabilities with concern amid a standoff over the Iranian nuclear programme, which the West says is aimed at building atomic bombs. Iran says the programme is only civilian.

Analysts say the US could take military action against Iran if it fails to resolve the nuclear dispute through diplomatic means. Iranian commanders say their armed forces are ready to respond to any attack.

Iran earlier in the war games said it tested a radar-evading missile and today's announcement is likely to add to western worries. Iran has a commanding position over the Strait of Hormuz at the entrance to the Gulf, a shipping route through which passes some two-fifths of all the oil traded in the world.

"This missile evades sonar technology under the water and even if the enemy sonar system could detect its movement under the water, no warship could escape from it because of its high velocity," Revolutionary Guards Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi said.

"The Islamic republic is now among the only two countries who hold this kind of missile. Under the water the maximum speed that a missile could (usually) move is 25 metres per second, but now we possess a missile which goes as fast as 100 metres per second," he told state television.

The commander used the word "missile" in Farsi, rather than "torpedo".

"The boats that can launch

this missile have a technology that makes them stealthy and nobody could recognise them or act against them," he said.

Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Aliasghar Soltaniyeh, said the missile test should not worry the world. He said that, to his knowledge, the weapon could not carry a nuclear warhead.

"The world should not worry because any country has its own self-defence conventional military activities," he told CNN.

State television earlier described the missile as the world's fastest. It also showed images of the weapon being fired from what appeared to be the deck of a ship, followed by the weapon travelling at speed through water. "It carries a very powerful warhead that enables it to operate against groups of warships and big submarines," Fadavi said.

The test was part of a week of Iranian naval manoeuvres that started on Friday and taking place in the Gulf and Sea of Oman. The official IRNA news agency said the manoeuvres were to show Iran's "defensive capabilities".

On Friday, Iran said it had successfully test-fired a domestically produced, radar-evading missile, and released images of it being launched into the air from land.

Iranian state television said that missile was called the Fajr-3. But Hossein Salami, head of the Revolutionary Guards air force, did not name the new weapon or give the its range, saying it depended on the warhead weight.

The US-based military affairs website globalsecurity.org describes the Fajr-3 as a 240mm artillery rocket with a 40-km range, one of a group of light rockets Iran has developed mainly for tactical use on the battlefield.



A protester wipes tears as British television star Joanna Lumley looks on during an anti-war demonstration in central London on Sunday where the names of 1,000 Iraqi civilians killed during the conflict were read out. (Reuters)

Buzz in British war room

SEAN RAYMENT

London, April 2: The British government is to hold secret talks with defence chiefs tomorrow to discuss, possible military strikes against Iran.

A high-level meeting will take place in the ministry of defence at which senior defence chiefs and government officials will consider the consequences of an attack on Iran.

It is believed that an American-led attack, designed to destroy Iran's ability to develop a nuclear bomb, is "inevitable" if Tehran's leaders fail to comply with United Nations demands to freeze their uranium enrichment programme.

The US is hopeful that the

Tomorrow's meeting will be attended by Gen. Sir Michael Walker, the chief of the defence staff, Lt Gen. Andrew Ridgway, the chief of defence intelligence and Maj. Gen. Bill Rollo, the assistant chief of the general staff, together with officials from the foreign office and Downing Street.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the nuclear watchdog, believes that much of Iran's programme is now devoted to uranium enrichment and plutonium separation, technologies that could provide material for nuclear bombs to be developed in the next three years.

The US is hopeful that the

military operation will be a multinational mission, but defence chiefs believe that the Bush administration is prepared to launch the attack on its own or with the assistance of Israel. British military chiefs believe an attack would be limited to a series of air strikes against nuclear plants — a land assault is not being considered at the moment.

But confirmation that Britain has started contingency planning will undermine the claim last month by Jack Straw, the foreign secretary, that a military attack against Iran was "inconceivable".

Condoleezza Rice, the US secretary of state, insisted,

during a visit to Blackburn yesterday, that all negotiating options — including the use of force — remained open in an attempt to resolve the crisis.

At the centre of the crisis is Washington's fear that an Iranian nuclear weapon could be used against Israel or US forces in the region, such as the American air base at Incirlik in Turkey. The UN also believes that the production of a bomb could also further destabilise West Asia.

A foreign office source said: "Monday's meeting will set out to address the consequences for Britain in the event of an attack against Iran."

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH APRIL 2 2003

Rice and Straw in Baghdad

Baghdad, April 2 (Reuters): US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice and Britain's Jack Straw flew to Baghdad today and pressed Iraqi politicians to break their deadlock and form a unity government that can halt a slide to civil war.

"The Iraqi people are losing patience," Rice said after meeting Sunni, Shia and Kurdish leaders. On the delay of nearly four months in forming a government since elections, she said she had told them: "Your international allies want to see this done."

Pressure on Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari looked almost irresistible as a leader of the biggest party in his ruling Shi'ite Alliance joined others in publicly breaking ranks and calling on him to step aside in the name of national consensus.

Though they refused to say so in public, it was a message which appeared to have been conveyed, too, by Rice and foreign secretary Straw. Minority Sunni and Kurdish leaders insist they will not join a cabinet under Jaafari and want a different Shia nominee.

At stake is the future of an Iraq that Rice said remained "vulnerable" to sectarian civil war three years after the US and British invasion. Two US crew were presumed dead today after the crash of their helicopter, which the US military said was probably shot down by insurgents.

The chill was palpable when Rice and the embattled Jaafari exchanged small talk on a rainstorm raging outside as reporters looked on. The smiles were frosty, the body language awkward.

No breakthrough is likely to be announced during the two-day trip, officials said — both Iraqi leaders and their visitors are anxious not to give the impression that Washington and London are innuendo.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH APRIL 2 2003

Iran test-fires new high-speed torpedo

Associated Press

TEHERAN, April 2. — Iran announced its second major new missile test within days, saying today it has successfully fired a high-speed torpedo capable of destroying huge warships and submarines.

The tests came during war games that Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards have been holding in the Gulf and the Arabian Sea since Friday at a time of increased tensions with the USA over Teheran's nuclear programme. The Iranian-made torpedo, called the *Hoot* or "whale" has a speed of 360 km per hour, said Gen. Ali Fadavi, deputy head of the Revolutionary Guards' Navy. That would make it about three or four times faster than a normal torpedo and as fast as the world's fastest known underwater missile, the Russian-made VA-111 Shkval, developed

in 1995. It was not immediately known if the *Hoot* was based on the Shkval.

"It has a very powerful warhead designed to hit big submarines. Even if enemy warship sensors identify the missile, no warship can escape from this missile because of its high speed," Fadavi told state-run television. It was not immediately clear whether the torpedo can carry a nuclear warhead. State-run television, which stopped its normal programmes to break news of the test, showed a brief clip of the launch from a ship into the waters of the Gulf. Television pictures also showed the torpedo hitting the target, a ship on the surface of the water.

The new weapon could raise concerns over Iran's naval power in the Gulf, where during the war with Iraq in the 1980s Iranian forces attacked oil tankers from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

02 APR 2006

THE STATESMAN

Rice, Straw press Iraq for new govt

Associated Press

Zarqawi replaced

BAGHDAD, April 2. — The top US and British diplomats told Iraqi leaders today they cannot afford to “leave a political vacuum” and must work quickly to form a new unified government.

The surprise visit by US Secretary of State Ms Condoleezza Rice and British foreign secretary Mr Jack Straw highlighted the allies’ growing impatience with the Iraqis’ failure to set up a governing coalition nearly four months after elections.

Ms Rice told reporters she and Mr Straw conveyed the same message to each of the leaders they saw: that each must do his own job in resolving the political stalemate and do it quickly.

“Whatever role that is, it’s time to play it because the Iraqi people are losing patience,” Ms Rice said. “What is more, your international allies want to see this get done because you can’t continue to leave a political vacuum.”

One of those leaders, foreign minister Mr Hoshiyar Zebari, said Ms Rice and Mr Straw made clear “there is a sense of urgency to form this new Iraqi national unity government” and that “there is a sense of impatience back in Washington and London about the delay.” En route to the Iraqi capital from England, Ms Rice said she and Mr Straw were going to urge

AMMAN, April 2. — Iraq’s resistance has replaced Jordanian-born Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as political head of the rebels, confining him to a military role, the son of Osama bin Laden’s mentor said today in Jordan.

“The Iraqi resistance’s high command asked Zarqawi to give up his political role and replaced him with an Iraqi, because of several mistakes he made,” said Hudaif Azzam, who claims close contacts with the rebels.

“Zarqawi’s role has been limited to military action,” said Azzam, whose late father Abdullah Azzam was the mentor of bin Laden, the Al-Qaida boss. “Zarqawi bowed to the orders two weeks ago and was replaced by Iraqi national Abdullah bin Rashed al-Baghdadi,” Azzam said. — AFP

that negotiations wrap up. Mr Straw said the choice of leaders is up to Iraqis alone. But neither he nor Ms Rice disguised the blunt nature of their mission. “There is significant international concern about the time the formation of this government is taking, and therefore we believe and we will be urging the Iraqi leaders we see to press ahead more quickly,” Mr Straw said.

Pilots dead

The US Apache helicopter that crashed near Baghdad was probably shot down and its two crew members are presumed dead.

02 APR 2006

THE STATESMAN

Iraq, Iran, and a strategy of a thousand errors

Hamid Ansari

“WHAT IS wrong in theory cannot be right in practice.” So said a Secretary of State of the United States, in another age. The present incumbent of that high office, confident of the judgment of history, opines that thousands of tactical errors notwithstanding, the strategic decision to invade Iraq was valid. At the other end of the spectrum is U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to whom the alleged mistakes were merely course adjustments; he chided Condoleezza Rice on her lack of understanding of warfare.

Both propositions are disputable. The consistency of errors is suggestive of a deeper malaise. Sun Tzu had considered “moral influence” the first among the primary factors in war preparations. Was this not lost sight of?

The Iraq story is well documented and stands critical scrutiny. The steep drop in opinion polls of U.S. President George W. Bush’s competence rating is eloquent enough. The war exercise, in violation of the United Nations Charter and international law, was at every stage in the past three years a litany of misleading statements, miscalculations, and misjudgments. It has brought anarchy and indescribable misery to Iraq. Other instances of crimes against a whole people have been judged at the bar of history, at times even earlier. Will this be an exception?

Apart from the human cost, would a globalisation-addicted world calculate the cost in economic terms? An American expert told an energy seminar in London last month that the invasion of Iraq had weakened America’s energy security and contributed to the surge in oil prices. Instead of Iraq contributing 5 million barrels a day to world supplies, production today is in the vicinity of 1.7 million, considerably lower

America has brought anarchy and indescribable misery to Iraq. Now it is eyeing Iran. Would American and world public opinion be mute spectators to another exercise in monumental folly?

than the 2.5 million in the last days of Baathist Iraq.

The controversy about reconstruction, and (mis)appropriation of funds, is a subject in itself. It has reportedly forced strategists in Washington to conclude that in future wars, reconstruction would not be given priority!

Even the democracy card shows signs of being discredited with the Foreign Ministers of the invading powers pressuring the legally elected Prime Minister to step down. The ancient imperial device of divide and rule has gone horribly wrong. The upshot of this is a decision to talk to Iran about Iraq, and to conduct the talks in Baghdad. A historian might whisper that this would be within a few miles of Ctesiphon, the winter capital of Persian kings who ruled over the region.

The U.S. proposal for talks through Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad was made in October. Iran’s acceptance of the offer now, following a request from the Iraqi Shia leader Abdulaziz Al-Hakim, signals a turn in the domestic Iranian debate. The leader of the negotiating team will be Iran’s man in Baghdad, Hasan Kazemi Qumi, who conducted a similar dialogue on Afghanistan some years back. He told the Iranian press on April 4 that (a) Iraq “will be the primary subject of negotiations”; (b) talks will be open and Iraqi government representatives “will be

present”; (c) the “necessary prerequisites for the talks” and the precise agenda is being worked out; (d) Iran “will welcome anything that may help stability, advancement of the political process, and improvement of the security situation in Iraq”; (e) both sides agree that a new government of national unity should be established as soon as possible.

Iran believes that this should be on the basis of the result of the recent election since the “democratic principle is very important.” America favours a consensus approach: “we are saying that the winning list of candidates should be given a greater share of power.” However, the Americans are emphasising the need for agreement among the main groups of Shias, Kurds, and Sunnis.

Too late for Iraq?

Has it all come too late? Patrick Cockburn, an experienced observer of the Iraqi scene, paints a grim scenario: “The moment that Iraq can be held together as a truly unified state has probably passed. But a weak Iraq suits many inside and outside the country and it will still remain a name on the map. American power is steadily ebbing and the British forces are largely confined to their camps around Basra. A ‘national unity government’ may be established but it will not be national, will certainly be disunited and

may govern very little. The government will end up being a few buildings in the Green Zone, one minister said.”

What then would the talks achieve? When would they commence? What would be the linkage to the ground situation in Iraq and to the International Atomic Energy Agency related matters? What other linkages will be sought to be established? A serious game of chess and poker is evidently in the offing. The Arab states are furious at being left out and feel they have been outplayed.

Iran is in American focus for more reasons than one. The U.S. succeeded in persuading the Security Council to give Iran 30 days to comply and in the process forgo each one of its rights as a signatory of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Iran’s response, after initial anger, was spelt out in a *New York Times* op-ed on April 6 and indicated the distance it was willing to travel to reassure the world about its nuclear programme. The offer is serious, specific, and worthy of consideration; France and Germany have urged more talks but the silence from Washington and London is deafening.

American officials have repeatedly asserted that no options are off the table. This, in simpler language, is a reiteration of the option to use force — pre-emptive, unilateral or in concert with allies like Israel. Exercises conducted in the U.S. War College at Carlisle (Pennsylvania) in recent years, codenamed “Unified Quest,” have visualised the use of a task force of six divisions and two airborne expeditionary forces moving into Iran from six directions and supported by five aircraft carriers with the declared objective of toppling the regime in Teheran.

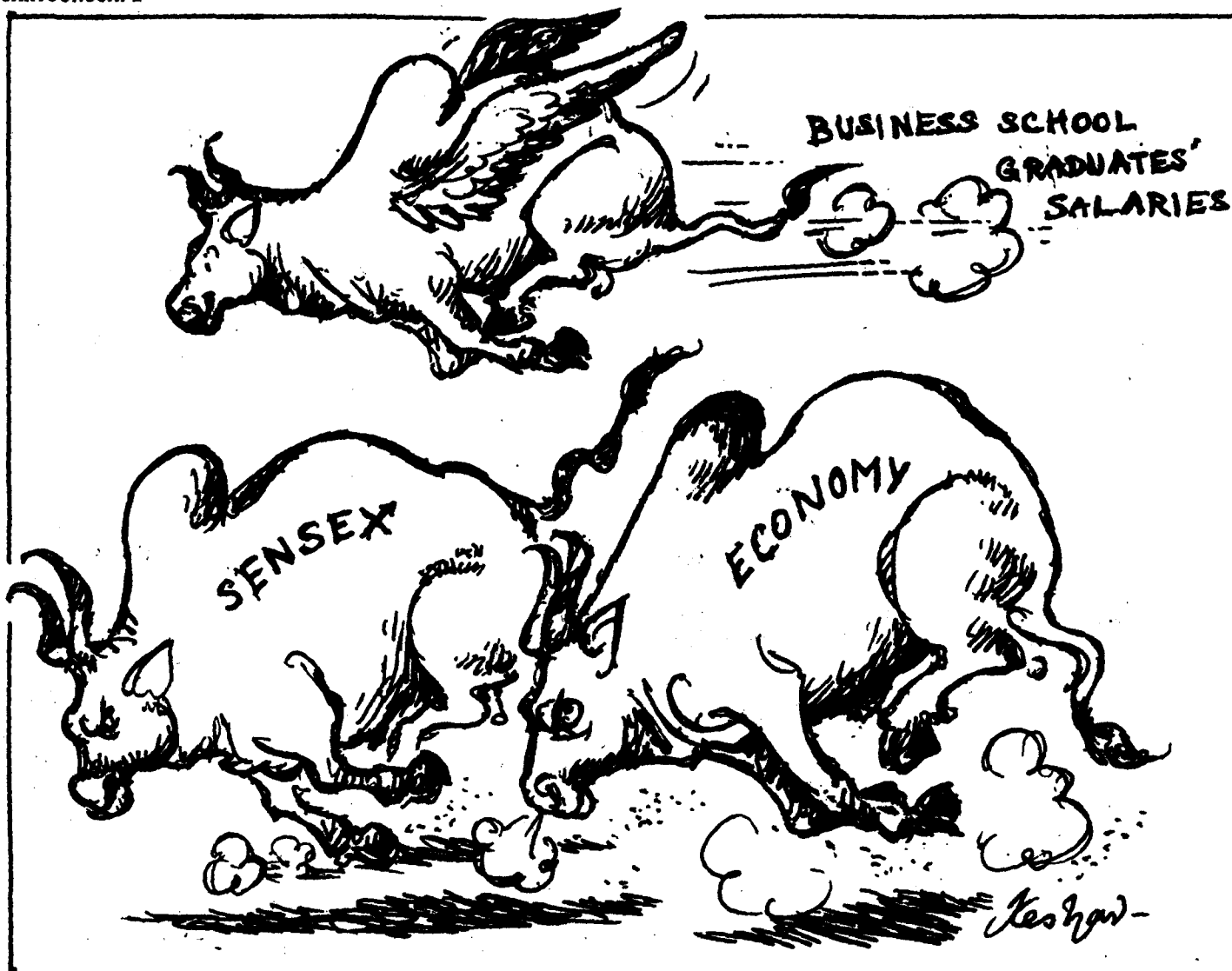
This week Seymour Hersh has reported thinking riveted on the use of tactical nuclear weapons to destroy the underground enrichment facility at Natanz. He amplifies the scope of thinking in the words of senior officials: “This is much more than a nuclear issue. That’s just a rallying point, and there is still time to fix it. But the Administration believes it cannot be fixed unless they control the hearts and minds of Iran. The real issue is who is going to control the Middle East and its oil in the next ten years.” This would necessitate a change of regime in Iran. Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad may therefore well be right in his belief that even if the nuclear matter is resolved, other questions such as human rights and animal rights will be put on the agenda.

Experts have speculated on the menu of other military options that the U.S. might explore. These could be (i) a demonstrative cruise missile attack on a high value nuclear facility; (ii) a limited strike using 16-20 cruise missiles and about a 100 sorties directed at several facilities; (iii) a major attack using 200-600 cruise missiles and strike sorties with a matching number of escorts, extending to 10 days and directed at major nuclear, missile, and radar facilities with the objective of damaging or destroying around 70 per cent of these; (iv) a large-scale attack by 1,000-2,500 cruise missile and strike sorties directed at all suspected Iranian facilities. A minority has suggested the “ride out Iranian proliferation” option, on the argument that patience is not always a virtue but has never been considered a mortal sin.

The duration of a conflict, its impact on the region, and the nature and intensity of Iranian retaliation, remain imponderable. The war option would involve heavy cost in economic terms. Oil industry calculations indicate that a shortfall of even 2 million barrels a day could double the oil price and result in a drop in the American GNP by up to 5 per cent, with all its attendant implications. The impact on others would be sharper.

War in our times is too serious a matter to be left to the fancies and prejudices of politicians. Would American and world public opinion be mute spectators to another exercise in monumental folly, to a thousand more errors?

CARTOONSCAPE



Iran enrichment may nuke India deal

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

Washington: Iran's crossing of yet another threshold in its nuclear wrangle with the West is certain to complicate the US-India nuclear deal despite expert opinion that Teheran is overstating its achievement.

Some US lawmakers and analysts have used the Pandora's box argument to object to the Bush administration's deal with India — that helping New Delhi with its nuclear programme will, even in the civilian sphere, will trigger a nuclear arms pursuit by other countries.

Despite repeated assertions by US officials that India is a unique non-proliferation case and deserves a deal limited to civilian cooperation, the Iran development is bound to give critics fresh ammunition. However, one administration official rejected the proposition, saying the Iran development is not a "particularly vexing problem", at least for now.

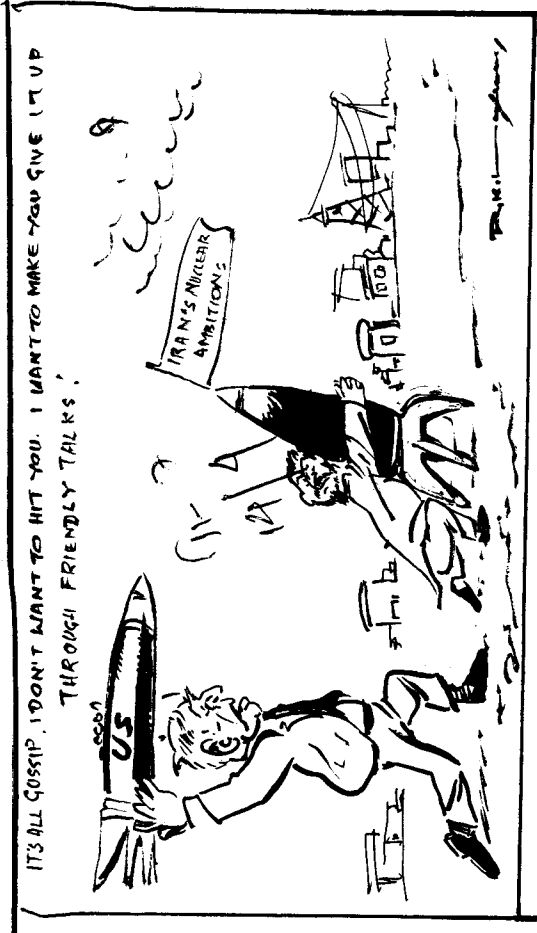
"I don't think the Pandora box's argument is holding sway right now. This (the US-India nuclear deal) is what we do with countries we trust

by Iran's push to nuclear enrichment often referred to the US-India deal while wondering why Washington is being so hard on Iran while giving a pass to India.

The administration's argument that Iran had cheated despite being an NPT signatory whereas India has stayed clean despite not being an NPT signatory found little resonance among non-proliferation hawks determined to treat all nuclear late-comers as renegades.

Although responsible US analysts have surmised that Teheran's announcement is more geo-political in nature rather than any significant technological breakthrough, the chatter here inevitable centers around a possible US attack on Iran. One of CNN's captions for the story read "War with Iran?"

But in one insightful commentary on ABC News, analyst Anthony Cordesman suggested that Iran's enrichment (of between 3 and 5 percent) was modest and did not amount to much if true. Fissile material for nuclear weapons needs upward of 95% enrichment.



and which we don't do with countries we don't trust," he said. "In both cases we are trying to solve non-proliferation issues. India has behaved in a responsible way and Iran has behaved in an irresponsible way," he added.

But California Democrat Barbara Boxer, who criticised India's ties with Iran at a Senate hearing last week and made sundering those ties a condition for the deal

to pass, lost no time in clubbing Iran and India, saying having nuclear weapons was a matter of "personal pride" for both countries.

The Bush administration has so far not publicly linked the Iran developments to the US-India deal. At Tuesday's state department briefing, spokesman Sean McCormack said, independent of the Iran story, the administration will continue to work closely with

Capitol Hill on any questions that they may have concerning the draft legislation and any other issues that may arise concerning the deal.

"We believe it's the right deal for the US. We think it's good for both countries and certainly we're going to be working on behalf of legislation that would allow the deal to be implemented," he said.

But the flood of commentary and analysis generated

4 APR 2006

4 APR 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Iraqi Tinderbox

6/11/06
25/7
America is losing the battle
and the argument

THE din of justifications and spin hasn't died down and neither has the bloody toll from the frontlines of a war that began with the avowed aim of changing the face of Middle East and bringing democracy. The confetti of victory had already been prepared a fortnight into the invasion of Iraq three years ago and an eager L Paul Bremer, the US administrator, was talking in terms of handing it all over to the Iraqis. Alas, that is still not to be so. Worse, the war of invasion is now intricately and perhaps intractably woven into a civil war in which the faultlines of Iraqi society have become the frontlines. And at great expense, the Americans are realising once again that liberating a country is one thing and holding on to it is another. Things have obviously hurtled out of control in Iraq, whatever George W Bush and his policy whitewashers say. The Tikritis still retain the power to strike and strike hard, Iraq is now a base for Al-Qaida, the Shiites are looking like a menacing Islamic power, Iraqis are still suffering and dying and there isn't a whiff of democracy in the Middle East.

The last effect is perhaps the worst, because whatever nascent democratic movements there were in countries run by Arab dictators are wobblier. And authoritarian rulers are armed with new arguments. "Look at what the Americans achieved in Iraq. Is this the democracy you want? It is a democracy where 30,000 people have been killed by war and sectarian violence", is what they are telling the people, according to a Syrian analyst. True, today's Iraq does not offer any window of hope. As an influential US paper put it, you can play it upbeat or downbeat, depending on whether you consider 2,300 American lives and some 35,000 Iraqi lives as necessary losses on the road to democracy. Iraq is horribly messed up, but the Americans still can save themselves a heavier price and push for peace by recognising that and then moving seriously to turn things around instead of looking at things only with Eagle eyes. A serious international effort to solve the Palestinian problem and creating a Palestinian state will clearly have a salutary effect on the entire region. Building on that the Americans must co-opt serious partners, unlike their earlier coalition of billing, and inspire confidence among Iraqi Sunnis, Shias and Kurds that a sincere effort is being made to bring democracy to their country.

28 MAR 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

US begins probe into killing of Iraqi family by its military

ALASTAIR MACDONALD
BAGHDAD, MARCH 21

THE US Military said on Tuesday it was investigating Iraqi police allegations that its soldiers shot dead a family of 11 in their home last week.

The probe comes a day after a magazine published allegations that US Marines killed civilians in another town in November. A criminal inquiry into those deaths was launched last week.

Time magazine said a patrol went on a rampage after one of their comrades was killed by a roadside bomb in Haditha, West of Baghdad. It published detailed accounts by townspeople.

Last Wednesday in Ishaqi, North of Baghdad, police accused US troops of shooting dead 11 people, including five children, while the military said only four people were killed in all.

"Because of that discrepancy, we



Relatives and friends carry the body of Farid Hussein for burial. Hussein was killed in a bomb blast on Monday in Baghdad. AP

have opened an investigation," Lieutenant Colonel Barry Johnson, a senior US Spokesman in Baghdad, said on Tuesday.

Accusations that American soldiers often kill innocent people has fuelled anger at the occupation among Iraqis over the past three

years. They also complain that little disciplinary action has resulted in the few cases that are investigated.

Meanwhile, guerrillas attacked the police headquarters and courthouse in Miqdadiya on Tuesday, killing 16 people and releasing prisoners, police said. —Reuters

22 MAR 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

Leaving Iraq would be like giving Nazis Germany: Rumsfeld

REUTERS

Washington, March 19

LEAVING IRAQ now would be like handing post-war Germany back to the Nazis, US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said in a column published on Sunday, the third anniversary of the start of the Iraq war.

"Turning our backs on post-war Iraq today would be the modern equivalent of handing postwar Germany back to the Nazis," he wrote in an essay in the *Washington Post*.

Rumsfeld said "the terrorists" were trying to fuel sectarian tensions to spark a civil war, but they must be "watching with fear" the progress in the country over the past three years.

In London, former Iraqi prime minister Iyad Allawi said that Iraq is in a civil war at present and is nearing the point of no return when the sectarian violence will spill over throughout West Asia.

"It is unfortunate that we are in civil war. We are losing each day, as an average, 50 to 60 people throughout the country, if not more. If this is not civil war, then God knows what civil war is," Allawi told BBC television.

Rumsfeld's view was that the Iraqi insurgency was failing.

"The terrorists seem to recognise that they are losing in Iraq. I believe that history will show

13 killed in clashes

US TROOPS clashed with gunmen north and west of Baghdad on Sunday, and in the holy city of Karbala where a million Shia pilgrims assembled for a major religious commemoration, insurgents lobbed mortars. Eight civilians, including a child, were killed in Duluiyah, in Iraq's Sunni heartland, during an Operation Swarmer raid. In Ramadi, two civilians were killed and 10 wounded when gunmen attacked US troops stationed at the governor's office. In the capital Baghdad, police found the bullet-riddled bodies of three men bound hand and foot and dumped in a sewage treatment plant in the neighbourhood of Rustamiyah. **AP, Baghdad**

that to be the case," he wrote.

He said 75 per cent of all military operations in Iraq include Iraqi security forces.

"Today, some 100 Iraqi army battalions of several hundred troops each are in the fight, and 49 per cent control their own battle space," he said. Rumsfeld wrote that if US forces leave Iraq now, "there is every reason to believe Saddamists and terrorists will fill the vacuum — and the free world might not have the will to face them again."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 MAR 2006

ইরানেও আগাম আক্রমণের হুমকি ইরাকে ফের ঝাঁকে ঝাঁকে মার্কিন বিমান

ওয়াশিংটন ও বাগদাদ, ১৬ মার্চ: ঠিক তিন বছর আগে এমন বসন্তেই শেষ বার মার্কিন যুদ্ধবিমান থেকে বোমাবর্ষণ দেখেছিল ইরাক। আজ ফের একই ছবি।

এ বার বোমার লক্ষ্য বাগদাদ থেকে প্রায় একশো কিলোমিটার উত্তরের শহর সামারা।

অভিযানের নাম 'অপারেশন সোয়ারমার'। নামের সার্থকতা বজায় রাখতেই অভিযানে নেমেছে ঝাঁকে ঝাঁকে মার্কিন সেনা। আজ সকাল থেকে তারা সামারায় গেরিলা বাহিনীর বিরুদ্ধে এই সামরিক অভিযান শুরু করে। তাদের সঙ্গে যোগ দেয় ইরাকি ফৌজ। দু'পক্ষ মিলিয়ে দেড় হাজারের বেশি সেনা অভিযানে সামিল হয়েছে। এদের সঙ্গে এগোচ্ছে দুশোরও বেশি সাজোয়া গাড়ি। আর আগেভাগে বোমাবর্ষণ করে পথ তৈরি করছে পঞ্চাশেরও বেশি যুদ্ধবিমান। এ ছাড়া দুর্গম অঞ্চলে অভিযান চালাতে সামরিক হেলিকপ্টারও যোগ দিয়েছে।

ইরাকে পুরোদমে সামরিক অভিযান শুরুর দিনেই হোয়াইট হাউস দেশের নতুন নিরাপত্তা কৌশল প্রকাশ করেছে। সেখানেই বুশ প্রশাসন ইরানকেও আগাম হুমকি দিয়ে জানিয়েছে, 'আত্মরক্ষার' প্রয়োজনে তারা ইরানের বিরুদ্ধেও আগাম আক্রমণের পথ নেবে। অবশ্য ইরান এ দিন জানিয়েছে, ইরাক নিয়ে আমেরিকার সঙ্গে তারা আলোচনায় রাজি। হোয়াইট হাউসের তরফেও জানিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে, ইরানের মার্কিন রাষ্ট্রদূতকে বিষয়টি নিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু করতে বলা হয়েছে।

যদিও এতে ইরান সম্পর্কে মার্কিন নীতি নরম হচ্ছে না। নিরাপত্তা কৌশল সংক্রান্ত নথিতে ইরানকে আমেরিকার সামনে প্রধান চ্যালেঞ্জ হিসাবে বর্ণনা করা ছাড়াও বলা হয়েছে, মুসলিম রক্ষণশীল শাসনে থাকা ইরান সন্ত্রাসকে প্রসার দেয়। ইজরায়ালের সামনেও সে-ই সবচেয়ে বড় হুমকি। নিথিতে বলা হয়েছে, ইরানিদের স্বাধীনতায় হস্তক্ষেপ তো বটেই, পশ্চিম এশিয়ার শান্তি বিঘ্নিত করা আর ইরাকের গণতন্ত্র ভুল্ল করার লক্ষ্যেও ইরান সর্বদাই সক্রিয়।

বুশ প্রশাসন তাই স্পষ্টই জানিয়েছে, ইরাকে যুদ্ধ চালিয়ে

যে অভিজ্ঞতাই হোক না কেন, দেশের নিরাপত্তা সুরক্ষিত করতে এই পথ থেকে সরবে না আমেরিকা। তাদের বক্তব্যের পরে ইরাকের এ দিনের অভিযান যথেষ্ট ইঙ্গিতবাহী। যদিও হোয়াইট হাউসের মুখপাত্র বিষয়টি এড়িয়ে সাংবাদিকদের প্রশ্নের জবাবে বলেন, ইরাকের মার্কিন কমান্ডারদের নির্দেশেই এই অভিযান। এর জন্য বুশের সম্মতির দরকার হয় না।

এ কথা বলা সত্ত্বেও ওয়াশিংটন কিন্তু অভিযানের পিছনে আসল উদ্দেশ্য কী, তা ঠারোঠারে বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছে। পেট্রোগান



প্রস্তুত হচ্ছেন মার্কিন ও ইরাকি সেনারা।— রয়টার্স

অনেক দিন ধরেই দেখাতে চাইছিল, মার্কিন ও ইরাকি ফৌজ একসঙ্গে অভিযান চালাতে সক্ষম। এ দিনের অভিযানে সেটা তারা পরিষ্কার করে দিল। জানা গিয়েছে, এই দলে ইরাকি ফৌজের সংখ্যাই বেশি। দীর্ঘমেয়াদি অভিযান চালিয়ে ইরাকি ফৌজিদের দিয়েই ইরাকি সন্ত্রাসবাদীদের কোমর ভেঙে দিতে চাইছে বুশ প্রশাসন। ইরাকি বিদেশমন্ত্রী হোশিয়ার জেবারি কোনও রাখঢাক না করেই জানিয়েছেন, এই

এর পর নয়ের পাতায়

ইরাকে আবার মার্কিন বিমান

প্রথম পাতার পর

অভিযান প্রমাণ করে দিল ইরাকি ফৌজ এখন কত শক্তিশালী।

বাগদাদে মার্কিন বাহিনীর দফতর এ দিন সকালেই অভিযানের খবরাখবর দিয়ে একটি বিবৃতি প্রকাশ করে। সেখানে কারণ হিসেবে বলা হয়েছে, সামারায় শিয়া-সুন্নি সম্পর্ক যেখানে পৌঁছেছে তাতে গৃহযুদ্ধের যথেষ্ট আশঙ্কা রয়েছে। দুই গোষ্ঠীর মধ্যে ছোটখাটো সংঘর্ষ নতুন কিছু নয়। কিন্তু গত মাসে শিয়াদের একটি ধর্মস্থানে বিস্ফোরণ এই আশঙ্কা অনেকখানিই উস্কে দিয়েছে। এর পিছনে যে সুন্নি সন্ত্রাসবাদী গোষ্ঠী রয়েছে, তাদের শিক্ষা দিতেই অভিযান। আরও বলা হয়েছে, খুব শীঘ্র অভিযান মেটার আশা কম। একই কথা ইরাকি মুখপাত্রের গলাতেও।

মার্কিন বাহিনীর সূত্র অনুযায়ী, প্রথম দিনেই অভিযানের অগ্রগতি যথেষ্ট। তারা শত্রুপক্ষের কয়েকটি ঘাঁটিতে হানা দিয়ে প্রচুর পরিমাণ অস্ত্রশস্ত্র, গোলাবারুদ, বিস্ফোরক উদ্ধার করেছে।

4/3/06 NSC New Asia
washingtonpost.com

U.S. Seeks Deadline in Dispute With Iran

By Dafna Linzer and Colum Lynch
Washington Post Staff Writers
Saturday, March 4, 2006; A14

NEW YORK, March 3 -- The Bush administration, preparing to take Iran's case to the U.N. Security Council as early as next week, is seeking a 30-day deadline for Tehran to halt its nuclear program and cooperate with international inspectors or face severe diplomatic pressures, according to several senior U.S. and European officials.

But the officials, who discussed the details of the diplomatic strategy on the condition of anonymity, said they expected tough negotiations among the Security Council's 15 members and said much hinges on Russia.

Russian officials have spent the past several weeks trying to persuade the Islamic republic to freeze much of its nuclear infrastructure and transfer the most sensitive aspects to Russia. Iran has expressed interest in a joint uranium-enrichment venture with Moscow but also wants to enrich uranium at home, which it says would be used for an energy program. Iran's chief negotiator, Ali Larijani, reiterated that position to senior European officials Friday in Vienna.

The Bush administration asserts that Iran's nuclear energy program is a cover for bomb-making. A three-year investigation by inspectors with the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency has not found proof of an Iranian nuclear weapons effort. But the agency also cannot determine whether Iran's nuclear program is strictly for peaceful purposes.

For years Washington was alone in its desire to push the issue of Iran's program to the U.N. Security Council. And on Monday, members of the IAEA board will meet in Vienna to discuss the agency's latest findings and formally hand the issue off to the Security Council, where the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France have more influence and can raise the possibility of imposing sanctions.

Going to the council represents the second time in four years that the Bush administration has tried to persuade the U.N. to pressure a Muslim country accused of hiding a weapons program. Wary of the comparisons to Iraq, where no weapons of mass destruction were found, the White House is hoping a combination of diplomacy, U.N. inspections and negotiations will succeed in pressuring Iran. At the same time, Washington hopes to ease the concerns of allies suspicious of U.S. intentions.

U.S. and European officials, who have claimed international consensus on the Iran issue, hope the matter could be taken up by the council by the end of next week. But it is clear that stark differences remain among council members.

U.S. diplomats have prepared a draft statement for adoption by the council, noting the IAEA's latest findings. Diplomats said the U.S. draft gives Iran 30 days to suspend its nuclear activities and cooperate with inspectors or face the possibility of tougher diplomatic action. U.S. and European officials have

been discussing a number of measures inside and outside the council's purview, such as travel bans on Iranian officials, economic sanctions or an oil embargo.

"The idea is to begin slowly, with a presidential statement, set timetables and then give Iran a certain deadline to respond," one senior U.S. official said. "After that we push harder with a resolution."

But Russian officials, unwilling to give up on talks with the Iranians, which have not yet yielded results, are unlikely to go for such a tough start.

"There is no collectively discussed and agreed strategy of what we all will be doing in the Security Council if the issue is there," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters Friday in Moscow. Lavrov will visit Washington on Tuesday for talks with President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Bush administration officials said they expect to get a sense then about how far Russia is prepared to go in pressuring Iran, which has been a close economic partner for Moscow. Russian officials are currently suggesting giving the Iranians anywhere from 60 days to three months to continue negotiations and respond to additional concerns from the IAEA, diplomats said.

For Washington, ensuring the issue remains on the council's agenda is key. John R. Bolton, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, was charged "to make sure this stays in the council," something Russia and China would like to avoid, a U.S. official said.

U.S. diplomats conferred with French, British, Russian and Chinese officials Thursday and Friday in New York to discuss Iran.

Some Iran and U.N. experts believe it is unlikely the council will agree to impose economic sanctions even if Iran continues to defy calls by the IAEA board to freeze parts of its energy program.

China blocked Security Council action against North Korea, which the IAEA referred to the council in 2003 after Pyongyang withdrew from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This time, Russia and China have said they are committed to seeing Iran freeze its nuclear enrichment activities to assure the international community it has no intention of pursuing a nuclear weapon. But they both firmly oppose punitive measures to compel Iran to do so and favor letting the IAEA handle the crisis.

"You have this basic split between the United States, Britain and France, who want the issue in the council, versus the Russians and Chinese, who for slightly different reasons would like to keep the issue in Vienna as long as possible," said Flynt L. Leverett of the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy.

Noting commercial and political interests, Leverett said that "for an energy hungry country like China, having a privileged relationship with a big oil supplier like Iran is a big deal."

Lynch reported from the United Nations.

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Israel, US planning to topple Hamas

Jerusalem, February 14

HAMAS DERIDED the United States and Israel on Tuesday following reports they were exploring ways to topple the militants' incoming government.

Israeli security officials said they were looking at ways to force Hamas from power, and were focusing on an economic squeeze that would prompt Palestinians to clamour for the return of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas' ousted Fatah Party.

The US denied any "plot" with Israel to undermine a Palestinian government led by Hamas, but said there were talks on cutting US aid if the radical group does not renounce violence.

"There's no plot," said White House spokesman Scott McClellan. "We have the same conversations with the government of Israel that we have with Arab governments and European governments and others."

But foreign ministry spokesman Mark Regev said, "There is no such plan."

The *New York Times*, citing anonymous US and Israeli officials, reported on Tuesday that the US and Israel were considering a campaign to starve the Palestinian Authority of cash so Palestinians would grow disillusioned with Hamas and bring down a Hamas government.

The reports came a day after the outgoing Fatah parliament gave new powers to Abbas, allowing him to set up a sympathetic court that would be able to veto Hamas legislation unchallenged.

Mushir al Masri, a Hamas spokesman and incoming legislator, said attempts to bring down a future Hamas government were hypocritical.

"This is ... a rejection of the democratic process, which the Americans are calling for day and night," al Masri said. "It's an interference and a collective punishment of our people because they practiced the democratic process in a transparent and honest way."

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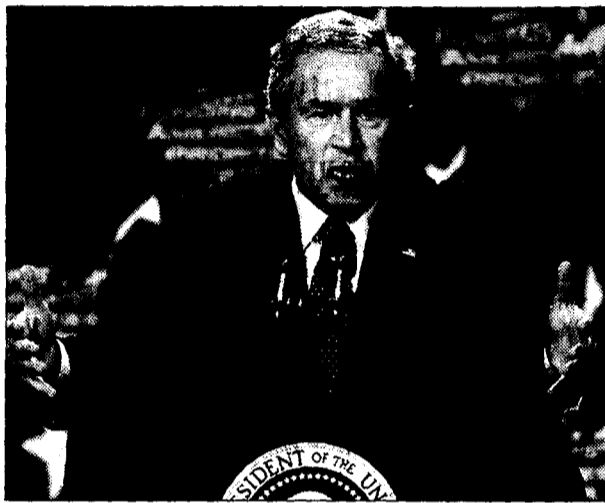
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Central Command and Strategic Command Planners are identifying targets, assessing weapon-loads and working on logistics for an operation, the *Sunday Telegraph* reported.

The war strategists are reporting to Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, as the US is updating plans for action if the diplomatic offensive fails to thwart the Iran's nuclear bomb ambitions, the report said.

"This is more than just the standard military contingency assessment," a senior Pentagon adviser told the newspaper. "This has taken on much greater urgency in recent months."

The prospect of military action could put Washington at odds with Britain which fears that an attack would



US President Bush wants military action as a last resort to block Tehran from developing nuclear weapons. AP

spark violence across the Middle East, reprisals in the West and may not cripple Tehran's nuclear programme.

However, the steady flow of disclosures about Iran's secret nuclear operations and the virulent anti-Israeli threats of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has prompted the fresh assessment of military options by Washington.

The most likely strategy would involve aerial bombardment by long-distance B2 bombers, each armed with up to 40,000lb of preci-

sion weapons, including the latest bunker-busting devices. They would fly from bases in Missouri with mid-air refueling.

The Bush administration has recently announced plans to add conventional ballistic missiles to the armoury of its nuclear trident submarines within the next two years. If ready in time, they will also form part of the plan of attack, the report said.

Tehran has dispersed its underground nuclear plants and has recently increased its air defences.

Tehran committed to NPT

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEHRAN, FEBRUARY 12

THE Iranian Foreign Ministry affirmed Tehran's commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) today and urged a peaceful solution to the dispute over its nuclear programme.

Spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi, the ministry spokesman, issued the latest Iranian declaration a day after the Iranian President threatened unspecified changes to the country's nuclear policy after it was reported to the United Nations General Assembly.

"We are still committed to the provisions of the NPT. But we can't accept its use as a (political) instrument. We will cooperate in the treaty and the safeguards' framework," Asefi told a news conference.

Asefi urged the IAEA and the EU to keep open diplomatic channels.

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Bush's Choice on Iran

Advertisement

By Jackson Diehl
Monday, January 30, 2006; A17

The debate on Iran is drifting toward the ugly question that the Bush administration would most like to avoid. That is: Is it preferable for the United States to live

with the consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran, or with those of a unilateral American military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities?

President Bush has never answered that question; instead, he and his State Department have repeatedly called an Iranian bomb "intolerable" while building a diplomatic coalition that won't tolerate a military solution. But two of our more principled senators, Republican John McCain and Democrat Joe Lieberman, have this month faced the Iranian Choice -- and both endorsed military action. McCain was most direct: "There is only one thing worse than the United States exercising a military option," he said on "Face the Nation." "That is a nuclear-armed Iran."

It's easy to see why the Bush administration prefers ambiguity to McCain's decisive judgment. After all, both options *are* terrible, and everyone can agree that diplomacy is worth a try. Yet Bush and both parties in Congress ought to be thinking through their own answers to the Iranian Choice, for two reasons. First, it looks more likely than not that the United States will, in the end, have to make that decision; and, second, the answer to the question ought to shape how the coming diplomatic phase is managed.

One driver of the choice is the ranting of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad about Israel and the Holocaust -- which, contrary to what a Western secular sensibility might suggest, is not necessarily a bluff. As Lieberman put it in his "Face the Nation" appearance a week ago, "if we should have learned one thing from 9/11 . . . it is that when somebody says over and over again, as Osama bin Laden did during the '90s, 'I hate you and give me the chance, I will kill you,' they may mean it and try to do it." If the West is going to gamble that it can contain a religious fanatic who possesses nuclear weapons and vows to wipe Israel from the map, it should do so knowingly, and not because it failed to provide for the possibility that an extremist would not respond to conventional diplomacy.

Another decision forcer is that, for all the talk among Iran watchers about opposition within the regime to Ahmadinejad, there is no evidence that anyone in Tehran disagrees with his judgment about negotiations with the West -- which is that Iran has no need to make a deal. Iranian leaders were universally dismissive of the offer made last summer by the European Union. There is no indication that any senior leader or faction favors giving up uranium enrichment, under any circumstances. Not even the democratic opposition wants it.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/29/AR2006012900687_p... 1/30/2006

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So the United States must approach the coming maneuvering in and outside the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency board, and any last-minute negotiations in Vienna, Moscow or Tehran, the way the Iranians probably do: not as an end in itself but as a prelude to more meaningful action. If the ultimate intent is to contain, rather than attack, the Iranian nuclear program, then dilatory and fruitless negotiations -- like those of the past two years -- are worthy and even desirable. Not only do they slow Iran's bomb-building but they help to cement a global coalition that might be able to deter the regime from actually using an eventual weapon over a long twilight era, Cold War-style.

If this is the choice, then aggressive efforts to support the Iranian democratic opposition also make sense, since over time the regime might be undermined from within. Russia and China should be courted. Brinkmanship -- like interrupting Iranian oil exports, or prompting Tehran to do so -- is to be avoided, since there is no military option to fall back on if the mullahs don't blink.

On the other hand, if McCain is right, then the current diplomatic campaign should be compressed. As in the case of Iraq, the United Nations and sanctions should be explored just long enough to show that the United States has tried them. That's because the timeline for military action is much shorter than that of containment: While it might not complete work on a weapon for five or even 10 years, according to most intelligence estimates, Iran will probably pass what Israel calls the "point of no return" far sooner. After that point, when Tehran will have acquired all the means it needs to manufacture a bomb, it would be considerably more difficult to stop the Iranian program by force. So, if military action is preferable to containment, then brinkmanship is called for, while promotion of Iranian democracy, or painstaking cultivation of Russia and China, is a waste of time.

So what is the Bush administration doing? It is allowing talks to drag on, and slowly courting Russia and China, but doing next to nothing to help Iranian democrats; it is drawing up lists of sanctions that, if imposed, might trigger a crisis, but it is also laying the groundwork for long-term containment. Perhaps the president has decided what course he will choose if Iranian uranium enrichment proceeds in spite of negotiations, U.N. resolutions or even sanctions. If so, his administration's current tactics show no sign of it.

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January 30, 2006

Rice Admits U.S. Underestimated Hamas Strength

By STEVEN R. WEISMAN

LONDON, Jan. 29 — Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice acknowledged Sunday that the United States had failed to understand the depth of hostility among Palestinians toward their longtime leaders. The hostility led to an election victory by the militant group Hamas that has reduced to tatters crucial assumptions underlying American policies and hopes in the Middle East.

"I've asked why nobody saw it coming," Ms. Rice said, speaking of her own staff. "It does say something about us not having a good enough pulse."

Immediately after the election, Bush administration officials said the results reflected a Palestinian desire for change and not necessarily an embrace of Hamas, which the United States, Israel and the European Union consider a terrorist organization sworn to Israel's destruction. But Ms. Rice's comments seemed to reflect a certain second-guessing over how the administration had failed to foresee, or factor into its thinking, the possibility of a Hamas victory.

Indeed, Hamas's victory has set off a debate whether the administration was so wedded to its belief in democracy that it could not see the dangers of holding elections in regions where Islamist groups were strong and democratic institutions weak.

"There is a lot of blame to go around," said Martin Indyk, a top Middle East negotiator in the Clinton administration, referring to Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, and his Fatah party. "But on the American side, the conceptual failure that contributed to disaster was the president's belief that democracy and elections solve everything."

Ms. Rice pointed out that the election results surprised just about everyone. "I don't know anyone who wasn't caught off guard by Hamas's strong showing," she said on her way to London for meetings on the Middle East, Iran and other matters. "Some say that Hamas itself was caught off guard by its strong showing."

With increasing vehemence in the last few days, administration officials have defended their decision to back Mr. Abbas with American aid and to rebuff Israel when it warned that the election should not be held as long as Hamas participated while refusing to lay down its arms. Those officials continue to lay most of the blame on Mr. Abbas for not offering a positive alternative to Hamas.

American officials say they were never comfortable with Mr. Abbas's decision that the elections be held without the disarmament of Hamas, but they went along with it because there was no alternative. One official recounted how President Bush had personally but unsuccessfully appealed to Mr. Abbas at the White House last October to disarm Hamas before the elections.

"The fact is, Abu Mazen wouldn't do it," said the official, referring to Mr. Abbas. "He said he wouldn't

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do it, because he said he couldn't do it."

What Mr. Abbas instead offered at the White House was a plan to avoid a civil war among Palestinians by winning the election and only then disarming Hamas and folding it into the mainstream. The administration resolved, in turn, to support Mr. Abbas's political party with whatever diplomacy or resources it could.

Even while acknowledging the failure to foresee a Hamas victory, Ms. Rice said the American decisions were basically correct. Contrary to some reports that even Mr. Abbas wanted the elections delayed, she said a postponement was neither possible nor desirable.

"Our constant discussions with Abu Mazen suggested that he wanted to go ahead with the elections and go ahead with them on time," Ms. Rice said. "We had to support that. I just don't understand the argument that somehow it would have gotten better the longer it went on."

At another point, she said: "You ask yourself, Are you going to support a policy of denying the Palestinians elections that had been promised to them at a certain point in time because people were fearful of the outcome?"

Others noted that the Palestinian elections had been postponed once already, from last summer to January, to give Mr. Abbas and Fatah time to capitalize on the pullout of Israeli settlers from Gaza in August.

To help Mr. Abbas, the United States and its European partners mobilized hundreds of millions of dollars in aid for the Palestinians to meet their payrolls, field their security forces, make welfare payments and build infrastructure.

The total outside assistance to the Palestinians runs to more than \$1 billion a year. Now Ms. Rice will meet in London on Monday with top officials of Europe, the United Nations and Russia to call on Hamas to abandon its vow to destroy Israel and to disarm and negotiate a two-state solution in the Middle East, or risk having this aid cut off.

"You've got to hedge against the risk that elections are going to lead to precisely this result," said Mr. Indyk, the former Middle East negotiator. "The hedge is to build civil society and democratic institutions first. But this administration doesn't listen to that."

Many experts blame the Palestinians for most of their problems, particularly the corruption and mismanagement in Mr. Abbas's Fatah organization. Hamas, by contrast, capitalized on its image of integrity and its record of delivering services.

Mr. Abbas is widely described as bitter that he failed to strengthen his hand by getting American help in persuading Israel to curb settlement growth, release prisoners and lift the checkpoints and roadblocks choking off livelihoods in the West Bank. By all accounts, Mr. Abbas's frustration with the administration on this score was met with frustration on the American side that he was not doing enough to crack down on violence and root out corruption.

The administration was also under pressure from Europeans to try to coax Hamas into the mainstream, and it did not want to rebuff their advice at a time when it was trying to work closely with the Europeans on isolating Iran.

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Administration officials said that even in the analysis of Israelis, Hamas's behavior in accepting a period of "calm" in the last year — ceasing its attacks on Israeli civilians — meant that it was willing to break with other groups like Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Israeli and American officials felt that such a trend was to be encouraged.

As for Mr. Abbas's position on disarming Hamas after the elections, an administration official said: "Our sense was that there was a certain logic to his presentation, and we did not see that we could force an alternative on him. But we were also skeptical."

The administration then immediately began working with European and other allies to set up "normative standards" for any group participating in the political process. Those standards are to be the focus of the talks in London, with the financing cutoff an implicit threat to Hamas. But a cutoff could force Hamas to turn to other sources, like Iran, for help.

Ms. Rice told reporters that she was convinced of the wisdom of instilling democracy in the Middle East. Elections have brought into office anti-American Islamic radicals in Egypt, Lebanon and Iran, but Ms. Rice said the alternative was trying to bottle up seething anger in the region that could lead to more terrorist attacks in the West.

"There is a huge transition going on in the Middle East, as a whole and in its parts," she said. "The outcomes that we're seeing in any number of places, I will be the first to say, have a sense of unpredictability about them. That's the nature of big historic change. It's simply the way it is."

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A First Answer to Egypt

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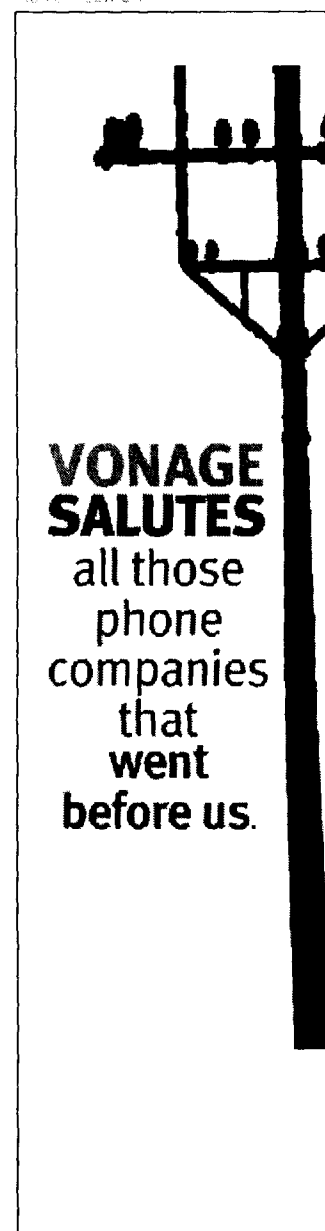
THE BUSH administration has taken a first step toward adjusting its relationship with Egypt following President Hosni Mubarak's flagrant violation of his promises to lead a transition to democracy. An Egyptian delegation that was to visit Washington this month to discuss a free-trade agreement has been disinvited, and the agreement itself was put on hold. Thanks to Mr. Mubarak's autocratic backsliding -- including his crude persecution and imprisonment of his leading liberal opponent, Ayman Nour -- Egypt will continue to lag behind Jordan, Morocco and other modernizing Arab states that enjoy tariff-free access to U.S. markets. For Egypt's business community and the reformist technocrats in its cabinet, the message should be clear: Egypt won't join the global economic mainstream unless it abandons its corrupt dictatorship.

For much of the past year Mr. Mubarak, 77, sought to convince the Bush administration that he could dismantle the autocracy he has presided over for nearly a quarter-century. He changed the constitution to allow a multi-candidate election for president; allowed more open debate in the press; and eased repression of the banned Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's largest opposition movement. Though his own reelection in September was heavily manipulated, Mr. Mubarak promised to carry out a long list of reforms in his new term, including more freedom for the media, independence for judges, greater authority for parliament and reform of the emergency laws that give him dictatorial power.

Now Mr. Mubarak has squandered the tenuous credibility he had acquired in Washington. When the Muslim Brotherhood's candidates performed better than expected in the first rounds of parliamentary elections in November, his government used fraud and brutality to alter the final results; security forces opened fire on voters trying to cast ballots. Mr. Mubarak, meanwhile, set out to crush Mr. Nour, a moderate, secular politician who won 8 percent of the presidential vote on a platform of liberal democracy. Though far weaker than Islamic leaders, Mr. Nour, 41, poses a threat to Mr. Mubarak's 42-year-old son, Gamal, who also presents himself as a moderate reformist. Without Mr. Nour, the only choices in Egypt are the Mubarak family and the Muslim Brotherhood. That's why Mr. Nour was sentenced on Dec. 24 to five years of hard labor on bogus charges of forgery.

Mr. Mubarak calculates that President Bush will eventually overlook this crude maneuver and will choose to accept, again, promises that his regime will make Egypt a democracy. Already, his government has brazenly petitioned the administration for hundreds of millions of dollars in new aid this year -- over and above the \$1.8 billion Egypt regularly receives -- ostensibly in compensation for its efforts to maintain security in the Gaza Strip. U.S. officials say this request will be rejected -- as it should be. Instead, Egypt's standing aid allocation and, in particular, its military component should be subjected to a rigorous review by the administration and Congress.

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While there may not be ready alternatives to Mr. Mubarak, it is foolish not to connect one of the largest U.S. foreign subsidies to vital American interests. First among those interests is concrete steps toward the construction of a political system that will allow Egypt's next president and parliament to be elected democratically. That means the lifting of emergency laws, the legalization of centrist parties that Mr. Mubarak keeps banned, and the removal of controls from the press and independent civil society groups. Ayman Nour should be freed and allowed to work unhindered for the constitutional reform he advocates. If Mr. Mubarak will not take these steps -- this year -- then it is not in the U.S. interest to keep funding his armed forces.

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U.S. Warns Iran on Nuclear Research

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US (to Iran) Asia

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON -- The United States warned Iran against pursuing new nuclear research Tuesday, rejecting assurances that the work was not a cover for a secret drive to build a nuclear bomb.

Iran told the U.N. nuclear watchdog on Tuesday it planned to resume nuclear fuel research after a 2.5-year hiatus, a vague declaration that was taken in the West as fresh evidence Tehran was trying to build an atomic weapon.

"We strongly oppose Iran proceeding with any further enrichment-related activities," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said.

"Our view is that if Iran takes any further enrichment-related steps, the international community will have to consider additional measures to constrain Iran's nuclear ambitions," McCormack said.

McCormack would not specify what action the United States would like to see, but reiterated the U.S. view that Iran will eventually be hauled before the U.N. Security Council if it will not back down. The council can impose harsh economic sanctions.

"Iran is trying to pursue nuclear weapons under the cover of a peaceful nuclear program," McCormack said, in one of the most direct accusations the United States has made. "We don't think that that should be allowed to happen."

Iran's Atomic Energy Organization was not specific about what research or development activities it will undertake, but said the work will be unrelated to nuclear fuel production.

Iran voluntarily suspended some nuclear activities while negotiating with European countries over ways to develop peaceful civilian nuclear energy while assuring that the technology not be used to make weapons. Tehran resumed some work after walking away from the talks last summer.

At issue is how far Iran may go in the complicated process of enriching uranium, a component of both nuclear energy and weaponry. Iran has said it remains determined, at some point, to resume uranium enrichment. Tehran says its nuclear program is for electricity generation.

"In terms of trying to draw a line around something being pure research with respect to enrichment activities is not something that we're going to buy, and I don't think the international community will either," McCormack said.

In Vienna, the head of the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, said it was important that Tehran "maintains its suspension of all enrichment-related activity" as a way of reducing international suspicions about its nuclear plans.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/03/international/middleeast/03wire-iran-react.html?page...> 1/9/2006

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