

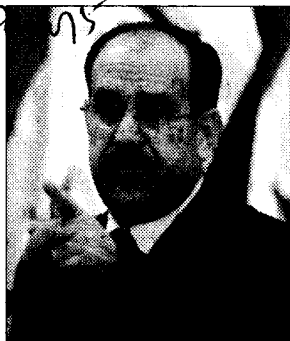
# Key obstacle 'resolved', Iraq cabinet likely by weekend

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, MAY 9 95

PRIME Minister-designate Nouri al-Maliki said on Tuesday the main stumbling blocks to forming a new Cabinet have been overcome and he expects to present his team to the Parliament for approval by the end of the week.

Al-Maliki said representatives of the parties had agreed on what factions would hold the "main posts" but they were still discussing the distribution of "a few" of them. They include the Ministries of Oil, Trade and Transportation, he said.



Al-Maliki hopes to form a new Cabinet soon. AP

The incoming prime minister declined to spell out the distribution of ministries, including key posts of Interior, which controls Police, and de-

fence, which runs the Army. US and British officials have insisted those posts go to people without ties to sectarian militias, believed responsible for many of the tit-for-tat killings of Sunnis and Shi'ites

"The direction we took, and which was agreed upon by the political groups, was that the two who will occupy these posts be independent and unaffiliated with a party or a militia," Maliki said.

Al-Maliki, a Shi'ite, said he "hoped and expected" to present the Cabinet to the Parliament by the end of the week. Parliament must approve each minister by a majority vote.

10 MAY 2006

# Sabre-rattling against Iran unlikely to succeed

Ringed by nuclear states, Teheran's atomic programme is scarcely unreasonable. So why has Washington manufactured this crisis?

Tariq Ali

TILL NOW, what has prevented the crisis in Iraq from becoming a total debacle for the United States has been the open collaboration of the Iranian clerics. Iranian foreign policy — fragmentary and opportunist — has always been determined by the needs and interests of the clerical state rather than any principled anti-imperialist strategy. In the past, this has led to a *de facto* collaboration with Washington in Afghanistan and Iraq. During the Iran-Iraq war, the clerics had no hesitation in buying arms from the Israeli regime to fight Iraq, then backed by Britain and the U.S. In the wake of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq — hoping, no doubt, that clearing the path for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and Mullah Omar might have won them a respite — the regime took a tougher stance on the nuclear question.

The Bush administration appears to be psyching itself up for a safe strike against Iran either by itself or via the Israelis, whose new leaders have referred to the Iranian President as a psychopath and a new Hitler. Why has Washington manufactured this crisis? The hypocrisy of George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac or Ehud Olmert — their own states armed with thousands of nuclear weapons — making a *casus belli* of what are, by all accounts, primitive gropings on Iran's part towards the technology necessary for the lowest grade of nuclear self-defence, hardly needs to be spelled out. So long as these powers are allowed to enlarge their nuclear armouries unimpeded, why should Teheran not?

The country is not only ringed by atomic states (India, Pakistan, China, Russia, Israel), it also faces a string of American bases with potential or actual nuclear stockpiles in Qatar, Iraq, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. Nuclear-armed U.S. aircraft carriers and submarines patrol the waters off its southern coast. Historically, Iran has every reason to fear outside threats. Its elected government was overthrown with covert Anglo-American aid in 1953, and the secular Opposition destroyed. From 1980 to 1988, the Western powers abetted Saddam Hussein's onslaught, in which hundreds of thousands of Iranians died. More than 300 Iraqi missiles were launched at Iranian cities and economic targets, especially the oil industry. In the war's final stages, the U.S. destroyed nearly half the Iranian navy in the Gulf and, for good measure, shot down a crowded civilian passenger plane.

## Best and worst of times

For the clerical state, the war on terror has been the best and the worst of times. Oil prices have soared. Enemy regimes on both sides, Baghdad and Kabul, have been overthrown. The Iraqi Shia parties that they have been fostering for years are now in office. Washington has been reliant on their help to

sustain its occupations both there and in Afghanistan. Yet social tensions in Iran are high. In this context, the nuclear issue is one of the regime's few unifying projects.

There is no evidence that Iran is much closer to nuclear weapons now than was Iraq in September 2002, when Mr. Blair and Dick Cheney assured the world that Baghdad represented a "genuine nuclear threat." In the competitive scramble by European powers to enhance their standing with Washington after the invasion of Iraq, France, Germany and Britain were keen to prove their mettle by forcing extra agreements on Teheran. The Khatami regime immediately capitulated. In December 2003, they signed the "Additional Protocol" demanded by the EU3, agreeing to a "voluntary suspension" of the right to enrichment guaranteed under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Within three months, the International Atomic Energy Agency was condemning them for having failed to ratify it; in June 2004, its inspectors produced examples of Iranian enrichment work, perfectly legal under the NPT, but ruled out by the Additional Protocol.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reaped the vote against Mohammed Khatami's miserable record between 1997 and 2005. Economic conditions had worsened and Mr. Khatami was prepared to defend the rights of foreign investors, but not those of independent newspapers or protesting students. Contrary to some reports, Mr. Ahmadinejad has not so far imposed any new puritanical clampdown on social mores. Instead, the most likely constituency to be disappointed is Mr. Ahmadinejad's own: the millions of young, working-class jobless, crammed into overcrowded living conditions, in desperate need of a national development policy that neither neo-liberalism nor Islamist voluntarism will provide.

To face up to the enemies ranged against Iran requires an intelligent and far-sighted strategy — not the current rag-bag of opportunism and manoeuvre, determined by the immediate interests of the clerics.

The U.S. Undersecretary of State has spoken of "ratcheting up the pressure." Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz has said that "Israel will not be able to accept an Iranian nuclear capability, and it must have the capability to defend itself with all that this implies, and we are preparing." Hillary Clinton accused the Bush administration of "downplaying the Iranian threat" and called for pressure on Russia and China to impose sanctions on Teheran. Mr. Chirac has spoken of using French nuclear weapons against such a "rogue state." Perhaps it is simply high-octane rocket-rattling, the aim being to frighten Teheran into submission. Bullying is unlikely to succeed. Will the West then embark on a new war? If so, the battlefield might stretch from the Tigris to the Oxus and without any guarantee of success. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006

04 MAY 2006

# Iran will hit Israel if US does 'evil'

**Teheran:** Iran will target Israel first if the United States does anything 'evil', a senior commander in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards said on Tuesday.

The United States says it wants Iran's nuclear standoff with the West solved diplomatically but has refused to rule out military action.

"We have announced that wherever America does something evil, the first place that we target will be Israel," Revolutionary Guards Rear Admiral Mohammad-Ebrahim Dehqani was quoted as saying by Iran's student news agency ISNA.

The Islamic Republic has never recognised Israel and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called for the Jewish state to be "wiped off the map."

Dehqani said naval wargames held in the Gulf last month "carried the warning to those countries that threaten Iran, including America and the Zionist regime."

Experts said the wargames, in which Iran said it had tested new missiles and torpedoes, were a thinly veiled threat that it could disrupt vital Gulf oil shipping lanes if it was attacked.

Meanwhile, a top US official said in Paris ahead of talks between UN Security Council delegations that the international community must "send a stiff message" to Iran over its nu-

clear programme, a top US official said in Paris ahead of talks between UN Security Council delegations.

Nicholas Burns, number three in the US State Department, told journalists that "Iran is forcing the international community to react in a much stronger way" than it has to date.



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

He said the political directors from Britain, China, France, Russia and the US meeting in the French capital must "be united" on the issue.

The five veto-wielding Security Council members, plus Germany, were to try to overcome differences at the meeting and forge a common approach to Iran, which failed to comply with a UN deadline that run out last Friday to suspend uranium enrichment.

"The Security Council has no option but to proceed with the Chapter 7," Burns said, referring to text in the UN charter which would open the door to sanctions—and possibly even military action as a last resort—against Iran. AGENCIES

# More missile fuel to Iran N-fire

**REUTERS**  
Tehran, April 3

IRAN'S BOASTS about its new missile technology may not stand up to close study but analysts say the message is simple: Iranian forces, if pushed, can cause havoc in one of the world's key oil shipping routes.

Iran says it has test fired a radar-evading missile and a high-speed underwater projectile during a week of naval wargames in the Gulf, the route for about two-fifths of the world's globally traded oil. On Monday, it tested a torpedo.

The Pentagon said on Monday it is possible Iran has produced missiles capable of evading radar and sonar as Tehran has stated in recent days, but added that the Iranians have been known to "boast and exaggerate."

Tehran says the manoeuvres are a show of defensive strength. Claims of technological prowess are a regular feature of wargames in Iran, which considers itself a regional power.

But the timing of the announcements, amid a standoff over Iran's nuclear programme, has raised eyebrows. The West accuses Tehran of seeking an atomic bomb, Iran denies it.

Although the US has said it wants a diplomatic solution to the standoff, it has left the military option open. "This is a message for Washington that the



Members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard attend a manoeuvre with a warship in the Persian Gulf on Monday. AP

most harmful military steps we can have in a confrontation is making trouble in the Strait of Hormuz, making trouble for oil ships in the Persian Gulf," said political analyst Saeed Laylaz. He said Iran may also have an eye on talks planned between

Tehran and Washington over Iraq. By showing off its military power, the Iranian government may believe it is strengthening its hand in the talks. But such bragging may also be a further sign Iran is digging itself in for the long haul in the on-

going nuclear dispute.

The UN, pressed on by Western states, has demanded Iran stop enriching uranium, a process Tehran says it needs to make fuel for power stations although the process also has military applications.

Iran has rejected the demand as a violation of its rights, while the West has also shown no signs of compromise. With neither side budging, Iran may feel a military confrontation is more likely even if it still remains far off, some analysts say.

"Probably, they anticipate that down the line there will be a point that confrontation will be inevitable. Therefore, they are just indicating that in case they come under any military pressure or any threat then they can properly defend themselves," said Iranian political analyst Mahmoud Alinejad.

But he said it was a risky strategy because it may serve to bolster those calling for a tougher line by the West against Iran and its President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who caused alarm in the West by openly calling for Israel's destruction.

"This sort of military propaganda will definitely give the hawks more ammunition against Iran. They'll say Iran is a military minded government," Alinejad said.

Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Aliasghar Soltaniyeh, told CNN the missile testing should not worry the world because it was a display of "self defence". But some Western governments have already voiced suspicions.

# Stakes high as Security Council haggles over Iran

ASSOCIATED Press  
UNHQ, April 29

THE UN Security Council headed for a replay of its divisive debate over Iran's nuclear ambitions, with the US, Britain and France at odds again with China and Russia. But this time the stakes are higher.

A report from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN nuclear watchdog, confirmed what diplomats and the world already knew: Iran has refused to stop enriching uranium as the council demanded a month ago.

The council's three veto-wielding Western nations immediately announced plans to introduce a new Security Council resolution next week that would make Iran's compliance with their demands mandatory. To intensify pressure, they want the resolution under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, which means it can be enforced through sanctions or military action.

China and Russia, the two other countries with veto power, oppose sanctions and military action and want the Iran nuclear issue resolved diplomatically, with the IAEA taking the lead, not the Security Council.

It took weeks of painstaking negotiations to craft the March 29 council statement giving Iran 30 days to stop enriching uranium, and the

result was much weaker than the West wanted. With the possibility of sanctions or military action on the horizon, the upcoming negotiations are certain to be even more divisive.

The members all agree that the best way to resolve the nuclear standoff is through diplomacy. But the initial reactions to the IAEA report showed how far apart the key players are. US Ambassador John Bolton took the toughest line, saying the US hopes to move "as a matter of urgency" and introduce a Chapter 7 resolution next week. Britain's UN Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry called it "a calibrated approach which is reversible if Iran

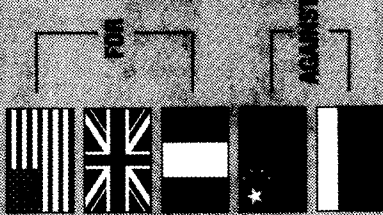
## NUCLEAR STAND-OFF

was prepared to comply with the wishes of the international community."

But China said the resolution would only complicate the situation and create uncertainty. Russia's deputy UN ambassador Konstantin Dolgov said that Moscow too sees no reason for a Chapter 7 resolution. He said the IAEA should stay in the lead on Iran and the Security Council should provide "political support" to the IAEA.

## COUNCIL SPLIT WIDE OPEN

The five permanent members all agree that the best way to resolve the nuclear standoff is through diplomacy. But while the US, UK and France are for a Chapter 7 resolution that sets a short time-bomb on Iran to halt enrichment, China and Russia think it would only complicate matters unnecessarily.



# Iraq II or a nuclear Iran?

I look at the Bush national security officials much the way I look at drunken drivers. I just want to take away their foreign policy driver's licenses for the next three years. Sorry, boys and girls, you have to stay home now, or take a taxi. You will not be driving alone. Not with my car



**THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN**

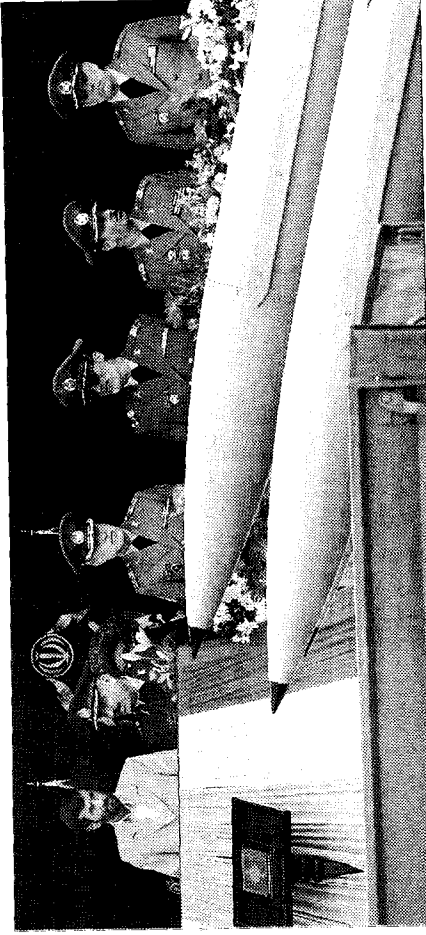
IF these are our only choices, which would you rather have: a nuclear-armed Iran or an attack on Iran's nuclear sites that is carried out and sold to the world by the Bush national security team, with Don Rumsfeld at the Pentagon's helm? I'd rather live with a nuclear Iran.

While I know the right thing is to keep all our options open, I have zero confidence in this administration's ability to manage a complex military strike against Iran, let alone the military and diplomatic aftershocks. As someone who be-

lieved—and still believes—in the importance of getting Iraq right, the level of incompetence that the Bush team has displayed in Iraq, and its refusal to acknowledge any mistakes or remove those who made them, make it impossible to support this administration in any offensive military action against Iran.

I look at the Bush national security officials much the way I look at drunken drivers. I just want to take away their foreign policy time out.

At a minimum, a change must be made at the Pentagon. Rumsfeld paints himself as a concerned secretary, ready to give our generals in Iraq whatever troops they ask for, but they just haven't asked. This is hogwash, but even if the generals didn't ask the relevant question, Mr



**Deterrence, with a rider, for a nuclear Iran? AP**

Rumsfeld is: What did you ask them?

What did you ask them when you saw the looting, when you saw Saddam's ammo dumps unguarded, when you saw that no one had control of the Iraq-Syria border and when you saw that Iraq was so insecure that militias were sprouting everywhere? What did you ask the generals? You didn't ask and you didn't tell, because you never wanted to send more troops. You actually thought

we could just smash Saddam's regime and leave. Insane.

So if our choice is another Rummy-led operation on Iran or Iran's going nuclear and our deterring it through classic means, I prefer deterrence. A short diplomatic note to Iran's

multilabs will suffice: "Gentlemen, should you ever use a nuclear device, or dispense one to terrorists, we will destroy every one of your nuclear sites with tactical nuclear weapons. If there is any part of this sentence you don't understand, please contact us. Thank you."

Do I wish there was a third way? Yes. But the only meaningful third way would be to challenge Iran to face-to-face negotiations about all the issues that divide us: Iraq, sanctions, nukes. Such diplomacy, though, would require two things.

First, the Bush team would have to make up its mind on something that has divided it for five years: Does it want a change of regime in Iran or a change of behavior? If it will settle only for regime change, then diplomacy has no chance. The Iranians will never negotiate and our allies will be wary of working with us.

Second, if the Bush team is ready to live with a change in Iran's behavior, diplomacy has a chance—but only if it has allies and a credible threat of force to make the Iranians ne-

gotiate seriously. The only way Iran will strike a grand bargain with the US is if it thinks America has the support at home and abroad for a military option (or really severe sanctions.)

The main reason Rumsfeld should leave now is because we can't have a credible diplomatic or military option vis-à-vis Iran when so many people feel, as I do, that in a choice between another Rumsfeld-led confrontation or just letting Iran get nukes and living with it, we should opt for the latter.

It may be that learning to live with a nuclear Iran is the wisest thing under any circumstances. But it would be nice to have a choice. It would be nice to have the option of a diplomatic deal to end Iran's nuclear programme—but that will come only with a credible threat of force. Yet we will not have the support at home or abroad for that threat as long as Rumsfeld leads the Pentagon. No one in their right mind would follow this man into another confrontation—and that is a real strategic liability.

*The New York Times*

FD-10  
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## Politics amidst turmoil

**F**our months after the December 2005 election, Iraq's parliamentarians finally picked nominees to fill the seven top spots in the governmental structure. But the political situation is not likely to improve in any significant fashion. It was known from the beginning that the posts would be distributed among the country's three main ethnic/sectarian groups in accordance with their relative strengths. The Kurd leader, Jalal Talabani, who was functioning as the President in the transitional administration that ran Iraq in 2005 has now been given the mandate for another five years. The two other sects have each got a vice-presidency. Similarly, while a Sunni, Mahmoud al-Meshhedani, has been chosen as the Speaker, the two deputy speakerships have been allotted to the Shias and the Kurds. Since the Shias constitute around 60 per cent of the country's population there was never any doubt that the person eventually chosen as Prime Minister would be from this community. However, the preferences of the other sects and ethnic groups could not be ignored because the cabinet cannot take office if it does not have two-thirds support in parliament. The Sunnis, the Kurds, and secular parties used this constitutional leverage to dissuade the Shias from installing Ibrahim al Jaafari as the Prime Minister. After resisting for several weeks, Mr. Jaafari's party, the United Iraqi Alliance, withdrew his candidature. The person now chosen for the Prime Minister's post, Jawad al Maliki, is likely to face an unenviable task as he tries to form a cabinet. The smaller groups in parliament, having once tasted blood, are very likely to demand that they be allotted prime portfolios in a multi-party government.

The smaller ethnic and sectarian groups cannot really be faulted for insisting that the Alliance give up control of the Interior and Defence Ministries. Under Mr. Jaafari's interim dispensation, Shia ministers allowed the community's two militias virtually to take over the police and paramilitary forces. The troops of the Interior Ministry are believed to have formed "hit squads" that tortured and murdered people belonging to the minority communities. It is unlikely that Mr. Maliki will be either able or willing to rein in the Shia militias, which pledge their loyalty to other leaders. The Mahdi army, which obeys firebrand cleric Moqtada al Sadr, and the Badr Organisation controlled by the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq have carved out separate fiefdoms in the south of the country. They have also apparently infiltrated pockets in the north such as the city of Kirkuk. The Shia militias appear to be intent on imposing their writ over large parts of Iraq. Sunni and Kurd fighters will almost certainly resist and the civil war conditions that already exist could soon become irreversible. Given this situation, the choice of office-bearers who can barely venture out of the parts of Baghdad protected by the United States military can hardly be counted as an achievement.

29 APR 2006

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## Iraqi Prime Minister Rules Out Stepping Down

Hussein's Signature Authenticated on Papers Tied to Shiite Repression

By Nelson Hernandez, K.I. Ibrahim and William Branigin  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Wednesday, April 19, 2006; 3:39 PM

BAGHDAD, April 19 -- Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari ruled out stepping down Wednesday to facilitate formation of a new Iraqi coalition government, as lawmakers worked behind the scenes to break a political deadlock amid signs of growing U.S. impatience.

Jafari, a Shiite Muslim doctor whose United Iraqi Alliance won the largest share of seats in December's parliamentary elections, wants to remain in the post he has held in a transitional capacity despite opposition from Sunni Muslim Arabs, Kurds and some members of his own Shiite bloc.

Iraq's 275-member National Assembly, or parliament, is scheduled to convene Thursday to try to resolve the political disputes impeding formation of a new permanent government of national unity. It was unclear whether any deals have been reached in advance of the session. Parliamentary speaker Adnan Pachachi went into a closed-door meeting and was not immediately available to comment.

The assembly had been scheduled to meet Monday, but lawmakers agreed to postpone the session to give the Shiite bloc more time to resolve disputes over its decision to keep Jafari as prime minister. Jafari himself refused to budge, telling a nationally televised news conference that stepping down was "out of the question."

He added, "I can't understand how resigning . . . would benefit the national interest."

In Washington, where administration officials and members of Congress have grown increasingly exasperated with the factional squabbling, President Bush issued a new call for consensus.

He told reporters that "the Iraqis must step up and form a unity government so that those who went to the polls to vote recognize that a government will be in place to respond to their needs." Saying that "the political process in Iraq must occur soon," Bush added that "failure in Iraq is not an option."

U.S. political and military leaders see a unity government made up of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds as vital for efforts to undercut Iraq's insurgency, which draws most of its support from disaffected Sunni Arabs.

Jafari, a member of the Shiite Dawa Party, took over as prime minister in a transitional capacity in April last year. He narrowly won an internal vote within the United Iraqi Alliance two months ago with the support of Moqtada al-Sadr, a firebrand Shiite cleric who has clashed with U.S. forces.

The latest political maneuvering came as the trial of former president Saddam Hussein continued Wednesday with the presentation of more evidence of what prosecutors say was his complicity in the

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massacre of 148 people more than two decades ago.

Handwriting experts authenticated more documents linking Hussein to the killings in the Shiite town of Dujail north of Baghdad, the chief judge of Hussein's trial said at a court session Wednesday.

During the three-hour session, Chief Judge Raouf Abdel-Rahman read the report of a three-member panel of handwriting experts who analyzed the writing on documents tied to the repression of Shiites in Dujail. Hussein and seven co-defendants are on trial for allegedly killing 148 people after a failed attempt to assassinate Hussein in 1982.

After comparing notes and signatures on the documents with older handwriting samples from Hussein's regime, the experts concluded that the papers were authentic.

The specific contents of the documents themselves were not discussed at the trial session, but they were papers that prosecutors had presented earlier in the trial. In the previous trial session on Monday, prosecutors showed a document that had authorized promotions for intelligence officers involved in the Dujail action.

The chief judge said the documents would be re-analyzed by a panel of five experts, and the court would reconvene April 24. Meanwhile, defense lawyers and Hussein's co-defendants vehemently denied that the papers were authentic, charging, as they have throughout the trial, that the court was biased.

"The prosecutor is biased against us and is trying to use all means to condemn us," said Hussein's half-brother, Barzan Ibrahim, who ran the regime's intelligence service.

Ibrahim went on in a lengthy speech: "I am not afraid of the punishment. I am afraid of having my reputation tarnished. Why would I kill 148 innocent victims? They were my countrymen. Why would I kill them?"

Another outburst disrupted the court, when the defense lawyer for Awad Hamed Bandar -- who happens to be Bandar's son -- accused the chief prosecutor, Jaafar al-Mousawi, of insulting his father at an earlier session.

"This proves that the prosecutor does not know honesty or neutrality," the younger Bandar said, prompting an angry demand by Mousawi that the comment be stricken from the record.

"I demand that the court take legal action against this lawyer," Mousawi shouted.

"I insist on the same," Bandar spat back.

The judge pounded his gavel to interrupt the exchange.

"It's not a competition between you and him," Abdel-Rahman said. "It's not a match."

*Branigin reported from Washington. Special correspondents Omar Fekiki and Bassam Sebt contributed to this report.*

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## Strong Leads and Dead Ends in Nuclear Case Against Iran

By Dafna Linzer  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Wednesday, February 8, 2006; A01

Iranian engineers have completed sophisticated drawings of a deep subterranean shaft, according to officials who have examined classified documents in the hands of U.S. intelligence for more than 20 months.

Complete with remote-controlled sensors to measure pressure and heat, the plans for the 400-meter tunnel appear designed for an underground atomic test that might one day announce Tehran's arrival as a nuclear power, the officials said.

By the estimates of U.S. and allied intelligence analysts, that day remains as much as a decade away -- assuming that Iran applies the full measure of its scientific and industrial resources to the project and encounters no major technical hurdles. But whether Iran's leaders have reached that decision and what concrete progress the effort has made remain divisive questions among government analysts and U.N. inspectors.


In the three years since Iran was forced to acknowledge having a secret uranium-enrichment program, Western governments and the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, have amassed substantial evidence to test the Tehran government's assertion that it plans to build nothing more than peaceful nuclear power plants. Often circumstantial, usually ambiguous and always incomplete, the evidence has confounded efforts by policymakers, intelligence officials and U.S. allies to reach a confident judgment about Iran's intentions and a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

Drawings of the unbuilt test site, not disclosed publicly before, appear to U.S. officials to signal at least the ambition to test a nuclear explosive. But U.S. and U.N. experts who have studied them said the undated drawings do not clearly fit into a larger picture. Nowhere, for example, does the word "nuclear" appear on them. The authorship is unknown, and there is no evidence of an associated program to acquire, assemble and construct the components of such a site.

"The diagram is consistent with a nuclear test-site schematic," one senior U.S. source said, noting that the drawings envision a test control team parked a safe 10 kilometers -- more than six miles -- from the shaft. As far as U.S. intelligence knows, the idea has not left the drawing board.

Other suggestive evidence is cloaked in similar uncertainty. Contained in a laptop computer stolen by an Iranian citizen in 2004 are designs by a firm called Kimeya Madon for a small-scale facility to produce uranium gas, the construction of which would give Iran a secret stock that could be enriched for fuel or for bombs. Also on the laptop -- obtained by U.S. intelligence -- were drawings on modifying Iran's ballistic missiles in ways that might accommodate a nuclear warhead. Beyond the computer files, an imprisoned Pakistani arms dealer recently offered uncorroborated statements that Iran received several advanced centrifuges, equipment that would vastly improve its nuclear knowledge.

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U.S. intelligence considers the laptop documents authentic but cannot prove it. Analysts cannot completely rule out the possibility that internal opponents of the Iranian leadership could have forged them to implicate the government, or that the documents were planted by Tehran itself to convince the West that its program remains at an immature stage.

CIA analysts, some of whom had been involved only a year earlier on the flawed assessments of Iraq's weapons programs, initially speculated that a third country, such as Israel, may have fabricated the evidence. But they eventually discounted that theory.

British intelligence, asked for a second opinion, concurred last year that the documents appear authentic. German and French officials consider the information troubling, sources said, but Russian experts have dismissed it as inconclusive. IAEA inspectors, who were highly skeptical of U.S. intelligence on Iraq, have begun to pursue aspects of the laptop information that appear to bolster previous leads.

"There is always a chance this could be the biggest scam perpetrated on U.S. intelligence," one U.S. source acknowledged. "But it's such a large body of documents and such strong indications of nuclear weapons intent, and nothing seems so inconsistent."

Bush administration officials, convinced that Iran has a weapons program, believe that the body of documentation is the nearest anyone can expect to "smoking gun" evidence. But even in the U.S. government, the predominant interpretation is more complex. And any step toward uranium enrichment, experts said, is consistent with three competing explanations -- that Iran's program is peaceful, that it aims for a weapon, or that the Tehran government is still keeping its options open.

A presidential commission found in 2004 that U.S. intelligence knows "disturbingly little" about Tehran's capabilities. And at a congressional hearing last Thursday, Director of National Intelligence John D. Negroponte described Iran as a "hard target" to penetrate.

While it is unknown whether Iran would ultimately decide to build a nuclear bomb, it is clear from evidence gathered by U.S. and foreign intelligence and through U.N. inspections that Iran, mostly through its energy program, is acquiring and mastering technologies that could be diverted to bombmaking.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the director general of the IAEA, said that after three years of investigation, he still cannot judge Iran's program "exclusively peaceful." At the same time, Iran is "not an imminent threat," he said in a recent interview. "To develop a nuclear weapon, you need a significant quantity of highly enriched uranium or plutonium, and no one has seen that in Iran."

U.S. intelligence experts who helped craft an assessment of Iran's program last year have based their judgments on just that. Until Iran is able to operate an industrial-scale centrifuge cascade for the production of bomb-grade uranium, the country will remain as much as 10 years away from a weapon.

Those experts have said that none of the drawings -- for the test shaft, the conversion facility or Iran's missile program -- alters those projections. Negroponte made that carefully hedged assessment public last Thursday when he said: "Iran, if it continues on its current path . . . will likely have the capability to produce a nuclear weapon within the next decade."

That assessment, by an intelligence community determined not to repeat the embarrassments of Iraq, is more conservative than views expressed by some policymakers. Some in the Bush administration have begun pushing back, suggesting that the CIA is demanding an unrealistically high standard of evidence

before reaching conclusions that the White House believes are obvious.

"Taking into account the assessments made by the intelligence community, and others, I just don't have a lot of confidence in the assessments," said a senior administration official who was heavily involved in guiding the White House's use of intelligence on Iraq's weapons programs.

This examination explores the intelligence and evidence that helped form such judgments, and the gaps in understanding that obscure a full portrait of the program. It draws on interviews with senior Bush administration officials, as well as with government and intelligence sources grappling with the accumulating data and their counterparts from U.N. agencies and governments in Europe and the Middle East. Most of those interviewed would discuss the confidential information on Iran's program only on the condition of anonymity.

### **Green Salt**

In the spring of 2001, a small design firm opened shop on the outskirts of Tehran to begin work for what appears to have been its only client -- the Iranian Republican Guard. Over the next two years, the staff at Kimeya Madon completed a set of technical drawings for a small uranium-conversion facility, according to four officials who reviewed the documents.

Iran has one such conversion plant and opened it to IAEA inspectors, but Tehran has not disclosed or produced the blueprints of a second one.

Over coffee in December in ElBaradei's Vienna office, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator was asked about the drawings, sources said. Ali Larijani called them "baseless allegations."

When IAEA inspectors went to Iraq last month, the CIA agreed to let them confront Iran with some of the evidence. Iranian officials dismissed the material but said they would follow up with clarifications at a later date, according to an IAEA report issued yesterday.

Several sources with firsthand knowledge of the original documents said the facility, if constructed, would give Iran additional capabilities to produce a substance known as UF<sub>4</sub>, or "green salt," an intermediate product in the conversion of uranium to a gas. Further refined in a large-scale enrichment plant, such as the one Iran says it intends to build for its energy program, the material could become usable for the core of a bomb.

Some of those who described the documents said senior Bush administration officials believe that they offer proof of a covert Iranian effort, under the direction of the military, to acquire nuclear weapons. The documents were found with design modifications for Iran's ballistic missile program, suggesting a link between potential weapons material and delivery systems. "We see this as pretty compelling evidence that they were trying to get a clandestine uranium-conversion facility," said one U.S. official. "At the very least, the Iranians should have reported the work" to IAEA inspectors, the official said.

Other sources with equal access to the same information, which went through nearly a year of forensic analysis by the CIA, were more cautious.

A second facility for uranium gas could have been envisioned as a replacement in the event the United States or Israel bombed the existing one in the city of Isfahan. "It was either their fallback in case we take out Isfahan," one U.S. analyst said. "Or maybe they considered an alternative indigenous plan but they realized it wasn't as good as what they already have, and so they shelved it."

As with the test-shaft drawings, those for the conversion facility were on the laptop allegedly stolen from an Iranian whom German intelligence tried, unsuccessfully, to recruit as an informant. It was whisked out of the country by another Iranian who offered it up to foreign intelligence officials in Turkey as evidence of a nuclear weapons program. Nowhere on any of the laptop documents, however, does the word "nuclear" appear.

"It's a complex-looking thing. You see the drawings but nothing beyond them, and you wonder, 'Can we be sure?' " a foreign official said.

Nowhere are there construction orders, payment invoices, or more than a handful of names and locations possibly connected to the projects. It remains unclear on whose authority the conversion work was done. Fueling suspicion, however, is the fact that the offices mentioned on the laptop documents are connected to an Iranian military officer, Mohsen Fakrizadeh.

Fakrizadeh is believed by U.S. intelligence to be the director of Project 111, a nuclear research effort that includes work on missile development. For years, U.S. intelligence knew of an Iranian endeavor that the Iranians code-named Project 110, believed to be the military arm of the country's nuclear program. U.S. officials believe its sequential successor may be the link between the country's nuclear energy program and its military, but they cannot be certain without more information from Fakrizadeh. "We want him produced for U.N. inspectors," said one U.S. source.

According to information on the laptop, Kimeya Madon appears to have ceased operation in the early spring of 2003, leading U.S. and allied intelligence services to suspect that it was a front company for the Iranian military. The last set of known drawings for the conversion facility are dated February 2003, as U.N. inspectors were making their first trip to Iran and U.S. troops were poised to invade neighboring Iraq.

### **Shooting Star**

When the CIA began poring over thousands of pages of drawings contained in the laptop, the ones that garnered immediate attention were the schematics for Iran's most famous missile, the Shahab -- Persian for "shooting star."

Experts at Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico ran the schematics through computer simulations. They determined two things: The drawings were an effort to expand the nose cone of the Shahab-3 to carry a nuclear warhead, and the modification plans, if executed, would not work.

Negroponte appeared to hint as much in his public briefing when he said Iran had not yet acquired the ability to integrate a nuclear weapon into its ballistic missiles.

The missile modifications, at first thought to have been based on a North Korean design, are now believed to be the handiwork of Iranian engineers. "This clearly wasn't done by the A-team of Iran's program," said one nuclear expert who has analyzed the documents. "It might have been given to an outside team or subcontracted out as an assignment or project for the military, though."

The laptop also includes 18 different attempts to perfect the size, weight and diameter of the nose cone in ways that could accommodate an implosion device. There are accompanying scientific notes describing experiments in the detonation of conventional explosives, suggesting to Western analysts that the author was working through the steps required to compress uranium into a critical mass for an atomic explosion.

"It's not hard evidence, but if you want to bring a building down, you don't need this kind of detonation," said one investigator. "So it's either for missiles or for a nuclear detonation."

In a recent meeting with IAEA inspectors, Iranian officials -- who learned 14 months ago that the United States had the documents on the laptop -- dismissed accusations that they reflect planning for a weapons program.

### **The Khan Network**

In a brightly lighted office at police headquarters in the Malaysian capital, Bukhary Syed Tahir sat down recently for his second round of talks with CIA officers since his arrest 20 months ago on the streets of Kuala Lumpur.

Tahir is held in a high-security prison, without charges, for his alleged role as a manufacturer, salesman and partner in Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan's nuclear network, which supplied materials to Libya, Iran and North Korea. After more than a year of denials about shipments to Iran in the 1990s, Tahir has changed his story and now claims to have recalled a previously forgotten sale, according to U.S. sources.

In addition to supplies Iran purchased from the network in the late 1980s to begin its nuclear program, Tahir said, Iran was sent in the mid-1990s three advanced, Pakistani-made centrifuges that could be used as models for manufacturing more. Thousands of properly constructed and assembled P-2 generation centrifuges could improve Iran's ability to make bomb-grade uranium. If the P-2s exist in Iran, as Tahir asserted, intelligence officials said the centrifuges could shorten the time needed for Iran to build a weapon.

Iran has told inspectors that it received only drawings of the P-2s, not the centrifuges themselves, and that it did not build any. A recent IAEA report determined that Iran has not been forthcoming on the P-2s or its dealings with Tahir and Khan, who led Pakistan to nuclear success.

Two sources with direct knowledge of Tahir's recent claims said they did not know what led him to offer a new account. They had no information on whether his new claims were made under duress or came after promises of release.

"Some of the individuals involved" in supplying Iran's program, "like Tahir, provide different accounts at different times, which only adds to the confusion," said a Bush administration official.

A 1987 meeting in a dusty Dubai office kick-started Tehran's nuclear efforts and a side business for Khan that made him rich and ultimately infamous. Iran, at war with Iraq then, bought from Khan centrifuge designs and a starter kit for uranium enrichment. The package included instructions for shaping uranium metal into "hemispherical forms," a process that has no other known use except to shield the core of a nuclear bomb.

"I haven't heard -- even from defenders of Iran -- an explanation for a peaceful purpose, that's not a weapons-related purpose," for the uranium metal, a U.S. official said. Iran contends that the uranium metal instructions were thrown in as a freebie and never used.

Khan, who is under house arrest in Islamabad, Pakistan, has provided few details to U.S. intelligence through his Pakistani handlers.

With Khan's help, Iran spent much of the 1990s secretly constructing a facility, partially underground, to house 50,000 centrifuges that it planned to build. That facility in Natanz is the only such known plant, and U.S. intelligence considers it unlikely that Iran has a hidden duplicate. Natanz was exposed in August 2002, at a time when the Bush administration was building support for war with Iraq. The revelations launched an investigation that took IAEA inspectors through Natanz for the first time three years ago this month.

Since then, they have uncovered matters of concern large and small. Some, such as traces of highly enriched uranium once feared to have been produced by Iran, are now known to have come from Pakistani equipment. Others areas of interest include suspicions of military involvement in uranium mining and plutonium tests.

But the history of Iran's P-2s, the laptop documents and the metal casting stand out as the most troubling for IAEA inspectors, the U.S. government and its allies.

For two years, the White House has sought to convince allies of Iran's guilt. "They say, 'Yes, we agree Iran's activities violate treaties, and, yes, it does seem like they are interested in nuclear weapons,' " a senior administration official said. The differences still to be worked out, between Washington and the world, are over "the proper course of action," the official said.

*Researcher Julie Tate contributed to this report.*

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# Teheran poses a difficult choice for Washington

M.K. Bhadrakumar

**E**IGHTEEN YEARS ago, in a surprise initiative, Iran's spiritual leader Imam Khomeini wrote an "open letter" to the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Mikhail Gorbachev. The Imam was ostensibly taking note of the Soviet leader's perestroika and glasnost, and did some plain-speaking as to where the Soviet state went astray through the preceding godless 70 years.

On one plane, the letter was harshly worded. Iran, as the fountainhead of revolutionary Shiaism, and the Soviet Union, situated on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, were ideologically poles apart. Moscow viewed next-door revolutionary Shias with great uneasiness bordering on suspicion. It avoided eye contact.

The significance of the letter lay not in its specific content but in the very fact of such an initiative. The Imam calculated — and Mr. Gorbachev understood — that Teheran and Moscow would stand to gain by cooperating. By 1988, Mr. Gorbachev had long admitted that Afghanistan was a "bleeding wound"; and, Iran was without doubt a moderating influence on the Afghan Mujahideen. The Imam on his part was acutely conscious of the value of Soviet support as the United States was revving up its policy of "containment" of Iran.

Indeed, Iran-Russia relations have never looked back. That is to say, there is a curious precedent for Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad's May 7 letter to U.S. President George W. Bush. The initiative, therefore, is worthy of deep contemplation.

Talking to the media in Ankara, Iran's chief negotiator on the nuclear issue, Ali Larijani, suggested in early comments that the letter could "lead to a new diplomatic opening." The American reaction as such has been to randomly pick holes, but, significantly, there has been so far no outright rejection of the Iranian offer of talks. (The Israeli lobby in the U.S. and the neocons would be infuriated by some of Mr. Ahmedinejad's observations.)

The prospects of putting together a "like-minded coalition" for bringing about a regime change in Iran appear uncertain.

Mr. Larijani acknowledged that the tone of the letter did not show any "softening" of the Iranian position as such, but "we need to think about the future of the world, go over problems encountered in the past and understand why people in the region are concerned."

The development once again shows the innate pragmatism that is the hallmark of the Iranian (Persian) temper. Also, Mr. Ahmedinejad's initiative calls attention to the overblown hypothesis among self-opinionated Iran-watchers that the regime in Teheran is torn between "radicals" and "moderates." There should be no doubt that Mr. Ahmedinejad's move carries the imprimatur of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Nor is it conceivable that the Iranian Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards) would dare sabotage the decision taken by the country's religious leadership.

Teheran's decision nonetheless must be placed contextually. It came on the eve of a crucial meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the five veto-holding member-countries of the U.N. Security Council and of Germany in New York on May 8 for further discussions aimed at evolving a consensus over the next move on the Iran nuclear issue.

## Consensus lacking

Clearly, a consensus is lacking on the Iran nuclear issue. There is difficulty in even agreeing on where it is that Iran has faulted in fulfilling its "obligations" under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The discussion today concerns the fulfilment of the so-called Additional Protocol, which in the first instance was meant to be a temporary measure undertaken by Iran voluntarily, and not enforceable.

The gaps in the positions of the "Iran Six" (which met in New York) have become pro-

nounced in recent days.

Russia and China find the rhetoric of the draft resolution (drafted by Britain and France at the U.S.' behest) invoking Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter allowing mandatory measures including military actions against Iran, to be completely unacceptable. Arguably, Moscow and Beijing too recognise the need to send a unified clear signal to Iran urging it to be more cooperative and, specifically, calling on Iran to freeze all nuclear enrichment and related activities, and to accept International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections.

Such a signal, however, cannot be in the nature of an ultimatum or by way of putting deadlines. China, in particular, insists that the issue must be resolved through negotiations; that the door for a negotiated settlement still remains open; and, that in the meanwhile, utmost restraint and patience is called for from all sides so that tensions do not get exacerbated. A high degree of coordination is evident between the Russian and the Chinese positions.

The European Union position has drawn close to the U.S. demand for taking a tougher attitude toward Iran. But there are nuances here too. Britain, France, and Germany are yet to give up the principle of resolving the issue through negotiations — their hardening stance notwithstanding.

The widespread view among the international community (and even within the U.N. Security Council) shows a preference for diplomatic mediation. This body of international opinion has reservations about both economic sanctions and military action against Iran. The efficacy of economic sanctions is in serious doubt in any case, while military action may only serve the purpose of hardening the Iranian position. Almost everyone agrees that a conflagration in the

Middle East, which is already a highly volatile region, could have far-reaching consequences globally.

Washington too must weigh carefully the downstream implications of militarily attacking Iran. The prospects of putting together a "like-minded coalition" for bringing about a regime change in Iran appear uncertain. The million dollar question, therefore, is: if, despite the heavy rhetoric on all sides in recent weeks, offered an appropriate and fair resolution, would Teheran be still prepared to make a substantial compromise?

At the New York conference, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov strongly pitched for the international community offering some clear benefits to Iran for cooperating. The conference apparently agreed that the EU-3 (Britain, France, and Germany) would put together a fresh package of benefits to offer to Iran if it chose to comply with demands to cease nuclear enrichment activities. Mr. Lavrov later described the New York discussions as dwelling on "the general action strategy of the international community" — and not on sanctions against Iran "in any form."

Mr. Ahmedinejad's initiative has been timed carefully. Iran always sought to talk things over directly with the U.S. The nuclear issue was only part of the agenda. As far as Teheran is concerned, Iran's integration in the international community is at stake. There is a point beyond which the EU-3 or Russia cannot deliver on the range of Iran's concerns. The U.S. hostility toward Iran is the core issue. No intermediary can pretend to hold Washington's brief in this regard.

At the same time, Teheran is putting the ball squarely in Washington's court. Pushed against the wall, Iran has threatened to quit the Non-Proliferation Treaty — and might well do so. Thus, if Washington were to persist with its tough line, it is going to be left with two alternatives. One, to accept a nuclear Iran; and, two, to attempt to set back Iran's nuclear programme by a few years through a military strike.

Mr. Ahmedinejad's initiative now opens a third option. The fact cannot be overlooked that it took 27 long years for the leadership in Teheran to address a communication to Washington. It implies that the Iranian offer needs probing. In the Middle East, Iran wields a lot of influence, which can be useful. That is self-evident.

But Iran is an ambitious country. A huge factor concerning the energy question, which has a bearing on global security, is also hanging in the air. On April 29, *The Financial Times* drew attention to it: "Analysts are concerned that an overall hardening of U.S. policy towards Moscow could drive Russia and Iran, which together hold nearly half the world's gas reserves, into an energy-based alliance."

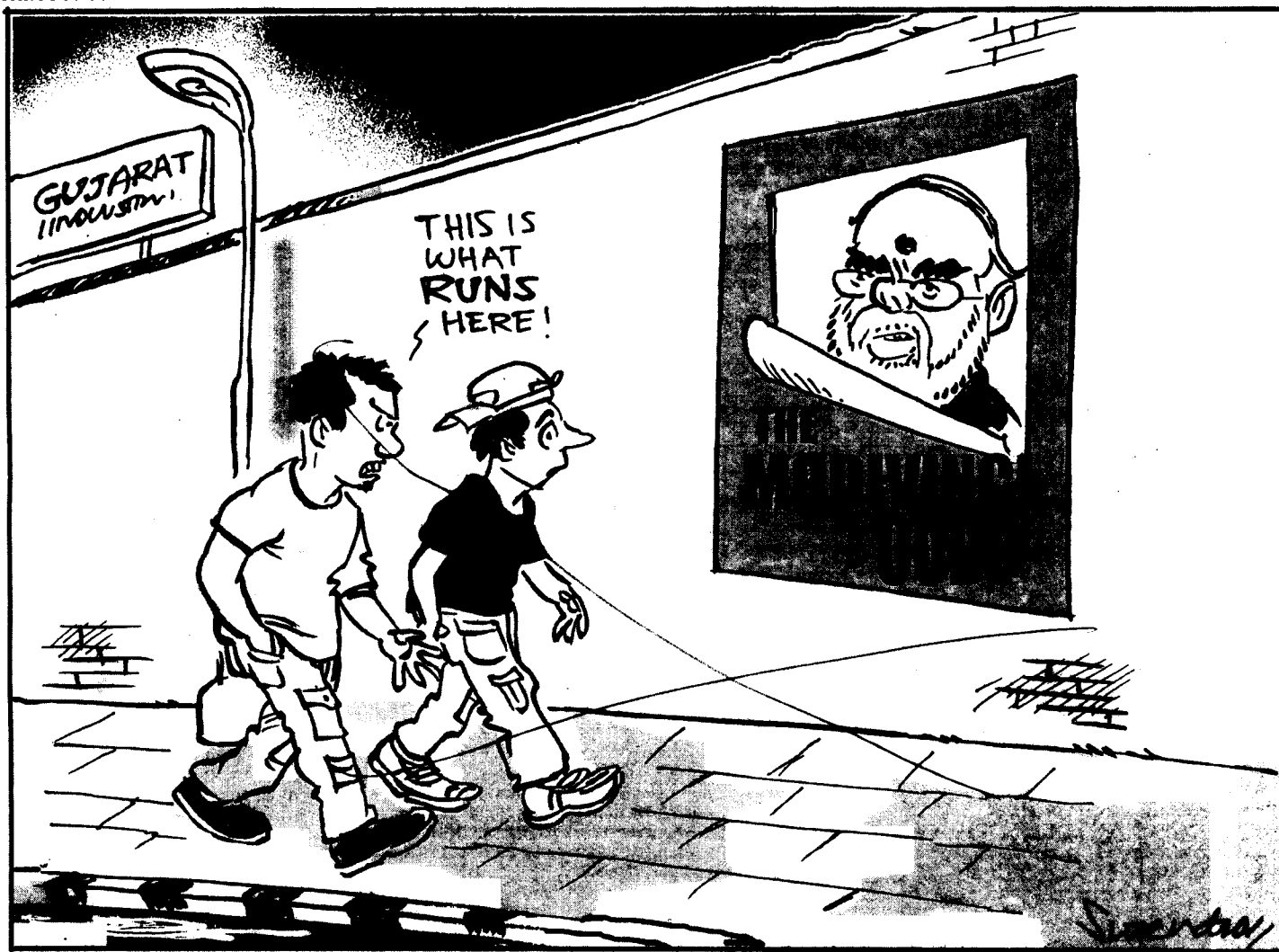
"A senior financier told *The Financial Times* that Iran, which is competing with Gazprom to provide gas to the Caucasus, was considering a switch in policy by selling its gas to Russia through Central Asia because the U.S. was blocking its access to Europe and India."

The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister who visited Moscow last month spoke of Iran and Russia forming an "arc" of energy-producing countries.

What is shaping up is the likelihood of Iran meeting China's energy needs for decades to come via a Central Asian pipeline system (bypassing the transit zone of the Straits of Malacca, which the U.S. Navy controls). The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation too may admit Iran as a full member.

Analysts have viewed these trends as a strategic defeat for the U.S. Washington realises it may be getting outmanoeuvred. The sharp acceleration of the Caspian "great game" in recent weeks and the growing stridency reminiscent of Cold War rhetoric in the U.S. criticism of Russia testifies to a sense of frustration in Washington. The point is that all the protagonists — the U.S., EU, Russia, and China — should keep constantly in view Iran's standing as a major energy producing country.

## CARTOONSCAPE





# Iran warns of oil price rise

Minister says any U.N. curbs on its oil industry are unlikely

ISLAMABAD: A senior Iranian oil official said on Sunday the United Nations was unlikely to impose sanctions on Iran's oil industry over its nuclear programme, because any such action would send world oil prices soaring.

Iran may face a new resolution from the U.N. Security Council after the International Atomic Energy Agency reported on Friday that the country hampered its checks and rebuffed requests to stop making nuclear fuel.

Western powers led by the United States support limited sanctions if Iran fails to back down. Russia and China, two veto-wielding members of the Security Council, have been more guarded on this issue.

## A smokescreen

Iran's Deputy Oil Minister Mohammad Hadi Nejad-Hosseini said any curbs on its oil and gas industry were unlikely. "I don't think anybody could put any sanction on the oil and gas industry," he told a news conference following talks with Pakistani oil officials on a gas pipeline project.

"Due to the sensitivity of the oil market, any action like that will increase oil prices very high. I believe not the U.N., not other

• Sensitivity of the oil market

• Russia, China guarded in reaction

bodies will put any sanction on oil or the oil industry."

The U.S. and other western countries suspect that Iran is using its nuclear programme as a smokescreen to develop nuclear weapons. Iran says its nuclear activities are for energy production.

AFP reports from Teheran:

Iran cannot be forced to halt its disputed nuclear programme and will defy any U.N. Security Council resolution demanding a freeze of uranium enrichment, the country's top national security official said on Sunday.

"We will not accept any forced resolution," Ali Larijani told a group of students at Teheran's Sharif University, Islamic republic's most prestigious scientific faculty.

"They should not think they can make us happy with sweets. Iran is allergic to the terms of the suspension. Our programme is to continue research and development in enrichment and to have the nuclear fuel cycle," he said. "If they want to pressure

us, our reaction will be to revise our relations with the IAEA," he said, referring to the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency. "The ball is in their court." Mr. Larijani said the country's bid to master nuclear technology — for peaceful purposes and not weapons as the United States alleges — was "a strategic objective".

"We will use any means to achieve that objective," he said, drawing loud applause from students.

"If you want to harm Iran, you should know that we can also harm you. We are serious about that," he added, referring to the fact that Washington has not ruled out taking military action against the Islamic republic.

"We are ready for all scenarios. The Government has set up a committee and has thought about all scenarios. If the situation becomes a military one, we have thought about that too," he said.

"What the Supreme Leader said was serious. If they harm us we will harm them," he said, several days after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei threatened the United States with global "harm" if a war broke out.

"I think that they are intelligent enough not to carry out such a mad thing." — Reuters

01 MAY 2006

THE HINDS

# Iran attacking Kurdish area, charges Iraq

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## Teheran working with Ankara to attack us: Kurds

**BAGHDAD:** Baghdad on Sunday accused Iranian forces of entering Iraqi territory and shelling Turkish-Kurdish PKK guerilla positions, with the Kurds accusing Teheran of working with Ankara to attack their movement.

"Iranian forces hit a border area called Haj Umran and then entered five km into Iraqi territory and hit the area of Lollan with heavy artillery with 180 shells targeting PKK positions," an Iraqi Defence Ministry statement said.

The Kurdish rebel group, Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), who have dug-in in Iraq's northern Kurdish-controlled area on the border with Iran and Turkey, have warned Iran not to interfere in their fight against Ankara's rule in southeast Turkey.

Leader of a group of PKK rebels Rustom Judi told AFP in an interview that Iranian forces had "no reason" to fight the PKK because "fighting has been between our men and soldiers inside Turkey, far from the Iranian border."

### Bound by treaty

But Iran is bound by treaty with Turkey to fight the outlawed PKK, which has waged a 15-year insurgency against Ankara for self-rule in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast. In return, Turkey has pledged to fight the Iranian armed Opposition group, the Iraq-based People's Mujahedeen.

Turkey says some 5,000 armed PKK militants have found refuge in northern Iraq

since 1999, when the group declared a unilateral ceasefire after the capture of its leader Abdullah Ocalan. The truce was called off in June 2004. "I warn Iran that their aggression against our party's positions in Iraq will have consequences," Mr. Judi said. The details of casualties from Sunday's attack were not yet known.

Kurds make up the majority in three adjacent areas within Iraq, Iran and Turkey.

Teheran and Ankara have accused a number of separatist rebel groups of exploiting Kurdish-controlled areas in Iraq to launch attacks inside their countries.

For around a year, Iran has been battling border infiltrations by a Kurdish group called Pejak, which Tehran says is linked to the PKK. Reports claim at least 120 Iranian police were killed and scores wounded in Kurdish rebel attacks last year, many of them blamed on Pejak.

Meanwhile, Turkey has massed troops along the border to intensify operations against PKK rebels who are sneaking into Turkey in growing numbers with the arrival of spring when snow melts and makes passage through the mountains easier.

On Sunday the Iranian newspaper *Kayhan* reported that four Iranian soldiers "were martyred in the Mahabad area while fighting with anti-revolutionary forces."

Mahabad, situated close to Iran's border with both Turkey and Iraq, is an historic centre of Kurdish nationalism. — AFP

## U.S. pact with armed groups?

**BAGHDAD:** President Jalal Talabani said on Sunday he was close to striking a deal with seven militant groups that could end the violence plaguing Iraq.

"The Americans have entered into negotiations with some of these groups with my blessing and I think it is possible to reach an agreement with the seven armed organisations," Mr. Talabani said according to a statement released from his office.

He said these groups were fighting against the U.S.

occupation of Iraq, adding "we want to have a dialogue with them and they can join the political process. They are visiting me and I met them. As there is broad freedom to express opinion, there is no justification for armed action" in Iraq, he said.

The President also charged that neighbouring Syria was the "main source" of the militancy. "It hurts me that Syria is the main source for the support of insurgency," the statement said. — AFP

01 MAY 2006

LOG HING

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## Iran refuses to blink

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**W**ith Iran refusing to meet a gun-to-its-head 'deadline' to suspend its uranium enrichment activities, the debate over sanctions is virtually guaranteed to flare up again in the United Nations Security Council. The United States, the United Kingdom, and France are pressing other members of the Council to pass a resolution under Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter, which covers threats to peace, breaches of peace, and acts of aggression. Such a resolution is expected to provide a figleaf of legality to the George Bush-led move to resort to sanctions or even military action against an Iran that seems determined to stand up to intimidation and pressure. The U.S. President's recent clarification that his administration remains committed to the diplomatic option provides some relief to a world that is fed up with his reckless unilateralism in disregard for international norms and law. Since Russia and China are apparently in no mood to support stringent measures, a Security Council resolution imposing sanctions appears unlikely. However, Washington has signalled that it can operate outside the ambit of the U.N. and ask allies and fellow-travellers to consider punitive economic measures. The other side of the story is that the theocratic regime in Teheran has done little to help its own cause, especially in recent weeks. While President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent statements have been unnecessarily provocative, Supreme Religious Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei added fuel to fire by offering nuclear know-how to Sudan.

A few weeks ago, *The New Yorker* and *The Washington Post* published reports to the effect that the Bush administration was contemplating military action against Iran. Seymour Hersh, a respected investigative journalist, wrote that military planners were not ruling out recourse to tactical nuclear weapons. According to these reports, the attacks were not likely to be confined to the Isfahan uranium conversion plant or the Natanz enrichment facility. The Bush administration was apparently thinking of a broad-based air campaign against Iran's conventional military forces as well, with some officials taking the view that the action could lead to a regime change. The Ahmadinejad regime, it was speculated, would have no choice but to quit. Sober analysts, of course, did not fail to draw attention to the explosive consequences of military action: Iran could instigate Shia militias in Iraq to join the insurgency; send its own troops across its western borders to attack the bogged-down U.S. military forces; reactivate Hizbollah's rocket warfare against Israel; attack shipping in the Straits of Hormuz; or, as the last resort, launch long-range missiles against Israel. Mr. Bush's denial of the reports aside, there are reasons to believe that a military strike is unlikely. Washington's military, and Mr. Bush's political, resources are so stretched by Iraq that the opening of a second battlefield will be akritic in the extreme.

01 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

# N-IMBROGLIO | Promises "maximum cooperation", else radical measures Iran to deal with IAEA, not UNSC

AGENCIES

TEHRAN, APRIL 30

IRAN'S promised today it would show "maximum cooperation" with a probe into its nuclear programme on condition the case was dealt with by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and not the UN Security Council.

"We have said that we are ready to solve the questions through dialogue. If the IAEA and the Security Council commit for the case to remain at the IAEA, we are ready for maximum cooperation," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters.

"But if they take radical measures, we will take measures as a consequence. If their decisions are reasonable, ours will be too. If their decisions are radical, ours will be too," he added.

Iran says it would allow United Nations inspectors to resume snap inspections of its nuclear facilities, but only if the dispute again went before the UN nuclear monitor. The White House rejected the offer, which came on Saturday as Iran apparently sought to avoid a full-blown UN debate over sanctions.

The "statement does not change our position that the Iran-



Ahmadinejad in Tehran vowed that no one could make Iran give up its nuclear technology. AP

ian government must give up its nuclear ambitions, nor does it affect our decision to move forward to the United Nations Security Council," said Blaine Rethmeier, a White House spokesman.

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

Meanwhile, Iran's deputy Oil

Minister said today that the UN won't impose sanctions against Iran because the move would increase global oil prices. "I do not think anybody could put any sanction on the oil industry and gas industry," M H Nejad Hosseinian told reporters in Islamabad.

"Any action like that will increase oil prices very high. And I believe that the UN or its bodies will not put any sanctions on oil or the oil industry," Hossein-

ian said after talks with senior Pakistani government officials on a proposed project for transporting Iranian gas to both Pakistan and India.

In Islamabad, Hosseinian wrapped up three days of negotiations with Pakistani officials on the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline in 1996, Iran proposed the 2,775 km pipeline—worth \$7 billion—to take its gas to Pakistan and India.

INDIAN EXPRESS

01 MAY 2006

HINDUSTAN TIMES

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## Cornering Iran

**T**HE ESCALATING international brawl we are seeing is not between the US and Iran, even though the former may be taking the lead in pointing fingers at Tehran's nuclear activities. It is between the UN and Iran, occasioned by the latter's refusal to accept a UN mandate to stop uranium enrichment. Contrary to what its President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claims, this demand is not to deny Iran's right to nuclear technology. It comes at the head of a two-year long process that has not been able to provide a final answer as to whether or not Iran is clandestinely seeking to make nuclear weapons. Having, hopefully, learnt the lesson of ignoring the UN in the run up to the invasion of Iraq, the US is acting along with its Security Council colleagues to get Tehran to behave on the nuclear issue.

What is worrisome are the remarks that Mr Ahmadinejad has made about Israel, and the kind of preparations being visibly made in Iran to launch a global terrorist campaign against a putative US attack. In this, the Iranian President's

deeply held religious beliefs don't give much comfort. He finances an institute in Tehran on the Twelfth Imam who went missing a millennia or so ago, and whose apocalyptic return would bring a perfect Islamic society in the world before the day of judgment. Similarly, millennial beliefs are shared by a significant numbers of US Christians who believe in the Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ. And where the Iranians are seeking nuclear weapons, the US already has a lot of them. This isn't a happy situation.

No one will argue that the world has a perfect system of global governance. But having a UN is better than having none. The world body has displayed deep flaws, not in the least in its mechanism to prevent war and maintain peace. Those with special authority in this area — the P-5 of the Security Council — have not been outstanding examples as upholders of the UN charter. But if their power is brazenly mocked at, we will be back in the pre-World War II era, when might was right. All things considered, the time for talk has passed and the UNSC needs to act now to corral Iran.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

01 MAY 2005

# Iran vows to resist as West pushes for action

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Diplomats from permanent U.N. member nations to meet today

**TEHERAN:** Iran's regime on Monday vowed it would resist pressure over its disputed nuclear programme, as Western powers prepared to push for tough Security Council action against the Islamic republic.

Diplomats from the five permanent Council member nations and Germany are to meet in Paris on Tuesday and again at the Foreign Ministers level in New York on May 9, following up on an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report confirming Iran has not complied with demands to freeze uranium enrichment.

The United States and Europe are hoping a reluctant Russia and China will agree to a robust resolution that legally obliges Iran to halt the sensitive work which makes reactor fuel but can also be extended to make the core of an atom bomb. But even if they succeed, Iran looked unlikely to back down.

## Epic struggle

"The struggle of the Iranian people against the United States is like the struggle between Moses and the Pharaoh," commented Mohsen Rezai, the Right-wing secretary of the country's top political arbitration body, the Expediency Council.

"For the Americans, it is not a nuclear issue but one of Iran

progressing to become developed and powerful," he told the ISNA news agency, repeating the regime's view that the crisis is merely an extension of U.S. ambitions to see the ouster of Iran's ruling clerics.

Iran has been seeking to split Council members by balancing threats of tough reprisals if the pressure mounts and some concessions if it eases.

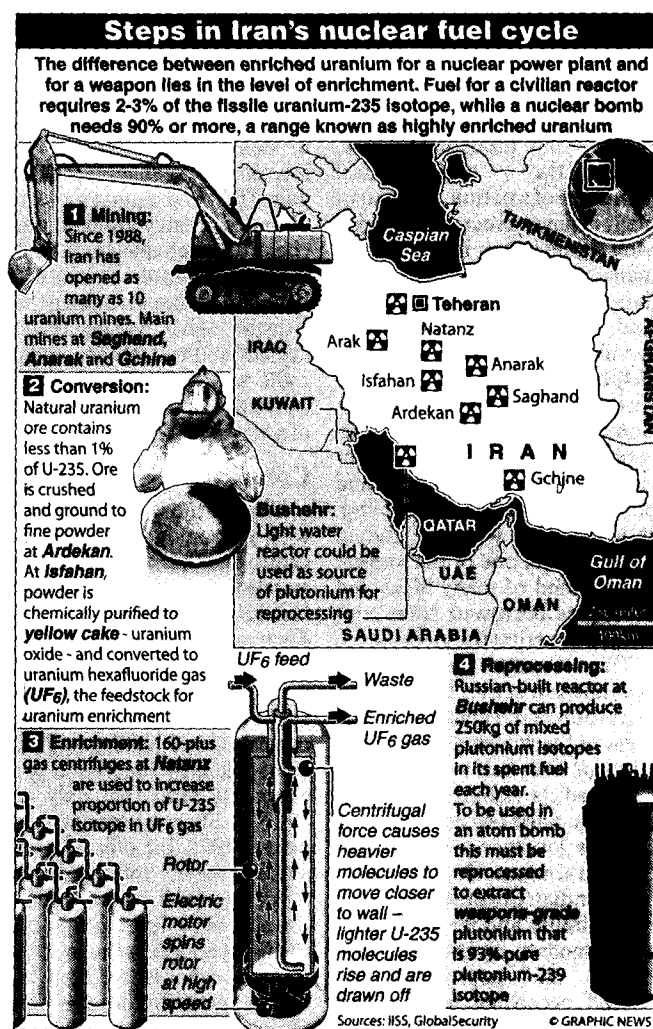
What Teheran wants is to continue enrichment and keep the case out of the Security Council, which unlike the IAEA, has enforcement powers. Iran argues it only wants to generate electricity and that fuel cycle work is, therefore, a right enshrined by the NPT.

## Pressure tactics

"We will not accept any forced resolution," Iran's top national security official Ali Larijani said. "If they want to pressure us, our reaction will be to revise our relations with the IAEA," Mr. Larijani said, repeating Iran's threat to put an end to crucial U.N. inspections.

"If you want to harm Iran, you should know that we can also harm you. We are serious about that," he added, several days after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei bluntly warned Washington of global retaliation in the event of an attack.

At the same time, Foreign



Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said "if the IAEA and the Security Council commit for the case to remain at the IAEA, we are ready for maximum cooper-

ation". U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was quick to accuse the Islamic regime in Teheran of "playing games". - AFP

02 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

# Iran faces resolution

Press Trust of India

Philosopher held

UNHQ, May 4: Responding to Iran's continued defiance on the nuclear issue, Britain and France, backed by the US, have moved a resolution in the UN Security Council demanding that Teheran suspend nuclear enrichment, which they suspect is aimed at producing atomic weapons.

Russia and China, two other veto wielding members of the Council, immediately made their opposition known, setting the stage for a possible confrontation.

The resolution, moved yesterday, threatens Iran with unspecified further measures as may be necessary to ensure compliance - a language that could be used to impose sanctions or even take military action at a later stage. US President George W Bush has repeatedly said he wants to pursue diplomatic option but has also stated that all

TEHERAN, May 4: In the first detention of a prominent academic since the election last June of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iranian authorities have arrested a liberal philosopher for espionage, official media reported today. ■ AP

options are on the table.

Russia and China had a lot of difficulty with the tough language in view of its implications, diplomats said. But they were not sure how far Moscow, which supplies arms to Iran, and Beijing would go if the Western power press the resolution as they are threatening.

The resolution calls for the UN nuclear watchdog - International Atomic Energy Agency, to report on the compliance but does not give any time frame. However, Western diplomats say they expect the report to be available by early June.

THE STATESMAN

05 MAY 2006

# Another chance for Iran

REUTERS  
UNHQ, May 3

*Handwritten:* Ahmadinejad, H.F. 13, 4/13

## What's in a name?

THE UNITED States, Britain and France are set to brief the UN Security Council on their proposed resolution that would give Iran another chance to curb its nuclear programme. But the allies probably will not distribute a text that Russia and China still oppose. Moscow and Beijing fear it would be a step toward sanctions or even military action. "We will explain to the council where our thoughts are and what direction they will take," US Ambassador John Bolton told reporters.

Meanwhile, Iran's nuclear chief said on Wednesday that Iran had enriched uranium up to 4.8 per cent — the upper end of the range needed to make fuel for reactors. Uranium needs to be enriched to more than 90 per cent to be suitable for use in nuclear weapons. Gholamreza Aghazadeh said Iran has no intention of enriching uranium beyond 5 per cent.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrived in Washington to discuss Iran strategy with US President George W. Bush. German officials said she hopes to persuade

THE IRANIAN President and the emir of Qatar got into a row recently over the name of the Persian Gulf, which Arabs prefer to call Arabian Gulf. When the emir said he hoped Iran's soccer team would bring pride to the "Arabic Persian Gulf" region at the World Cup in Germany, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad shot back: "I believe you called it the Persian Gulf in school." The emir was left mumbling: "The gulf does belong to all."

AP, Tehran

Bush to take a methodical approach on Iran so as not to split Western allies.

Bolton said it would be "helpful to apply greater pressure on Iran" so that all 15 members of the council, not just the Western powers, could give their views.

The plan is to introduce a resolution under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, making legally binding a March council statement that asked Iran to suspend uranium enrichment work — a process that could be used for electricity generation or making an atomic weapon.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

04 MAY 2006



# China, Russia not one with P5's Iran view

Press Trust of India

UNHQ, May 6. — The five veto-wielding permanent members of UN Security Council have failed to narrow down their differences on a tough Franco-British draft on the Iranian nuclear issue, virtually dashing the hope for adoption of a resolution before their foreign ministers' meeting on Monday.

A senior Russian diplomat today criticised the latest Western draft of a UN Security Council resolution on Iran, saying that it would take time to reach a compromise. "It is too early to say which changes should be made to the draft resolution to satisfy Russia," Russian Deputy foreign minister Mr Sergei Kislyak said in Moscow, added AP.

The diplomats and experts from the five countries - the US, the UK, Russia, France and China - had a daylong informal discussion yesterday but Moscow and Beijing stood firm on their opposition to invoking Chapter 7 of the UN Charter which makes the resolution describing the Iranian uranium enrichment as threat to international peace and security mandatory.

Mincing no words, China's UN ambassador Wang Guangya said the reference to Chapter 7 and threat to international peace and security need to be removed from the resolution. But Western diplomats said that much dilution would make the resolution meaningless. The two provisions were the heart of the resolution, they asserted.

Iran, they said, needed to be sent a clear message that it must respect the demands of the international community and suspend its uranium enrichment programme.

The enriched uranium can be used both as fuel for power plants and for making nuclear weapons. Iran maintains its programme is for peaceful purposes but Western nations suspect that Teheran is trying to produce nuclear arms clandestinely.

Though the five plan to continue their discussions over the weekend ahead of their foreign ministers' meeting in New York on Monday, Council diplomats said there is still a wide chasm between their positions, the bridging of which would take time.

THE STATESMAN

07 MAY 2006

# Russia balks at Iran nuke draft

AGENCE France-Presse  
Moscow, May 6

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN the United States and its key UN allies over Iran were exposed again on Saturday when Russia said major changes were needed in a draft resolution requiring Tehran to halt uranium enrichment.

The draft resolution being debated "requires major changes," Russia's Interfax and RIA-Novosti news agencies quoted the country's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Kislyak as saying before leaving for talks at UN headquarters in New York.

"It's too early to say what changes should be brought to the draft resolution to satisfy the Russian side. Consultations are ongoing," Kislyak told reporters.

Members of the UN Security Council were expected on Saturday to hold talks on the resolution put forward by London and Paris in response to international concern over the nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

The resolution would oblige Iran, under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, to suspend uranium enrichment — the process used to produce fuel for nuclear reactors and, potentially, the core material of an atomic bomb.

If Iran does not comply, the draft warns there would be unspecified "further measures".

Iran has remained defiant over its right to enrich uranium to generate atomic energy.

Washington wants the UN to take centre stage and call for tough action against Tehran.

But Beijing and Moscow, which is building Iran's first nuclear reactor, oppose sanctions and stress the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), should play the key diplomatic role.

On Saturday, Kislyak outlined the terms of a deal that would allow both the IAEA to carry out necessary checks and Iran to continue its nuclear programme.

Russia "has come forward with an offer the essence of which is that Iran freeze uranium enrichment work for a time to work with the IAEA to restore trust in the character of Iran's nuclear programme", Kislyak was quoted by ITAR-TASS as saying.

Under Moscow's proposal, put forward in varying forms over the past few months, Russia would then enrich uranium on its territory on behalf of Iran for a certain period of time.

The offer "remains on the negotiating table," Kislyak said. The international community's call for Iran to halt uranium enrichment work "is not an aim in itself but a tool for restoring trust in their nuclear programme," the minister said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

07 MAY 2006

TEHRAN LAWMAKERS THREATEN IN LETTER TO ANNAN

# Iran may pull out of NPT

Associated Press

TEHRAN, May 7: In a letter to UN Secretary General Mr Kofi Annan today, the Iranian parliament threatened that it would force the government to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty if the USA continued pressuring Teheran to suspend uranium enrichment.

The letter, read on state radio, said Mr Annan and the Security Council must resolve the dispute over Iran's nuclear programme "peacefully, (or) there will be no option for the parliament but to ask the government to withdraw its signature" from an addendum to the treaty that calls for snap inspections by the International Atomic Energy

Agency, the treaty monitoring body. Iran already had stopped snap IAEA inspections, saying its 2003 agreement was being implemented voluntarily and had not been ratified by parliament and the Guardian Council, a powerful oversight body dominated by Islamic hard-liners. The protocol allows unfettered and unannounced IAEA inspections to ensure overall compliance with the NPT.

Furthermore, the letter said, the lawmakers would order a "review (of) Article 10 of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty," the section of the agreement that outlines procedures for withdrawal. Article 10 allows signatories to pull out of the treaty if they decide that extraordinary events have jeopardised their own supreme interests. A

nation wanting to withdraw must give fellow treaty signatories and the UN three months notice and detail events leading up to the decision. North Korea withdrew from the treaty in 2003 on that basis.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad too said Iran would reconsider its membership in the NPT if pressure continued. "If a signature on an international treaty causes the rights of a nation to be violated, that nation will reconsider its decision and that treaty will be invalid," Mr Ahmadinejad said, according to the official Islamic Republic News Agency. "If they (the USA and its allies) want to make incorrect decisions against Iran and issue statements and resolutions, they have to know that the Iranian nation will smash their

illegitimate resolutions against a wall," he said. The USA, Britain and France have expressed concern that Iran is trying to build nuclear weapons under cover of its enrichment programme and are trying to craft a UN resolution that would involve some measure of punishment should Iran fail to cease processing uranium. Russia and China, the other two veto-holding council members, have refused to agree to a draft resolution, calling for further diplomacy. The USA has said it wants a vote in the coming week, with or without support from Moscow and Beijing.

Also today, foreign ministry spokesman Mr Hamid Reza Asefi said again that there was nothing the international community could do to prompt Iran to suspend uranium enrichment.

# Iran threatens to quit NPT

**Teheran:** The Iranian parliament threatened in a letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on Sunday to force the government to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty if the United States continued pressuring Teheran to suspend uranium enrichment.

The letter, read on state radio, said Annan and the Security Council must resolve the dispute over Iran's nuclear program "peacefully, (or) there will be no option for the parliament but to ask the government to withdraw its signature" from an addendum to the treaty that calls for signers to allow intrusive, snap inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency - the treaty monitoring body.

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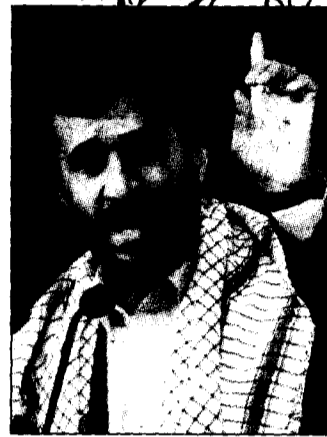
Article 10 allows signatories to pull out of the treaty if they decide that extraordinary events have jeopardised their own supreme interests. A nation wanting to withdraw must give fellow treaty signers and the UN three months notice and detail events leading up to the decision.

North Korea withdrew from the treaty in 2003 on that basis.

## NUCLEAR STANDOFF

The US ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, dismissed the Iranian parliament's threat and said it would not deter Western nations trying to push through a new U.N. resolution demanding Teheran stop uranium enrichment.

"This is a typical Iranian threat. It shows they remain desperate to conceal that their nuclear programme is in fact a weapons programme," he said. "I'm confident that these statements from Iran will not deter the sponsors of the draft resolution from proceeding in the Security



US and its allies "don't give us anything and yet they want to impose sanctions on us." He called threats of sanctions 'meaningless' and vowed to "smash their illegitimate resolutions against a wall."

Ahmadinejad also said he would not hesitate to reconsider NPT membership. "If a signature on an international treaty causes the rights of a nation be violated, that nation will reconsider its decision and that treaty will be invalid," he told IRNA.

Also Sunday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said again that there was nothing the international community could do to prompt Iran to suspend uranium enrichment, declaring that "intervention by the Security Council in this issue is completely illegal."

Briefing reporters, Asefi also said Iran's opponents were driven by "political motivations."

"Countries sponsoring the draft resolution (Britain, France and the United States) have political motivations," Asefi said. "It's clear that any action by the UN Security Council will leave a negative impact on our cooperation with the IAEA." AP

08 MAY 2006

# Iran Prez writes to Bush to end row

Breaks 26-year Hiatus Between Arch Foes

**Tehran:** Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has written to US President George W Bush to "propose new ways" to resolve a quarter-century of tensions between the arch-foes, Teheran announced on Monday.

The historic move brings an end to a 26-year-old break in official top-level contacts with Washington and comes amid US calls for sanctions and even threats of force to stop the hardline Islamic regime's disputed nuclear drive.

"President Ahmadinejad has written a letter to George Bush, which is to be handed to the Swiss embassy," government spokesman Gholam Hossein Elham told reporters, saying the message "goes beyond the nuclear question".

"In this letter, while analysing the world situation and finding the roots of the problems, he has proposed new ways for getting out of the existing vulnerable world situation," Elham said, adding that "the nuclear question is a part" of this situation. It is the first time an Iranian president has been known to officially communicate with an American president since Washington and Teheran cut off diplomatic relations in 1980.

Foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told the ISNA news agency that "once the American president has received the letter, its content will be made public". A source in Ahmadinejad's office said the letter would be handed to the Swiss embassy in Teheran— which has been acting as a conduit for messages between the two arch-enemies since 1981—



US President George W Bush and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

later on Monday. "The letter contains interesting things. It is written in English," was all the source would reveal. The US and Iran are at loggerheads over Teheran's nuclear programme which Washington suspects is a cover for ambitions to build atomic weapons.

News of the letter came ahead of a meeting in New York of the foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany in a bid to map out a common strategy to force Iran to halt sensitive nuclear fuel work. Security Council members are bargaining over a Franco-British draft resolution that would legally require Iran to freeze all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities. Teheran vowed on Sunday it would refuse to comply, warning the diplomatic crisis was heading toward a "confrontation".

Bush has not ruled out taking military action against Teheran, which Washington also accuses of being the world's "leading sponsor of terror". AGENCIES

09 MAY 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

STUCK | Major powers fail on strategy, US rejects Ahmadinejad's letter

# Again no agreement on Iran

AGENCIES

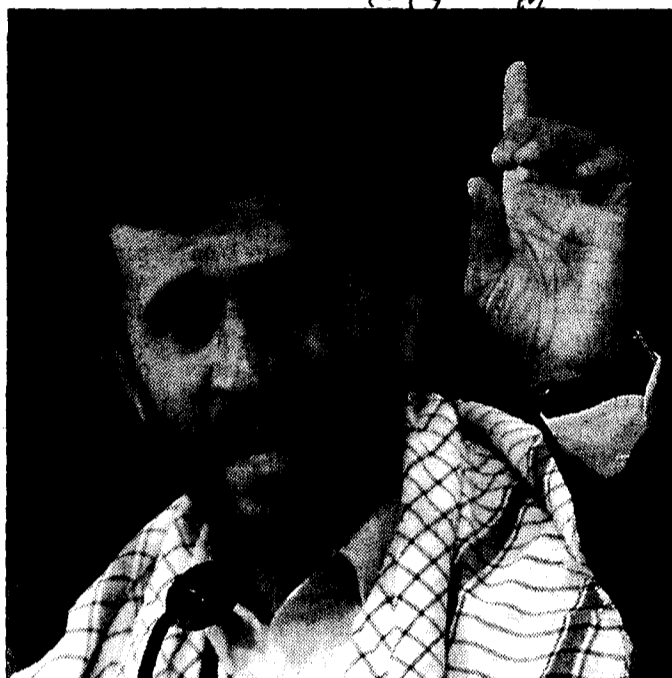
UNITED NATIONS, MAY 9

**F**OREIGN ministers of major powers failed to come up with a joint strategy for dealing with Iran after Tehran had sought to influence the negotiations with a last-minute diplomatic manoeuvre, officials said.

French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said a US-hosted, three-hour meeting that lasted till late on Monday did not reach an agreement. "We are still considering our work," he told reporters after the session of ministers from France, Russia, Britain, China and Germany had ended.

A senior US official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the meeting agreed that Iran must pay a price for not complying with UN resolutions but did not come to terms on what form that would take. "I think the prospects for an agreement this week are not substantially good," he said.

After a meeting on Tuesday in New York, the major power political directors will likely meet again next week but sponsors—aiming for unity—have backed



Ahmadinejad at a gathering of Basij commanders, a paramilitary group affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards, in Tehran. AP

off a timeline for UNSC action, the US official said.

The meeting came after Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad wrote to President George W. Bush proposing "new ways" to resolve their differences on Monday. IN the first detailed response

to the letter from the US, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Tuesday that it did not resolve questions about Tehran's suspect nuclear programme. "This letter is not the place that one would find an opening to engage on the nuclear issue or any-

thing of the sort," Rice said. "It isn't addressing the issues that we're dealing with in a concrete way."

Ahmadinejad's letter made only an oblique reference to Iran's nuclear intentions, asking why "any technological and scientific achievement reached in the Middle East region is translated into and portrayed as a threat to the Zionist regime." Otherwise, it lambasted Bush for his handling of the September 11 attacks, accused the media of spreading lies about the Iraq war and railed against the US for its support of Israel. It questioned whether the world would be a different place if the money spent on Iraq had been spent to fight poverty.

"Would not your administration's political and economic standing have been stronger?" the letter said. "And I am most sorry to say, would there have been an ever-increasing global hatred of the American government?"

On Tuesday, Ahmadinejad, on his way to Indonesia, called his letter "words and opinions of the Iranian nation" aimed at finding a "way out of problems" facing humanity, according to the official Iranian news agency.

INDIAN EXPRESS

10 MAY 2006

# Iran says Western concern on nuclear programme a big lie

TOMI SOETJIPTO AND  
MUKLIS ALI  
JAKARTA, MAY 10

IRANIAN President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad accused Western nations on Wednesday of hypocrisy and said their expressions of concern over nuclear programmes were a "big lie".

The Iranian leader was speaking on a visit to fellow Muslim nation Indonesia, which said Tehran had been receptive to its offer to help mediate the Islamic republic's dispute with critics of its nuclear project.

"I'll tell you, they are not con-

cerned with nuclear programmes... They are themselves engaged in nuclear activities and they are expanding day by day. They test new brands of weapons of mass destruction every day," Ahmadinejad told a news conference after meeting Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

"Big powers pretend (they) are concerned, but it's a big lie," the Iranian leader said.

Iran is under pressure to rein in a nuclear programme it says is for peaceful purposes but some countries fear is really aimed at developing weapons.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, has offered to help mediate on the issue, Yudhoyono and his spokesman said. "We can cooperate well in reducing the tension and move toward continuing talks and negotiations," Yudhoyono told reporters.

Spokesman Dino Patti Djajal said "Iran was very receptive" to Indonesia's offer to help mediate.

"We hope it will happen. We need to breathe new life into negotiations," he said.

Speaking of a letter sent to US President George W. Bush, which Washington shrugged

off as an attempt to divert attention from the nuclear issue, Ahmadinejad said sending it was the right decision and that he had no comment on the US reaction.

Bush received the 18-page letter from Ahmadinejad on Monday, the first publicly announced personal communication from an Iranian President to his US counterpart since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Despite Washington's initial cool reaction, analysts say the letter might buy Tehran more time to pursue its programme and improve its standing as a regional leader.

AP

11 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

# An Iranian offer that America must heed

Siddharth Varadarajan

WITH THE exception of one highly regrettable sentence implicitly questioning the historicity of the Nazi holocaust against the Jews and another hinting at the complicity of U.S. intelligence agencies in 9/11, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's 18-page letter to his American counterpart, George W. Bush, is a *tour de force* of the kind the world of diplomacy has not seen for a long time.

This extraordinary document — cleverly drafted in the religious idiom that Mr. Bush and his neoconservative advisers allegedly believe in, complete with a reference to Judgment Day — is the first official communication from the head of the Iranian government to an American President since the 1979 revolution that overthrew the Shah. It is also a masterpiece of political clarity and philosophical opaqueness, which will frustrate and provoke Washington. The world sees the well-timed letter as a diplomatic opening — which it most certainly is — but the Bush

## REALITY CHECK

administration is not interested in diplomacy. Nor does it look kindly upon those who seek to suggest that the recent crescendo of allegations against Iran resembles the lies Washington told about weapons of mass destruction in the run-up to its disastrous invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The experience of Iraq is the single most important argument the Iranian President marshals to make the point that the Bush administration's policy towards Iran is misconceived and dangerous. And he urges the American President to change course lest he be judged harshly by three separate courts: of God, of history and of his own people.

Because of the possibility of the existence of WMDs in Iraq, Mr. Ahmadinejad's letter notes, the country was occupied, "around one hundred thousand people killed, its water sources, agri-

The Ahmadinejad letter is as much an invitation to dialogue as a reminder to the world of the dangers posed by the Bush administration's policies.

culture and industry destroyed, close to 180,000 foreign troops put on the ground, sanctity of private homes of citizens broken, and the country pushed back perhaps fifty years ... Lies were told in the Iraqi matter. What was the result? I have no doubt that telling lies is reprehensible in any culture, and you do not like to be lied to."

The letter is formally addressed to Mr. Bush but its arguments are all aimed at a wider audience, particularly in Europe, West Asia, and the U.S. To the people of the United States, Mr. Ahmadinejad offers a reminder of the high price they are paying thanks to the Bush administration's lies in Iraq: "Hundreds of billions of dollars spent from the treasury of one country and certain other countries and tens of thousands of young men and women — as occupation troops — put in harm's way, taken away from family and loved ones, their hands stained with the blood of others, subjected to so much psychological pressure that everyday some commit suicide and those returning home suffer depression, become sickly and grapple with all sorts of ailments; while some are killed and their bodies handed to their families."

Post-9/11, Mr. Ahmadinejad writes, the American people have been made to feel less secure thanks to their government's policies. And the U.S. administration has thrown all principles of human rights out of the window by incarcerating people indefinitely without trial and maintaining secret prisons. In a direct reference to Mr. Bush's much-publicised religious beliefs, the Iranian President asks how all of this can be reconciled with someone being "a follower of Jesus Christ, the great Messenger of God."

But there is more to the letter than mere rhetoric. In directly addressing the U.S. Presi-

dent, Mr. Ahmadinejad is reprising a tradition as familiar to Iranian statecraft as its experience with 'regime change.'

Under pressure from the same Anglo-American powers ranged against Teheran today, Mohammed Mossadegh, who was Prime Minister of Iran until being forcibly overthrown in 1953, wrote a number of letters to President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Mossadegh had asserted Iran's independence against the British by nationalising its oil and was being subjected to punitive action by Britain and the U.S. "Although it was hoped that during Your Excellency's administration attention of a more sympathetic character would be devoted to the Iranian situation," Mossadegh wrote to Eisenhower on May 28, 1953, "unfortunately no change seems thus far to have taken place in the position of the American Government." He also complained that Iran had made numerous proposals for the amicable settlement of its dispute with the Anglo-American oil companies but these had not been responded to.

Unlike President Bush, who got Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to reject Mr. Ahmadinejad's letter, Eisenhower gave Mossadegh the courtesy of a reply. But he was also dishonest and misleading. The plot hatched by the Dulles brothers for Mossadegh's overthrow was already under way. On August 19, 1953, Iran was brought back kicking and screaming into the Free World.

As a former teacher, Mr. Ahmadinejad knows Iran's history well. He also knows Mossadegh erred in not correctly reading the intentions of the U.S. and in being reactive. Elected to the presidency last year, Mr. Ahmadinejad quickly — and correctly — concluded that there was no way the Bush administration would give up its goal of 'regime change' in Iran. After all, the opening to

Washington attempted by his more liberal predecessor, Mohammed Khatami, had not only been summarily rejected but rewarded by Iran's inclusion in the 'axis of evil.' Mr. Ahmadinejad was equally certain that no matter what concessions Teheran made to provide its European interlocutors "objective guarantees" of its peaceful nuclear intentions, Washington would never accept the development or retention of safeguarded fuel cycle activities by Iran.

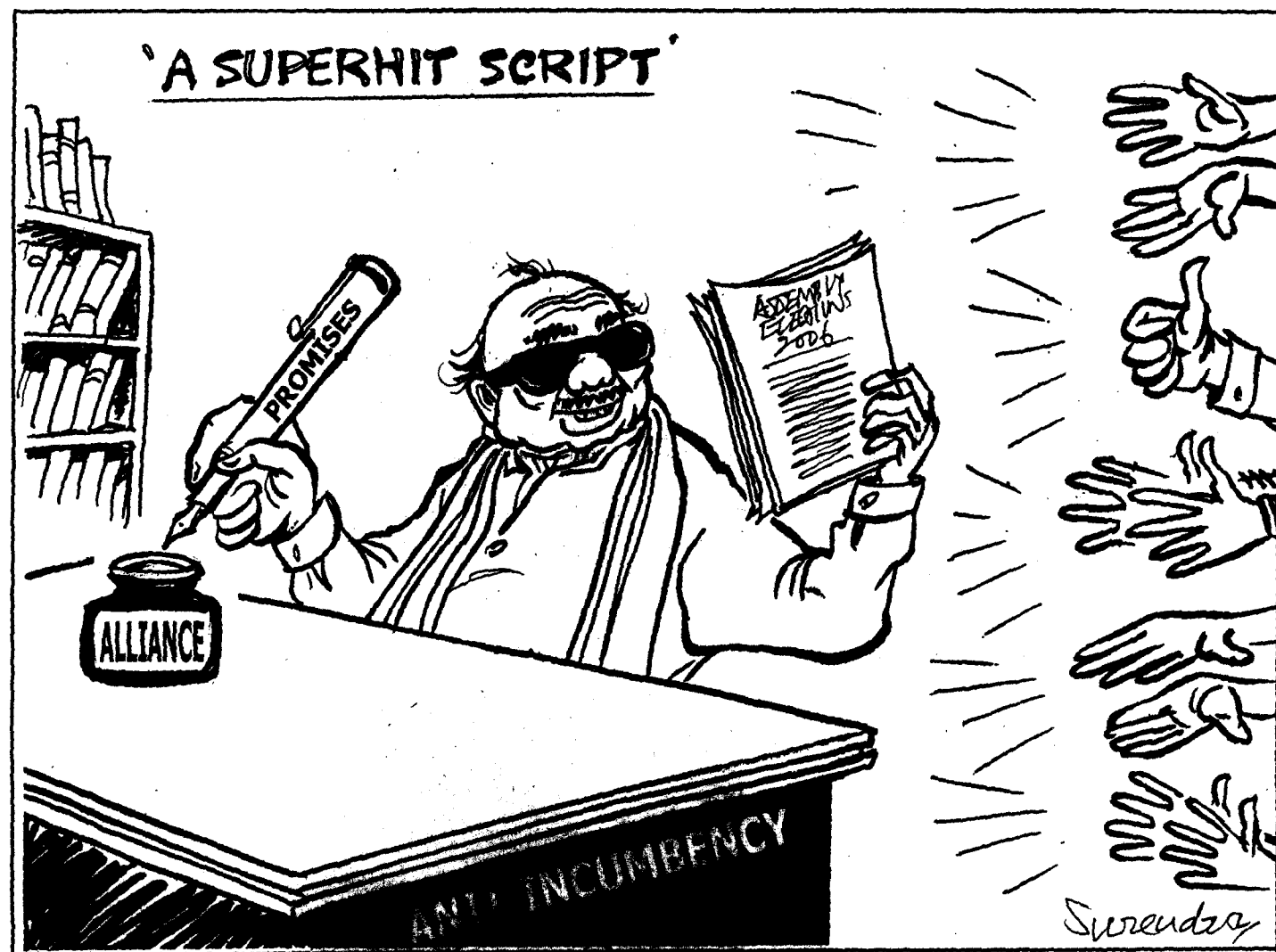
Sitting in his Teheran office in August 2005, Mr. Ahmadinejad could be forgiven for believing in the inevitability of American sanctions and eventual use of force. The hopes in liberal Iranian circles that France, Germany, and Britain would come up with a credible formula for the resolution of the nuclear question were dashed when the E-3 produced their limp proposal of August 5. Rather than sitting back and allowing Washington to calibrate the pace and extent of crisis escalation, President Ahmadinejad probably surmised that Iran's best chance of avoiding the fate that befell Iraq lay in escalating the crisis on its own terms.

The rhetoric against Israel last fall, the resumption of enrichment experiments in January this year, and the declaration that Iran has mastered the technology and is now a "nuclear nation" would have made no sense to a Mossadegh. But to a leader convinced about the inevitability of an American military attack, it was a high-risk gamble that appears to have paid off. By bringing the crisis to a "peak" at a time when Washington has neither the military nor diplomatic capability to launch an attack — let alone persuade the world to impose sanctions — President Ahmadinejad has, paradoxically, increased his country's room for manoeuvre. His letter to Mr. Bush is part of the same strategy, except that it comes as a soothing unguent to the high octane grandstanding of the past few months. Certainly, the international oil bourses have taken it that way.

What should the Bush administration do? It should heed the advice of its friends and allies and grasp the diplomatic nettle that Mr. Ahmadinejad has thrust into its unwilling hands. Contrary to Washington's deafening propaganda, Iran has not crossed the nuclear weapons rubicon and it is not at all clear that it even wishes to do so. In any case, if the Iranian leadership decides to build nuclear weapons, there is absolutely nothing the U.S. or the world can do to force it not to do so. The key, then, lies in making sure Mr. Ahmadinejad and his colleagues — and the wider Iranian clerical-corporate establishment of which they are a part — continue to have no incentive to go down that path. Imposing sanctions and threatening military action are not disincentives; if anything, they will strengthen the hands of those in Teheran who argue nuclear weapons are needed as the ultimate deterrent against 'regime change.' Mr. Ahmadinejad's letter has raised issues about American policies that are shared by countries in the region and the wider world. These are also issues that are being keenly debated inside the U.S. itself. President Bush should do himself and the world a favour and enter into a dialogue with Iran on these.

As far as the nuclear issue is concerned, Iran has said it will provide time-bound answers to all outstanding questions raised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) provided its dossier is transferred back from the U.N. Security Council to the IAEA. This proposal should be accepted. There can also then be a speedy resumption of Iran's Additional Protocol obligations, including surprise complementary accesses to sites international inspectors wish to visit. Technical fixes like inspections are necessary to assure the world about the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. But they have to be supplemented by a political approach that addresses Iran's security concerns. Mr. Ahmadinejad has provided a rational and cogent outline of what these concerns are. Nowhere in the letter does he call for the destruction of Israel or any other state. Peace in the region requires a change of course by Washington. It is up to the rest of the world to push for such a change.

## CARTOONSCAPE



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Poll results

The outcome of the Assembly elections in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam, West Bengal and Pondicherry has ratified the findings of the exit poll conducted by *The Hindu-CNN-IBN* team. The fall of a few veterans in the Indian Union Muslim League and considerable inroads by the Left into the Muslim votebank are some significant aspects of the election outcome in Kerala. Though the Congress suffered a setback in the State, it has made gains in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. The party may be able to retain power in Assam.

The West Bengal result is no surprise. The Left forces have reinforced their position through fair elections conducted in five phases. The result of the Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha by-election may offer new hope for the Congress in Uttar Pradesh. In all, the results present a win-win situation for the Congress and its allies, particularly the Left.

**C.P. Velayudhan Nair,**  
Kochi, Kerala

The results have thrown up some interesting aspects regarding people's choice of leaders. The anti-incumbency argument has been nullified in West Bengal. In Tamil Nadu, outgoing Chief Minister Jayalalitha's fate was sealed when she suspended over a lakh State Government employees for striking work. The lesson for her and others — do not trample upon the rights of the common man because he is the king in a democracy.

**Yugal Rayalu,**  
Nagpur

### Kerala verdict

The Kerala verdict reflects the people's rejection of the Congress' opportunistic policies. Oommen Chandy was the only leader who opposed the UDF's alliance with K. Karunakaran

but finally had to give in to pressure. The Congress perhaps thought he would be an asset but the literate Kerala voters thought otherwise.

**Abraham P. Ruby,**  
Bangalore

Since the formation of the two major alliances, LDF and UDF, in 1980, power has been alternating between them. This time, the vote is not for the LDF but against the UDF. The promise of creation of two million jobs, the Smart City project, an international container terminal at Vizhinjam, an LNG terminal at Kochi, and the Expressway were a few estimable projects of the UDF Government but they smacked of corruption. The LDF should take development issues seriously and revive the disappearing industries.

**K.A. Solaman,**  
Alappuzha, Kerala

### Seven times in a row

The West Bengal election result, giving the communists a seventh successive victory, has brushed aside the Opposition contention that the Left will lose if free and fair elections are held in the State. The communists of Kerala should learn a lot from their comrades in West Bengal, who get elected time and again because of good governance.

**V.P. Ramesan,**  
Tripunithura, Kerala

This time not even Mamata Banerjee can attribute the Left's resounding victory to rigging — scientific or otherwise. The Election Commission's measures, though initially seen as hurting Bengal's pride, have proved to be a blessing in disguise. The Left Front's claim that its six consecutive victories in the past were not because of rigging has been vindicated.

**S.K. Choudhury,**  
Bangalore

The deeply entrenched organisational strength of the CPI (M), its concern

for the people's issues, strategy of adapting itself to changed scenarios without compromising on ideology, and corruption-free governance are some important factors that have contributed to the massive victory. That the Left Front has won the election while supporting the UPA Government at the Centre, opposing, at the same time, the anti-people policies, is indeed amazing.

**S.R. Krishnamurthy,**  
Thanjavur, T.N.

Hats off to the Left for the landslide. Indubitably, the success mantra is massive land reforms undertaken in right earnest.

**Syed Sultan Mohiddin,**  
Kadapa, A.P.

A canard of scientific rigging was hurled at the Left Front Government for winning the elections in West Bengal. The charge has been roundly nailed by the State's electorate, which has established that its continuous support to the Left is purely because of its people-oriented policies.

**Kasim Sait,**  
Chennai

The result must make all incumbent governments introspect on what makes it possible for the Left to achieve the seemingly unachievable feat in poll after poll.

**P. Venkatesh,**  
Salem, T.N.

Congratulations to the Left for its victory in West Bengal and Kerala. The verdicts will certainly enhance its image in the Indian political scene. Even while supporting the UPA Government at the Centre, the Left, as a responsible opposition, has consistently fought on major people's issues.

**V.V.K. Suresh,**  
Guntur, A.P.

### A new dimension

The Tamil Nadu electorate has given not only a decisive verdict but has also

introduced a new dimension to the political scenario of the State. Ever since the DMK was voted to power in 1967, one of the Dravidian parties has been ruling the State with absolute majority. For the first time, a government led by the DMK will be dependent on the Congress. The verdict also throws up an interesting equation for the Centre-State relationship, with both the Congress and the DMK dependent on each other for survival.

**N. Ramakrishnan,**  
Chennai

The voters have ushered in the new regime with the hope that there will be better Centre-State cooperation — a factor that has been absent for over three decades now. Although the emergence of the Dravidian parties has strengthened regional autonomy over the years, the lack of cooperation from the Centre has resulted in failure to augment development in many spheres.

Neither the Congress nor any other third party has emerged as an alternative; to expect one to emerge for another decade or so is wishful thinking. Coalition, therefore, is the best option under the circumstances. It is hoped the Congress and the Left will participate in the government.

**Sivakumar Periasamy,**  
Bareilly, U.P.

DMK chief M. Karunanidhi deserves praise for spearheading the DPA to a stupendous victory. The people expect the formation of a coalition government with the much needed checks and balances. They also hope there will be no political witch-hunt and Mr. Karunanidhi will extend a hand of friendship to the Opposition. A word of appreciation is also due to *The Hindu-CNN-IBN* team for the accurate projections in the exit poll.

**J. Anantha Padmanabhan,**  
Srirangam, T.N.

It was a closely fought election in which the anti-incumbency factor was

absent, only minor differences existed in the strength of the alliances and there was a strikingly large voter turnout. The voters have given a decisive verdict for a coalition for the first time. None other than the people of Tamil Nadu have won the election.

**P.S. Kumar,**  
New Delhi

The verdict is the most authoritative expression of voters' minds and no political party should belittle it. As for the opinion polls, many magazine-based studies that predicted one-sided results went wrong.

As usual, the interpretation of public opinion became a babble of discordant voices and conflicting claims.

**R. Bhakther Solomon,**  
Chennai

The verdict defeated autocracy, cautioned against family succession to Chief Minister's post, put in place a bigger Opposition, and taught a lesson to all those who believed too much in chemistry.

**R. Ganesan,**  
Chennai

The results looked like a mirror image of the exit poll figures. Congratulations to *The Hindu-CNN-IBN* team.

**Saravanan Loganathan,**  
Chennai

During World War II, Winston Churchill assumed the reins of power and led Britain to victory. But in the general elections that followed, the people voted him out of power. Similarly Ms. Jayalalitha, bequeathed empty coffers, brought the State out of the morass and steered it towards economic growth, brought rowdiness under control, and handled the gigantic tragedies of the tsunami and unprecedented floods.

More than a desire for change, the results of Tamil Nadu seem to have been carried away by the promise of free colour television sets.

**A. Dharma Perumal,**  
Palayamkottai, T.N.



# 'People around the world are flocking to God. Don't you want join them?'

Last week, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad sent a letter to US President George W Bush. It was the first personal communication from an Iranian president to his US counterpart since the 1979 Islamic revolution. We reproduce extracts from the letter.

**FOR SOME** time now I have been thinking, how one can justify the undeniable contradictions that exist in the international arena which are being constantly debated, especially in political forums and among university students. These have prompted me to discuss some of the contradictions and questions in the hopes that it might bring about an opportunity to redress them.

Can one be a follower of Jesus Christ, feel obliged to respect human rights, present liberalism as a civilization model, announce one's opposition to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and WMDs, make "War and Terror" his slogan, and finally, work towards the establishment of a unified international community, but at the same time, have countries attacked; the lives, reputations and possessions of people destroyed and, on the slight chance of the presence of a few criminals in a village city, or convoy, for example, the entire village, city or convoy set ablaze.

Or because of the possibility of the existence of WMDs in one country, it is occupied, around 100,000 people killed, its water sources, agriculture and industry destroyed, close to 180,000 for-

eign troops put on the ground, the sanctity of private homes of citizens broken, and the country pushed back perhaps 50 years.

At what price? Hundreds of billions of dollars spent from the treasury of one country and certain other countries and tens of thousands of young men and women — as occupation troops — put in harm's way, their hands stained with the blood of others, subjected to so much psychological pressure that everyday some commit suicide and those returning home grapple with all sorts of ailments, while some are killed and their bodies handed to their families.

Later it was revealed that no WMDs existed to begin with.

Of course Saddam was a murderous dictator. But the war was not waged to topple him, the announced goal of the war was to find and destroy weapons of mass destruction. He was toppled



**Are you pleased with the current condition of the world? If billions of dollars spent on security were instead spent on establishment of peace, would there have been an ever increasing global hatred of the American governments?**

dations and the disintegration of families. They are equally dismayed with the fading of care and compassion. The people of the world have no faith in international organizations, because their rights are not advocated by these organisations.

Liberalism and Western style democracy have not been able to help realize the ideals of humanity. Today these two concepts have failed. Those with insight can already hear the sounds of the shattering and fall of the ideology and thoughts of the liberal democratic systems.

We increasingly see that people around the world are flocking towards a main focal point — the Almighty God. Undoubtedly through faith in God and the teachings of the prophets, the people will conquer their problems. My question for you is: "Do you not want to join them?"

Mr President, Whether we like it or not, the world is gravitating towards faith in the Almighty and justice and the will of God will prevail over all things.

Mahmood Ahmadinejad

people or of the occupiers and oppressors?

Did our administration set out to promote rational behaviour, logic, ethics, peace, fulfilling obligations, justice, service to the people, prosperity, progress and respect for human dignity or the force of guns, intimidation, insecurity, disregard for the people, delaying the progress and excellence of other nations, and trample on people's rights?

**AND FINALLY**, they will judge us on whether we remained true to our oath of office — to serve the people, which is our main task, and the traditions of the prophets — or not?

Are you pleased with the current condition of the world? Do you think present policies can continue?

If billions of dollars spent on security, military campaigns and troop movement were instead spent on investment and assistance for poor countries, promotion of health, combating different diseases, education and improvement of mental and physical fitness, assistance to the victims of natural disasters, creation of employment opportunities and production, development projects and poverty alleviation, establishment of peace, mediation between disputing states and distinguishing the flames of racial, ethnic and other conflicts were would the world be today?

Would not your government and people be justifiably proud? Would not your administration's political and economic standing have been stronger? And I am most sorry to say, would there have been an ever increasing global hatred of the American governments?

The people are disgusted with increasing corruption. The people of many countries are angry about the attacks on their cultural found-

peace, security and prosperity for the people or insecurity and unemployment?

Did we intend to establish justice, or did we just support special interest groups and by forcing many people to live in poverty and hardship, make a few people rich and powerful — thus trading the approval of the people and the Almighty with theirs?

Did we defend the rights of the underprivileged or ignore them?

Did we defend the rights of all people around the world or impose wars on them, interfere illegally in their affairs, establish hellish prisons and incarcerate some of them?

Did we bring to the world peace and security or raise the spectre of intimidation and threats?

Did we tell the truth to our nation and others around the world or present an inverted version of it?

Were we on the side of



people around our region and country. But my main power have spe- office, and do not rightly, but their nay recorded in history constantly judged immediate and distant. The people will scribble presidencies. Damage to bring

**Why is a scientific achievement reached in the Middle East portrayed as a threat to the Zionist R&I as one of the scientific achievements of scientific achievements being utilised for military purposes being utilised for military purposes and technology altogether?**

along the way towards another goal, nevertheless the people of the region are happy about it. I point out that throughout the many years of the imposed war on Iran Saddam was supported by the West.

**IT IS** not my intention to pose too many questions but I need to refer to other points as well. Why is it that any technological and scientific achievement reached in the Middle East regions is translated into and portrayed as a threat to the Zionist regime? Is not scientific R&D one of the basic rights of nations?

You are familiar with history. Aside from the Middle Ages, in what other point in history has scientific and technical progress been a crime? Can the possibility of scientific achievements being utilised for military purposes be reason enough to oppose science and technology alto-



together? If such a supposition is true, then all scientific disciplines, including physics, chemistry, mathematics, medicine, engineering, etc. must be opposed.

Lies were told in the Iraqi matter. What was the result? I have no doubt that telling lies is reprehensible in any culture, and you do not like to be lied to.

These are some of the grievances.

# Iran ready for talks, barring Israel

**Nusa Dua (Indonesia), May 13** (Reuters): Iran is ready to talk with any country except Israel but not under threat of force, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said today.

"If they want to resort to the use of force we will not go into dialogue with them," he told journalists attending the Developing Eight (D-8) summit in Nusa Dua on Indonesia's resort island of Bali.

"We are ready to hold dialogue with all countries of the world except for the Israeli regime," Ahmadinejad added.

He also said Tehran would abide by the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in cooperating with other countries.

The Iranian President's comments came as European ministers prepared to discuss a new proposal in Brussels on Monday to end the long-running standoff over Iran's nuclear programme.

The plan includes incentives for cooperation in ending uranium enrichment but also a threat of targeted sanctions if Tehran was seen as obstructive.

The US and western allies suspect Iran's declared civil-ian nuclear energy programme is a smokescreen for a nuclear weapons programme. The UN Security Council is considering a draft resolution by Britain and France and backed by the US that demands Iran suspend uranium enrichment. But Russia and China oppose parts of the text. US state department spokesman Edgar Vasquez, reacting to Ahmadinejad's comments in Indonesia, said Iran must suspend uranium enrichment, cooperate with the IAEA, and return to good-faith negotiations.

By all appearances up to now they only seem to engage in delaying and stalling while going down the road of acquiring a nuclear weapon," he said.

Ahmadinejad sent a letter earlier this month to President George W. Bush which some interpreted as an overture to ease the nuclear dispute. But he said today the letter was not related to Iran's nuclear programme.

"This letter was meant to open a new horizon for the politicians in the world," Ahmadinejad said at a news conference after the summit of

Muslim-majority nations. Shortly before he spoke, the D-8 issued the summit's closing declaration, which made no direct reference to Iran's nuclear programme or the dispute over it. The declaration did make a general endorsement of peaceful development of nuclear energy.

However, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said he had told his Iranian counterpart directly "that a continued cooperation should be made between Iran and IAEA to have a peaceful, just solution" to the dispute.

Muslim-majority nations.

By all appearances up to

The Iranian President's

The plan includes incentives

He also said Tehran would



President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Nusa Dua, Indonesia. (Reuters)

# Move for unity Government in Iraq faces fresh hurdle

30 killed in violence; double suicide bombing near Baghdad airport

**BAGHDAD:** Efforts to form a new national unity government in Iraq stumbled on Sunday as a member of an influential Shia alliance bloc threatened to unilaterally form the new government if rival groups did not scale back their demands. Sunnis shot back with a threat to withdraw entirely from the political process.

As the 275-member Parliament convened on Sunday, Bahaa al-Araji, a lawmaker loyal to the radical anti-American Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, set a deadline of two days before the 130 alliance deputies act unilaterally.

Sunni lawmakers shot back with their own threats, with one member of the three-party Sunni Arab coalition that holds 44 seats in Parliament threatening to walk out of the talks and the government.

## Upsurge in violence

More than 30 persons were killed in a spate of attacks on Sunday, including 14 dead in a double suicide bombing near Baghdad airport, Iraqi and U.S. security officials said.

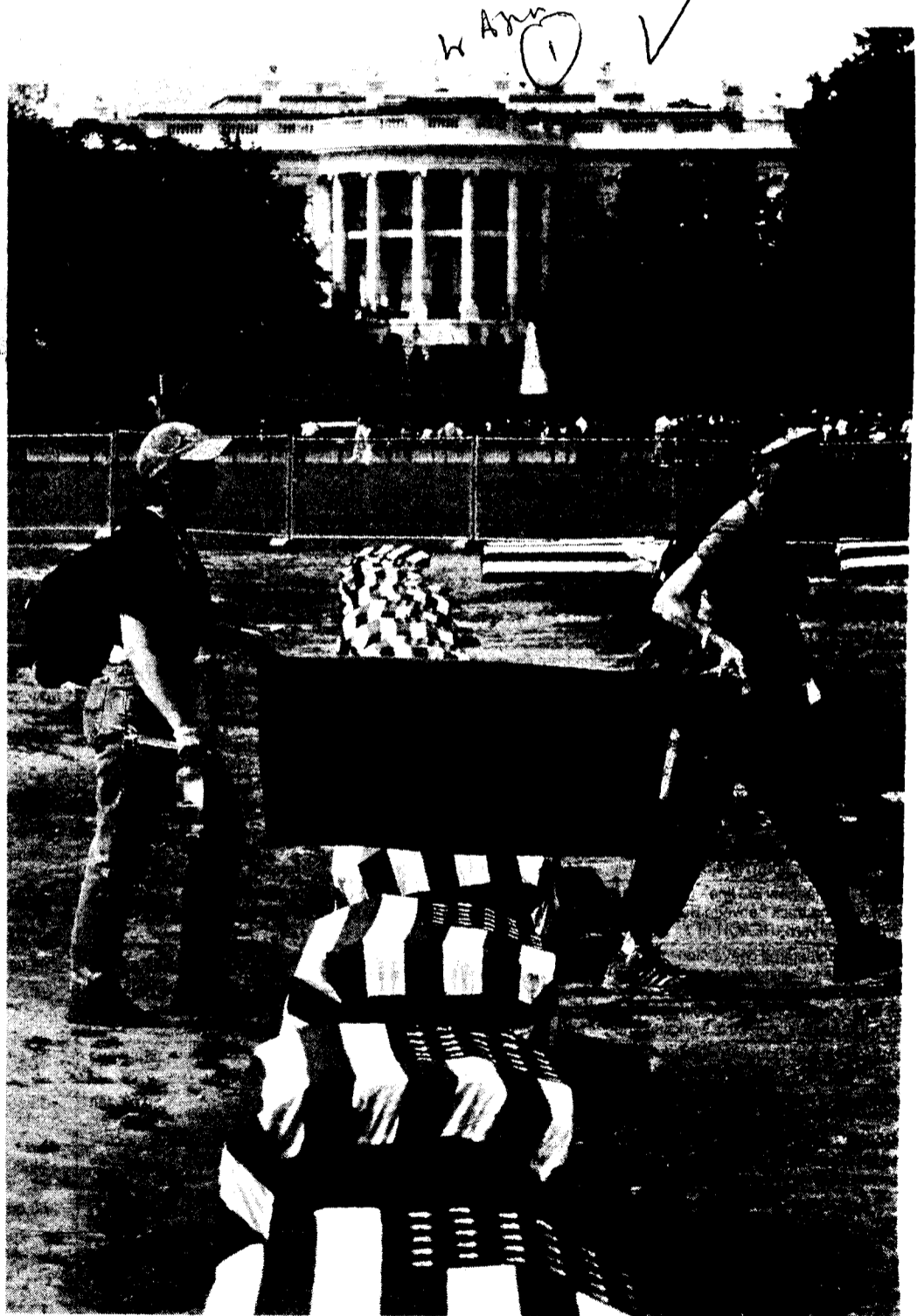
Two British soldiers were killed and one other wounded in a roadside bombing in the southern port city of Basra on Saturday, the Defence Ministry in London said.

Fourteen Iraqis were killed and six wounded in the two suicide car bombings near a U.S. base close to Baghdad international airport.

Two vehicles packed with explosives were detonated in a parking lot near a Victory Base checkpoint.

Outside the city of Baquba, militants late on Saturday destroyed at least two small shrines of local Shia holy figures, the Abdullah bin Ali shrine in the village of Wajhiya and the Tamim shrine, both in mixed Sunni-Shia areas.

In the restive Sunni city of Samarra, central Iraq, U.S. and Iraqi army sweeps over the past few days rounded up more than 200 people for questioning in a counter-militancy operation named Iron Triangle, the U.S. military said. — AP, AFP



**AGAINST WAR:** Anti-war protesters march amid mock coffins placed outside the White House in Washington on Saturday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

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# IRAN | Military may be involved in Tehran's nuclear enrichment

## 'No stopping peaceful N-work'

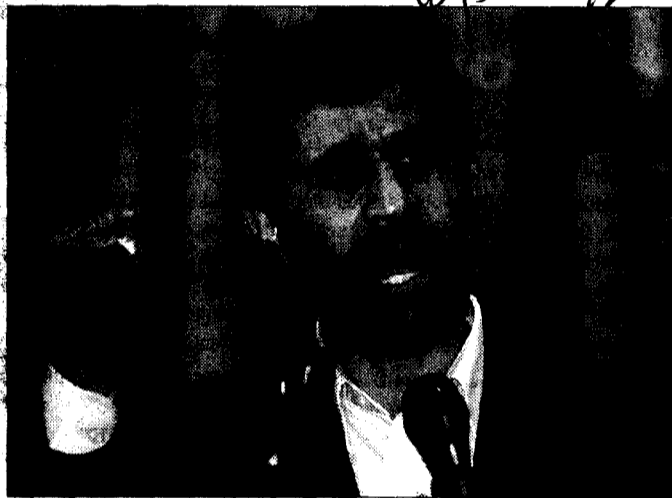
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AGENCIES

TEHRAN, MAY 14

**I**RAN said on Sunday it would reject any demand to stop what it calls peaceful nuclear work, a day before European foreign ministers discuss incentives and penalties designed to rein in Tehran's atomic ambitions.

EU foreign ministers will meet on Monday to work out technical, trade and political sweeteners that would be offered to Iran in exchange for allaying Western fears it is seeking to produce an atom bomb, notably by halting uranium enrichment.



Ahmadinejad stands firm on not halting uranium enrichment. AP

11/10/05

"Any proposal that obliges us to stop peaceful (nuclear) activities would not have value and would not be valid," Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said in a speech broadcast on state television. He accused the Europeans of living in a "colonialist world" and said Tehran would not accept decisions reached in Brussels.

Meanwhile finding of uranium residue at a military facility, enriched to a degree higher than required for civilian needs, indicated the involvement of the Defence establishment in Iran's nuclear programme, a report claimed today. The residue was found at a northern Tehran facility.

15 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

# Defiant Saddam rejects report

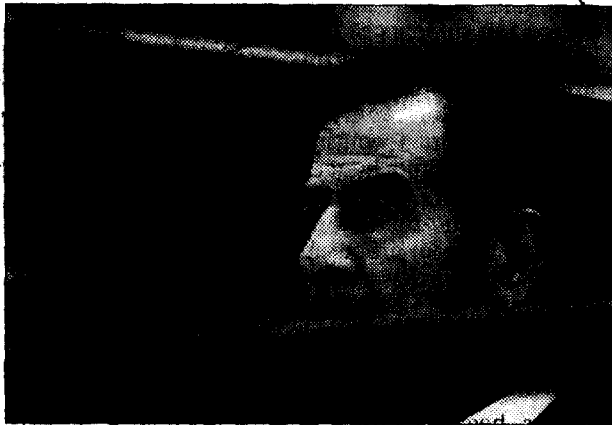
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Associated Press

BAGHDAD, May 15: The chief judge formally charged Saddam Hussein today with crimes against humanity, including torture of women and children, murder and the illegal arrest of 399 people in a crackdown against Shi'ites in the 1980s. A defiant Saddam refused to enter a plea.

Saddam, who was alone in the defendants' pen as the charges were read, stood holding a copy of the *Quran* and insisted he was still Iraq's president, saying he did not recognise the court. "Your honour, you gave a long report. That report can't be summed up by saying guilty or not," Saddam, dressed in a black suit, said after chief judge Raouf Abdel-Rahman read the charges list and asked for a plea.

"I do not recognise the collaborators that they brought to appoint a court and put forward a law with retroactive effect against the head of state, who is protected by the constitution and the law," he said.



Saddam Hussein during his trial in Baghdad. ■ AFP

Abdel-Rahman entered a plea of not guilty for Saddam. With the reading of charges, the trial, which began on 19 October enters a new phase, with the defence presenting its case. After hearing from five defence witnesses in the five-hour session, the court adjourned until tomorrow.

Saddam and seven former members of his regime are on trial over a crackdown against residents of the town of Dujail, and they face a possible execution by hanging if found guilty.

## Iraq unrest

US forces killed more than 40 insurgents, including a known Al-Qaida operative, in five raids in south of Baghdad, and militants downed a US helicopter during the fighting, killing the two soldiers aboard, US command said today. Their deaths, along with three other soldiers and two Marines, brought the weekend toll to seven US service members. In a report, Iraqi authorities today released 418 detainees initially arrested on suspicion of aiding or participating in insurgency.

16 MAY 2006

THE STATESMAN

# STANDOFF | US has no intention of holding direct talks with Tehran EU to give Iran 'bold' offer

MARK JOHN

BRUSSELS, MAY 15

**T**HE European Union pledged on Monday to make Iran a generous offer of technology, economic and other incentives but stressed Tehran must comply first with international demands to halt sensitive nuclear activities.

The 25-member bloc wants to present Iran with a stark choice of accepting the offer, expected to be delivered around the end of the month, or risk seeing international support grow for a UN resolution that would pave the way for possible sanctions.

"It will be a generous package, a bold package that will contain issues related to nuclear, economic matters and maybe if necessary security matters," EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana told reporters before a meeting of EU foreign ministers.

A draft statement for Monday's EU meeting obtained by Reuters stated the EU could help Tehran develop "a safe, sustainable and proliferation-proof civilian nuclear programme" while stipulating it halt all enrichment activities on its soil.



British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett speaks with the media at the EU Council building in Brussels on Monday. AP

"If they (the Iranians) do come back into compliance, people will work hard to help them achieve what they really need, or say they need, which is access to civil nuclear power," said British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Sunday Iran would not accept any EU offer if it included a demand that Tehran stop what he called peaceful nuclear activities.

Solana gave no details of the package but said the EU wanted to present it to Iran in the coming weeks simultaneously with the approval of a UN resolution calling on Tehran to halt enrichment of uranium or face consequences. Efforts to agree a UN resolution last week stalled in the UN Security Council amid opposition from Russia and China.

Iran, the world's fourth-largest oil exporter, insists its

nuclear plans are purely to make electricity. It affirmed at the weekend it would reject any demand to stop what it calls peaceful nuclear work.

Solana said Tehran's affirmations that it would reject any demand to stop peaceful nuclear work were a misunderstanding of EU policy. "We have said over and over again that we have nothing against Iran having nuclear capabilities if they are strictly devoted to the production of energy," he said. But Iranian demands to be allowed to conduct enrichment for research purposes were still "something that at the moment we (the EU) cannot accept," he said.

The United States made clear on Sunday it had no intention of holding direct talks with Iran on the nuclear issue despite a letter to President George W Bush last week from Ahmadinejad—the first direct communication between the two countries' leaders for more than two decades. Germany has called publicly for Washington to engage Iran directly. France and Britain, the other two major EU powers, have not joined the call publicly. —Reuters

16 MAY 2006

IRAN EXPANSION

# Breaking the Iran nuclear impasse

Praful Bidwai

IRAN'S PRESIDENT Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has done something no Iranian leader has done since the Islamic Revolution of 27 years ago. He wrote a letter to the President of the United States proposing "new solutions" to "international problems and the current fragile situation of the world." This is arguably the cleanest break anyone has attempted with the all-too-familiar pattern of exchange of hostile rhetoric between the two nations, which have long demonised each other either as the "Great Satan" or as a part of the "Axis of Evil." The break is even more direct and radical than reformist President Mohammad Khatami's abortive call for a "Dialogue Among Civilisations" at the U.N. General Assembly in 2000.

There are two ways of looking at Mr. Ahmadinejad's extraordinary move. One, it's a limited, probably insincere, manoeuvre to secure a temporary reprieve for Iran as it comes under intense pressure at the Security Council thanks to a U.S.-backed resolution moved by Germany, France, and Britain, which asks Iran to halt uranium enrichment on pain of sanctions. In this view, Iran's maximal, and cynical, objective is to drive a wedge between key members of the Council as the European Union prepares a new "package of incentives" to dissuade it from enriching uranium.

Or two, it's a serious, welcome, overture towards Washington and an invitation to a wide-ranging dialogue that could soothe longstanding and rapidly escalating tensions between the two countries. It deserves a response in good faith.

Hard-nosed policy makers in Washington are likely to take the first view. Indeed, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has already dismissed the 18-page letter as too insubstantial to provide a "new opening" for a dialogue on the nuclear issue.

However, from within Teheran, which this writer recently visited, it is the second view that makes more sense. The letter is part of the signals Iran is sending out in favour of dialogue, negotiation, and reconciliation. Among these is a recent statement by the head of the Supreme National Security Council, Hasan Rowhani, that

After Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's landmark letter to George W. Bush, many in Teheran expect more overtures favouring a diplomatic solution. India must strongly back these moves, not passively tail Washington's hardline agendas.

Iran would even be prepared to suspend uranium enrichment for a short time. No less important is the recent visit to the U.S. of a deputy of Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larjani, allegedly for "personal" reasons. Iran has also agreed to talk to U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad to help stabilise the Iraq situation — a testimony to its cooperative attitude.

A number of security and foreign policy experts whom I met confirm the assessment that Iran is keen on talks, which could lead to a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue. For instance, Professor Nasser Hadian-Jazy, an international relations specialist at the University of Teheran, said: "Most Iranian policy-makers believe that the gap between what Teheran wants and what Western pragmatists will concede on the nuclear issue is not unbridgeable. They would certainly like to avoid a confrontation, with its prohibitively high costs. Iranian policy makers are realistic enough to try to negotiate a compromise."

Others, who insisted on anonymity, believe Iran is pursuing a two-pronged strategy: taking a hardline, "principled" position insisting on Iran's "inalienable" right under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to peaceful uses of nuclear energy; and simultaneously, adopting a "soft" approach centred on diplomacy. According to them, Mr. Ahmadinejad's announcement a month ago of Iran's success in enriching uranium to reactor grade level is part of that strategy: a signal that "Iran has achieved what it can, and is now prepared for talks," albeit from a position of strength.

The logic of this view, shared by a cross section of the moderate or liberal intelligentsia, is as follows: Iran's policy makers are acutely

aware that pursuit and acquisition of nuclear weapons is likely to make Iran more vulnerable and insecure in the medium and long term. It will "blunt" Iran's conventional edge vis-à-vis its potential adversaries in the region. It is likely to produce a backlash, by inviting hostility from Israel and pushing the smaller regional states towards Washington.

Nuclear weapons pursuit will increase the likelihood of regional nuclear proliferation to non-state actors such as Al-Qaeda, which — contrary to misperceptions about a "natural affinity" between Islamicist political currents — are unfavourably disposed towards Iran for sectarian ideological reasons. Above all, it would heighten the risk of coercive manoeuvres by the U.S., including military attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities, for which elaborate plans exist, including, most dangerously, the use of tactical nuclear weapons.

## The consensus

There is a broad consensus in Iran that the country should acquire a civilian nuclear capability, not nuclear weapons, indeed not even a nuclear weapons capability. The image of young Iranians joyfully dancing in the streets after the April 11 announcement of uranium enrichment as an index of popular sentiment is highly misleading. Like VHP activists celebrating India's Pokharan-II blasts, it represents a minority viewpoint. There is little evidence that the mass of the people, who labour under an unemployment rate of 12 per cent and rising inflation, have any enthusiasm for a nuclear weapons capability. The intelligentsia certainly has none.

In private conversations, many social scientists, strategic experts, teachers, artists, and so-

cial activists pour scorn on the idea that Iran should nurture nuclear weapons ambitions. Some cite Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's view that nuclear weapons are "un-Islamic." A good number are sceptical of the government's claimed nuclear prowess and aware of the assessment by independent experts that Iran is a long way away from mastering industrial scale uranium enrichment.

Iran currently has just 164 centrifuges in a pilot scale plant — when several thousands are needed to produce even reactor grade uranium in significant quantities. Some independent nuclear experts believe that the uranium hexafluoride conversion facility at Isfahan does not generate gas of the requisite purity. Iran, then, is probably five to 10 years away from acquiring a capability to make a crude first generation fission bomb.

The present moment presents an excellent opportunity to negotiate a nuclear restraint agreement with Iran, under which it stays within the Non-Proliferation Treaty framework, and performs pilot scale enrichment under strict international supervision, and within the constraints of the intrusive Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

There is an urgent need to follow up on the "Russian formula" of taking Iran's uranium hexafluoride outside the country, enriching it, and returning it for use in power reactors — with the rider that Iranian personnel are fully involved in the process. Iran has had an unpleasant experience with Eurodif, a facility in France, in which it holds 10 per cent equity, but to which it has no access. It cannot accept a Russian Eurodif-II. Nor can it accept the EU's reported new condition that it must completely stop enrichment — and give up a right available to it under an international treaty (the NPT).

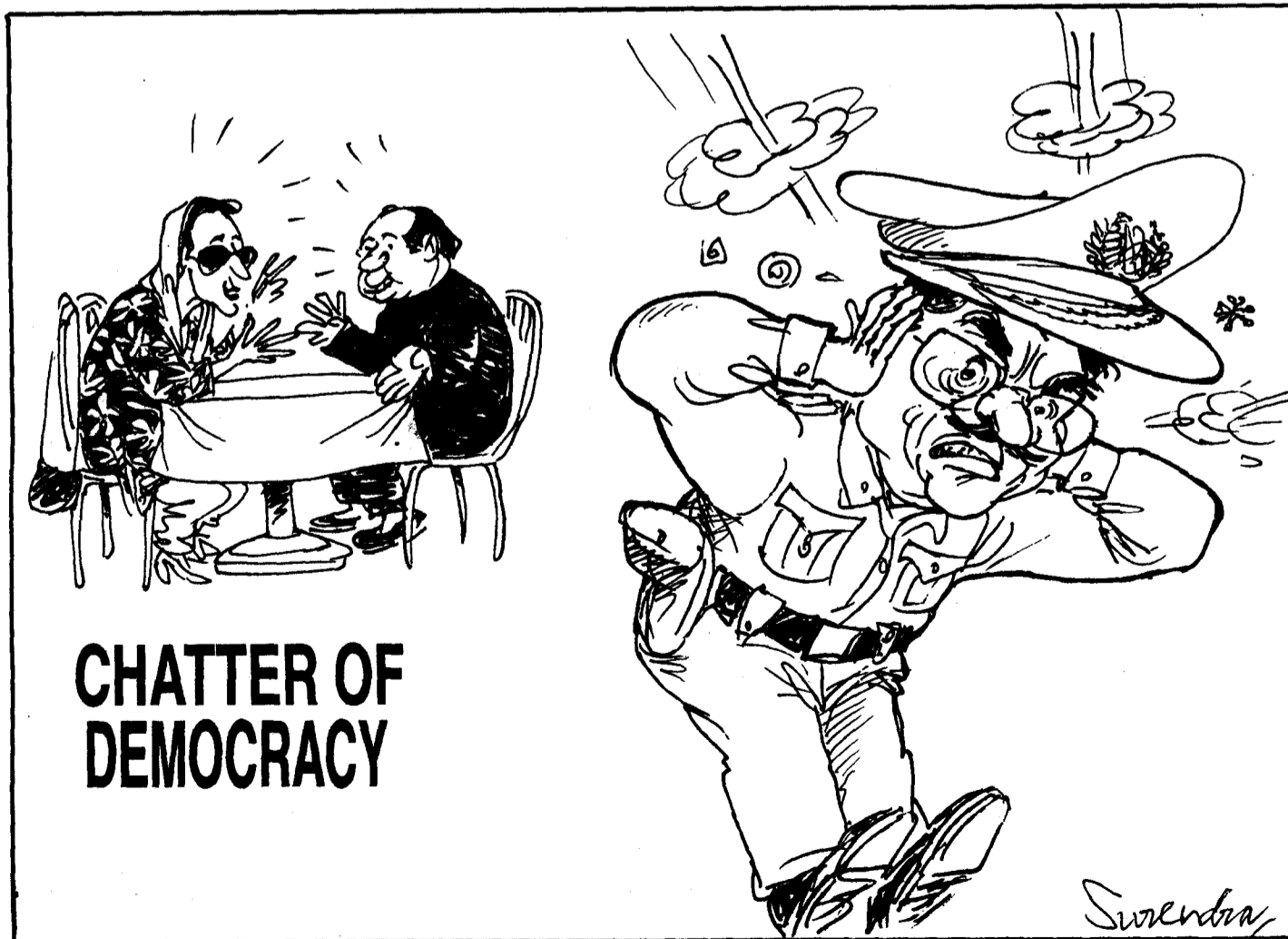
In return, the Western powers should offer both "security" guarantees to Iran, including a no-aggression assurance and normalisation of relations, and financial assistance and access to technology for enhancing oil and gas production. (Currently, Iran's gas production is hamstrung by lack of such access.) It is in the world's — and Washington's — own interest that Iran is brought into the ambit of non-discriminatory arrangements and allowed to conduct nuclear activities with strict safeguards to prevent diversion of nuclear material to military uses.

The West, in particular, the U.S., faces a critical test. If it insists on seeing Iran as an irredentist "revolutionary" power and a "rogue" state bent upon altering the strategic political status quo, it will have missed a crucial and fundamental aspect of Teheran's foreign and security policy posture: namely, Iran is not a territorially revisionist state; rather, it is *status quo*-ist and eager to normalise relations with the rest of the world. The popular grudge is that the U.S. ignores this urge and seems bent upon cornering and isolating Iran. The danger is that such an approach will tend to rally the population behind the nuclear hawks, who are still a minority within the Establishment.

This confronts India with a choice: it can obsequiously follow the U.S., as it did in two recent IAEA votes, and become complicit in Iran's isolation and its targeting for coercion — with all its dreadful consequences for West Asia's stability. Or India can play a pro-active independent role in keeping with its past orientation by calling for direct Washington-Teheran talks, as well as by advocating multilateral approaches to the nuclear crisis. One of these would be to get the U.N. General Assembly to make a reference to the International Court of Justice for its advisory opinion on Iran's rights and obligations under the NPT. This should clarify that Iran does have a right to uranium enrichment for peaceful purposes and elucidate the conditions under which the right is to be exercised.

India enjoys a fund of goodwill in Iran — despite its recent slide towards the U.S. and the nuclear deal with Washington. This goodwill is still palpable. India can press its advantage by striking out for non-coercive diplomacy and negotiation. That is the best way of contributing to a less strife-torn, insecure, and unstable West Asia, and a more peaceful and harmonious world.

## CARTOONSCAPE



# Iran offers EU a deal in turnaround

## Offers Incentives In Return For Right To Enrich Uranium

**Teheran:** In a surprising turnabout, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Wednesday that Teheran was willing to offer strong economic incentives to the European Union in return recognition of Iran's right to enrich uranium.

"We are prepared to offer economic incentives to Europe in return for recognising our right (to enrich uranium)," Hamid Reza Asefi was quoted by state-run radio as saying. "Iran's 70-million population market is a good incentive for Europe," the radio quoted Asefi as saying.

European countries now have access to the Iranian market, but Teheran has in recent years turned more frequently to Russia and China for trade deals.

Earlier, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had ruled out any idea of halting nuclear fuel work in return for EU incentives, saying the Europeans were offering "candy for gold".

Britain, France and Germany, the European Union's three biggest powers, plan to offer Iran a light-water reactor as part of a package to induce Teheran to freeze a uranium enrichment programme that the West suspects has military dimensions.

"They say we want to give Iranians incentives but they

think they are dealing with a four-year-old, telling him they will give him candies or walnuts and take gold from him in return," Ahmadinejad told a crowd in the central city of Arak.

Arak is the site of a heavy-water nuclear reactor that Iran is building despite opposition from Western countries concerned that the plant's plutonium by-product could be used in warheads.

"Iran will not accept any suspension or freeze (of nuclear work)," Ahmadinejad said in a speech that was televised live. The EU seeks an end to Iran's nuclear fuel activities as the only credible guarantee that it is not making atomic weapons. Teheran insists it needs the fuel only for power stations.

"We trusted you three years ago and accepted suspension but unfortunately this proved to be a bitter experience in Iranian history. We will not be bitten by the same snake twice," Ahmadinejad said of European diplomacy.

Iran suspended uranium enrichment work in 2003 as a goodwill gesture while it tried to forge a diplomatic solution to the stand-off in talks with France, Germany and Britain. But the diplomacy failed and Iran resumed work on atomic fuel in August last year. AGENCIES



# Iraqi Parliament approves Cabinet; differences over portfolios remain

Prime Minister to set timetable for transfer of security mission

Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** Iraq's Parliament has approved a new Government, but differences among members still persist over candidates who would head the Ministries of National Security, Interior and Defence.

The Government has representatives from the country's majority Shia, Sunni and Kurdish communities.

However, the tussle for power, especially between the Shia and Sunni communities, has been reflected in the difficulties in finding suitable candidates for Ministries dealing with National Security.

Prior to Iraq's December 2005 elections, the Shia group, Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) dominated the Interior Ministry, amid allegations that members of its militia had been inducted in large numbers in the security forces. Sunni groups accused the Interior Ministry of running death squads that operated on sectarian lines.

## Iran association

The SCIRI has had a close association with Iran and the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, had also opposed the persistence of SCIRI's domination in the Interior Ministry.

With an agreement not in sight, Iraq's new Prime Minister, Nouri al Maliki, a Shia, will be in charge of the Interior Ministry while Salam al-Zaubai, a Sunni, will run Defence.

The dissonance in the new Parliament became apparent when Saleh-al-Mutlaq, the leader of a key Sunni party staged a walkout after it was announced that a final decision on the candidates for the security ministries had been deferred.

Earlier, the leader of the Dialogue party, a smaller Sunni faction, had also expressed his dissatisfaction at the negotiations, which had led to the allocation of portfolios.

During the course of the swearing-in ceremony, the 275-member Parliament approved each Cabinet Minister that Mr.



**TAKING THE REINS:** Iraq's new Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (left) listens along with his Deputy Barham Saleh (centre) as acting Defence Minister Salam al-Zaubai speaks during the presentation of the Cabinet to Parliament in Baghdad on Saturday. - PHOTO: AFP

Al Maliki proposed, by a show of hands. Among the posts that have been allotted, Hoshiyar Zabari, a Kurd has got the Foreign Ministry - a position he has held since 2003. The crucial Oil Ministry has gone to Hussain al-Shahristani, a Shia, who was the former deputy parliamentary Speaker.

The approval of the new Gov-

ernment comes in the wake of spiralling violence that has taken a heavy toll of lives. Shortly before Parliament convened, at least 19 persons were killed and 58 wounded in a bombing, in an area of Baghdad where the Shias dominate.

In another incident, a suicide bomber attacked a police station in the western border town of Al

Qaim, killing at least five persons and injuring 10.

During his first address to Parliament, Mr. Al-Maliki said that restoration of stability and security would be his top priority. He said that he would set "an objective timetable to transfer the full security mission to Iraqi forces, ending the mission of the multinational forces."

21 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

# War or peace?

## Middle East Great Game Approaching Climax

Handwritten notes: "Handwritten" with a circled 'D', "5.8", and "2/15".

The dispute between Iran and the United States is progressing along a predicted course. A final resolution, whether violent or peaceful, does not appear too far away. To appreciate the factors influencing the dispute it would be helpful, even at the risk of repeating past formulations, to outline some facts and conjectures.

Factor One: America and Iran have been holding quiet talks ever since the Iraq invasion started. Overtly there is loud bluster on the nuclear issue. Covertly there are quiet talks on the future of Iraq. Historically there has been a love-hate relationship between Iran and Israel. America has used Israel as the conduit for dealing with Iran. During the Iran-Contras deal in President Reagan's time it was Israel that passed on US funds to Iran for procuring arms against Iraq. It should be noted that despite Iran's ranting against Israel, there is no record of Iranian anti-Semitism against Tehran's Jewish community.

### Islamic agenda

Factor Two: After Egypt's pro-Nazi Muslim Brotherhood waned, at the end of World War II, the first radical pan-Islamic movement started under Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. Although a Shiite himself, Khomeini attempted to unify all Muslims under an Islamic agenda which questioned the basic assumptions of western society. But with the death of Khomeini and the emergence of Osama bin Laden this leadership passed into the hands of the Wahabi Sunnis of Saudi Arabia.

The recent anti-Zionist posturing of President Ahmadinejad might, then, be reckoned in this context. Ahmadinejad seeks to regain the leadership of pan-Islam for the Shiites. He appears to be succeeding. While Osama lurks around the Pakistan-Afghanistan border releasing an occasional tape, Ahmadinejad has moved to centre stage with his anti-Israel rhetoric and his nuclear programme. He has become today the cynosure of global attention. Through brinkmanship both America and Iran are giving sleepless nights to the world community.

Factor Three: It was Tehran that enlightened world opinion about wider issues

*The author is a veteran journalist and cartoonist*

### Rajinder Puri

being sorted out between US and Iran than just the nuclear issue. Iran announced that it was prepared to discuss Iraq peace with America.

Obviously, this could not have been an abrupt introduction in the negotiation agenda. It indicated that quiet talks on the subject

are also advertised. On March 5th this year Reza Pahlavi, the late Shah of Iran's son, gave an interview to the journal *Human Events*. He opposed both an Iranian nuclear weapon and a US military intervention. He said that in the next two to three months he would finalise prepara-



**It should be noted that despite Iran's ranting against Israel, there is no record of Iranian anti-Semitism against Tehran's Jewish community**

had already been under way. Something must have occurred in those talks to encourage Iran to bring the item out in the open. This was followed by President Ahmadinejad's 18-page letter to President Bush. It was the first letter in 27 years from an Iranian President to the US President. This letter seemed to invite a comprehensive dialogue on all differences dividing Islam and the West. It targeted the Christian Right constituency that has traditionally supported President Bush. It repeatedly invoked God, Jesus and Christian values.

Factor Four: While the US-Iranian nuclear dispute continues, Russia, China and Europe have intervened in different ways and at different times to avert a collision. Current efforts to take Iran's nuclear issue out of the UN Security Council are afoot. Meanwhile both the US and Iran have prepared contingency plans in case peace talks fail. The US frequently leaks information about its plans to destroy Iran's nuclear installations. But that is not all. To reinforce this threat the plans for a regime change

for a movement to overthrow Iran's Islamic regime. Though he lives in exile in the US, Pahlavi claims to be in touch with elements in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and other activists in Iran who have pledged him support. After his proposed revolution Pahlavi would be willing to become a constitutional monarch if offered that role. He said: "I'm ready to serve in that capacity if the people so choose, it would be my greatest honour."

While America makes such veiled threats, Iran is not idle. It has prepared a move that could destroy the dollar and US economy. It has finalised preparations to open the Iranian International Oil Bourse (IOB) on the island nation of Kish. It will offer oil in euros. That would be a real threat to the US dollar. According to Forbes, the IOB is ready for trading and could open in weeks. But Reuters, basing itself on statements of President Ahmadinejad, reported it will open only after two months.

On 30 April Al-Jazeera reported that many nations, including China

and India, would back IOB. Bill Gates, George Soros and Warren Buffet, a well-known Rothschild banker, believe that if IOB operates it could spell doom for the US economy. Today America's economy needs to borrow \$2 billion a day just to stay afloat. It is heavily reliant on its petrodollar reserve status. Since all international oil transactions are presently in US dollars, more than two-thirds of all central bank reserves are in dollars. This creates a constant demand for dollars despite America's vulnerable economy. If and when IOB comes into operation, this arrangement could collapse.

So, will America and Iran settle peacefully or plunge the world into crisis? There is some hope on the nuclear dispute. Last week Mr Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), pointed out that Iran was surrounded by nuclear nations. He named Russia, Israel and Pakistan. He said: "There is a sense of insecurity. When you talk about the Iranian issue, the only solution is a package that should inter alia include security issues". Did this hint credible guarantees to Iran regarding Israel?

### Iraq's future

But what of Iraq's future? Iraq was ruled by a Sunni minority for years. Now the majority Shiites and the Kurds demand fair shares. Last weekend the Iraqi parliament approved at long last a cabinet. Will it succeed in keeping Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds united? Or will Iraq eventually divide into three separate nations? How are distortions left behind by imperialism to be resolved? By creating pluralist democratic societies accommodating all groups? Or by redrawing maps to protect ethnic and cultural identities? The latter option would create upheavals. Protesting Kurds abound in Iraq, Iran and Turkey. This debate affects the future of South Asia. Kashmiris are contiguously located in India and Pakistan, Pashtuns in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Tamils in Sri Lanka and India, Bengalis in Bangladesh and India, Punjabis in India and Pakistan.

With time this issue will gain urgency. How it is settled will determine the shape of the new world order. That is what America and Iran are struggling to resolve.

# 'Iran seeks direct talks with the US over nuclear programme'

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 25 May 2006

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
 WASHINGTON, MAY 24

**S**OFTENING its stance, Iran has requested, through intermediaries, direct talks with the United States over its nuclear programme, according to American officials and foreign diplomats. The request follows Iran President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent letter to President George W Bush.

Senior Iranian officials have asked a multitude of intermediaries to pass word to Washington making clear their desire for direct talks, Saeed Laylaz, a former government official and prominent analyst in Tehran, told the *Washington Post*. He said Ali Larjani, chairman of Iran's supreme National Security Council, passed the message to the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, who arrived in Washington Tuesday for talks with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice



**Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with Revolutionary Guards commander Rahim Safavi in Khorramshahr. Reuters**

and National Security Adviser Stephen J Hadley.

Iranian officials made similar requests through Indonesia, Kuwait and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Laylaz said. American intelligence analysts also say Larjani's urgent requests for meetings with senior officials in France and Germany appear to be part of a bid for dia-

logue with Washington.

"They've been desperate to do it," said a European diplomat in Tehran. "The eagerness for talks demonstrates a profound change in Iran's political orthodoxy, emphatically erasing a taboo against contact with Washington that has both defined and confined Tehran's public foreign policy for more than a quarter-century," the

## Iran test-fires missile as Israel, US discuss nuclear issue

TEL AVIV: Iran test-fired a long-range missile, Israeli Defence officials said today, as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and US President George W Bush were expressing concern over Iran's nuclear programme.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to talk to reporters, said the missile was a Shihab-3 with a range of 1,500 kilometres, the same type of missile that has been test-fired several times in the past.

Olmert mentioned Iranian missiles of that range in a news conference in Washington after meeting Bush, noting that it would give Iran the ability to strike any point in Europe as well as Israel. Olmert said it is not too late to stop the Iranian programme. "This is a moment of truth," he said.

Iran has said it is enriching uranium, a key part of producing nuclear weapons, but insists that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes. At the joint news conference, Bush said Iran had turned down an offer from the West to supply it with fuel for nuclear power reactors, but insisted on enriching its own uranium, raising concerns that its goal was to manufacture nuclear weapons. Bush and Olmert both said Iran must be prevented from acquiring nuclear weapons. Bush said that diplomatic means must be exhausted, implying that a military option has not been ruled out. —AP

officials were quoted as saying.

Though the Tehran government in the past has routinely jailed its citizens on charges of contact with the US, Ahmadinejad's May 8 letter was implicitly endorsed by Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. "You know, two months ago no-

body would believe that

Khamenei and Ahmadinejad together would be trying to get George W Bush to begin negotiations," Laylaz said. "This is a sign of changing strategy. They realise the situation is dangerous and they should not waste time, that they should reach out."

# Iran for closer ties with Pakistan

Nirupama Subramanian

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan has played host to three Iranian delegations in the last five days, with Iranian Vice-President Parivz Davoudi, the latest to arrive on Thursday.

During his two-day visit, Mr. Davoudi is expected to discuss political and economic issues with Pakistani leaders, including the U.S.-Iran standoff on the nuclear issue.

He is expected to meet President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz.

## Reaffirms support

Pakistan on Thursday reaffirmed its support for resolution of the nuclear issue through dialogue.

In discussions with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, who arrived on Wednesday, Mr. Aziz said his Government recognised Iran's right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, according to the Pakistan Government Web site. Mr. Mottaki was here for the ministerial meeting of

the Pakistan-Iran Joint Commission for economic and trade relations, a day after the two countries and India held two days of talks on the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline.

The talks failed to break the impasse on the pricing issue. The next meeting will take place in India in July.

Mr. Aziz told Mr. Mottaki that Pakistan was pursuing the project keeping in view its national interest.

Both leaders discussed the possibilities for expanding economic and trade relations.

He said Pakistan would build "brotherly relations" with Iran based on religious, cultural, political, historical and economic ties, and a shared interest in regional peace.

The Iranian Minister later said his Government was seeking a broad-based relationship with Pakistan.

In an interview to Pakistan Television, he said his country wanted a "comprehensive relationship with Pakistan including security co-operation."

## Nepal, Maoists talks today

Ameet Dhakal

**KATHMANDU:** The Government and the Maoists will begin a preliminary round of dialogue on Friday. The Government on Thursday added two more members to its talks team.

Minister for Tourism Pradeep Gyawali and Minister for Labour and Transport Management Ramesh Lekhak are included in the team to be headed by Home

Minister Krrishna Prasad Sitaula. Politburo member Krishna Bahadur Mahara will lead the three-member Maoist team.

Asked if talks would commence on Friday, a senior Cabinet minister told *The Hindu*: "We will finish some remaining business in the morning and begin talks in the evening. That's 95 per cent sure."

The Cabinet also decided to release all the Maoist rebels.

26 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

# U.S. plotting tensions: Iran

## Teheran takes steps to maintain social cohesion

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: Iran has begun to take urgent steps to maintain social cohesion, as tensions with United States over its nuclear programme show no signs of abating.

Iran has been alarmed by recent protests by a section of its Azeri population, following the publication of a cartoon in the state-run Persian daily, *Iran*, which seemed to ridicule the ethnic group. Surprisingly, there were no protests for nearly a week following the publication of the cartoon in the children's section of the daily.

Hundreds of Azeris took to the streets in the northwestern city of Tabriz. The demonstrators reportedly smashed windows at the office of the provincial Governor.

### Largest minority

The Azeris are Iran's largest minority and comprise nearly one fourth of the 70 million population. Many of them reside in an area that shares border with oil-rich Azerbaijan, which has been improving its relationship with the U.S. recently.

The Government shut down the daily and arrested the cartoonist and the editor-in-chief of the newspaper.

Analysts point out the action may have nothing to do with curbing press freedom.

On the contrary some publications, which have been consistently critical of the establishment, have not been closed down after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad assumed the presidency.

At a rally in Khorramshahr, Mr. Ahmadinejad blamed the U.S. of "hatching plots" against Iran.

"Today, they [the U.S. and its allies] are hatching plots. They want to pro-

voke differences, divisions, disappointment ... to prevent the Iranian nation from achieving all of its rights."

Interior Minister Mostaf Pourmohammadi said on Tuesday miscreants were deliberately attempting to undermine social harmony.

"Some are misusing the situation. Others outside borders are trying to propagate protests through their satellite channels," he said in reference to Opposition television channels, which operate from the U.S. In February, the U.S. State Department had sought \$75 millions of additional funding for "democracy promotion" work in Iran.

Iranian authorities have also been highly concerned about the acts of violence in its Kuzestan province. Unlike the rest of Iran, the area has a majority Arab population.

Besides, most of Iran's oil reserves are located in this region, which borders Iraq.

Six persons were killed and 46 wounded in a blast on January 24, for which an Iranian Arab group claimed responsibility.

Iran had blamed Britain, which has its troops deployed in nearby Basra, in Iraq, and the U.S. for the incident. Khorramshahr, which Mr. Ahmadinejad visited on Wednesday, is located in Kuzestan.

Calling for national unity, the former President, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, on Wednesday stressed that Iran was being "threatened more than ever before."

• Alarmed at protests by minority Azeris

• Cartoon provokes controversy

26 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

# Iran says willing to negotiate on some centrifuges

Handwritten: H. Asefi  
Iran

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AGENCIES

PUTRAJAYA/TEHRAN, MAY 30

IRAN said today it had told Britain, Germany and France that it was ready to resume negotiations to try to resolve a stand-off with the West over its nuclear programme.

"We express our readiness for resumption of negotiations with EU 3 in Tehran. Ambassadors of those countries have been informed about our position," Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki told reporters. He was speaking in Malaysia after attending a meeting of Non-Aligned states, which issued a statement of support for Iran in its stand-off with the EU and the US and warned against any attack on Iranian nuclear facilities.

Earlier today Iran had said it was willing to negotiate the number of uranium-enriching centrifuges it uses for research, but stressed it would not stop running the devices entirely as the UN Security



Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki at the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement in Putrajaya, Malaysia, on Tuesday. NAM backed Iran in its nuclear stand-off with the United States. AP

Council has called for.

The comments by Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi were the clearest sign so far that Iran could curb some centrifuge work to try to defuse a stand-off which could lead to sanctions or even military action against the Islamic Republic. But it was still unlikely to satisfy many Western

powers, particularly the US.

"There is no consensus on the number of centrifuges to be used for research and it is a subject for negotiation to be discussed with other parties," Asefi told a news conference.

"We will not accept anything beyond our obligations to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Therefore if they ask us to

freeze our research work, we will not accept that," he said.

Western diplomats say a freeze on all enrichment is the only guarantee Iran can give that it is not seeking arms.

Iran in April said it had produced a small amount of enriched uranium from 164 centrifuges. Although the 164 operational centrifuges pose little risk in terms of suspected arms manufacture, Iran's planned industrial-scale underground facilities near the central town of Natanz have aroused far more suspicion.

Asefi also signalled today that Iran will study the European proposals to end a crisis over its nuclear programme.

"We have to wait and see what kind of proposal will be made. We haven't seen it yet. They have to submit it so it will be studied and we will see how it can be followed up."

Britain, France and Germany are currently putting together a package of trade and other incentives they hope will coax Iran into agreeing to halt uranium enrichment.

31 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

# Teheran for talks with EU, not USA

**Associated Press**

PUTRAJAYA, May 30: Iran is ready to restart negotiations on its nuclear programme with the European Union, the foreign minister said today, but he ruled out direct talks with the USA.

"I announce that Iran is ready to respond positively to the call" made by the Non-aligned Movement "for resuming the negotiations on Iran's nuclear issue without any preconditions," foreign minister Mr Manouchehr Mottaki told reporters. He is in Malaysia to attend a NAM foreign ministers' meeting that ended today.

"Accordingly, I would like to announce our readiness to restart immediately the negotiations with the EU Three to resolve the issues," he said, referring to France, Britain and Germany. The announcement raised hopes that Iran would react positively to a package of incentives meant to persuade it to abandon uranium enrichment put together by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council

~ US, China, France, Britain and Russia plus Germany.

The package was to be presented to Teheran by France, Britain and Germany - the trio of nations that broke off talks with Iran in August 2005 after it resumed activities linked to uranium enrichment.

The UNSC gave Iran until the end of April to suspend all such activities. But Iran announced last month it had for the first time successfully enriched uranium and was doing research on advanced centrifuges to produce more of the material in less time. Now that a formal announcement has been made, Iran's embassies in the three EU countries as well as their ambassadors in Teheran would be informed on the next course of action, he said.

#### **Mottaki speaks**

The USA is incapable of attacking Iran, Mr Manouchehr Mottaki said today at NAM. He also accused Washington of following "a double standard policy" over the nuke issue.

31 MAY 2006

THE STATESMAN

# Alternative approaches to West Asian crises

Hamid Ansari

IT COMMENCED in Iran 100 years back, in 1906. The demand was for an *adalat-khaneh* (house of justice). Within months, an elected *majlis* was in place. A year later the Anglo-Russian *entente* divided Iran into a Russian and a British sphere of influence, leaving a small area in the middle as neutral territory. The Iranians, wrote the historian Nikki Keddie, "were neither consulted on the agreement nor informed of the terms."

In 1904, Najib Azari launched in Paris the *Ligue de la Patrie Arabe* with the declared objective of freeing Syria and Iraq from Ottoman rule. The stirrings of Arab nationalism during the First World War got enmeshed in imperial intrigues pertaining to the war effort. The commitments made in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence of 1915-1916 were rescinded in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916; the latter, when made public by revolutionary Russia, was sought to be dismissed as a "figment of malicious Bolshevik imagination."

In both instances, and in many more, the West Asian memory of encounters with the West is of the latter's arrogance, duplicity, perfidy, and occupation. Historical records sustain it. The visible symbols today are Palestine, Iraq, and Iran. In each case, the Western recipe is prescriptive but incapable of successful imposition; in every instance the local response, despite a severe imbalance of forces, is rejection. Has this contributed to stability?

The experience of the Occupied Territories in Palestine since 1967 and of Iraq since 2003 sustains the validity of Rousseau's judgment that "the strongest man is never strong enough to be always the master." Similarly, Iran has shown that foreign pressure brings forth impulses of resistance that are out of the ordinary.

Clearly, the grand designs for the 'Middle East' have failed to fructify. 9/11 compelled a re-think, but the premises were faulty and the conclusions fallacious. Forgotten in the process was Hans Morgenthau's dictum that successful

Given the linkages, prioritisation would need to be eschewed in favour of parallel and simultaneous progress on Palestine, Iraq, and Iran.

statecraft depends on choosing "between one set of principles divorced from political reality and another set of principles derived from political reality."

It was argued in 2003 that the change of regime in Iraq and grafting of democracy would create conditions for the solution of the Palestinian-Israeli problem and the implementation of the Quartet Road Map. The same argument is now being used for Iran. The three are thus perceived to be links in a chain. Can they not, therefore, be considered for a package solution? Would such an approach offer a more promising solution than the discredited regime-change option?

Perhaps a beginning can be made by revisiting the basic premises. These relate to the belief that (a) access to Persian Gulf oil necessitates political control over sources of supply; (b) the neopatriarchal West Asian systems of governance, dependent on external support for regime security, are prone to manipulation to ensure delivery; (c) the 'radical' regimes in the area - Iran and Syria - can be isolated, and done away with; (d) public opinion in the region, despite occasional outbursts, can be ignored; (e) Israel must be allowed to create new ground realities to define its boundaries and its requirement of security premised on ensuring its dominance; and (f) sleek packaging and smart salesmanship can make the region 'appreciate' what is good for it, if this does not happen, crude pressure or force may be necessary.

Each premise is disputatious. Together, they have delivered neither security nor stability. A quest for alternatives is thus unavoidable. Given the linkages, prioritisation would need to be

eschewed in favour of parallel and simultaneous progress on three tracks.

In Palestine, and even without the attributes of full statehood, Palestinians have proved the democracy argument. A people discriminating enough to make a democratic choice certainly deserve to be independent and free of foreign occupation. The Quartet Road Map was delayed and destroyed by Ariel Sharon. The International Court of Justice categorically ruled against the construction of the Wall on land under occupation. Incrementally the argument, moral as well as practical, is tilting against Israel. The impasse can be broken through the acceptance of the unofficial Geneva Accord jointly produced in October 2003 by a group of Israeli and Palestinian public figures.

The Accord was well received globally and in Israel though not by the Likud Government. It is based on the premise that "peace requires the transition from the logic of war and confrontation to the logic of peace and cooperation." It builds upon all the existing agreements, proposes that the permanent border between Israel and Palestine be based on the June 4th 1967 line with reciprocal modification on a 1:1 basis" indicated in a map attached to the document. The parties would reject and condemn "terrorism and violence in all its forms" and shall proclaim laws to prevent incitement to irredentism, racism, terrorism, and violence. They would work together with the international community to build a secure and stable Middle East "free from weapons of mass destruction, both conventional and non-conventional." The uniqueness of Jerusalem is recognised and practical, acceptable arrangements suggested.

question of refugees is acknowledged and addressed by accepting the principle of compensation and offering options for the choice of Permanent Place of Residence that would not override Israel's sovereignty. Each of these would be implemented with the help of different sets of multilateral arrangements.

The Iraq story was told early enough by the Rumsfeld Memorandum of October 16, 2003: "we lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror... the cost-benefit ratio is against us." Thirty months on, the grimness of the picture is public knowledge. Nevertheless political games, rather than sagacity and commonsense, still seem to prevail.

Discussions with Iran are essential but not sufficient. All other neighbours of Iraq need to be involved in a cooperative endeavour to guarantee Iraq's territorial integrity. They, in turn, would seek assurances about Iraq's political set-up. In a plural society, equity is an essential ingredient of a democratic framework; a tyranny of the majority will not lead to stability. It is late but perhaps not too late to initiate a cooperative exercise.

Other correctives are essential in Iraq. The second chamber provided for in Article 69 of the Constitution has yet to be instituted. Distortions reflected in Articles 108 and 109 relating to oil and gas resources do not auger well for equity and stability. No matter how humiliating, a timetable for withdrawal of coalition forces and the closure of U.S. bases there is essential to bring down the temperature of a significant section of the insurgency.

The third link in the chain is Iran, dubbed the most serious strategic problem for the United States. Iranian defaults notwithstanding, the argument that Teheran should prove that it does not have a weapons programme while years of inspections by the IAEA have yet to prove that it does have one, is fatuous. Ambassador Negroponte was tentatively personified recently in his comment: "our assessment at the moment is that even though we believe that Iran is determined to acquire or obtain a nuclear weapon, that we believe it is still a number of years off before they are likely to have enough fissile material to assemble into or put into a nuclear weapon, perhaps into the next decade."

More specific were the operative words of his statement: "There is concern about the new leadership in Iran." A report in the *Financial Times* on April 21 said the current diplomatic effort was to slow down the Iranian nuclear programme "while more 'robust' efforts continue towards the ultimate solution of regime change."

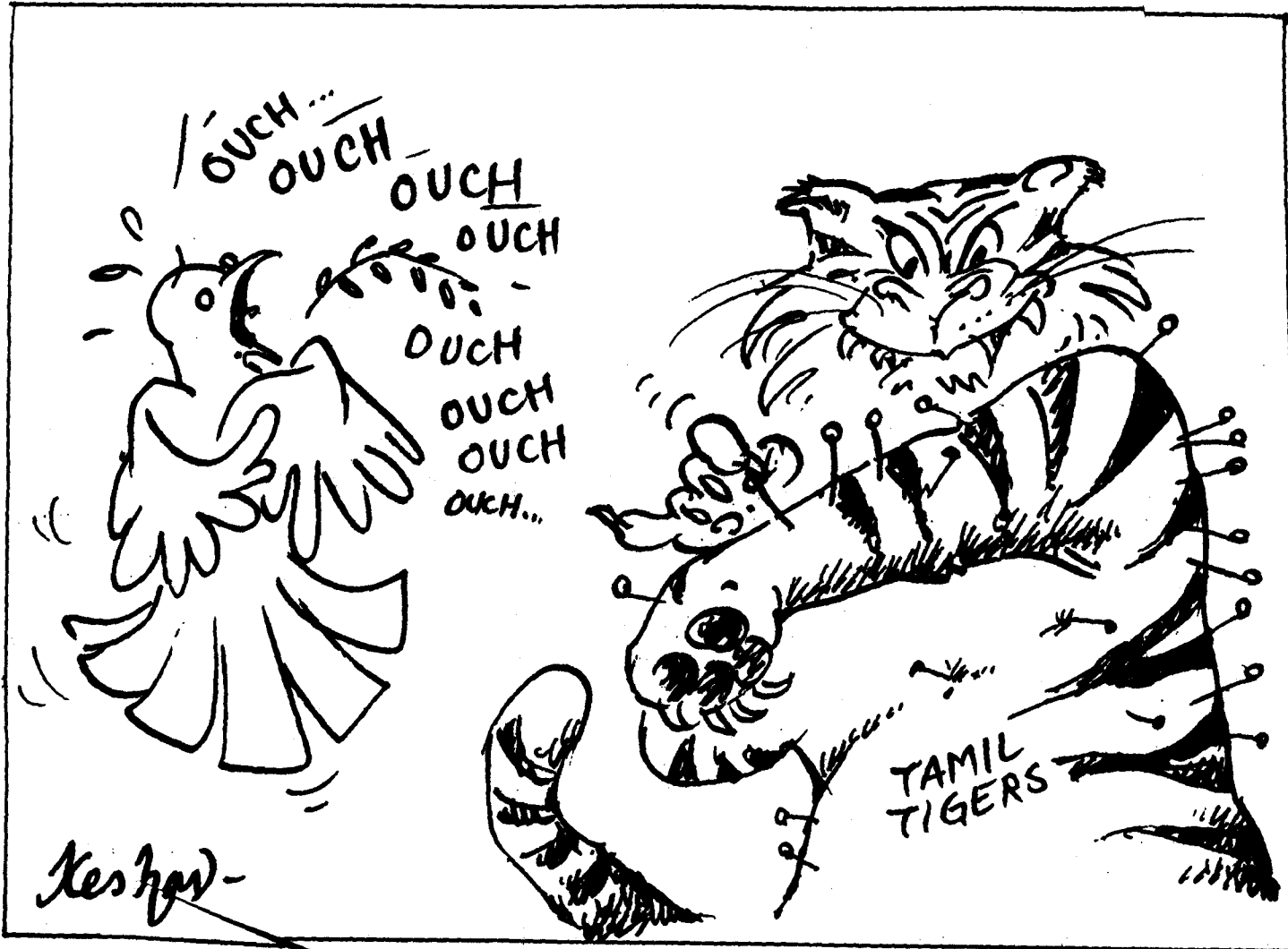
Taking the Iranian case to the Security Council, and reported plans to bomb Iranian facilities using tactical nuclear weapons, are thus aimed at unnerving and destabilising the system. This is unlikely to happen, given Iran's nationalist fervour; even anti-regime elements abroad have cautioned against the effort to create another Ahmad Chalabi!

Most experts on Iran agree that Teheran's quest is security, not necessarily security through nuclear weapons that have yet to be acquired. This security can be provided through a serious dialogue on four crucial subjects: Iraq, Persian Gulf security, a settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli question, and Iran's role in the global energy market (and its quest for energy-related technology and investments). They share the perception that exclusion of Iran from any of these would have negative implications.

Iran's nuclear question can be resolved in a wider framework. Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf Cooperation Council states support a nuclear weapon and weapons of mass destruction-free zone in West Asia. A reconciliation between the Arab states and Israel, in terms of the Arab League Resolution of March 2002 and subsequent to an Israeli-Palestinian accord, would add impetus to the move.

The choice is clear: a continuation of the three conflicts or an alternative paradigm of cooperative security. Would Morgenthau's theorem show the way?

## CARTOONSCAPE





ISRAEL ■ The 67 strong Kadima coalition now has the backing to redraw Israel's final borders

# Olmert has majority, names Cabinet

RAMIT PLUSHNICK-MASTI  
JERUSALEM, MAY 1

**A**FTER three weeks of negotiations, interim Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Monday put together a coalition government that backs his plan to pull out of parts of the West Bank and draw Israel's final borders by 2010.

Olmert announced key Cabinet appointments, naming Tzipi Livni, a pragmatic jurist and rising star in Israeli politics, as Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister. Livni had served as acting Foreign Minister in recent months. Outgoing Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, who only belatedly threw his support behind Olmert, got a relatively minor portfolio.

In the West Bank town of Tulkerim, meanwhile, Israeli soldiers shot and killed a Palestinian woman while trying to arrest an Islamic Jihad militant hiding in the woman's apartment building, the Army said. The soldiers fired at the house when they saw suspicious movement, killing Itaf Zalut, 41, and wounding her two daughters, the army said. The army apologised for the shooting and said it was investigating.

The woman's husband, Yousef, 48, said the shots came without warning. "They shot at a home with people living in it, civilians," he said. "We have done nothing. They didn't even knock on the door to tell me to get out. I would have gotten out."

In Israel, coalition talks ended on Sunday when Olmert informed President Moshe Katsav that he had

formed a government that controls a majority in parliament. Olmert's Kadima Party won a March election, but did not win enough seats in the 120-member parliament to rule alone. The agreement signed with the ultra-Orthodox Shas party late on Sunday, along with support from the Left-centre Labour Party and from the Pensioners' Party, gives Olmert a majority of 67 in parliament.

Labour and the Pensioners are expected to support Olmert's West Bank plan without hesitation. However, Shas insisted that it will not be forced to commit to the programme which would require the dismantling of

dozens of Jewish settlements. Olmert is not expected to launch the plan for another year to 18 months.

If Shas were to back the pullout, the party could alienate its hard-line constituency, which opposes handing over parts of the West Bank to the Palestinians. "The settlers will not forget that Shas turned its back on them at this difficult time, as Olmert's sword lies on the neck of the entire settlement enterprise," Yitzhak Levy, a lawmaker from the pro-settler National Religious Party, was quoted as saying in the Israeli daily Yediot Ahronot.

But the Meretz Party, which has so far not joined Olmert's government,

could give parliamentary support to a West Bank withdrawal if Shas pulls out in coming months.

In an initial push to draw Israel's borders, Olmert's Cabinet modified the route of the separation barrier on Sunday, putting thousands of Palestinians on the West Bank side of the structure. Israel began construction of the barrier four years ago, saying it needed to keep suicide bombers out of the country. Olmert says the barrier will serve as the basis for Israel's final border with the West Bank, which Israel won from Jordan in the 1967 Middle East war.

—Associated Press

## Key Cabinet members

**VICE-PREMIER AND FOREIGN MINISTER:** Tzipi Livni, 47. Rising star in Israeli politics and protégé of former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Followed Sharon to Kadima after he left hard-line Likud Party to create a new centrist political party. Worked four years at Mossad intelligence agency. Since 2001, has been an important minister in Israel governments.



**DEFENCE MINISTER:** Amir Peretz, 53. Head of Labour Party. Widely perceived as strong on social issues but inexperienced in military matters, making his new posting controversial.

Peretz immigrated from Morocco in 1956. Elected to Israel's Parliament on the Labour slate in 1988.

Peretz wrested leadership of the moderate Labour Party from Israel's elder statesman Shimon Peres in November.



**FINANCE MINISTER:** Avraham Hirschson, 65. Member of Kadima. As a long-time friend of Olmert, he is expected to keep Israel on free market path, perhaps with some modifications to redress the widening poverty in Israeli society. Hirschson followed Sharon into Kadima immediately after the centrist party was established in November. MP since 1992. Minister in previous government.

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER:** Shimon Peres, 82. Former prime minister and winner of a Nobel Peace Prize. Followed Sharon to Kadima after Peretz ousted him as Labour leader. Peres, who is feted abroad as a statesman, will also serve as minister for the development of the Negev Desert and Galilee regions.



02 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

# Abbas willing to hold immediate talks with Israel

## Hamas may be by-passed through a referendum if negotiations yield a fair deal for Palestinians

Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has called for urgent negotiations in the wake of the newly-elected Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's declaration that he would go ahead with a controversial plan to fix his country's permanent borders with a future Palestinian State.

"Mr. Olmert should not wait [to resume negotiations]," Saeb

Erekat, the spokesman for Mr. Abbas, said soon after Mr. Olmert addressed the newly-elected Parliament and set out his Government's agenda.

### Reluctant partner

Even before the Israeli Parliament met, Mr. Abbas had stressed that talks between the Palestinians and Israelis must begin quickly.

"We are prepared to resume the negotiations immediately,"

Mr. Abbas said. Israel has been reluctant to hold talks, citing the emergence of a Palestinian Government led by the militant group Hamas. But, Mr. Abbas has been indicating that Hamas could be by-passed through a referendum if negotiations with him yielded a fair deal.

In an interview with the Israeli daily *Maariv*, Mr. Abbas said, "It is my intention to bring the results of the negotiations (with Israel), if and when they

end, to the Palestinian people in the form of a referendum and to give the Palestinian people the right to decide."

### New initiative

Mr. Abbas' comments coincide with reports that he intended to start a new political movement in which the younger members of his Fatah party would be involved. The London-based Arabic newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* reported that Mr.

Abbas would invite key Fatah members including former Parliament Speaker Rouhi Fatouh, Muhammed Dahlan, and Jibril Rajoub to participate in his new initiative.

During his address Mr. Olmert laid out some of the salient features of what has been described as Israel's "convergence plan." He called for the removal of isolated Israeli settlements, but said major settlement blocks would be consolidated.

07 MAY 2006

# Iran refuses to comply with Security Council demand

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**BERLIN:** Iran on Thursday refused to comply with a United Nations Security Council demand for an end to uranium enrichment, defying major powers which fear Teheran secretly wants an atomic bomb.

"Iran's decision on enrichment, particularly research and development, is irreversible," its Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Aliasghar Soltanieh in Vienna told AFP.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, speaking in Geneva, described the U.N. declaration as an "angry precedent" and a "bad move."

Iran struck the defiant stance even as Foreign Ministers of the Security Council permanent members plus Germany met in

Berlin to chart their next moves in the standoff.

## Non-binding statement

The Security Council on Wednesday unanimously approved a non-binding statement giving Iran 30 days to abandon its uranium enrichment activities.

"This is a strong sign to Iran that negotiation, not confrontation, should be their course," U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said.

"It is now up to Iran to make a choice ... between isolation brought about by its own actions or a return to the negotiating table," added German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the meeting's host.

But cracks appeared between

the major powers here over how to act if Iran does not comply.

The U.N. statement leaves open what consequences might follow if Teheran does not halt uranium enrichment.

Russia does not believe that sanctions will serve the purpose of settling the various issues.

In a clear warning against any the use of force to settle the standoff, Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo said that any such move would unleash chaos in the region.

The U.N. talks had been marred by differences between the U.S. and its Western allies on the one hand and Russia and China on the other over how to coax Teheran away from uranium enrichment, which could be used to build a nuclear bomb.

3 1 MAR 2006

# U.N. Council close to deal on Iran, says Bolton

Revised draft makes concessions to Russia, China

**UNITED NATIONS:** The five United Nations Security Council powers are close to a deal on Iran's suspect nuclear programme and hope for approval of a new draft statement when the full Council meets later on Wednesday, diplomats said.

Britain and France, backed by the United States, distributed a revised text late on Tuesday to all 15 Security Council members, making concessions to Russia and China. But it still calls on Iran to suspend uranium enrichment efforts, which the West believes are a cover for bomb-making.

## U.S. compromise

"We have reached agreement on the bulk of the text, so there was movement on all sides. And now we need to see whether we can cross this last bridge, but we're very close," U.S. Ambassador John Bolton told reporters.

"We have been incredibly flexible. Incredibly flexible. I

probably have never been more flexible," Mr. Bolton said of the compromises.

The Security Council was scheduled to hold consultation later on Wednesday after the five powers meet again. The hope is that the statement will be adopted then or at least be ready for approval early on Thursday when Foreign Ministers of the five powers and Germany meet in Berlin to discuss the strategy toward Iran. But not all issues have been settled and a presidential statement, compared to a resolution, needs the approval of all 15 nations with seats on the Council.

Negotiations have stretched over three weeks on the statement, which is non-binding and threatens no punitive measures. But Russia, backed by China, fear Security Council involvement will lay the groundwork for tougher action, such as sanctions, which they have vowed to oppose. The International

Atomic Energy Agency, the Vienna-based U.N. nuclear watchdog, referred the Iranian dossier to the Council on March 8 after Teheran resumed nuclear fuel work. This prompted European negotiators Germany, France and Britain to break off 2-1/2 years of talks. Oil-rich Iran insists its programmes are to develop nuclear energy.

## Main obstacle

One change in the text is a watering down of a phrase calling Iran's actions a possible "threat to international peace and security," a term that Beijing and Moscow said established an escalation of Council involvement. The new version notes the Council's "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security" as defined in the U.N. Charter. But this language has still not been approved by Russia, diplomats said, and is considered the main obstacle. — Reuters

30 MAR 2006

THE HINDU

# Bush opposes Iraq's premier, say Shiites

## Al Jaafari Accuses US Of Subverting Iraqi Sovereignty

By Edward Wong

11-19  
30/3

**Baghdad:** The American ambassador has told Shiite officials that President Bush does not want the Iraqi prime minister to remain the country's leader in the next government, senior Shiite politicians said on Tuesday.



It is the first time the Americans have directly expressed a preference in the furious debate over the country's top job, the politicians said, and it is inflaming tensions between the Americans and some Shiite leaders.

The ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad, told the head of the main Shiite political bloc at a meeting on Saturday to pass on a "personal message from President Bush" to the interim prime minister, Ibrahim Al Jaafari, said Redha Jowad Taki, a Shiite member of Parliament who was at the meeting.

Khalilzad said Bush "doesn't want, doesn't support, doesn't accept" Jaafari as the next prime minister, according to Mr. Taki, a senior aide to Abdul-Aziz Al Hakim, the head of the Shiite bloc. It was the first "clear and direct

### Iraq is not Vietnam: Blair

**Auckland:** British Prime Minister Tony Blair rejected on Tuesday any comparison between the situation in Iraq and the Vietnam War.

"Vietnam was an occupation... there was a completely different set of circumstances," Blair said in a radio interview during a short stop in New Zealand. "In Iraq we're in there with the consent of a democratically-elected government and the UN. If the democratically-elected government—there will be one formed shortly—says leave, we will leave but they're not saying that." AP

message" from the Americans on a specific candidate for prime minister, Taki said.

The Shiite bloc, which won a plurality in the parliamentary election in December, nominated Jaafari last month to retain his post for four more years.

American officials in Baghdad did not dispute the Shiite politicians' account of the conversation, though they would not discuss the details

of the meeting. A spokeswoman for the American Embassy confirmed that Khalilzad met with Hakim on Saturday. But she declined to comment on what was said. "The decisions about the choice of the prime minister are entirely up to the Iraqis," said the spokeswoman, Elizabeth Colton. "This will be an Iraqi decision."

In Washington, the State Department said it would not comment on diplomatic conversations, but Adam Ereli, the deputy spokesman, reiterated American support for "a government of national unity with strong leadership that can unify all Iraqis".

The Americans have harshly criticised the Jaafari government in recent months for supporting Shiite militias that have been fomenting sectarian violence and pushing Iraq closer to full-scale civil war.

Haider Al Ubady, a spokesman for Jaafari, said the prime minister had received the ambassador's message and accused the Americans of trying to subvert Iraqi sovereignty.

Tensions between Shiite leaders and the American government, which had been rising for months, boiled over after an assault on Sunday night by American and Iraqi forces on a Shiite mosque compound in northern Baghdad. NYT News Service

THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Iran for nuclear fuel centre

48-13  
W. Abid  
9/12/06  
29/3

**MOSCOW:** Teheran is calling for a nuclear fuel production centre to be set up in Iran with the involvement of other countries, said the Iranian Embassy in Moscow on Tuesday.

The proposal, announced in a statement from Iran's embassy in Moscow, presents an alternative to a Russian offer to host Iran's nuclear fuel production as a way to ease concerns that enrichment conducted in Iran could be aiming to develop atomic weapons.

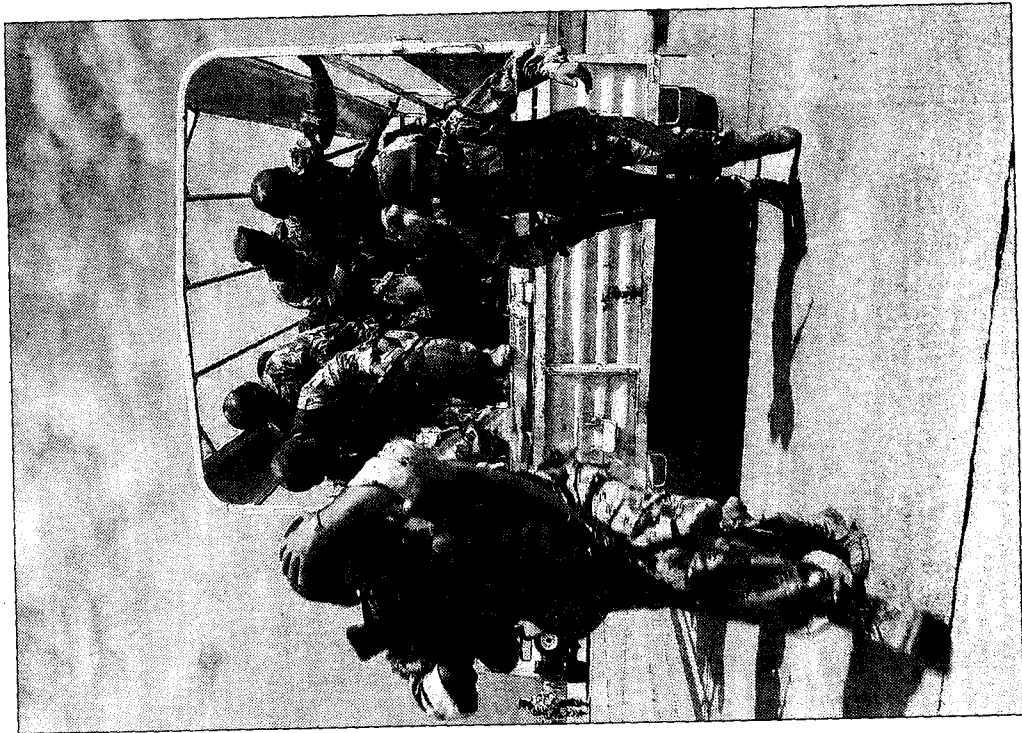
"In terms of satisfying its needs, Tehran cannot remain dependent on international suppliers," Teheran said in the statement.

"Iran would welcome the creation of an international nuclear fuel centre on its territory with the participation of other countries and in the framework of an international consortium."

Moscow's proposal to move Iran's uranium enrichment programme to Russia is meant to guarantee international oversight of fuel production and ensure it cannot be used for weapons production.

Iran insists its nuclear programme is only meant to generate power. The Iranian statement reiterated that U.N. Security Council intervention in the dispute would "escalate tensions, entailing negative consequences that would be of benefit to no party." — AP

# Blast kills 40 Iraq army volunteers



AFP  
Iraqi soldiers jump off their truck during a training session supervised by US officers at a military base north of Kirkuk.

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Baghdad, March 27

A SUICIDE bomber attacked an army recruiting station near a US-Iraqi military base in northern Iraq on Monday, killing 40 people and wounding 30 others, the Iraqi defence ministry said. At least 21 more corpses were found — many with nooses around their neck — and mortar and bomb attacks killed at least four in Baghdad and surrounding towns.

No American troops were hurt in the bombing about 18 miles east of the ancient city of Tal Afar, said the US military, which confirmed the attack. The bomber struck shortly after noon at the station, killing a crowd of recruits who were attempting to join the Iraqi Army.

US President George W. Bush singled out Tal Afar in a recent speech as a success story for American and Iraqi forces in the drive to quell the insurgency. US soldiers helped secure the area after the attack and treat the wounded.

Iraqi army Lt. Akram Eid said many of the wounded were taken to the Sykes US army base on the outskirts of Tal Afar, about 40 miles west of Mosul, Iraq's third largest city.

Details of a joint US-Iraqi Special Operations attack in northeastern Baghdad late on Sunday continued to filter out. The military, in an updated report, said the joint operation "killed 16 insurgents and wounded three oth-

RUSSIA HITS BACK AT US

RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER Sergei Lavrov on Monday dismissed as politically motivated reports in the US suggesting that Moscow provided intelligence to Saddam Hussein at the start of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. "The way this was done suggests that there is a political motive here," Lavrov said, referring to the Pentagon report.

Lavrov said he had followed reports about the Pentagon charge, as well as comments made on the issue by various officials. "I know nothing beyond that because no one among American officials has raised this issue with us," the Russian minister said. **AFP, MOSCOW**

ers during a house-to-house search on an objective with multiple structures.

"They also detained 18 others, discovered a significant weapons cache and secured the release of an Iraqi being held hostage," the statement said. Iraq's interior minister, however, reacted angrily, denouncing the operation and rejecting the US account.

"Entering the Mustafa Shia Mosque and killing worshippers was unjustified and a horrible violation from my point of view," Bayan Jabr said on the Al-Arabia TV news network. "Innocent people inside the mosque offering prayer at sunset were killed."

Iraq police Lt. Col. Falah al-Mohammadi said 17 people were killed. Seven were members of the Mahdi Army, a Shia militant, three were members of the Islamic Dawa Party-Iraq Organisation that had an office in the mosque complex and seven were civilians with no affiliation.

Also on Monday, Baghdad Gov. Hussein Tahan told reporters the local government had cut ties to the US military and diplomatic mission. "The Baghdad provincial council has decided to stop dealings in regards to services and politics with the coalition forces and the US embassy because of the cowardly attack on the al-Moustafa mosque," he said without elaboration.

"Harsher measures will be taken in the future to preserve the dignity of Iraqis," Tahan said.

In an apparent effort to clamp down on police wrongdoing, US troops raided an Interior Ministry building and briefly detained about 10 Iraqi policemen after discovering 17 Sudanese prisoners in the facility, Iraqi authorities reported.

The report was reminiscent of a similar US raid last November that found detainees apparently tortured. That discovery set off a round of international demands for investigations and reform of Iraqi police practices to ensure observance of human rights. In this case the Americans quickly determined the Sudanese were held legitimately and had not been abused, said a deputy interior minister.

AP/27

# Not hiding bomb: Iran

HD-10  
28/3

## Unafraid of sanctions: Mashaee

Amit Baruah

**NEW DELHI:** "We are not hiding any [nuclear] bomb in any part of Iraq," Iranian Vice-President Rahim Mashaee said here on Monday.

Emphasising that Iran's "nuclear knowledge" was home-grown, he said it was "impossible" to launch a military attack on Teheran's research capabilities.

The Vice-President, who met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday, said Iran was not perturbed at what the United Nations Security Council might do on the nuclear issue. "We have no concerns about any matter," he told a select group of presspersons.

Teheran was also not afraid of sanctions. "We have been under economic sanctions for the last 30 years ... they are not allowing us to purchase spare parts for civilian aircraft, which are critical for passenger safety."

### Ripple effect

Mr. Mashaee warned that sanctions would have a ripple effect on other parts of the world. Without referring to Iran's status as a major oil supplier, he claimed that further sanctions would not hurt his country.

Asked whether Teheran was disappointed at New Delhi voting against it at the International Atomic Energy Agency meeting, he said Dr. Singh told him that Iran had the right to peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Asserting that Iran had tried for years to build confidence in the international community on the nuclear issue, Mr. Mashaee said the "great nation of India" had always opposed "aggressive treatment" of his country in the matter of peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The 42-year-old Vice-Presi-



Rahim Mashaee

dent said it was not possible for Iran to "go back" on its peaceful nuclear programme. "It is not possible at all." Teheran would continue its cooperation with the international community "as we have done in the past."

Mr. Mashaee's repeated statements that Iran's nuclear research capabilities were "100 per cent domestic" go against India's new efforts to link the country with the Pakistan-based A.Q. Khan nuclear technology smuggling ring.

### Nuclear issue

Asked whether his country expected India's support on the nuclear issue, Mr. Mashaee said, "We do not expect anything particular from India."

Asked whether "final clearance" was received for the five-million-tonne-a-year supply of Iranian liquefied natural gas (LNG), the Vice-President merely said it was "cleared in principle".

"We will take into account not just international price but other issues as well. Cooperation with India is an important issue." Iranian Oil Minister Kazem Vaziri-Hamaneh would visit India in the "near future" to discuss this and other issues.



TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2006 ✓

## Iran at the Security Council

Handwritten notes: 28/3, 9/20, 8/20, 8

**M**ore than two weeks after the International Atomic Energy Agency formally referred the Iranian nuclear dossier to the United Nations Security Council, the United States and Britain have been unable to reach a consensus on their preferred course of action. For now, at least, this means the world is a safer place. That Washington and London would like the Council to adopt a Chapter VII resolution — paving the way for the eventual imposition of sanctions and use of force — is an open secret now, thanks to the leaking of a British Foreign Office letter last week. Russia and China correctly apprehend that this path is fraught with danger. With the experience of the decade-long, fruitless hunt for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq behind them, Moscow and Beijing appear to have decided not to allow the confrontation with Iran to escalate so rapidly. How long they will manage to withstand the relentless Anglo-American drive towards a showdown remains to be seen. An IAEA official has been quoted by the Associated Press as saying the recent scare stories about Iranian capabilities “come from people who are seeking a crisis, not a solution.”

If the world needs Russia and China to stand firmly in favour of a negotiated solution to the Iran crisis, it is a pity that other major powers like India are nowhere to be seen on the diplomatic stage. The Manmohan Singh Government, in effect, voted itself out of the committee last September and then again this February by pushing for the Iranian file to be dispatched from the IAEA Board of Governors, where New Delhi has a say, to the UNSC, where it doesn't. Germany, thanks to being a part of the E3 group of European Union countries, is playing a central role in Iran-related discussions at all levels but Indian support for whatever the E3+U.S. proposes is simply taken for granted. India stands to lose much more than any of these distant warriors should the targeting of Iran turn nasty and violent. Prime Minister Singh has rationalised his Government's stand by remarking that it is not in India's interest to have another nuclear-armed country in our neighbourhood — as though nuclear weaponisation in South Asia is not a current concern. It is surely not in India's interest that the U.S. and its allies use force or sanctions to resolve the issue. Finally, if there is one country with a vital interest in the peaceful resolution of the nuclear question, it is Iran itself. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been playing his cards badly. His comments on the Holocaust and Israel were not just anti-historical and morally indefensible; they also reflected a poor grasp of politics and diplomacy. As the political temperature rises in the next few months, Iran must be wary of the U.S. and Israeli provocations. Above all, it must not say or do anything on matters nuclear and non-nuclear that could end up narrowing the circle of its well-wishers and friends.

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28 MAR 2006

THE HINDU

HD-10  
273

## No breaking the deadlock

to Amir  
09/20/06

**W**ith ministry-making running into serious difficulty, Iraq's political leaders have sought to break the impasse by setting up a National Security Council that will formulate broad policies on security and economic issues. The hope is that the 19-member Council, which will represent all the major political formations, will be able to draw the different sects and ethnic groups into the decision-making process. This plan is not likely to work. While the President and Prime Minister will be members of the Council, they will be free to override its collective decisions that affect their spheres of authority. Since there is no constitutional provision for creating such a body, non-official members can have no real authority over the executive branch. The Council seats will be allotted to the major formations in proportion to their strength in parliament. As its decision will not be binding unless they are supported by two-thirds of its members, it is likely to be no more than a replica of the legislature. In a situation where the major parties refuse to arrive at a minimal accommodation, this new institutional arrangement is not likely to help break the deadlock. The overall political situation has deteriorated over the past few weeks since alignments have begun to change. The Kurd-Shia coalition that was once touted as a stabilising force has started to come apart.

The Kurd, Sunni, and secular parties, which together control 140 seats in the 275-member parliament, have refused to accept the Shia coalition's nominee for the post of Prime Minister. This amounts to a veto since a government cannot take office unless it has the support of at least two-thirds of the members of the House. While the Shia coalition, called the United Iraqi Accord, has a parliamentary strength of 130, nearly half that number cannot be counted as supporters of the nominee, Ibrahim al Jaafari. When the Accord's parliamentarians met a few weeks ago to choose their prime ministerial candidate, Mr. Jaafari defeated his rival by a single vote. The wafer-thin margin exposed the rifts within a coalition that has three major components. Mr. Jaafari, who has served for almost a year as interim Prime Minister, has the backing of his own Dawa'a party and the group led by firebrand cleric Moqtada al Sadr. But the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (the Accord's third major constituent) apparently agrees with non-Shia politicians that Mr. Jaafari's performance in office has been below par. The Sunni and secular parties were infuriated by the government's failure to control Mr. Sadr's militias during the recent sectarian strife. The Kurds were incensed when the interim Prime Minister visited Turkey against their wishes. In turn, the Shia masses have taken umbrage at the suggestion of the President and Kurd leader, Jalal Talabani, that they reconsider their choice.

27 MAR 2006

THE HINDU

Sources in US central command helped out

# Russia tipped-off Saddam on US plans

Washington  
25 MARCH

RUSSIA provided former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein with intelligence from inside the US military command on the American battle strategy and troop movements during the opening days of the Iraq war in 2003, according to an official report. The unclassified Pentagon re-report, released yesterday, did not assess the value of the information provided to the Iraqis by the Russians other than citing two captured Iraqi documents as saying that Russians had their American sources from "inside the American central Command" and the battlefield information was passed on to Hussein through Moscow's top envoy in Iraq. However, a classified version of the Pentagon report titled 'Iraqi Perspective Project' has not been made public.

The US State department has declined to comment on the report and the Pentagon has directed all questions to the Central Command. According to an Iraqi document, the information that the Russians had collected from their "sources inside the



American Central Command in Doha" was that the United States was convinced that occupying Iraqi cities was impossible and that as a result the US military would avoid urban combat. The strategy was to "isolate Iraq from its western borders," the document said.

The Pentagon report also

showed that Russia told Iraq that the US planned to concentrate on bombing in and around Baghdad, cutting off roads to Syria and Jordan and creating enough confusion to force residents to flee. The study's main author Kevin Woods said he was surprised to learn that Moscow had passed on intelligence to Hussein but that he did not doubt the authenticity of the documents.

But General Anthony Cucolo, who was also involved heavily in the project, argued that the Moscow-Baghdad link was a long standing economic relationship. "I don't see it as an aberration. I see it as a follow-on to economic engagement and economic interests."

The report was also designed to help American officials understand how Hussein and his military commanders prepared for and fought the war. It talked of an Iraqi government blind to the threat it faced and inept military leadership that was deceived by its own propa-ganda. "The largest contributing factor to the complete defeat of Iraq's military forces was the continued interference by Saddam," the Pentagon said.—PTI

The Economic Times

26 MAR 2006

The Economic Times

# The game plan on Iran is becoming clearer

Siddharth Varadarajan

**T**HIS WEEK, the fog of Anglo-American diplomacy on the Iranian nuclear question parted momentarily to give the world a rare glimpse of the drive to war that lies behind. On Wednesday, *The Times* of London reproduced a letter written by John Sawers, the British Foreign Office pointman on Iran, to his counterparts in the United States, France, and Germany outlining the line of action the four allies should follow in the United Nations Security Council. Stripped of the verbiage and the too-clever strategising on how to choreograph Russian and Chinese consent for sanctions and war, the main point in Mr. Sawers' letter is that the Iranians need to know that "more serious measures" are likely from the Security Council than just a Presidential Statement.

Mr. Sawers elaborates on what the E3+U.S. has in mind: "This means putting the Iran dossier on to a Chapter VII basis. We may also need

## REALITY CHECK

to remove one of the Iranian arguments that the suspension called for is 'voluntary'. We could do both by making the voluntary suspension a mandatory requirement to the Security Council, in a Resolution we would aim to adopt I[n], say, early May."

Chapter VII is that part of the U.N. Charter dealing with threats to international peace and security. Putting the Iranian dossier on to a Chapter VII basis would allow the Anglo-Americans to do two things. First, circumvent Iran's legal right to uranium enrichment, as enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), its safeguards agreement, its Additional Protocol, and in every single resolution passed by the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors on the Iranian issue. Secondly, generate a minimally plausible but absolutely essential legal fig leaf for military action against Iran in the likely event that the Iranians do not com-

The Anglo-Americans want a Security Council resolution allowing for the eventual use of force. Iran must play its cards very carefully from now onwards.

ply with such a Chapter VII resolution.

So far, the Russians and Chinese have made it clear that they are not prepared to appease the "Christmas in Teheran" folks in Washington and London. But in allowing the Iranian file to reach the Security Council, Moscow and Beijing have allowed the U.S. to ratchet up the rhetoric and pressure. This drive to penalise Iran in some way will become a test case for how seriously Russia, China, and the world have learned the lessons of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The reason the U.S. is keen to bring in Chapter VII is because it would like to provoke Iran into walking out of the NPT. If Iran were ever to commit this folly, the U.S. regime change plan will move swiftly into high gear. As and when force is used, it would likely be a Yugoslav-style prolonged air war aimed at targeting civilian and industrial infrastructure rather than an Iraq-style invasion.

So fluid is the situation that the Iranians need to carefully consider all their legal and political options and build a strategy aimed at widening the circle of countries opposed to confrontation and in favour of dialogue and diplomacy.

In legal terms, both Article XVII of the IAEA Statute and Article 22 of Iran's Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA provide for a dispute resolution mechanism through arbitration or the involvement of the International Court of Justice. Article 22 of the ICJ Statute is clear on this point: "Any question or dispute concerning the interpretation or application of this Statute which is not settled by negotiation shall be referred to the International Court of Justice in conformity with the Statute of the Court, unless the parties concerned agree on another mode of settlement." (Emphasis added.)

The Sawers letter suggests the E3+U.S. are

trying to create a situation where the IAEA Statute would not be applicable to Iran any longer, particularly the rights that devolve upon an NPT non-nuclear weapons state whose facilities are safeguarded.

Alongside this fact is the growing threat of the use of force by the United States and Israel in official pronouncements, an issue that has already been formally raised by the Iranian ambassador to the U.N., Javad Zarif, in a note *verbale* to the Secretary General on March 21: "These statements and documents, in view of past illegal behaviour of the United States, constitute matters of utmost gravity that require urgent, concerted and resolute response on the part of the United Nations and particularly the Security Council. It is indeed regrettable that past failures have emboldened senior U.S. officials and even others to consider the threat or use of force, both of which are specifically rejected under Article 2(4) of the Charter as violations of one of the most fundamental principles of the Organization, as options available on the table. The United Nations has a fundamental responsibility to reject those assertions and to arrest this trend. It will be highly appreciated if this letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly under Agenda Items 9, 82, 87, 94, 95, 97, 110 and of the Security Council."

These General Assembly Agenda Items referred to by Ambassador Zarif include, *inter alia*, prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon states against the use or

threat of use of nuclear weapons, and general and complete disarmament.

What the E3+U.S. are doing is subverting the NPT system by attacking the core bargain underlying it: that countries that renounce the right to make nuclear weapons shall not be prevented from developing civilian nuclear technology. In addition, there are valid legal grounds for considering the IAEA Board of Governors' referral of Iran to the U.N. Security Council and the proposed insistence on non-voluntary suspension of enrichment as *ultra vires* the IAEA Statute and the U.N. Charter.

As Michael Spies of the Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy, New York, has argued: "The authority of the Board to refer matters to the Security Council is granted by the IAEA Statute, the Safeguards Agreements, and the Additional Protocol when applicable. Under the Statute (Art. 12(C)) and the Safeguards Agreement the Board may only refer Iran to the Security Council if it finds that, based on the report from the Director General, it cannot be assured that Iran has not diverted nuclear material for non-peaceful purpose. In the past findings of 'non-assurance' have only come in the face of a history of active and ongoing non-cooperation with IAEA safeguards. The pursuit of nuclear activities in themselves, which are specifically recognized as a sovereign right, and which remain safeguarded, could not legally or logically equate to uncertainty regarding diversion."

None of the reports of the Director General have ever said that inspectors has not been able to verify that there has been "no diversion of nuclear material required to be safeguarded under this Agreement, to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices," the condition under which the Safeguards Agreement with Iran allows the IAEA to "make the reports provided for in paragraph C of Article XII." What the Director General has consistently said is that there has been no diversion of safeguarded nuclear material but that he is not yet in a position to say there are no undeclared nuclear activities. But since more than 100 countries have yet to ratify the Additional Protocol, this is a "finding" the Director General will have to make for not just Iran alone. Interestingly, China, which voted in February to refer Iran to the Security Council, explicitly stated in its explanation of vote that this referral was not a referral as construed by Article XIIC of the IAEA Statute.

In the light of the foregoing analysis, this much is clear. First, the E3+U.S. want to render inoperative the IAEA Statute and the NPT as far as Iran is concerned. Secondly, the E3+U.S. want to rewrite, through a Chapter VII resolution, the provisions of a Treaty, the NPT, that 188 countries are currently signatories to. Thirdly, the U.S. and Britain have used force in contravention of the U.N. Charter and international law to attack a neighbour of Iran's barely three years ago. Fourthly, Iran has real and justifiable fears that it too will be subjected to an armed attack.

On the basis of these bald facts, Iran should try and get the U.N. General Assembly to seek an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice under Article 96 of the U.N. Charter on the following question: Non-nuclear weapon state parties to the NPT have the right to develop civilian fuel cycle technology. The E3+U.S. insistence on unilaterally imposing new rules on NPT signatories is not in the interest of international peace and security. Right from the outset, Iran has had the law on its side. Even as it displays an open mind on the question of participating in multinational fuel cycle arrangements with Russia, China, and other potential partners, Iran cannot be compelled to give up legal rights, which devolve upon it as an NPT signatory. Nor is it in the interest of other NPT members or non-members that the Security Council arrogate to itself the right to dictate changes to treaty law. In the run-up to its vote against Iran at the IAEA, India said it did not want to see any other state in its neighbourhood acquire nuclear weapons. It is only fitting that India should also state openly that it does not want to see any other state in its neighbourhood subjected to armed aggression in the name of weapons of mass destruction.

## CARTOONSCAPE



# Hostages rescued in Iraq

**Baghdad, March 23** (Reuters): Weeks of intelligence work in lawless west Baghdad and a rapid response by special forces to information extracted from a prisoner led to British troops' rescue of three Christian peace activists in Baghdad today.

British and US officials were reluctant to give details of the release of Canadians Harmeet Sooden and Jim Loney and Briton Norman Kember, not wishing to jeopardise efforts to free several other hostages believed still held around the capital.

"It was part of ongoing operations related to hostages," said British military spokesman Wing Commander Tony Radcliffe.

## Canadian Harmeet among peace activists released

Among foreigners still missing are two Kenyan engineers and American journalist Jill Carroll, seized in Baghdad in January.

Sporadic gunfire throughout the day after the operation near the Abu Ghraib suburb that is a stronghold of Sunni insurgents suggested Iraqi forces might be continuing a sweep of the area.

The killing of a fourth Christian hostage, American Tom Fox, may have spurred greater urgency in the hunt. His tortured body was found in Baghdad on March 10, three

days after his three colleagues were seen in a videotape appealing for help.

The dawn raid that found the three hostages tied up and unguarded in a house was led by British troops and involved others from the US-led coalition, officials said.

They were acting on intelligence obtained three hours earlier from one of two people arrested the night before.

Though not a shot was fired, it is likely the operation was led by special forces ready to quell resistance and, especially, get the captives out un-

harmed after four months in captivity: "It was a fairly clinical extraction," Radcliffe said.

Foreign secretary Jack Straw said: "It follows weeks and weeks of very careful work by military coalition personnel in Iraq and many civilians as well."

That suggested that the arrest of the man who provided the final tip was the product of detective work rather than chance.

Special police teams, apparently from Britain and possibly Canada, had been working on the ground since the four men were seized in west Baghdad on November 26, British officials said, stressing the role civilians played in the process.

24 MAR 2006

# U.S. probes new civilian deaths case

Five women and four children among victims, say Iraqi police

14 0817

**BAGHDAD:** The U.S. military has ordered an investigation into its forces who killed Iraqi civilians last week, the latest in a series of allegations of abuse and indiscriminate shootings that has mirrored its three-year occupation of Iraq.

The investigation relates to an incident on March 15 in the village of Al Bu Seifa, near Balad north of Baghdad, and comes hot on the heels of a U.S. Navy criminal probe into reports that Marines intentionally shot 15 civilians dead near the western town of Haditha last year.

The U.S. military says four civilians — two women, a child, and a man — were killed in the early hours of last Wednesday when troops, looking for an Al-Qaeda suspect, came under fire as they raided a house.

Iraqi police say 11 civilians were killed — including five women and four children.

"There is an investigation directed by the commander of the multinational force into the discrepancy between the numbers and to determine the facts," U.S. Lieutenant-Colonel Barry Johnson told AFP on Wednesday.

"They attacked the house of Fayez Khairat Khalaf Turfa, and they killed 11 people, among them five women, two men, four children, before they dynamited the house and burned three cars," a local police officer who declined to be named said at the time. An AFP photographer witnessed locals cradling the bodies of dead children, some clearly only a few years old, and laying

out their bodies in an emotional burial ceremony.

"Troops were engaged by enemy fire as they approached the building, Coalition Forces returned fire utilising both air and ground assets," according to U.S. spokesman Major Tim Keefe.

"There was one enemy killed, two women and one child were also killed in the firefight," he said, adding that the building and one vehicle were destroyed.

## Al-Qaeda suspect held

The wanted Al-Qaeda suspect was taken into custody, he said.

"The American soldiers were dropped by helicopter around 2:30 am. They entered the house, blindfolded the family. When they left they blew up the house," said neighbour Ahmed Zedan. Local medics said the bodies of those killed had bullet wounds to the head.

U.S. forces have repeatedly been accused of using excessive force in counter-militancy operations, and human rights organisations have urged the military to take "all feasible precautions" to minimise civilian casualties.

"Under the law of armed conflict, military operations must use all feasible means to minimise loss of civilian life and property, and attacks must be withheld if expected to cause civilian loss disproportionate to a concrete military goal," according to the U.S.-based Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict.

— AFP



**INNOCENT VICTIMS:** People gather near the bodies of men and children who were allegedly killed during a U.S. raid in Ishaqi area near Balad, north of Baghdad, in this March 15 photo. — PHOTO: AFP

# Khamenei ready for talks with US on Iraq

ALISSA J. RUBIN  
VIENNA, MARCH 22

IRAN pushed ahead on its nuclear programme on Tuesday as the country's most powerful figure reaffirmed its willingness to hold face-to-face talks with the US on Iraq — sending a somewhat mixed message to the international community.

Talks at the United Nations Security Council on a response to Iran's nuclear programme remained stalled as diplomats from Russia and China argued with representatives of the European Union and the US over how hard to press Iran to halt its efforts to start uranium enrichment.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the ultimate say in Iran on all state matters, said that Iran was prepared to discuss ways to stabilise Iraq with a US delegation. "If the Iranian officials can make the US understand some issues about Iraq, there is no problem with the negotiations," Khamenei said in a speech broadcast on state television. But he went on to warn the US that Iran should be treated with the respect appropriate to one of the most powerful countries in the regions. "If he talks mean opening a venue for bullying and imposition by the deceitful party (the Americans), then it will be forbidden," said Khamenei.

His comments came as President Bush warned that "if the Iranians were to have a nuclear weapon, they

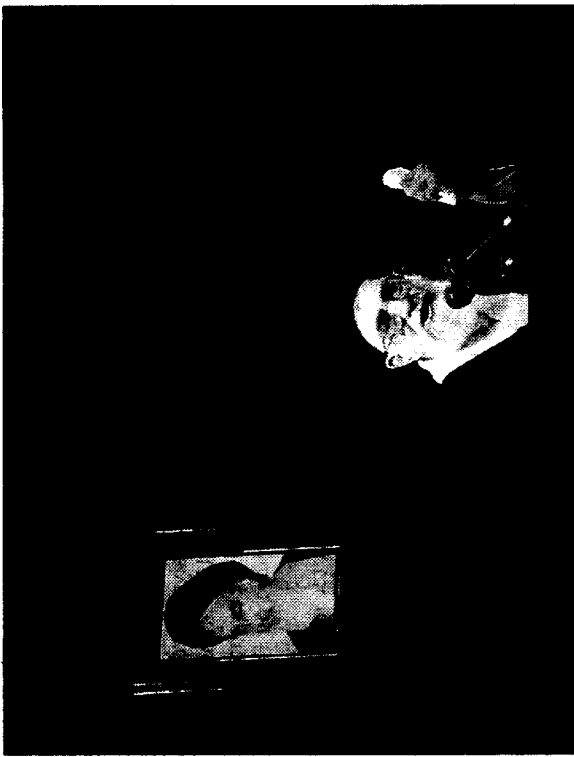
could blackmail the world" because "they're not welcoming the international inspections."

Meanwhile diplomats close to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna confirmed that Iran had now assembled 164 centrifuges — enough to combine into what engineers call a cascade, which can be used to spin uranium hexafluoride gas into enriched uranium. That step would put Iran back to the level of technology it had achieved before it agreed to a moratorium on nuclear development in 2003.

During the moratorium, some of its equipment deteriorated, nuclear

experts believe. Iran has yet to complete the crucial piping system needed to move uranium gas from one centrifuge to the next. Until the latter step is complete and the system is sealed, enrichment cannot begin. Experts disagreed over how long those next steps could take. "This is the next rung on the technical ladder," said David Albright, a former weapons inspector who is now president of the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington.

A US diplomat also said Iran's move was "more rapid progress than we expected." When enriched



Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei delivers a speech at Mashhad in Tehran on Tuesday. AP photo

## Rebels kill four policemen

BAGHDAD: Rebels blasted an Iraqi police station with grenade and mortar fire before dawn on Wednesday, killing four policemen in Maddeen, south of Baghdad, police said.

They said they had detained about 70 suspects in raids in the town after the assault, which occurred a day after at least 22 people were killed and 30 prisoners released in a similar attack on a police post northeast of the capital. Among the detainees was a Syrian found with leaflets by the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, police said. — Reuters

to a relatively low level, uranium can be used to fuel a reactor to generate electricity. At higher levels of enrichment, uranium can be used to make a bomb. Officials of the US and some other Western countries believe that Iran is trying to attain the technology and know-how to make an atomic bomb.

Iranian leaders insist that they are trying to gain the knowledge necessary to make enriched uranium for civilian uses. While it is technically possible to manufacture enough highly enriched uranium for a bomb using a 164-centrifuge cascade, the process would take 10 years. Weapons experts do not think that is Iran's plan. Instead, the experts say their concern is that running a small cascade would give Iran the technical knowledge to build and operate a far larger one.

—LATWP

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—LATWP

## Bush says

# troops may stay in Iraq past '08

JIM VANDEHEI

WASHINGTON, MARCH 22

PRESIDENT Bush acknowledged on Tuesday that the Iraq war is dominating nearly every aspect of his presidency, and served notice for the first time that he expects the decision on when all US troops come home from Iraq to fall on his successors.

Bush said the "trauma" of war has left the public and even some lawmakers in his own party understandably shaken and skeptical of his vow that the US will prevail. "Nobody likes war," Bush said. "It creates a sense of uncertainty in the country."

With a series of polls showing Bush and the war less popular than ever, he rejected calls to change the US military strategy or shake up the White House staff and war Cabinet. "I am happy with the people I surrounded myself with," he said. However, Bush did not rule out bringing aboard a veteran Washington operative to help soothe relations with an increasingly restive Republican Congress, a move that aides said might happen soon. "I'm not going to announce it right now," Bush said.

Asked if a day will come when there are no US troops there, Bush said "that will be decided by future presidents and future governments of Iraq."

Throughout the news conference, Bush steered the conversation back to Iraq, including when he was asked why a growing number of Americans are telling pollsters that they no longer trust him.

—LATWP

# UNSC | Vast chasm between US, Britain and France on the one hand and Russia and China on the other Superpowers fail to agree on Iran issue

AGENCIES  
NEW YORK, MARCH 21

**T**HE UN Security Council's five veto-wielding members and Germany failed to reach an agreement on how to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue after holding four hours of talks but all sides committed to a new round of meetings to break the impasse.

The meeting was billed as an attempt to develop a long term strategy to deter Iran from producing any nuclear weapon but there was vast chasm in the positions taken by the US, Britain and France on one side and Russia and China on the other. The deadlock came as US and European officials said that Britain's strategy for getting Iran to give

up its nuclear ambitions would be to try to get Russia and China to impose sanctions that could be enforced militarily if diplomacy fails, according to a letter.

At the meeting last night, officials were joined by their United Nations ambassadors struggling to produce a consensus text for the presidential statement on the Iranian nuclear issue. But no agreement could be reached.

Britain and the Western allies face an uphill struggle in getting Moscow and Beijing even to agree on a UN Security Council statement calling on Iran to comply with demands by the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, to suspend uranium enrichment.

US Ambassador John Bolton had expressed hope that the

be worth the time because when we do achieve that statement, it will be yet another clear unified message by the international community that Iran has to heed the words of both the IAEA and the UN Security Council."

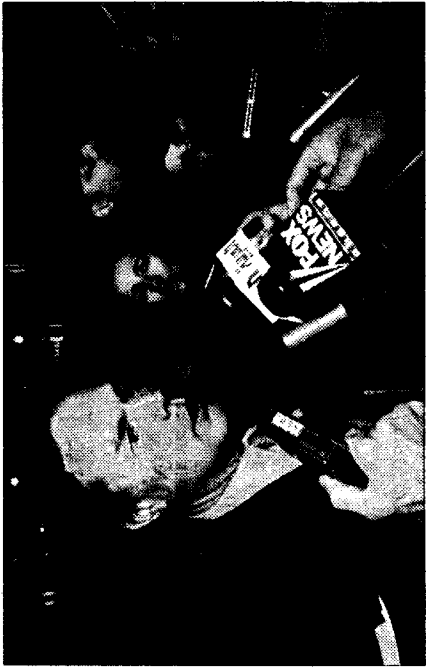
He reiterated that the six countries oppose Iran seeking a nuclear weapons capability and agree that Tehran is not complying with its international commitments and "is now traveling down a road toward enrichment and reprocessing which will be fundamentally detrimental to the interests of the world of nonproliferation and of peace and security." But serious differences remain on the best way to get Tehran to halt uranium enrichment.

The senior diplomats from the six countries agreed on a brief

statement which said their meeting "built on progress" at a London meeting of their foreign ministers on January 30.

"We share a deep concern that Iran has failed to respond positively to the IAEA resolution of February 4, continues enrichment and has ceased cooperation under the (IAEA) additional protocol" which allows surprise inspections, it said. "We will remain in close touch to finalise draft Security Council action."

Diplomats said the Russians and Chinese have not budged from their opposition to tough language in the proposed council statement including a demand for a report in 14 days on Iran's compliance with IAEA demands. Moscow and Beijing have said that is too short.



**Nicholas Burns, US Undersecretary of State, speaks to reporters after the UN Security Council meeting in New York. AP**

statement could be adopted after council discussions Tuesday afternoon. But US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns told reporters on Monday night that the senior diplomats from the six

countries needed more time for negotiations. "We remain convinced that we will achieve a presidential statement," Burns said. "It may take a little bit of time, but it's going to

As is (D) from 937



# 29 killed as rebels storm Iraq prison

## AGENCIES

Baghdad, March 21

INSURGENTS STORMED a jail around dawn on Tuesday in the Sunni Muslim heartland north of Baghdad, killing 19 police and a courthouse guard in a prison break that freed dozens of prisoners and left 10 attackers dead.

As many as 100 insurgents armed with automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades stormed the judicial compound in Muqadadiyah, about 60 miles northeast of the capital. The assault began after the attackers fired a mortar round into the police and court complex. At least 33 prisoners were freed in the jail break.

After burning the police station, the insurgents detonated roadside bombs as they fled, taking the bodies of many of their dead comrades with them, police said. At least 13 policemen and civilians and 15 gunmen were wounded.

Another roadside bomb later killed one policeman and wounded three in Baqouba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, authorities said. Five other police were wounded in two separate roadside bomb attacks targeting patrols in northern and southern Baghdad on Tuesday.

In Baghdad, a group of US senators met with interim Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari to discuss prospects for forming a national unity government, a step viewed as important in working toward peace and a withdrawal of US troops. Al-Jaafari predicted a new government would be ready in the coming weeks.

## Saddam minister was CIA informant

MONTHS BEFORE the Iraq war, Iraq's foreign minister gave the CIA more accurate information about Saddam Hussein's alleged unconventional weapons programme than the US agency had, for which he was paid more than \$100,000, said an NBC report.

Naji Sabri, for a short time beginning with a UN General Assembly in September 2002 was the highest-ranking Iraqi informant on the CIA's payroll. According to the sources, Sabri said Saddam had no significant biological weapons programme, wanted a nuclear bomb but needed much more time to build one than the several months the CIA had estimated, and had poison gas left over from the Gulf War. Sabri broke off contacts weeks after he repeatedly resisted CIA pressures to defect to the US and publicly renounce Saddam.

AFP, Washington

On Monday, 39 people were killed by insurgents and sectarian gangs, continuing the wave of violence that has left more than 1,000 Iraqis dead since the bombing last month of a Shia shrine. Police found the bodies of 15 people dumped around Baghdad. The discoveries marked the latest execution-style killings that have become an almost daily occurrence as Sunni and Shia rebels settle scores.

22 MAR 2006

THE INDUSTRIAL TIMES

# New biz boom: terror insurance

ROBERT F. Worth  
Baghdad, March 21

TWICE IN the past year, Mohammad Said has survived assassination attempts that left his car riddled with bullets. He works part time as a bodyguard for his father, a Baghdad city councilman, and helps a friend who has contracts with the US military. Both are very dangerous jobs.

So last month, Said, a baby-faced 23-year-old, did what a small but growing number of Iraqis are doing: He walked into the offices of the Iraq Insurance Company and bought a terrorism insurance policy. It looked like an ordinary life insurance policy, but with a one-page rider adding coverage for explosions caused by weapons of war and car bombs, assassinations and terrorist attacks.

It cost him 125,000 dinar, about \$90. The payout, if he dies, is five million dinar,



around \$3,500, or about what an Iraqi policeman earns in a year.

That guarantee appears to be the first off-the-shelf terrorism policy in the world, experts say. The payout is not a lot of money, even by Iraqi standards. But in a country where terrorism kills hundreds a month and no one can rely on the government to

provide for their relatives afterward, it seems to be an idea with a future.

The Iraq Insurance Company, a state-owned group, has sold about 200 terrorism policies in the last year, and is now negotiating with several government ministries and private companies for group policies.

Abbas Shaheed al-Taiee, the Iraq Insurance Company executive who came up with idea, said, "It is a kind of gift to the Iraqi people." Amazingly, the company has yet to pay out on a single claim. "We have sold policies in Dawra, Ramadi, Falluja," Shaheed said. "The contract seems to be a good luck charm."

He says the policy makes no distinctions between who fires the shots or detonates the bombs. He would be perfectly willing to insure an insurgent, though has not done so to his knowledge, he said.

The New York Times

# Iraqi leaders hopeful of forming coalition ✓

Militants fire mortars as Parliament opens ✓ Asia

Atul Aneja 10-13 ✓

**DUBAI:** Six weeks after its controversial elections, Iraq's Parliament convened on Monday amid signs that key political formations were still some distance away from an agreement over the formation of a coalition government. Without a decision on

a new government, the opening of Iraq's transitional National Assembly remained a ceremonial event. The Assembly session opened at 11.30 a.m. local time, with a reading of Koranic verses, and closed a few hours later without fixing a date for the next meeting.

All the 275 elected deputies

were sworn in during the session. The United Iraqi Alliance — a Shia grouping with 140 seats and the Kurdish alliance, with 75 seats, have been in discussions over the formation of a coalition government.

Iraqi officials have been hinting that the new government should be broad-based and include the Sunni community as well as representatives of the pro-U.S. Iraqiyah party of former interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, which secured only 40 seats in the Assembly.

In Monday's session, Mr. Allawi and interim President Ghazi al-Yawar said the process of government formation should include Sunnis, most of whom boycotted the January 30 elections.

Despite the obstacles, analysts point out that it is possible that the negotiating parties would arrive at a decision on a new government by the month-end. Mr. Jaafari, at the end of Monday's meeting predicted, "Within two weeks you will see the birth of a new government".

As the new Parliament met, Iraqi militants fired mortar rounds close to the venue in Baghdad's high security Green Zone. The explosion rattled windows of the convention centre where the Assembly had convened. In a related development, Italy, a staunch U.S. supporter so far, has signalled that it would begin withdrawing its forces from Iraq in September.

## Call for Rumsfeld to resign

Julian Borger and Jonathan Steele

**WASHINGTON/AMMAN:** A former U.S. army general on Sunday called for Donald Rumsfeld to resign on grounds of incompetence in Iraq, hours after Iyad Allawi, former U.S.-backed Iraqi Prime Minister, declared the country to be in the thick of a civil war that could soon "reach the point of no return". Three years after Iraq was invaded, statistics published on Sunday show that the frequency of militant bombings and group killings is growing, but both Mr. Rumsfeld, Defence Secretary, and (U.S. President) George Bush have vowed to fight on.

"Turning our backs on post-war Iraq today would be the modern equivalent of handing post-war Germany back to the Nazis," the

Defence Secretary wrote in a *Washington Post* commentary, as the administration tried to quell growing concern that the conflict was unravelling beyond Washington's control. Mr. Bush made a brief appearance on the White House lawn to say he was "encouraged" by progress on forming a unity government in Iraq. But he had no other good news to mark three years of a war in which more than 2,300 Americans have died, and which has so far cost \$500 billion.

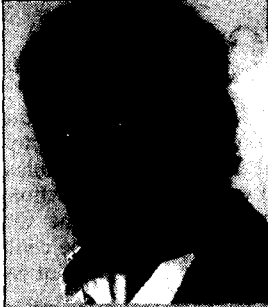
The U.S. commander in Iraq, General George Casey, said that the troop withdrawals he had forecast for this spring or summer might have to wait until the end of the year or even 2007. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006

21 MAR 2006

THE HINDU

# Iraq - three years of war

Three years after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, ethnic and sectarian violence is threatening to degenerate into a full-blown civil war. Religious strife could aggravate and draw surrounding countries into the conflict



■ **Business** Iraqis begin crackdown, Saddam captured and is awaiting trial

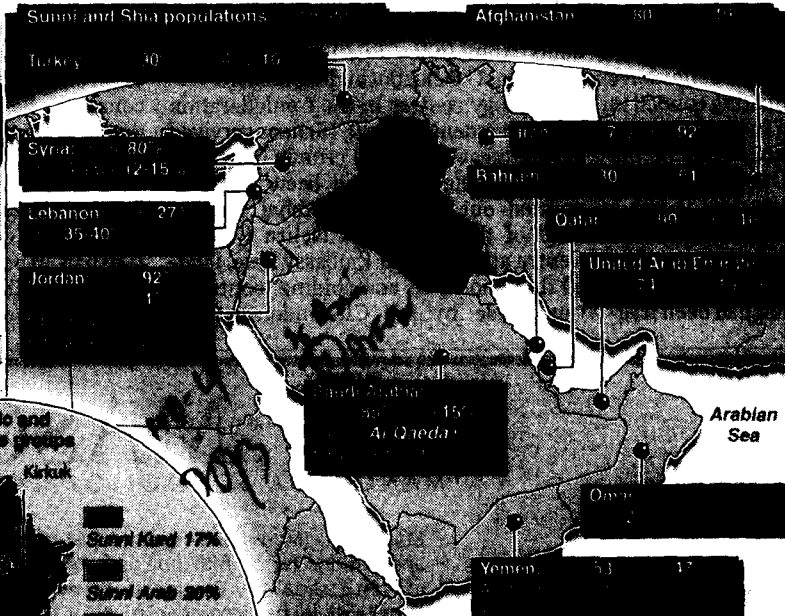
■ **Economy:** 1990-2003 - UN sanctions hold down GDP to between \$42-58bn/year

2003 World Bank est. \$15.3bn

2004 \$26.5bn

2005 \$26.3bn

CIA estimate 2004 GDP at \$69.8bn



Country	U.S. Casualties
U.S. occupation	3,111 killed, 17,000 wounded
United Kingdom	183
Italy	31
Ukraine	18
Poland	13
Spain	3
Sweden	3
France	1
Germany	1
Canada	1
South Korea	1
Japan	1
Other	1

■ **Infant mortality rate:** Deaths per 1,000 live births (2004)

2004	102
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■ **Unemployment rate:** 70%

One in five Iraqis live under poverty line which is defined as US\$1 per day per person

■ **Reconstruction:** Cost to U.S. taxpayers \$50 billion

■ **Oil production:** 2.4 million barrels per day

2005, Jan	760,000
2006, Jan	Up to 1.8 million
2006, Dec	1.1 million

■ **Cost of Iraq war:** President Bush requests extra \$72.4bn for 2006. Total cost to date to U.S. taxpayers \$315 billion

Projects planned	69
Completed	13

■ **Water and sanitation:** Only one in three Iraqis have access to clean drinking water - down from one in two pre-invasion

Projects planned	712
Completed	434

■ **Electricity:** Baghdad gets four hours of power each day - down from average of 16 hours a day pre-invasion

Demand	2040 megawatts
Pre-2003 capacity	4,400MW
Nov 2005 capacity	1,000MW
Year will serve about 1,000 homes	
Projects planned	616
Completed	253

■ **Security:** Bombs in Feb 22, 2004 in Baghdad

■ **Shia groups:** 38 groups, 100,000 members

■ **Flood to democracy:** Jul 2003: Iraq Governing Council chosen under U.S. supervision

Jun 2004: Governing Council dissolved to make way for interim government

Jan 2005: Election of assembly to draft Constitution is won by Islamist coalition. Most Sunnis fail to vote

Aug: Constitution adopted despite Sunni objections

Dec: Parliamentary elections give Shia United Iraq Alliance 128 seats - below two-thirds majority needed to rule without coalition partners



Mar 16, 2006: Parliament convenes - Sunnis and Kurds oppose nomination of Shia Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari

■ **Hostages:** More than 250 foreigners and thousands of Iraqis have been kidnapped. Fifty-five foreign hostages have been executed



Sources: World Bank, WHO, UNICEF, Oil & Gas Journal, United Nations Development Programme, ISS, Iraq Body Count.net, U.S. Department of Defense, mtrincweb.com, International Relations and Security Network, Congressional Research Service, U.S. Library of Congress, U.S. Government Accountability Office

# UN Iran talks: China offers compromise

EVELYN LEOPOLD  
UNITED NATIONS | MARCH 18

CHINA on Friday offered a compromise on a UN statement aimed at reining in Iran's nuclear ambitions, which Russia seems likely to back. At issue is a provision in the proposed text that would ask the head of the IAEA to report on whether Tehran had complied with its demands. It does not threaten sanctions.

Russia and China have argued the IAEA chief should first report to his board, which would diminish the role of the UNSC. But China's UN ambassador, Wang Guangya, said, before council members met on the Iran crisis, the report should be given to "both the IAEA and the Security Council" simultaneously. Diplomats, speaking on con-

## US sceptical of Iran offer on Iraq talks

WASHINGTON: White House National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley expressed scepticism on Friday about Iran's offer to talk to the United States about Iraq, saying it may be an attempt to divert pressure over Tehran's nuclear ambitions. Hadley told a group of reporters his concern was that the Iran offer was "simply a device by the Iranians to divert pressure that they are feeling in New York," where members of the UN Security Council are debating a statement aimed at reining in Iran's nuclear programme.

—Reuters

dition of anonymity, said Moscow might also accept that language.

Wang said Russia and China still had differences with a draft statement backed by the United States, Britain and France that expresses "serious concern" about Iran's nuclear programme and asks the IAEA to report on whether Tehran had complied with its demands. It does not threaten sanctions.

"We need to send a message ... that the Security Council is supporting reinforcing the role of the IAEA, not to replace or take it over from IAEA," Wang said.

British Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry agreed the main responsibility "has always been and should be with the IAEA" and that all concerned would get the report.

"But what the United Kingdom will not accept is that the Security Council should be fettered." —Reuters

19 MAR 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

# Top Iranian dissident released

SAEED KOMEIJANI  
TEHRAN | MARCH 18

IRAN'S most prominent political dissident, Akbar Ganji, has been released from prison after six years behind bars for criticising some of the most powerful figures in the Islamic Republic.

Ganji, a journalist, was jailed in 2000 after writing articles linking senior officials to the serial killings of political dissidents in 1998. His articles particularly targeted powerful cleric Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran's president from 1989 to 1997.

A cheerful but thin and heavily-bearded Ganji welcomed reporters into his Tehran apartment. He stuck to pleasantries and side-stepped politics. "Thanks for coming," he said,



grinning. "I am so sorry it is such a small place."

Ganji spent stints in solitary confinement and fell gravely ill in July, weakened by a hunger strike aimed at persuading authorities to release him. The case sparked outrage from the US and the EU.

Ganji, born in 1959, was a devoted follower of the 1979 Islamic revolution and served in the hardline Revolutionary Guards. He has been criticised for his propaganda work and his surveillance of Iranian student activities in Turkey. However, his political views changed sharply and his letters from prison broke two of Iran's biggest taboos, both criticising the system of clerical rule and levelling personal attacks on Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. —Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS

## ইরাকে আবার রণধ্বনি

তিন বছর আগে আধিকৃত হইলেও ইরাক যে এখনও মার্কিন আধিপত্যের কাছে নত হয় নাই, তাহা স্পষ্ট হইয়া গিয়াছে রাজধানী বাগদাদের অদূরে সামারায় শুরু করা নূতন অভিযানে। অভিযানের নাম দেওয়া হইয়াছে ‘অপারেশন সোয়ারমার’। তাহাতে যোগ দিয়াছে দেড় হাজার মার্কিন সৈন্য, পঞ্চাশটি যুদ্ধবিমান এবং দুই শত সাজোয়া গাড়ি। সঙ্গে অনির্দিষ্ট সংখ্যক ইরাকি ফৌজও। লক্ষ্য: সুন্নি গেরিলাদের ঘাঁটিগুলি ধ্বংস করা। অসম্ভব, তিন বছর ধরিয়া ক্রমাগত সংঘর্ষের পরও গেরিলাদের নিশ্চিহ্ন করা যায় নাই। এই অভিযানের ফলে তাহা সম্ভব হইবে, এমন আশাও কম। কেননা ইরাকের বিদ্রোহ আসলে গভীরতর রাজনৈতিক বাস্তবতার মধ্যে নিহিত, এক কথায় যাহার নাম— জাতীয় পরাধীনতা। এই পরাধীনতার কারণেই কখনও মুজাদা আল সদরের মতো শিয়া ধর্মীয় নেতা তাঁহার মেহদি বাহিনী লইয়া মার্কিন আধিপত্যকে চ্যালেঞ্জ জানান, কখনও গেরিলারা মানববোমা হইয়া পুলিশ লাইনে বিস্ফোরিত হয়। মার্কিন অভিযান তাই বিপুল ধ্বংস ও মৃত্যু সত্ত্বেও শেষ পর্যন্ত গেরিলা ঘাঁটি নিশ্চিহ্ন করিতে কত দূর সফল হইবে বলা শক্ত। গেরিলারা যদি আক্রান্ত হওয়ার অপেক্ষায় ঘাঁটিতেই বসিয়া থাকিবে, তবে আর তাহারা গেরিলা কীসের?

মার্কিন যুদ্ধযন্ত্রটি আপাতদৃষ্টিতে সমুন্নত ও অপরাজেয় হইলেও ইরাকের মরুবালুঝড়ে তাহা যে আকণ্ঠ নিমজ্জিত হইয়া পড়িয়াছে, তাহাতে আজ সন্দেহ নাই। অদূর ভবিষ্যতে ইরাকে মোতায়েন মার্কিন বাহিনীর ঘরে ফেরার সম্ভাবনাও যে দূরপরাহত, তাহাও এক প্রকার নিশ্চিত। কেননা ইরাকে বর্তমানে যে গৃহযুদ্ধের পরিস্থিতি বিরাজ করিতেছে, তাহাতে ইরাকিদের সেই যুদ্ধের জ্বলন্ত কটাহের মধ্যে ফেলিয়া চলিয়া আসাও অনৈতিক। বিশেষত শেষ বিচারে সেই গৃহযুদ্ধও যখন মার্কিন আগ্রাসনেরই পরিণাম, ঠিক যেমন গেরিলাদের জেহাদি সন্ত্রাসও ইরাকে মার্কিন আধিপত্যেরই প্রত্যক্ষ পরিণাম। ইরাকে কখনও জেহাদ বা সন্ত্রাসবাদের অস্তিত্ব ছিল না, মার্কিন আগ্রাসন ও আধিপত্যই তাহার জন্ম দিয়াছে। এখন বাগদাদ সহ দেশের সর্বত্রই যাহার যেখানে জোর, সে সেখানে অন্যকে মারিতেছে। সুন্নিপ্রধান প্রদেশগুলিতে শিয়ারা আক্রান্ত হইতেছে, শিয়াপ্রধান অঞ্চলে সুন্নিরা। এখনও পর্যন্ত কুর্দ জনজাতি সে ভাবে সুন্নি ক্রোধের শিকার হয় নাই, তবে যে-কোনও দিনই হইতে পারে। সুন্নি ক্রোধের কারণ মার্কিন পরিকল্পনা অনুযায়ী শিয়া ও কুর্দদের পশ্চিমি গণতান্ত্রিক শাসনপ্রণালী প্রবর্তনে শরিক হওয়া। এই প্রক্রিয়ায় যে সব রাজনৈতিক শাসক হিসাবে উঠিয়া আসিয়াছেন, ইরাকের জনসাধারণের মধ্যে তাঁহাদের গ্রহণযোগ্যতাও যৎসামান্য, পশ্চিমি রাষ্ট্রের নিশ্চিত্ত প্রবাসে তাঁহারা পাশ্চাত্য গণতন্ত্রে দীক্ষিত হইয়াছেন, যাহা মেসোপটেমিয়ার ঐতিহ্যের সহিত সাযুজ্যরহিত। মার্কিন বাহিনী মঞ্চ হইতে অপসৃত হইলেও এই গণতন্ত্র ও তাহার ইরাকি নায়কদের আঁতাকুড়ে নিষ্ক্ষেপিত হইবারই সম্ভাবনা।

দুর্ভাগ্যজনক হইলেও ইহাই ইরাকের বর্তমান বাস্তবতা, সম্ভবত আফগানিস্তানেরও। আফগানিস্তানে তালিবান জঙ্গিরা মার্কিন ক্রীড়নক হামিদ কারজাইয়ের বিপরীতে দেশপ্রেমিক শক্তি রূপে সাধারণ্যে বৈধতা পাইতে শুরু করিয়াছে। আর ইরাকে শিয়া বনাম সুন্নি গৃহযুদ্ধ সূচিত হইয়াছে। এত কাল সুন্নি গেরিলারা শিয়া জনপদে, মসজিদে, তীর্থস্থানে হামলা চালাইতেছিল। এখন শিয়া জঙ্গিরাও পাল্টা হামলায় সুন্নিদের হত্যা করিতেছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী ইব্রাহিম আল জাফারির সরকার সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ শিয়াপ্রধান জোটের, তাহারা শিয়া জঙ্গিদের প্রতি নরম মনোভাব গ্রহণ করিয়াছে। কাঁটা দিয়া কাঁটা তোলার সম্ভাবনায় মার্কিন বাহিনীর স্থানীয় সেনাপতিদের পক্ষেও শিয়া জঙ্গিদের উস্কানি দেওয়া, এমনকী প্রশিক্ষণ ও অস্ত্রশস্ত্র দেওয়াও অসম্ভব নয়। অতীতে ভিয়েতনামে, নিকারাগুয়ায়, চিলিতে, হন্ডুরাসে সি আই এ-র অনুরূপ কার্যকলাপের রেকর্ড আছে। সব মিলাইয়া ইরাক এক সমূহ মাৎস্যন্যায়ের মধ্যে পতিত। অপারেশন সোয়ারমার ‘সফল’ হইলেও সেই সফট সহসা ঘুচিবার সম্ভাবনা নাই। প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ ওয়াকার বুশ স্পষ্টতই বাঘের পিঠে সওয়ার হইয়াছেন, এখন সহসা নামিতেও পারিবেন না।

1 8 MAR 2006

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

**DEMOCRACY |** First session lasts just over 30 minutes, adjourned indefinitely as no agreement on speaker

# Deadlock at Iraq's first Parliament session

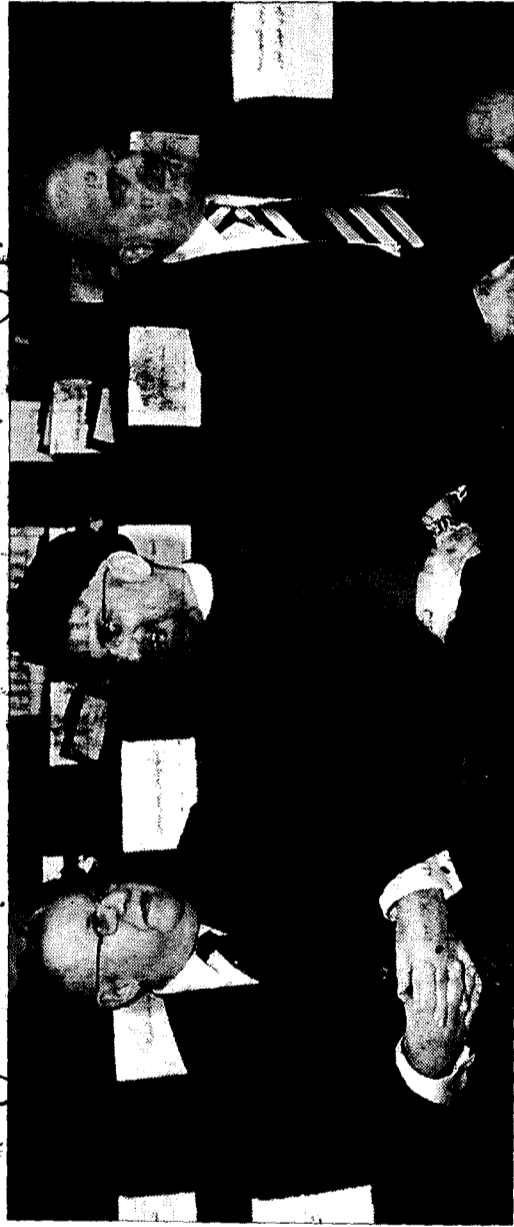
QASSIM ABDUL ZAHRA  
BAGHDAD, MARCH 16

**I**RAQ's new parliament was sworn in on Thursday with parties still deadlocked over the next government, vehicles banned from Baghdad's streets to prevent car bombings and the country under the shadow of a feared civil war.

The long-expected first session, which took place within days of the third anniversary of the US-led invasion, lasted just over 30 minutes and was adjourned indefinitely because there still was no agreement on a permanent speaker for the legislature and his deputies.

Members stood together and pledged to "preserve the independence and the sovereignty of Iraq and to take care of the interests of its people."

The head of the committee that drafted the constitution, Humam Hammoudi, then stood up and protested two words had been changed in the oath. But after brief



Shi'ite leader Adbul-Aziz al-Hakim (centre) with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani (left) and PM Ibrahim Jaafari before the start of the parliament in Baghdad on Thursday. AP

consultations, judicial officials agreed the wording was acceptable and the session adjourned until further notice.

Adnan Pachachi, the senior politician who administered the oath, spoke of a

country in crisis. "We have to prove to the world that a civil war is not and will not take place among our people," Pachachi told lawmakers. "The danger is still looming and the enemies are ready

for us because they do not like to see a united, strong, stable Iraq."

As Pachachi spoke, he was interrupted from the floor by senior Shi'ite leader Adbul-Aziz al-Hakim, who said

the remarks were inappropriate, to which he responded, "These are the duties of the council" of deputies—parliament's official name.

Acting PM Ibrahim al Jaafari told reporters after the brief session, "If politicians work seriously, we can have a government within a month". Al Jaafari's candidacy for a second term as prime minister is at the centre of the political logjam that delayed parliament's first session for over a month after the results of December 15 elections were approved.

Under the constitution, the largest parliamentary bloc, controlled by Shi'ites, has the right to nominate the prime minister. Al Jaafari won the Shi'ite nomination by a single vote last month.

Politicians involved in the negotiations have said part of the Shi'ite bloc, those aligned with al-Hakim, would like to see al Jaafari ousted but fear the consequences, given his backing from radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and al-Sadr's thousands-strong Mahdi Army. —AP



# Jaafari offers to quit Premier race

Differences among various parties hold back Iraqi government formation

Atul Aneja

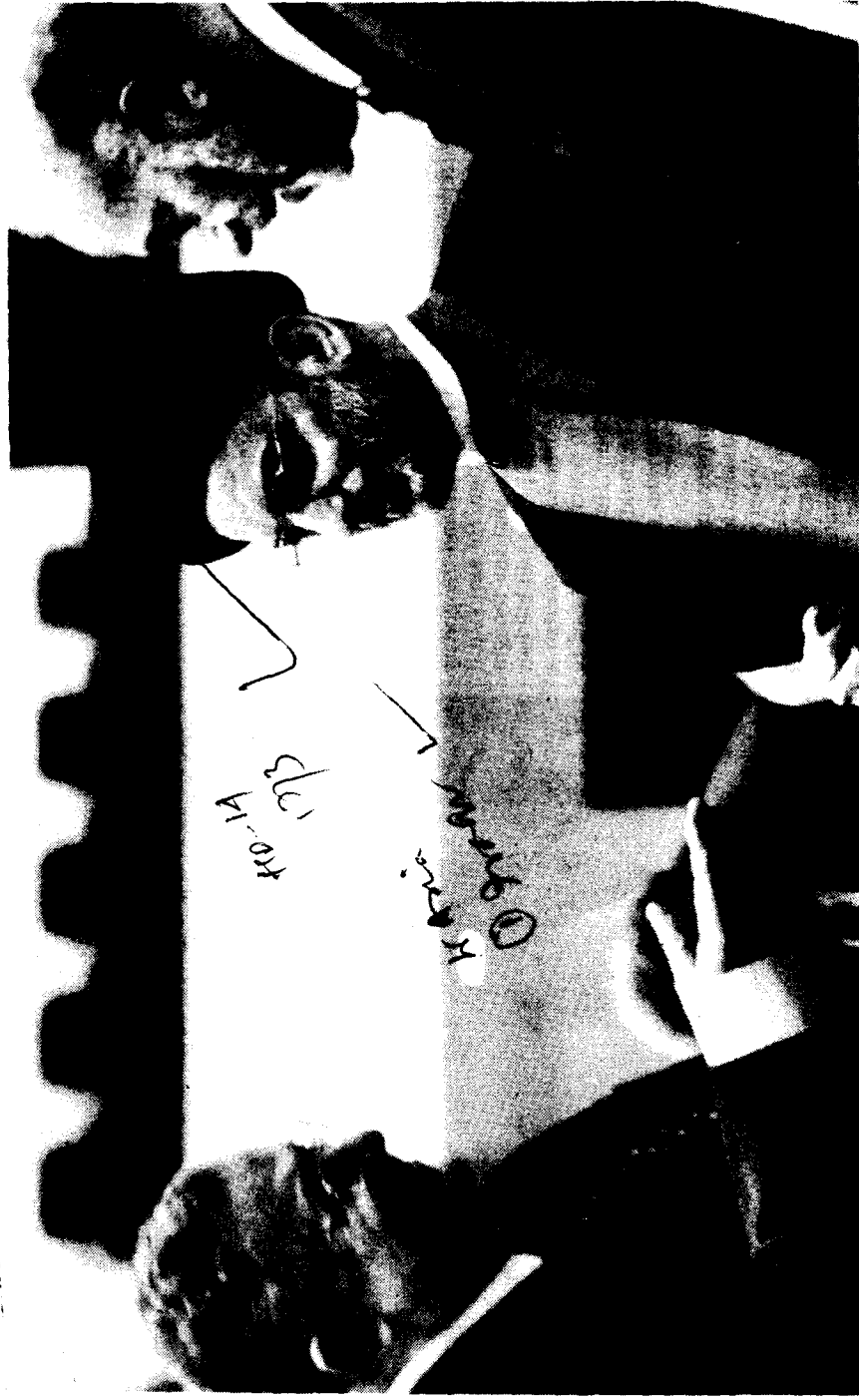
**DUBAI:** Iraq's Parliament has been sworn in, but differences among various parties are holding back the formation of a new government.

There has been stiff opposition to Ibrahim Jaafari, who has been chosen as the prime ministerial candidate by the United Iraqi Alliance — a Shia grouping which has got the maximum seats in the 275 member Assembly. The main Kurdish Alliance, whose support the UIA needs to form a stable government, had also opposed Mr. Jaafari's nomination earlier.

## Shifting position

Reports in the local Iraqi media suggest that the Kurdish Alliance might have shifted its position lately mainly due to the exertions of its leader Jalal Talabani, who is known to be close to Iran. During the inaugural session, which lasted only for 30 minutes, Mr. Jaafari said he would be willing to withdraw his name from premiership, if the people of Iraq wanted him to do so. The mandatory appointment of a Speaker did not take place.

With sectarian violence shooting up, the Americans are considering an alternative political arrangement that could end the crisis on the formation of government. According to the BBC, there has been an agreement in principle that a lead-



**MANY ISSUES ON HAND:** Shia leader Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim (centre), President Jalal Talabani (left), and Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari during the first session of Parliament in Baghdad on Thursday. — PHOTO: AP

ership council be formed that would include Sunnis who contested the elections under the banner of the Iraqi Accordance Front. The proposal has emerged, "partly because of heavy pressure from the U.S. Ambassador." The Americans have been advocating the formation of a "national unity" government, which would include Sunnis who contested the elections under the banner of the Iraqi Accordance Front. Against the backdrop of surging Sunni-Shia clashes, the Americans are pushing in nearly 1000 troops and tanks inside Iraq ahead of the conclusion of a major Shia festival.

# Iran for talks with U.S. on Iraq

Negotiations will be limited to resolving the problems in Iraq: Larijani

TEHERAN: Iran is willing to open a dialogue with the United States on Iraq, a senior official on Thursday said.

Iraqi Shia leader Abdul Aziz al-Hakim had urged Shia Iran to help resolve disputed issues in Iraq, apparently referring to U.S. accusations of meddling in the country, which is gripped by sectarian violence. Iran denies the charges.

"We will accept the proposal to help resolve the problems in Iraq and establish an independent government there as it was made by Mr. Hakim, a top Islamic leader in Iraq," said Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran Supreme National Security Council. Three months after elections, nego-

## Shia leader Abdul Aziz al-Hakim urged Iran to help resolve disputed issues in Iraq

tiations on forming a power-sharing government in Iraq are deadlocked as the country slides towards civil war. Mr. Larijani refused to comment on the time and level of talks.

Iranian officials had previously said Teheran was not interested in discussions before U.S. troops pulled out of Iraq. There was no immediate response from the U.S., which is leading diplomatic efforts to isolate Iran

over its nuclear ambitions. "The negotiations will be only on resolving the problems in Iraq," Mr. Larijani told reporters.

Iran has repeatedly been accused by the U.S. of allowing weapons and militants to cross its borders into Iraq. Teheran denies the allegations.

Mr. Hakim, a leader in the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, called on Iran to open talks with the United States.

Britain's *Sunday Times* said journalists in Teheran had been shown a letter that was purportedly from U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and which invited Iran to send representatives to talks in Iraq. — Reuters

17 MAR 2006

# West readies tough Iran statement

Press Trust of India

UNHQ, March 15. — In an effort to increase pressure on Iran, Britain and France, backed by the USA, circulated to ten non-permanent members a proposed tough statement they would like the UN Security Council to issue on Teheran the nuclear subject even as they were still trying to persuade the two veto wielding members, Russia and China, to support their plan.

Generally, the five permanent members go to the remaining ten only after they have come to an agreement among themselves. But Britain and France decided to circulate the proposed statement to the ten in the hope they would find an overwhelming support among them and that would increase the pressure on Russia and China to fall in line. Britain, France and the USA want the UNSC to call on Iran to end its uranium enrichment programme which they suspect is aimed at making nuclear weapons. Tehran strongly denies that and contends its aim is to produce fuel for its nuclear power plants. Diplomats said the draft also demands that a quick report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Iranian compliance with the Council demand which implies that it

could consider action if the IAEA presents adverse findings. But Russia and China would like the report to go to IAEA board first which could refer it to the Council. That would effectively take the issue away from the Council, something which the USA, Britain and France oppose.

Yesterday's was the first informal meeting of the whole Council. Till now, only the permanent five had been meeting. A statement requires agreement of all Council members and if the USA, Britain and France fail to persuade Russia and China, the only alternative they would have is to move a resolution and bring it vote.

In that case, Moscow and Beijing would have to either use veto or abstain. The meeting came even as Iranian Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei asserted that Teheran would not accept the demand to stop enriching uranium as it would impinge on its independence. Meanwhile, Iran today urged Russia and China in Teheran to defend its nuclear programme, adds AFP. Despite Iranian position that it would not agree to roll back its uranium enrichment programme, Moscow is having talks with Teheran to persuade it to station its enrichment facilities in Russia to reassure the international community that it does not plan to make nuclear weapons.

16 MAR 2006

THE STATESMAN

# 87 bodies found in Iraq, 'Qaida plot' foiled

**Baghdad:** Iraqi authorities discovered at least 87 corpses—men shot to death in execution-style—as Iraq edged closer to open civil warfare. Twenty-nine of the bodies, dressed only in underwear, were dug out of a single grave on Tuesday in a Shiite neighbourhood of Baghdad.

Some of the bloodshed appeared to be retaliation for a bomb and mortar attack in the Sadr City slum that killed at least 58 people and wounded more than 200 two days earlier.

Iraq's Interior Minister Bayan Jabr, meanwhile, said security officials had foiled a plot that would have put hundreds of Al Qaida men at critical guard posts around Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, home to the US and other foreign embassies, as well as the Iraqi government.

A senior Defence Ministry official said the 421 Al Qaida fighters were recruited to storm the US and British embassies and take hostages. Several ranking Defence Ministry of-

ficials have been jailed in the plot, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Defence Secretary Donald H Rumsfeld said on Tuesday that he had not received anything definitive on the report, but cautioned that earlier accounts are often adjusted later on.

"We've always known that there are people who have tried to infiltrate the various security forces and tried to get close access to places that they ought not to be," he said. "There's nothing new about that that I know of."

Police began unearthing bodies early on Monday, though the discoveries were not immediately reported. The gruesome finds continued throughout the day on Tuesday, police said, marking the second wave of sectarian retribution killings since bombers destroyed an important Shiite shrine last month.

In the mayhem after the golden dome atop the Askariya shrine in Samarra was destroyed on February

22, more than 500 people have been killed, many of them Sunni Muslims and their clerics. Dozens of mosques were damaged or destroyed.

Undermining the unease in the capital, Interior Ministry officials announced another driving ban, from 8 pm on Wednesday to 4 pm on Thursday to protect against car and suicide bombs while the Iraqi parliament meets for the first session since the December 15 election.

After the driving ban was announced, the Cabinet said Thursday would be a holiday in the capital, presumably because residents would not be able to get to work.

The most gruesome find on Tuesday of the 29 bodies dressed only in underwear was made after police, acting on a tip, discovered a grave in an empty field in Kamaliyah, a mostly Shiite east Baghdad suburb, Interior Ministry official Lieutenant Colonel Falah al-Mohammedawi said. He estimated the victims were

killed about three days ago before the Sadr City attack on Sunday evening. Residents watched, some covering their eyes in horror, others offering scarves and newspapers to cover the bodies as they were pulled from the grave. An abandoned minibus containing 15 other bodies was found earlier on the main road between two mostly Sunni west Baghdad neighbourhoods not far from where another minibus containing 18 bodies was discovered last week, al-Mohammedawi said.

At least 40 more bodies were recovered elsewhere in Baghdad, in both Sunni and Shiite neighbourhoods, al-Mohammedawi said. Police found three other corpses dumped in the northern city of Mosul.

Rumsfeld hinted that US troop levels may increase slightly in Iraq in the coming days because of pilgrimages connected to the Ashura holiday. Increased attacks marked the celebration during 2004 and 2005. AP



An Iraqi boy climbs on a wall after a recent mortar attack inside a school ground in Baghdad

# Iran to build second nuclear power plant

Ahmadinejad says Teheran will not back down

**TEHERAN:** Iran is to start work in the next six months on a second nuclear power station, the Energy Minister said in comments published on Monday, amid increasing tension with the West over its atomic programme.

"We have received the plans of (Iran's atomic energy chief) Gholam Reza Aghazadeh and the authorisation to start building the power station," said Energy Minister Parviz Fattah in comments published in local newspapers.

"We are expecting to start the construction of the power station in the next six months," he said.

## String of delays

Iran is building its first civilian nuclear power station near the southern city of Bushehr with Russian help but the project has been hit by a string of delays. Iran vowed on Monday to press on with its nuclear activities and played down the threat of sanctions ahead of a key U.N. Security Council meeting on the country's atomic programme.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said: "We know well that a country's backing down one iota on its undeniable rights is the same as losing everything. We will not bend to a few countries' threats as their demands for giving up our nation's rights are unfair and cruel," state television quoted him as saying. — AP

## Two-week deadline in Iran confrontation

The United States and Europe want the U.N. Security Council to give Iran a two-week deadline to halt suspect nuclear work or face possible sanctions. Iran has warned the U.S. that it could inflict "harm and pain" to match whatever punishment the Security Council decides to inflict



**Cut off exports:** OPEC's second biggest oil producing nation could squeeze oil markets by reducing exports. *Europe, China and India* would feel cuts immediately  
**► Such a move would hurt Iran's economy as much as it would damage the United States**

**Cause turmoil in the West Asia:**  
**► Lebanon:** Iran has heavy influence with militant group *Hezbollah*  
**► Palestine:** Ties with Islamic militant group *Hamas* and *Islamic Jihad*  
**► Iraq:** Believed to have sway over powerful Shia groups and has sent elements of its *Revolutionary Guard*

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**Military action:** Threat of invasion remains a powerful tool

**Airstrikes:** Could target Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Operation would have to take out multiple sites, some hidden underground  
**► Even a limited strike would be highly unpopular with U.S. allies**

**Sanctions:** Push for economic and political sanctions through U.N. Security Council. A travel ban or asset freeze against top officials could severely isolate Teheran's regime  
**► Sanctions are difficult to enforce. Russia and China — Security Council members with veto power — oppose such moves**

## Russia, Iran to resume talks

Vladimir Radyuhin

Minister Sergei Lavrov has said.

**MOSCOW:** Russia and Iran will hold more talks on Teheran's nuclear programme in the near future, Russian Foreign

"Iran again proposed holding consultations, and these will take place," Mr. Lavrov told reporters on Monday.

# Iran not considering Russian plan

Atul Aneja

*K. Aneja*  
DUBAI: Iran said on Saturday it was no longer considering the Russian nuclear proposal to ease tensions surrounding its atomic energy programme and hinted that it might withdraw from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"The Russian proposal is not on our agenda any more," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said on the sidelines of an international energy conference in Teheran. His assertion follows the decision by the 35-member International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board that the United Nations Security Council should take up Iran's case.

Mr. Asefi said: "The situation has changed. We should wait and see how developments will go on among different states, includ-

ing the five permanent members of the Security Council."

Russia and Iran had been holding talks on the enrichment of uranium on Russian soil. But on March 7, Russia and the U.S. rejected an Iranian compromise offer to limit itself to small-scale enrichment of uranium under international supervision for research purposes alone.

On Wednesday, the IAEA forwarded its assessment report on Iran's nuclear status to the Security Council, following three years of inconclusive inspections.

Threatening possible withdrawal from the NPT in the future, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said: "If we reach a point where the existing mechanisms do not provide for the right of the Iranian people, then the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran would be

possibly revised and reconsidered ... At the moment we believe that there is a chance for different sides to continue the negotiations."

Iranian officials have so far given mixed signals on whether they would use the "oil weapon" in response to western pressures on the nuclear issue.

Iranian media quoted Interior Minister Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi as saying that Iran, the fourth largest producer of oil in the world, could bring oil supplies into the nuclear equation if subjected to sanctions.

Mr. Mottaki, however, observed that Iran would keep up its energy supplies to Asia. "The Islamic republic of Iran is determined to be a reliable and effective energy supplier for Asian countries and not to use oil to implement its foreign policy."

Meanwhile, the five veto-

wielding permanent members of the Security Council had a "private meeting" on Friday at which they discussed Iran. All its 15 members are expected to discuss the issue next week.

## Open to negotiations

AFP reports:

Mr. Asefi told public television in Teheran that the Russian compromise proposal on its nuclear programme could still be negotiated, as long as it acknowledged Iran's right to enrich uranium on home soil.

"As for the Russian proposal, if it considers Iran's right to conduct [nuclear] research on its soil, it can be a topic of negotiation, because the right to conduct research in Iran is the Islamic republic's right that we neither want to give up nor will do," he said.

THE HINDU

## SADDAM TRIAL RESUMES

# Prosecutor for prompt hanging

Agence France Presse

BAGHDAD, March 12. — The trial of Saddam Hussein and seven co-defendants resumed today with the chief prosecutor calling for the prompt hanging of any found guilty. Saddam is on trial for crimes against humanity in connection with the killing of 148 villagers from Dujail, north of Baghdad, after he escaped an assassination attempt there in 1982.

As the trial resumed after an 11-day suspension, just one of the accused, Mizher Abdullah Kadam al-Roweed, a small-time former Baath party official from Dujail, was in court to offer testimony as to his role in the massacre. All the defence lawyers also attended the hearing, the 15th since the trial began in October.

Speaking just hours earlier on Iraqi state-television, the Iraqi High Tribunal's chief prosecutor, Mr Jaafar Mussawi, said Saddam would hang immediately without undergoing further trials if found guilty and sentenced to death in the present case.

"If the court passes a death sentence on any of the defendants in the Dujail case, the law is clear, the sentence must be carried out within 30 days following the appeal," Mr Mussawi said.

"As for other cases (in which they have been charged), the court will only judge living defendants as those executed cannot be tried," he added.

Saddam and others have also been charged in connection with other crimes, including the use of poison gas during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq against Iraqi Kurds in Halabja, in the north of the country, and the crushing of a Shi'ite revolt in the south of the country following the 1991 Gulf War.

AP 110 2006

THE STATESMAN

# জোর খাটালে তেলই হবে অস্ত্র, হুমকি দিল ইরান

তেহরান, ১১ মার্চ: পরমাণু কর্মসূচি নিয়ে বেশি জোর খাটালে ইরান তেলকেই হাতিয়ার করবে। ইরানের স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী মোস্তাফা পোরমহম্মদি এই হুমকি দিলেন আজ। তিনি সাক্ষ জানালেন, “পরমাণু প্রসঙ্গ নিয়ে রাজনীতি হলে ইরান যে কোনও কিছুকেই হাতিয়ার করবে। আমরা তেলে ও গ্যাসে সমৃদ্ধ। বিশ্বে তেল সরবরাহ ব্যবস্থার সব চেয়ে বড় নিয়ন্ত্রক আমরাই। তাই ইরানের উপর কোনও রকম নিষেধাজ্ঞা চাপিয়ে দিলে আমাদের যতটা লোকসান হবে, তার চেয়ে অনেক বেশি ক্ষতি হবে বিশ্বের অন্যান্য দেশের।”

ইরানের পক্ষে তেলকে হাতিয়ার করাটা স্বাভাবিক ও প্রত্যাশিত হলেও, লক্ষণীয় ভাবে, এ পর্যন্ত অভিযোগের চাপান-উতোর মোটামুটি সীমাবদ্ধ ছিল তাদের পরমাণু কর্মসূচি নিয়েই। এতটা সরাসরি ‘তেলাস্ত্র’ প্রয়োগের হুমকি এই প্রথম। এ দিকে ইরানে ইউরেনিয়াম পরিশোধন কী ভাবে বন্ধ করানো যাবে সেই বিষয়ে আমেরিকা এখনও রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের বাকি ৪ স্থায়ী সদস্যকে এক মত করে উঠতে পারেনি। গত কাল এই প্রসঙ্গে নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের দ্বিতীয় বৈঠক থেকেও বেরিয়ে আসেনি বিবৃতির কোনও অভিন্ন বয়ান।

আমেরিকা, ব্রিটেন ও ফ্রান্স চায় ইউরেনিয়ামের পরিশোধন বন্ধ করার জন্য ইরানকে কড়া নির্দেশ দিক নিরাপত্তা পরিষদ। এ ব্যাপারে সময়সীমা নির্দিষ্ট করে দেওয়ারও পক্ষপাতী এই তিন দেশ। কিন্তু রাশিয়া ও চীন অতটা কড়া পদক্ষেপ চাইছে না। তাদের আশঙ্কা, নিরাপত্তা পরিষদ কড়া বিবৃতি দিলে তার বিরূপ প্রতিক্রিয়াও হতে পারে। ইরান হয়তো তাতে আরও কট্র অবস্থান নিতে পারে তাদের পরমাণু কর্মসূচির ব্যাপারে। দু’রকম মত উঠে আসায়, বিষয়টি নিয়ে আরও আলোচনা চালাবে নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের স্থায়ী পাঁচ সদস্য। আশা করা হচ্ছে, এই পাঁচ দেশের একমতের ভিত্তিতে আগামী সপ্তাহে হয়তো কোনও বিবৃতি জারি করতে পারে নিরাপত্তা পরিষদ।

যদিও বিবৃতি জারির আগে নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের অস্থায়ী ১০ সদস্য দেশের সঙ্গেও আলোচনা করে নেওয়া হবে। যদিও কূটনীতিকদের মতে, সেটা নিছকই আনুষ্ঠানিকতা। মোকদ্দা বিষয়টা নির্ভর করছে ভেটো দেওয়ার অধিকারী পাঁচ রাষ্ট্র একমত হয়ে বিবৃতির বয়ান চূড়ান্ত করতে পারছে কি না, তার উপর। কারণ, নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে দ্বিতীয় দফার বৈঠকের আগেই রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ নিযুক্ত মার্কিন রাষ্ট্রদূত জন বলটন জানিয়ে রেখেছেন, ইরানকে ধামাতে প্রয়োজনে অন্য পথে হাটবে বশ প্রশাসন। — পি টি আই, রয়টার্স



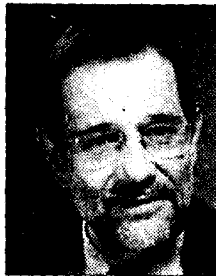
# EU discuss Iran's nuke programme

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALZBURG, MARCH 10

EU's foreign ministers were to take stock on Friday of international efforts to get Iran to resolve concerns over its nuclear programme.

A senior EU official cautioned sanctions may lay ahead. "At a later stage, sanctions of some kind can't be excluded. Let's wait and see what the Security Council does," the EU's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana was



Javier Solana

quoted as saying by the Austrian daily *Der Standard* in an interview published on Friday.

"We are only at the begin-

ning. I don't exclude sanctions but it depends on the type of sanctions. We certainly don't want to target the Iranian people," said Solana.

French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy urged Iran on Friday to return rapidly to "reason" as the standoff

over its nuclear programme moved to the Council.

"The hand is extended. Negotiations are possible," Douste-Blazy said on RTL radio in France. "Iran

must understand that it has no choice. It has the right to civilian nuclear energy, it does not have the right to something else."

## US views Iranian dispute as test for UNSC

UNITED NATIONS: US views Iran's disputed nuclear weapons programme as a test for the UN Security Council that should be addressed urgently but in a cautious and deliberate manner, US Ambassador John Bolton said on Thursday.

"This is a test for the Council. And if the Iranians do not back off from their continued aggressive pursuit of nuclear weapons, we will have to make a decision of what the next step will be." "We're confronted with a threat here as Iran pursues not only nuclear weapons, but the capability through increasingly longer-range and more accurate ballistic missiles...that is very dangerous," he said. "So we have a responsibility in the Council to try and deal with that threat." —AP

11 MAR 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

**ENRICHMENT |** Tehran says it won't be bullied into abandoning its pursuit of nuclear energy

# Iran rejects IAEA decision as 'unjust'

AGENCIES

TEHRAN, MARCH 9

**I**RAN on Thursday rejected as "unjust" a decision by the UN nuclear watchdog agency to refer its nuclear programme file to the UN Security Council, and said it won't be bullied into abandoning its pursuit of nuclear energy.

"The people of Iran will not accept coercion and unjust decisions by international organisations," Iranian television quoted hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as saying during a visit to Iran's western province of Lorestan. "Enemies cannot force the Iranian people to relinquish their rights. The era of bullying and brutality is over," he told a crowd of supporters.

On Wednesday, the 35-nation board of the IAEA concluded a three-day meeting in Vienna on Iran's nuclear programme, formally opening the path to Security Council action. Soon after, IAEA chief Mohamed Elbaradei sent a February 27 report on Iran's status to the Council. The Security Council was expected to debate the issue next week.

Tehran's newspapers published news of the agency's decision on the front pages of their Thursday editions, but only the official Persian-language daily *Iran* had a comment on the latest development. The IAEA decision, it said in an editorial, was "a message of weakness and failure" by the organisation.

The US has warned of "meaningful consequences" if Iran does not back away from



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

an international confrontation over its nuclear programme to develop nuclear fuel that could be used for weapons.

Washington and its European allies want Iran to give up altogether uranium enrichment, a technology that can be used to produce nuclear fuel to generate electricity or materials for a nuclear bomb. Iran has rejected the demand, saying it will never give up its right under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to enrich uranium and produce nuclear fuel.

Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Wednesday that imposing UN Security Council sanctions on Iran would be ineffective in convincing Tehran to curb its nuclear ambitions. Sergei Lavrov told reporters after meeting UN Secretary-General Kofi An-

nan that he opposed military action and questioned any measures the West might propose in the Council.

He said that imposing UN Security Council sanctions on Iran would be ineffective in convincing Tehran to curb its nuclear ambitions.

Several hours after he spoke, the five permanent members of the Council met to discuss a statement that UK, France and the US are preparing for possible adoption next week. The statement was to have asked for a report from the IAEA in 30 days on whether Iran had cooperated with UN nuclear and suspended its atomic activities, diplomats said. But one envoy said Britain now wanted a 14-day deadline while no immediate decision had been reached among the five.

# Iran's tactics may be bad diplomacy

Tehran, March 9

GRUDGINGLY ADMIRING in the past by the West for its negotiating skills, Iran may have misjudged its recent confrontational tactics in the nuclear standoff.

Miscalculating both its own bargaining strength and world resolve on the nuclear issue has weakened Iran's familiar blend of brinkmanship and conciliation, diplomats and analysts say.

But despite its apparently uncompromising stance, Iran is risk-averse and will probably redouble efforts to defuse the dispute in the coming weeks, they add.

"The regime is ultimately cautious and tends to prefer a controlled crisis as opposed to full confrontation," said a senior European Union diplomat in Tehran.

"The problem is, they've been so explicit about their red lines and what they won't concede on that

UK taking Tehran's threat seriously

■ Britain said on Thursday it was taking seriously threats from Iran that it could inflict "pain" to match any measures the UN Security Council takes to punish Tehran for refusing to halt its disputed nuclear work. "There has been nothing explicit but it is a thinly veiled threat to use violence," said a British official. Iran's comments, following a meeting by the UN's nuclear watchdog which agreed to send the dispute over Iran's nuclear

programme to the Council, fuelled speculation that Iran may help Iraqi insurgents target western troops in Iraq. The five nations with veto power intend to meet again on Friday before the Iran issue is referred to the full UN Security Council next week. But Russia seemed to rule out tough council measures. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said sanctions against Iran would be ineffective and military action was not a solution. Reuters

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took office in August.

"With (former top negotiator Hassan) Rohani there was more of a dialogue. He was very keen to know how we would react if Iran did this or that," said another senior Western diplomat.

"With the new team it's more of a monologue. We just shout our

prepared statements at each other and leave," he said. Explicit threats issued by Iran on Wednesday to inflict "harm and pain" on Washington and possibly to curb oil exports, do more harm than good, analysts said.

"Everyone knows what Iran can do to harm Western interests if it chooses, but by saying these things they will only goad the Americans into tougher action," said one Iranian political analyst, who asked not to be named.

President Ahmadinejad's threats to "wipe Israel off the map" and comments doubting the scale of the Holocaust have solidified Western views, closing differences Iran had earlier exploited.

And, as the failed attempts to strike a deal with Russia over uranium enrichment showed, even sympathetic nations have grown sceptical about Iran's ploys, diplomats said. Reuters

# Iran set to face UN Security Council rap

**Vienna:** The United States and European allies said on Wednesday that Iran's nuclear intransigence left the world no choice but to ask for Security Council action, as the International Atomic Energy agency's 35-nation board focused on Teheran's refusal to freeze uranium enrichment.

The meeting is in effect the last step before the Security Council begins to consider Iran's nuclear activities and fears they could be misused to make weapons. It began with both Iran and nations which oppose its enrichment plans sticking to their positions, reflecting deadlock that has led the IAEA board to call on the UN Security Council to get involved.

"The time has now come for the Se-



**Supporters hold a picture of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as they listen to his speech in western Iran on Wednesday**

curity Council to act," declared Gregory Schulte, the US delegate to the IAEA. He listed Iran's decision to curtail agency inspections, its expanding uranium enrichment programme and worrying conclusions by IAEA inspectors that suggest at least past interest in nuclear arms, as contributing to "mounting international concerns" about Teheran's nuclear intentions.

"Iran has still not come clean," he said, listing Teheran's possession of plans that could only be used to make nuclear warheads, link between its nuclear programmes and

the military and its determination to develop a large-scale enrichment programme that could be misused to make nuclear arms. Agencies

09 MAR 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

March 9, 2006

## Threats Rattle at Nuclear Meeting on Iran

By ELAINE SCIOLINO

VIENNA, March 8 — Negotiating over Iran's nuclear program has come to resemble an endless session of global poker. In the latest round, played Wednesday in the boardroom of the international nuclear agency here, distrust beat diplomacy.

The Iranian side upped the ante by blaming the United States for Iran's predicament — consideration of its nuclear activities in the United Nations Security Council next week — and threatened retaliation.

"The United States may have the power to cause harm and pain," Javad Vaeedi, a senior Iranian nuclear negotiator, told reporters at the end of the meeting. "But it is also susceptible to harm and pain. So if the United States wants to pursue that path, let the ball roll."

The threat did not seem to be an off-hand remark. The threat was contained, in almost the same wording and with the same mixed metaphor, in Iran's speech to the 35-nation board of the International Atomic Energy Agency and in a separate formal statement. In Iran meanwhile, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vowed that those who wanted to "violate the rights of the Iranian nation will quickly regret their actions."

But underscoring the fluid nature of Iran's policy making, even Iran's envoy in Vienna dodged when asked what letting the ball roll meant — perhaps using oil as a weapon or destabilizing the region, for example. Ali Asghar Soltanyeh, Iran's ambassador to the agency, said the matter would be "carefully" studied back home.

Wednesday's meeting was Iran's last chance to promise to curb its nuclear activities and avoid judgment by the Security Council.

Last month, the agency voted by an overwhelming majority to report Iran's case for judgment to the Security Council, but gave Iran a grace period of one final month to take remedial steps before the Security Council would take action.

Instead of giving in, Iran held firm to its position that it had the sovereign right to continue to make small amounts of nuclear fuel for research purposes at its vast uranium enrichment plant at Natanz.

Consideration of the Iran case by the agency on Wednesday was a diplomatic ritual. It came toward the end of the regularly scheduled quarterly session of the board, in which several nuclear issues were discussed. A number of board members, as well as Iran, delivered speeches on Iran's nuclear crisis, but no formal resolution was introduced.

Iran's oil minister, Kazem Vaziri-Hamaneh, delivered a very different message in Tehran. He assured an edgy oil market that Iran would continue to export crude even if economic sanctions were imposed. His

remarks underscored the fluid nature of Iran's policy making.

Noting that sanctions "could affect" the oil market and raise prices, "it will not affect our decision to continue our supply," he told reporters on the fringes of a meeting of OPEC oil ministers. "Oil flow is continuing. The exports will not be stopped."

But the Bush administration was quick to focus on Iran's threats. "Provocative statements and actions only further isolate Iran from the rest of the world," the White House spokesman, Scott McClellan, said in New Orleans.

Iran's threats came a day after Vice President Dick Cheney declared, without any specifics, that the Security Council would "impose meaningful consequences" on Iran if it proceeded with uranium enrichment activities. He did not indicate how he was able to predict the outcome of Security Council deliberations before the body even met.

The Bush administration's envoy to the nuclear agency, Gregory L. Schulte, kept up the fierce tone on Wednesday, telling reporters, "The leadership in Tehran has thus far chosen a course of flagrant threats and phone negotiation."

Uncertainty about Iran's intentions, coupled with persistent threats from Washington about punitive measures against Iran, prompted pleas for caution and a return to negotiations.

"Everybody is looking forward to a political settlement," Mohamed ElBaradei, the agency's director and the most recent recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, told reporters Wednesday in Vienna at the end of the meeting on Iran. He added: "What we need at this stage is cool-headed approaches. We need for people to lower the rhetoric."

Dr. ElBaradei called on Iran to resolve outstanding issues of concern and restore the world's confidence "to get out of the hole that we're in today."

He underscored that in the long term, the United States held the key to building Iran's trust with the world. Stressing that it was a personal view, he said that once security issues began to be discussed with Iran, "the U.S. should be engaged into a dialogue."

In Washington, R. Nicholas Burns, under secretary of state for political affairs, said action against Iran in the Security Council would start early next week.

The first step will be a "strong statement" about Iran, which means a statement by the Council president that lacks the force of a formal resolution. But Mr. Burns said that if the Iranian government did not "accede to the wishes of the international community, then of course we would have to look at possible targeted sanctions, which a number of countries are already beginning to explore."

The sanctions "will be specifically targeted to pressure the regime and Iran's nuclear and missile programs, rather than hurting the great majority of innocent Iranians," he said.

The outcome of Wednesday's meeting was a setback for Russia, which is opposed to using the Security Council as a vehicle to punish Iran. In recent days, Russia floated — then withdrew under American pressure — a face-saving proposal to restart negotiations that would have allowed Iran to conduct some small-scale uranium enrichment eventually.

In his speech to the board on Wednesday, Russia's ambassador, Grigory V. Berdennikov, called on Iran to "fully cooperate" with the nuclear agency "without delay" so that its case could be dealt with in a "normal, routine" way inside the I.A.E.A.

The Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, said Wednesday after meeting with the United Nations secretary general, Kofi Annan, that "I don't think sanctions as a means to solve a crisis has ever achieved a goal in the recent history."

March 8, 2006

## Small-Scale Atomic Research by Iran Is Risky, Experts Say

By WILLIAM J. BROAD

There are times when even a little bit of research can be a bad thing, especially if it centers on Iran and the bomb.

On Tuesday, a wide range of nuclear scientists and analysts faulted as dangerous Moscow's tentative proposal to let Tehran do small amounts of research on uranium enrichment, with some comparing it to being a little bit pregnant.

"After a while, you tend to wind up having a baby," said Peter D. Zimmerman, a professor of science and security in the war studies department of King's College, London. "I do not believe the Iranians should have any access to enrichment technology until they prove to be a more responsible partner than they've been so far."

The Iranians have strenuously objected to such characterizations, saying the West wants to deprive them of atomic knowledge and expertise that they have a right to acquire for a peaceful program of nuclear power.

They see it as nothing less than a devious plot by outside powers to keep their country from modernizing. In an interview with Al Arabiya television last month, for example, Ali Larijani, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, said, "The problem is that they look at the Islamic nations as being inferior, that we should not have modern technology, and it is enough for us to produce tomato paste and mineral water."

On Monday, European officials described a Russian proposal in which Iran would agree to a moratorium on production of enriched uranium on an industrial scale but would eventually be allowed to pursue what it calls its small-scale "research and development." On Tuesday, Russian officials denied that the proposal had ever circulated. But officials think the idea is certain to resurface.

The proposal as described appears to refer to Iran's work at Natanz, where it is building a prototype plant that would hold 1,000 centrifuges and an industrial-scale one that would hold 50,000 machines. Centrifuges are tall, thin devices whose rotors spin extraordinarily fast to enrich a toxic gas in uranium's rare component, uranium 235, which can then be used to fuel nuclear reactors or atom bombs.

The nuclear scientists and analysts said the research plant of 1,000 centrifuges would pose no immediate threat of weapon making if it were enriching natural uranium. To enrich enough natural uranium for a single nuclear warhead, they said, the plant's 1,000 centrifuges would have to operate around the clock for two or three years.

But the calculus would change significantly, they said, if Iran acquired uranium that had already



undergone some minimal enrichment and fed that into the prototype plant.

On the face of it, that sounds like an exaggeration. After all, nuclear reactors operate on fuel containing only about 4 percent uranium 235, whereas nuclear weapons require levels of 90 percent or higher. Thus, Iran's diverting fuel for a nuclear reactor into the research plant would seem to give it hardly any advantage in making nuclear arms.

Not so, the analysts said. They explained that enrichment worked under laws that are highly complex and nonlinear. Thus, it takes more energy to enrich natural uranium to a level of 4 percent than it does to go from 4 percent to 90 percent.

For Iran's research plant, that kind of nonlinearity could translate into a great reduction in the time needed to produce a bomb. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, a respected arms analysis group in London, has calculated that the 1,000 centrifuges, if spinning low-enriched uranium, could make fuel for a bomb not in years but in as little as 108 days.

David Albright and Corey Hinderstein of the Institute for Science and International Security, a private research group in Washington, have found that as few as 500 Iranian centrifuges spinning low-enriched uranium could produce weapons-grade fuel for a bomb in just six months.

Could Iran, if it had international approval to go ahead and do centrifuge research, also gain access to a supply of low-enriched uranium, clandestinely or otherwise?

The analysts said that was quite possible. Iran already has a number of research reactors running on low-enriched uranium and, with the Russians, is building a very large nuclear power plant at Bushehr that will use more than a hundred tons of it, though that will be under international safeguards. Tehran also has a long history of buying atomic materials on the global black market.

"It's reasonable to be concerned about this issue," said Gary Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, a research organization in Washington. "Once a country is operating 1,000 centrifuges, you have to worry about the possibility that they could quickly make a bomb."

Elaine Sciolino contributed reporting from Vienna for this article.

# ElBaradei hopeful of deal

Iran says it will not give up right to small-scale enrichment

**VIENNA:** The chief of the United Nations nuclear watchdog, Mohamed ElBaradei, said on Monday he hoped an agreement could be reached soon to ease Western fears over Iran's nuclear programme and avert punitive U.N. action.

As his International Atomic Energy Agency opened a meeting here that could lead to international sanctions against Teheran, Mr. ElBaradei talked of a deal in around a week on the issue of Iran doing small-scale uranium enrichment.

## Hectic diplomacy

He said there was frantic diplomatic activity to try to get Teheran and the European Union back to the negotiating table. "The sticking point remains the question of the centrifuge-related R and D (research and development)," he told reporters. "That issue is still again being discussed this week and I'm still very much hopeful that in the next week or so an agreement could be reached."

The Iran dossier is at the top of the agenda at the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors — although it is unlikely to be discussed until Tuesday — amid Western fears that it is secretly



**UNFLINCHING SUPPORT:** Women raise slogans in support of nuclear programme in Teheran on Sunday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

working on making nuclear weapons. A deal on small-scale enrichment, and a resumption of talks between Teheran and the Europeans, would effectively head off Security Council action.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vowed his country would not be bullied. "If they

want to put political pressure on us, our decisions and behaviour will be reconsidered," the official news agency IRNA quoted him as saying. "We will not be bullied and we ourselves are not bullies." Uranium enrichment can make nuclear reactor fuel or atom bomb material, and Iran

insists its programme is part of a peaceful drive for civilian energy. However, talks with the European Union aimed at securing guarantees that it is not seeking nuclear weapons broke off last August when Teheran resumed some enrichment activities. — AFP



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# Iran Renews Threat to Withhold Oil

## Bolton Issues Warning; Vote by U.N. Atomic Agency Looms

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By Karl Vick  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Monday, March 6, 2006; Page A12

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TEHRAN, March 5 -- Iran and the United States on Sunday heralded a crucial week of decision-making at the International Atomic Energy Agency by exchanging thinly veiled threats about the consequences of a vote to send the issue of Iran's nuclear program to the U.N. Security Council.

Iran's chief negotiator renewed a threat to interrupt petroleum exports if the IAEA board of governors followed through on its vote last month to report Iran to the Security Council pending a last stab at a diplomatic solution. Iran is the second-largest producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

"If we are referred to the Security Council, problems might occur for others as well as us," Ali Larijani said at a news conference. "We would not like to use our oil as a weapon. We would not like to make other countries suffer."

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The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, John R. Bolton, in turn warned of "painful consequences" if Iran made good on a separate threat, also repeated Sunday in Tehran, to answer a punitive vote by moving rapidly toward large-scale uranium enrichment. Enriching uranium can produce fuel for civilian power reactors, which is all Iran says its nuclear program is intended for. The same process, if taken further, can also produce fuel for nuclear warheads, which the Bush administration and other skeptics assert is Iran's ultimate goal.

"The Iran regime must be made aware that if it continues down the

path of international isolation, there will be tangible and painful consequences," Bolton said at the convention of a pro-Israel lobby, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the Reuters news agency reported. He said the United States was prepared to "use all the tools at our disposal to stop the threat." President Bush has repeatedly said the possibility of military strikes remains "on the table" even as Washington endorsed an intense international diplomatic effort.

The IAEA meeting has loomed as a showdown since Feb. 4, when the U.N. agency's governing panel voted 27 to 3 to discipline Iran for resuming nuclear research, about two years after voluntarily suspending nuclear research as there were concerns that the program, because it had been largely secret, was not purely civilian. The Security Council has the power to impose economic or other sanctions on Iran, though diplomats say the council would likely choose measures that gradually increased pressure on Tehran.

The IAEA board, which convenes in Vienna, is not expected to take up Iran's file until Tuesday, and diplomats said a final vote probably would not come until late in the week. That leaves several days for last-ditch negotiations, and on Sunday Iranian officials indicated the talks may bear fruit.

Attention remained focused on a Russian offer to enrich uranium to low-grade fuel on its soil, ship the fuel to reactors in Iran, then bring the spent fuel back to Russia so there was no possibility any might be diverted for military use. But Larijani said the vote in Vienna could imperil that proposal.

"If Iran is referred to the Security Council, Iran will start enrichment, so there's no need to have another country do enrichment for us," he said.

A key sticking point is Iran's insistence that it be allowed to continue at least small-scale enrichment within its own borders, in the name of research. Larijani said Sunday that Iran was willing to suspend large-scale enrichment as part of a "package" that he declined to detail.

He repeatedly warned, however, that Iran would not tolerate the issue of its program being sent to the Security Council, given the humiliations neighboring Iraq endured during forced inspections through the 1990s.

"But we're not willing to be like Iraq, to let them come into the country whenever they want and look in any corner they want," he said.

*Correspondent Molly Moore in Paris contributed to this report.*

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# the BIG story

WILLIAM J BROAD &  
DAVID SANGER

MARCH 5, 2006

**W**HEN Iran defiantly cut the locks and seals on its nuclear enrichment plants in January and restarted its effort to manufacture atomic fuel, it forced the world to confront a momentous question: How long will it be before Tehran has the ability to produce a bomb that would alter the balance of power in the Middle East?

Iran's claims that it is racing forward with enrichment have created an air of crisis as the board of the International Atomic Energy Agency prepares to meet on Monday in Vienna before the United Nations Security Council takes up the Iran file for possible penalties. Yet behind the sense of immediate alarm lies a more complex picture of Iran's nuclear potential.

Obstacles, the experts say, remain at virtually every step on the atomic road. The most significant, they add, involve the two most technically challenging aspects of the process—converting uranium ore to a toxic gas and, especially, spinning that gas into enriched atomic fuel.

The Iranians need to do repairs and build new machines at a prototype plant before they can begin enriching even modest quantities of uranium. And then, for a decade, they would have to mass produce 100 centrifuges a week to fill the cavernous industrial enrichment halls at Natanz.

By late this year, Iranian officials said, they would begin installing nearly 3,000 centrifuges at the Natanz plant, buried underground to withstand attack. That many centrifuges, international inspectors knew, could make fuel for up to 10 nuclear warheads every year.

US intelligence agencies say it will take 5 to 10 years for Iran to manufacture the fuel for its first atomic bomb. Most forecasters acknowledge that secret Iranian advances or black market purchases could produce a technological surprise.

While most analysts identify the greatest danger as when Iran can produce nuclear fuel—the hardest part of the bomb venture, far more difficult than designing a warhead—others, particularly the Israelis, say the tipping point may come earlier, when Tehran has accumulated a critical mass of atomic knowledge.

For all the anxiety of the moment, Iran's atomic history is a conundrum of delay: given its wealth of atomic scientists and oil revenues, why was Tehran unable to succeed years ago? It took only three years for the United States to build the world's first atom bomb. It took Pakistan and North Korea, poor by Western standards, roughly a decade.

Iran has been moving toward the same objective for at least two decades. Some of Iran's nuclear troubles can be traced to wavering political commitment by mullahs more interested in creating a theocracy than unlocking the secrets of



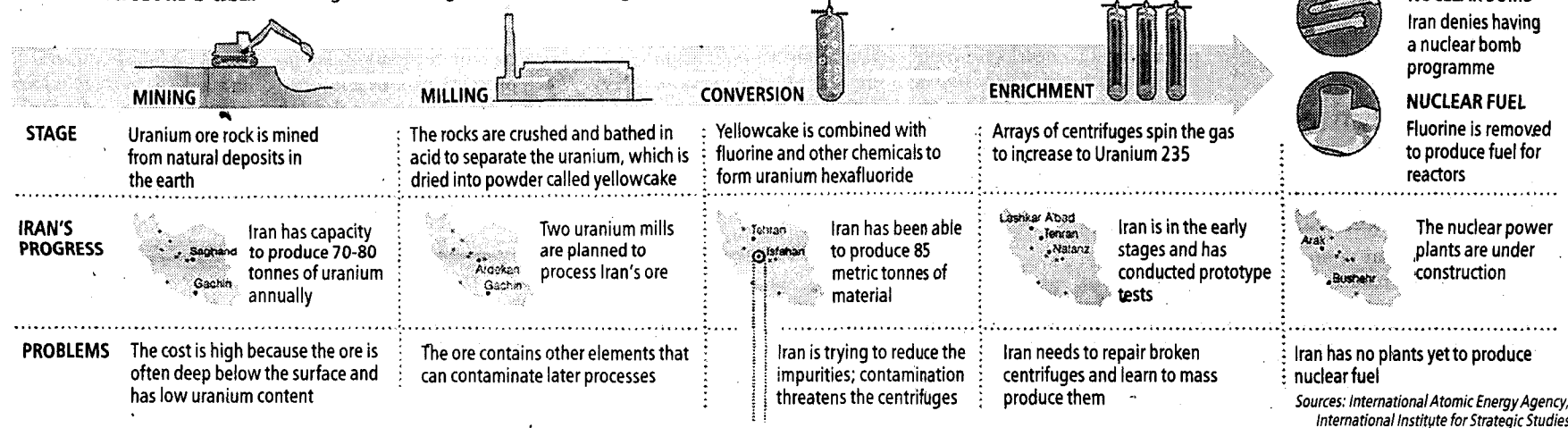
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## NEVER SAY DIE

President Mahmud Ahmadinejad in Kuala Lumpur. He was on a three-day visit for discussions with Malaysian officials on support ahead of the IAEA meet and on the establishment of an Islamic economic bloc in East Asia

# How far is Iran from the bomb

**Iran's Nuclear Push** Although Iran is doing research in most stages of nuclear development, each step has problems



the atom. Many top scientists fled after the Islamic revolution of 1979.

## Centrifuges and uranium

The oldest and most daunting problem involves centrifuges—temperamental machines whose rotors can spin extraordinarily fast to enrich uranium. After two decades of effort, Iran seems barely out of the starting gate. All uranium is not equal. One form, uranium 235, easily splits in two, or fissions, in bursts of atomic energy that power nuclear reactors and bombs. Its slightly heavier cousin, uranium 238, does not.

But since uranium 235 accounts for less than 1 percent of all uranium, engineers use centrifuges to separate the two and concentrate the rare form. Uranium enriched to about 4 percent uranium 235 can fuel most reactors; to 90 percent, atom bombs.

In 1987, the Iranians secretly began buying drawings and parts for centrifuges from Abdul Qadeer Khan, the Pakistani nuclear expert who operated the world's biggest nuclear black market. International inspectors say the deals eventually included parts for about 500 primi-

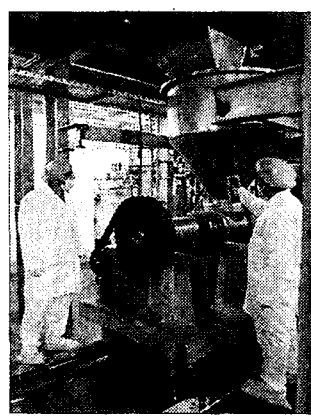
tive used centrifuges.

Tehran, unhappy with their quality, turned to Moscow. In early 1995, it made a secret deal to buy an entire plant of centrifuges—typically tens of thousands of the spinning machines linked together to slowly increase the level of enrichment.

But after the Clinton administration persuaded Moscow to back out, Iran accelerated its secret drive to copy Khan's centrifuges. It also started building the huge enrichment plant near Natanz, in central Iran. The pilot factory there was to house 1,000 centrifuges; the main plant would shelter 50,000 machines underground.

In August 2002, Iranian dissidents revealed the existence of the Natanz site, beginning the current confrontation with the West. The next year, Iran agreed to suspend work while negotiating with Europe over the program's fate.

But when operators shut down an experimental cascade of 164 centrifuges at Natanz, about 50 of them crashed, according to a January report by David Albright and Corey Hinderstein of the Institute for Science and International Security, a



**Estimates of just when Iran might acquire a nuclear weapon range from alarmist views of only a few months to roughly 15 years**

private Washington group.

Now, the report said, Iran must replace and repair the broken machines and prepare the cascade for operation. Then comes the really hard part: if all goes well, the Iranians must mass-produce thousands of

centrifuges and learn to run them in concert, like a large orchestra.

Iran is also struggling to turn concentrated uranium ore, or yellowcake, into uranium hexafluoride, the toxic gas fed into the centrifuges for enrichment. Such conversion is done at a site on the outskirts of Isfahan. Iran began the conversion effort in the early 1990's, asking China to help build the complex.

But in 1997, the Clinton administration persuaded Beijing to stop the deal. The Iranians got blueprints but little else. So they started building on their own. Iran voluntarily revealed Isfahan to international inspectors in 2000. But the plant encountered problems during its first runs in early 2004, its output laced with impurities, in particular molybdenum, a silvery element found in uranium ore.

The contamination, experts say, can ruin delicate centrifuges, reducing their efficiency and cutting short their lifetimes. The Iranians are working hard to solve the problem.

## Estimating a bomb's birth

Israel cites studies like one published in October by the Strategic Studies Institute of the Army War

College, "Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran." Its timeline is short, one to four years.

To date, the most comprehensive public estimate is by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London. "If Iran threw caution to the wind," John Chipman, the institute's director, said, it might be able to make fuel for a single nuclear weapon by 2010.

Samore, who edited that report, said, the Iranians might see political advantage in a deliberate approach, doing nothing provocative until after 2015 or 2020. In his view, Iran would complete the main Natanz plant, installing 50,000 centrifuges and learning to operate them. If successful, it could then enrich uranium to the low levels needed for a nuclear reactor and so comply with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Then it could rush to produce highly enriched fuel for a nuclear arsenal in weeks or months. At full tilt, the report concluded, Natanz could annually churn out material for up to 180 warheads. Such a "breakout" chain of events worries experts because it leaves the world little or no time to react. **NYT**

Tehran cites 'double standards'

# Delhi deal gifts ammo to Iran

K.P. NAYAR

Washington, March 5: The Iran vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been complicated by the nuclear deal between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Iranian diplomats in Vienna are telling member-states of the IAEA's board of governors, which is convening on Monday, that the Indo-US nuclear deal is an example of double standards on non-proliferation and that, as such, they should not be party to any action against Iran.

"The US approach is a form of double standards. It signed a contract with a country that was not a member of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT)," Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said in Tehran today. "That is objectionable. On the other hand, it approaches Iran in such a (threatening) way."

As the governors gather in Vienna to hear a status report from the IAEA's director-general, Mohamed ElBaradei, on the Iranian nuclear programme and decide if and what to tell the UN Security Council about it, Iran's argument is finding echoes across the world.

French President Jacques Chirac said in Riyadh that France, Germany and Britain had assured Tehran that "it can develop its nuclear capaci-

## BUSY LINES



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin for 20 minutes on the nuclear deal and the Iran issue

See Page 6

ty for civilian purposes".

France's position on non-proliferation has been far more consistent than that of the US. Just as Paris backed India after the 1998 nuclear tests, Chirac will support any legitimate demands by Iran under the NPT for pursuing a peaceful nuclear programme.

With India poised to gain access to civilian technology once the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) changes its rules on the lines of the Indo-US nuclear deal, there will be many aggrieved parties.

Developing countries, which want to tap civilian nuclear programmes and develop atomic power as a solution to their energy needs, have complained for decades that the world's nuclear powers have denied them their rights under Article IV of the NPT.

This article gives signatories to the treaty "the inalienable right... to develop re-

search, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination". It also commits the five nuclear weapons states to "contributing alone or together with other states or international organisations to the further development of the applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes".

*The New York Times* said in an editorial today that "the India deal is exactly the wrong message to send right now, just days before Washington and its European allies will be asking the IAEA to refer Iran's case to the UN Security Council for further action...."

"Mr Bush might as well have tied a pretty red bow around his India nuclear deal and mailed it as a gift to Tehran."

Diplomats in Vienna said that if Tehran senses that it will be punished with an unfavourable vote at the IAEA, it may agree to a last-minute compromise with Russia, which has agreed to enrich uranium at Russian plants on Iran's behalf.

"I would not state that time is running out," said Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, who is to shortly have talks with the Americans. "Let us give them a chance."

The Security Council is likely to take up the Iranian crisis in about a fortnight, depending on ElBaradei's report to his board of governors on Monday.

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06 MAR 2006

THE TELEGRAPH

washingtonpost.com

## Iran's Khatami Says Islam Is the Enemy West Needs

By Karl Vick  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Sunday, March 5, 2006; A17

TEHRAN, March 4 -- Former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami, whose foreign policy was defined by a quest for what he called a "dialogue between civilizations," warned Saturday that tensions between the Islamic world and the West are taking the shape of a new Cold War.

Khatami, speaking at a government conference promoting interfaith dialogue, said the West was largely responsible. Islam was being cast as the "enemy of humanity" by governments reverting to the polarized worldview that divided the planet for 50 years after World War II, he said.

The West "needs an enemy, and this time it is Islam," Khatami said. "And Islamophobia becomes a part of all policies of the great powers, of hegemonic powers.

"We are not very far from the era of the Cold War that inflicted a lot of damage on the world."

The bleak assessment drew a bold line under the damaging difference in perceptions that drove the controversy over cartoons of the prophet Muhammad first published in a Danish newspaper last autumn.

Depiction of the prophet is banned by most schools of Islamic thought, and many Muslims interpreted each successive publication of the cartoons as a deliberate insult. But many Westerners interpreted those objections as tantamount to censorship, insisting the core issue was not the feelings of Muslims but freedom of expression.

Khatami said he took deep offense at that insistence and contended that defining the question as one of freedom amounted to brushing aside the sacred dignity that stands at the core of any religion.

"The affront to the prophet was an act, not an idea," he said. "The tragedy is that this inhumane act is justified in the name of freedom."

"Defilement is an action, not an idea, and therefore it is not freedom of expression. It does treachery to freedom of expression," Khatami said. "Secondly, it is a part of a trend that enrages Islamism around the world. Therefore it has to be interpreted in this context."

Khatami suggested that the bombing of a Shiite shrine in Samarra, Iraq, last month was an extension of the trend. "If we go behind the idea," he said, "it leads to the destruction of holy shrines and killing of human beings."

Khatami spoke at a state-sponsored conference on "respect for religious sanctities and divine prophets."

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The hall where the conference was held, appropriately enough, stands on a fault line.

The headgear around the tables suggested a genuine diversity of faiths: the black and white turbans of both Shiite and Sunni Islam; the peaked cap of an Orthodox archbishop; and, in a prominent place near the front, the extravagantly fur-lined hats of four ultra-Orthodox Jews, who were flown in for the occasion.

"We are Jews but not Zionists," said Rabbi Ahron Cohen, of Manchester, England, invoking the distinction between those who follow Judaism as a faith and religious Zionists who believe the Jews have a Biblical right to Israel as a homeland.

"The root cause of the problem in the Middle East is the Zionists," Cohen said. "But really, the whole concept is flawed, and that's what the people in this country believe, too, and we're with them."

In recent months, Iran has faced widespread accusations of anti-Semitism since Khatami's successor as president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, called for Israel to be "wiped off the map" and dubbed the Holocaust a "myth."

Cohen said he was not bothered by Iran's plans to hold another conference, this one to publicly ask how Nazi Germany could have killed 6 million Jews before and during World War II.

"I don't find it offensive at all," Cohen said. "If people want to debate the details of the Holocaust, they're welcome to.

"We happen to know. We were involved."

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# Vienna talks end without deal

German leader says Teheran made no new proposals

**VIENNA:** Talks between the European Union's top powers and Iran days before a United Nations atomic watchdog board meeting ended on Friday without agreement, Ministers said.

After the high-level meeting between France, Britain, Germany and Iran in Vienna, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told reporters the Iranians had offered no new ideas on how to allay fears Teheran is seeking nuclear weapons.

"Unfortunately, we were not able to reach agreement today," Mr. Steinmeier told a news conference.

French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said Iran was told it

must return to a full suspension of activities linked to uranium enrichment, which can produce fuel for power plants or atomic bombs, to win fresh negotiations on trade incentives.

## IAEA meet on Monday

The International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) 35-nation Board of Governors will convene on Monday to weigh a report by the IAEA chief saying essentially that Iran has ignored a February 4 call to reimpose a suspension of enrichment work to regain world trust.

"We made clear to them that to regain trust they must return to a full suspension of research and de-

velopment. This is the key to any restoration of confidence," Douste-Blazy said.

"We regret that Iran was not able to respond to our conditions without further ado," he said.

The Vienna-based board reported Iran to the Council but on the condition the top world body on war and peace issues would not flex its muscle at least until after next week's session.

Meanwhile in Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that global powers don't have an agreed action plan if the Iranian nuclear issue is handed over to the United Nations Security Council.

— Reuters, AP

Q 4 MAR 2006

THE HINDU

# Sunni strike dents Baghdad calm

**ASSOCIATED Press**  
Baghdad, March 3

CHILDREN KICKED a soccer ball in one of Baghdad's busiest streets, and families strolled to mosque under the watchful eye of Iraqi security forces on Friday as a ban on vehicles brought rare calm to the country's bloodied capital. In the nearby town of Nahrwan, however, guns ruled as suspected Sunni insurgents attacked a brick factory and shot dead at least 25 Shia migrant workers.

It was one of the bloodiest attacks in the 10 days of sectarian violence that have pushed Iraq to the brink of civil war following the bombing of a Shia shrine on February 22.

More than 50 gunmen, believed to be Sunni insurgents allied to al-Qaida and based in Diyala province, entered the town after 5 p.m. They attacked and destroyed the local power plant, killing nine people, before US and Iraqi army units responded. As the gunmen withdrew and began killing people working there.

"We understand there are bodies everywhere around the factory, in the fields," an Interior Ministry official in Baghdad said. "The police cannot retrieve them all because



AP  
A soldier stands guard as Iraqis assemble for their prayers in Basra, 500 km from Baghdad, on Friday.

they afraid to venture in without more military protection."

In Baghdad, however, there was a lull following a night of carnage. The government imposed the 6 am-4 pm vehicle ban on Friday in a bid to avert large-scale attacks on the day Muslims congregate for the most important prayer service of the week.

Shia and Sunni leaders used their sermons to appeal for calm.

Hundreds took to the streets after services in the southern Shia stronghold of Basra and marched to the Iraqi South Oil Co., threat-

ening to disrupt exports unless the government provides better protection and greater support to local authorities and private militias.

Security forces sealed off Baghdad, preventing most vehicles from entering or leaving the city of 7 million, said Capt. Adil Mohan of the traffic police. Armed police and soldiers in bulletproof vests manned checkpoints across the capital, preventing most cars and motorcycles from leaving their neighbourhoods.

Militiamen loyal to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr were also out in force in the teeming Shia slum known as Sadr City, frisking pedestrians and helping police patrol the area. The collaboration was likely to raise alarm among Sunni Arabs, who accuse followers of the firebrand cleric of numerous attacks against them in recent days. US officials have also been pressing for the disbanding of private militias.

Downtown was largely deserted. Most shops and gas stations were closed, though small neighbourhood groceries stayed open.

Dozens of young boys turned parts of Baghdad's usually busy Saadoun Street into improvised soccer fields, looking clearly unhappy when the odd car disrupted their games.

washingtonpost.com

## Iraqi Parties Unite to Derail Shiite Leader's Nomination

Sunnis Join Kurds in Seeking New Candidate for Prime Minister

By John Ward Anderson and Omar Fekeiki  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Friday, March 3, 2006; A11

BAGHDAD, March 2 -- Political parties in Iraq stepped up their efforts Thursday to derail the selection of the ruling Shiite Muslim coalition's nominee for prime minister, threatening to prolong the process of forming a new government but perhaps laying the ground for a more inclusive and widely acceptable one.

Kurdish political parties sent a letter to Shiite coalition leaders Thursday asking them to withdraw their nomination of transitional Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari to retain his post in Iraq's next government, according to Mahmoud Othman, an independent member of parliament representing the Kurdish coalition. Tariq al-Hashimi, a member of the Sunni Arab bloc, said the Sunnis supported the Kurdish position, while a spokesman for the secular party of former prime minister Ayad Allawi, a Shiite, said his group was still studying the issue.

Jafari, who has headed the transitional government here for almost a year, was nominated to take the job permanently two weeks ago by the United Iraqi Alliance coalition, the Shiite bloc that won 130 parliamentary seats, far more than any other group, in elections in December. The alliance selected Jafari by a one-vote margin.

Other political parties, citing what they call Jafari's lackluster job as leader, have argued for a different candidate -- one of several issues that have delayed the formation of a government. Together, the Sunni Arabs, Kurds and secular parties control 133 seats in Iraq's 275-member parliament, enough to derail the candidacy of Jafari, who effectively needs the support of two-thirds of parliament to become prime minister.

The United States is pushing for a broad governing coalition that would include Shiite, Sunni, Kurdish and secular political parties. Such a coalition, U.S. officials hope, would empower all of Iraq's factions, demonstrate that politics is a more effective agent of change than violence and weaken the Sunni-led insurgency that has pushed Iraq to the brink of civil war.

The stakes were raised after the Feb. 22 bombing of a Shiite shrine in Samarra sparked sectarian clashes in many parts of Iraq, underscoring, many officials here said, the importance of an inclusive government and the urgency of forming it quickly.

The violence, while not as intense, continued Thursday, with at least 38 people killed and 26 wounded in bombings and shootings across the country. The deadliest incidents included the bombing of a market in a Shiite neighborhood in southeastern Baghdad, in which eight people were killed, and a suicide

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bomb attack aboard a minibus that killed eight passengers in Sadr City, a Shiite neighborhood in the northeast of the capital.

On Thursday morning, gunmen opened fire on the car of a top Sunni political leader, Adnan al-Dulaimi, killing a bodyguard and wounding three others, aides said. They said the incident occurred when Dulaimi's car sustained a flat tire and gunmen emerged from a passing BMW and opened fire as the tire was being changed. Dulaimi had just left the scene in another car and was not injured, they said.

Late Thursday, the government announced that a 6 a.m.-to-4 p.m. ban on private vehicles would be imposed Friday in Baghdad and surrounding areas.

Some politicians said the continuing violence was partly to blame for the erosion of Jafari's support. The prime minister did not have strong backing to begin with, and his performance since the Samarra mosque bombing has weakened his standing further, they said.

Even some Shiites have accused Jafari of ignoring reports of serious security threats to holy sites before the Samarra blast and criticized him for leaving Iraq to visit neighboring Turkey six days after the bombing, as sectarian violence exploded.

Othman, the Kurdish lawmaker, said that in their letter to the Shiites the Kurds cited Jafari's habit of making decisions without informing others as a key reason for their opposition.

"He doesn't share his decision with others, like his last visit to Turkey, which was wrong because he didn't tell his deputy, the president, the minister of foreign affairs. It was a decision he made by himself without going back to the government," Othman said. "Iraq is in a pool of blood and the prime minister left to visit Turkey, while in such a situation there shouldn't be any official outside the country."

It was unclear whether the Shiites would withdraw the nomination of Jafari, who was selected partly on the strength of backing by the Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. An aide to Sadr, Riyadh al-Nouri, said the suggestion to drop Jafari was "not appropriate at all."

"If such a decision is to be made, the coming government will fail, since it won't have credibility for violating what the people chose," he said.

*Special correspondent Bassam Sebti contributed to this report.*

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# Moscow deal fails, Iran wants last-minute talks with EU

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REUTERS

MOSCOW, MARCH 2

IRAN on Thursday announced last minute talks with the European Union to head off being reported to the United Nations over its nuclear programme after talks with Russia for a possible compromise deal failed.

Speaking in Moscow, Iran's nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani said Tehran would meet the EU troika of Britain, Germany and France soon.

Asked if the meeting with the EU3 would be before



Ali Larijani at Moscow on Thursday. AP

March 6, he said: "Yes".

That is the date set for a key session of the IAEA that could decide whether to report Iran to the UN Security Council over its nuclear programme.

Larijani added: "Our talks with the EU3 are being held for us to say we are in favour of holding constructive negotiations." But he failed to make any mention of the crucial point—whether Tehran would bow to Western calls for it to stop uranium enrichment at home.

Meanwhile, Iran and Russia failed to agree on a compromise to break the deadlock over Tehran's nuclear programme on Wednesday, as the Islamic Republic's president sought support in Muslim Malaysia.

Larijani, held a third round of talks on Moscow's proposal to carry out uranium enrichment for Iran on Russian soil. "We need to refine...a few elements of this question and study it. This requires time," said Larijani.

Sergei Kistiyak, a Russian deputy Foreign Minister, was quoted by Interfax news agency as saying that "not a few questions remain unresolved."

Time is running out for a breakthrough before March 6, when the UN's nuclear watchdog is to issue a report on Iran's nuclear activities.

03 MAR 2002

INDIAN EXPRESS



# Our plans are transparent; Iran

Teheran firm; Moscow pushes deal

**MOSCOW:** Iran offered no sign of compromise on Wednesday as officials met for high-stakes talks here on a Russian plan designed to ease fears that Teheran is trying to build nuclear arms, with time fast running out for a deal.

As the high-level delegation arrived for negotiations with Russian officials, U.S. President George W. Bush said Iran must not be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons. He said it would be the "most destabilising thing" that could happen in the volatile region.

## No direct link

Iran's top negotiator Ali Larijani rebuffed calls for it to suspend uranium enrichment work, saying there was "no direct link" between reinstating a moratorium and reassuring the world over its nuclear ambitions.

"We provide answer to all questions in all circumstances," Mr. Larijani said in remarks broadcast on state television here after landing at an airport outside Moscow. "A moratorium is needed when there is something dangerous, but all of our activities are transparent," he said.

Mr. Larijani's comments suggested little movement in the negotiating positions of Iran and Russia, which have met several times in recent weeks to thrash out a plan to assuage global concerns before Monday's meeting of the U.N. watchdog International Atomic Energy Agency

(IAEA). "We do not have any extraordinary demands," Mr. Larijani said, adding Iran was still open to giving IAEA inspectors access to nuclear facilities provided their work was carried out in line with international law.

Russia is building Iran's first nuclear power plant as part of that nation's fledgling nuclear power programme.

The U.S. accuses Iran of using that programme to hide development of nuclear weapons, a charge Teheran vehemently denies.

Iran says it has a right to generate its own nuclear power like any other country, but the West says the fact that Iran hid parts of its nuclear programme for 18 years and has called for Israel to be "wiped off" the map make it a special case requiring further verification.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on the eve of the Moscow talks he was "optimistic" that Iran would return to compliance with the IAEA's "additional protocol," a contract designed to boost the agency's power to protect against secret weapons programs, notably through inspections.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov meanwhile said Iran's reinstatement of its moratorium on uranium enrichment was needed if progress were to be made ahead of the March 6 deadline.

"What is needed is for Iran to come back to a moratorium," Lavrov said. — AFP

# Iran: another bid to end nuke deadlock

MEG CLOTHIER

MOSCOW, MARCH 1

RUSSIAN and Iranian negotiators made a fresh bid in Moscow on Wednesday to reach a compromise that might defuse Tehran's stand-off with the West over its nuclear programme.

"We are optimistic we can agree with our Iranian partners...we think we can come to an agreement that a joint venture on the soil of the Russian Federation will be able to meet Iran's needs fully," Russian President Vladimir Putin told a news conference during a visit to Hungary.

"It sounds as if they are combining technical expert discussions with highly-placed diplomatic efforts. They are making their best efforts on both sides and I take that as a good sign," said Rose Gottemoeller, director of the Moscow Carnegie Centre and a non-proliferation expert.

There is less than a week until a



**Iran's Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki delivers a speech at a hotel in Tokyo on Wednesday. AP**

March 6 meeting of the IAEA, whose board will discuss its latest report into Iran's nuclear programme.

IAEA's report, which says it still cannot confirm there is no covert atomic activity in Iran, will then be forwarded to the UN Security Council which can impose sanctions.

Russia has strong diplomatic and commercial ties with the Islamic Republic and is building a nuclear power station at the Gulf Port of Bushehr. —Reuters

02 MAR 2006

0 1 MAR 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Iran N-goals not entirely peaceful: IAEA

IAN Traynor

THE HEAD of the world's nuclear watchdog declared on Monday night that he could not give Iran's nuclear programme a clean bill of health, blaming Tehran for frustrating almost three years of inspections and detective work by experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The damning verdict delivered by Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the IAEA, set the scene for a diplomatic battle next week in Vienna when the IAEA's 35-

strong board is to take the long-running dispute to the UN security council in New York.

A confidential report by ElBaradei, supplied to Vienna diplomats ahead of next week's meeting and obtained by the Guardian, said that the IAEA was still not in a position to assert that Iran's nuclear programme was "entirely peaceful".

"It is regrettable and a matter of concern that the uncertainties related to the scope and nature of Iran's nuclear programme have not been clarified after three years of intensive

agency verification," he said.

But he was also unable to state unequivocally that Iran was embarked on a nuclear weapons programme. Rather, the tone of the report was one of suspicion, criticism, and exasperation that Iran was not showing adequate "transparency" with inspections. Although the IAEA had not discovered "any diversion of nuclear material to weapons or other explosive devices, the Agency is not at this point in time in a position to conclude that there are no undeclared nuclear materials or activities in Iran".

Following a number of confrontational IAEA meetings in Vienna and two emergency sessions of the IAEA board recently, international patience is running out with Iran. But the options available to the west in seeking to coerce Iran into scrapping its domestic nuclear fuel manufacture are limited and fraught with risk.

The ElBaradei report and any resolution agreed next week will be passed to the security council and form the basis for subsequent action.

The Guardian

# Blasts rock Baghdad, genocide heat on Saddam

41 dead in bomb attacks ■ Paper shows Iraq President approved Dujail massacre



Saddam Hussein reacts to the prosecutor's charge in court on Tuesday. AP

**AGENCIES**

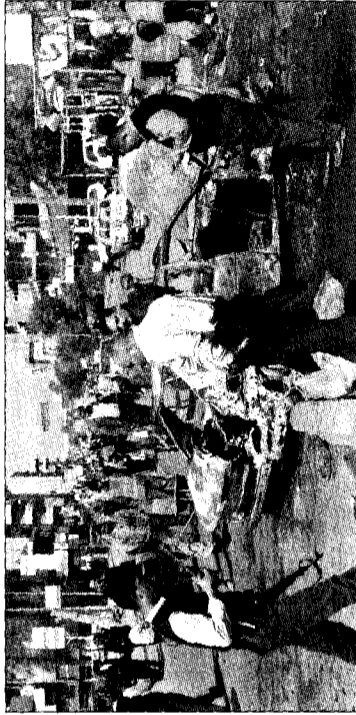
Baghdad, February 28

FIVE BLASTS and a deadly paper missile aimed at Saddam Hussein rocked Baghdad on Tuesday.

The explosions — including three car bombs, a suicide attacker and a blast near the National Theatre — killed 41 people and injured scores, while a document presented by Saddam's chief prosecutor showed a signature by the former leader approving the executions of 148 Shi'ites in Dujail in 1982, dealing the most lethal blow yet to the deposed leader's defence.

Meanwhile, *The Washington Post* reported that as many as 1,300 people had died in the wave of sectarian violence that swept Iraq following the bombing of the Askariya shrine in Samarra. The daily cited officials at Baghdad's main morgue as its source.

The worst-hit in the string of blasts on Tuesday was the New Baghdad neighbourhood. A suicide attacker wearing an explo-



AP

Police secure a blast site in central Baghdad on Tuesday.

sives belt blew himself up in a kerosene shop queue, killing 23 people and injuring 51, while a car bomb targeting a police patrol killed 9 and injured 17 civilians.

Another car bomb exploded near a Shi'ite mosque in the crowded southeastern Karada neighbourhood, killing four people and injuring 16. Police said the vehicle was parked next to a market opposite Timimi Mos-

The fifth blast took place near

**Saddam father's tomb hit**

A BOMB blast near the tomb of Saddam Hussein's father in Tikrit, northern Iraq, on Tuesday damaged a dome and blew out windows and doors at the Hussein al-Majid mosque, but caused no casualties. AP, Tikrit

the downtown National Theatre. Initial police reports indicated a mortar blast. There were no reports of casualties.

In Saddam's trial court, prosecutors presented a memo from the Revolutionary Court, dated June 14, 1984, announcing that 148 suspects (listed by name) had been sentenced to death by hanging. The signature on the memo was that of the court's head, Awad al-Bandar, one of Saddam's co-defendants.

A document dated two days later was a presidential order approving the death sentences. The paper was signed by Saddam,

chief prosecutor Jaafar al-Mousawi said, displaying the document with the signature on a screen in the court room.

The sentences were passed after an "imaginary trial," he told the court. "None of the defendants were brought to court. Their statements were never recorded," he said.

Prosecutors also displayed a March 1985 document said to be signed by Saddam's half-brother Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti — then the head of the Mukhabarat Intelligence agency — ordering the executions to be carried out.

Another document from the Revolutionary Court, dated March 23, 1985, confirmed that 96 executions took place. Another 46 people were "liquidated during interrogations," a later Mukhabarat document stated. It also said four people were executed by mistake, even though their names were not on list of those sentenced to death — a man named Mahdi Abdel-Amir, two of his sons and his brother.

# Al Sadr's political rise not in US interests

**Baghdad:** The bombing and bloodshed that pushed Iraq to the brink of civil war have propelled anti-American firebrand Muqtada Al Sadr to the forefront of Iraqi politics. The young Shiite cleric who twice defied America in 2004 now has emerged as a major threat to US plans for Iraq.

Al Sadr had already managed to carve out a strong position in Iraqi politics. His followers won 30 of the 275 parliament seats in the December elections, and his support enabled Prime Minister Ibrahim Al Jaafari to win the nomination of the Shiite bloc for a second term as prime minister.

But the outbreak of Shiite-Sunni violence presented Al Sadr with an opportunity that he was quick to exploit. An increase in Al Sadr's stature is an ominous development for the United States given his opposition to US influence, his links to radical groups and regimes in the Middle East and his militia that undermines state authority.

Through skilful use of intimidation, first, and then concessions, Al Sadr, 31, has profited more than any other Iraqi figure from the unrest that swept the country after the Wednesday bombing of a Shiite shrine, which triggered reprisal attacks against Sunni mosques and clerics. Many of those reprisal attacks were believed to be the work of Al Sadr's own Mahdi Army militia, which operates in the Shiite slum of Sadr City and in Shiite strongholds throughout the country.

But Al Sadr, who was in Lebanon when the bombing occurred, denied any role in the violence. He quickly joined moderate Shiite clerics in public appeals to halt the attacks.

The fact that the worst of the violence ended after the clerics' appeal



**Al Sadr's supporters chant slogans as they welcome their leader in Basra**

added to Al Sadr's prestige, especially since no major Shiite figure has openly challenged his denial of a role in the reprisal attacks.

The message was clear: Al Sadr controls the streets in much of the country, and no agreement to restore order has a chance of success unless he signs off on it. No major Shiite figure, including the country's top cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani himself, would at this point challenge Al Sadr openly. In effect, Al Sadr's followers stirred up trouble, and then took credit for stopping it.

Even the Americans, who battled Al Sadr's militia in his two major uprisings, appeared unsure how to deal with the cleric. During a press conference on Saturday, Maj Gen Rick Lynch said sectarian unrest provided the government with "an opportunity to get rid of the militias." Then Lynch suggested the time was not right for a showdown and that getting rid of the militias will take "a period of time." AP

28 FEB 2006

THE  
D.C.A



JOINT URANIUM ENRICHMENT VENTURE

# Iran, Russia

# strike deal

SF1  
27/3

16 April 1990 Jan ✓

AP & The Independent

BUSHEHR (Iran), Feb. 26.— Iranian nuclear chief, Mr Gholamreza Aghazadeh, said a basic agreement was reached with Russia today for the establishment of a joint uranium enrichment venture.

Mr Aghazadeh, who heads Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran and is also the country's vice-president, told a Press conference that the two countries "have reached a basic agreement on the creation of a joint venture (to enrich uranium)."

By announcing the agreement, Iran has sought to avert increased international pressure over its disputed nuclear programme.

However, the reported deal, announced a week before the UN nuclear watchdog meets again in Vienna to decide whether to back UN Security Council action against Teheran, left many unanswered questions about Iran's intentions, and the chief Iranian negotiator said more talks were needed.

A British Foreign Office spokesperson said there was "nothing to indicate" that Iran had addressed key demands of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and particularly its insistence that Iran returns to a



An anti-aircraft gun near the reactor building of the Bushehr nuclear power plant in southern Iran on Sunday. The launch of Iran's first nuclear power station, being built with Russian help, has been delayed again owing to "technical reasons". — AFP

freeze on all uranium-enrichment activities.

British and US diplomats have accused Iran of playing for time in the talks with Russia over a compromise deal under which uranium would be enriched outside Iran as part of a joint venture. The Iranian government has also shown no sign that it intends to give up domestic enrichment of uranium. In comments unlikely to ease Western concerns, the Iranian nuclear chief, Mr Aghazadeh, told reporters that Iran would be setting an unspecified "precondition" to the deal.

An EU diplomat said that this precondition was almost certain to be Teheran insisting upon its

right to enrich its own uranium, in addition to enrichment in Russia, which would be unacceptable to the Europeans and to the USA.

Russia insists that its compromise offer of a joint venture is conditional on Iran agreeing to return to a moratorium of enrichment activities.

Russia is helping Iran build a "safe" light-water nuclear reactor at Bushehr. Mr Sergei Kiriyyenko, head of Russia's atomic energy agency Rosatom, speaking at a joint news conference with Mr Aghazadeh, stressed that Iran still had to take "serious steps" before the deal could be completed, an apparent reference to a return to a uranium enrichment freeze.

27 FEB 2006

THE STATESMAN

**N-PROGRAMME I** Details unclear, proposal was to enrich Iran's uranium in Russia

# Yes, basic pact with Russia: Iran

PAUL HUGHES

BUSHEHR (IRAN), FEBRUARY 26

IRAN has reached a "basic" agreement with Russia on jointly enriching uranium, officials said today. But there was no immediate sign that it would suspend home-grown enrichment to allay fears that it is developing nuclear weapons.

It was unclear what this basic agreement involved and both Russian and Iranian officials identified serious obstacles to a full-fledged deal. These principally concerned a suspension of Tehran's home-grown uranium enrichment work, the main demand of Western powers who are threatening to press for UN sanctions.

The original Russian proposal had been for Iran's uranium to be enriched in Russia to defuse suspicions that Iran might divert some nuclear fuel into a weapons programme.

However, Iran has always insisted upon its right to enrich the uranium it mines in its central desert on its own soil, and it was unclear how the original Russian proposal could be tailored to please Tehran.

"Regarding this joint venture, we have reached a basic agreement. Talks to complete this package will continue in coming days in Russia," Iranian nuclear chief Gholamreza Aghazadeh told reporters in the southern Iranian port of Bushehr.

Sergei Kiriyenko, head of Russia's atomic energy agency Rosatom, speaking at a joint news conference with Aghazadeh, said Iran still had to take "serious steps" before the deal could be completed.

He was not specific about what these steps would be, but an unnamed Russian official in Bushehr told the Interfax news agency that the deal could only go ahead if Iran suspended its

own uranium enrichment. Tehran has repeatedly refused to do this.

Aghazadeh also stipulated that Iran would be setting an unspecified "precondition" to the deal.

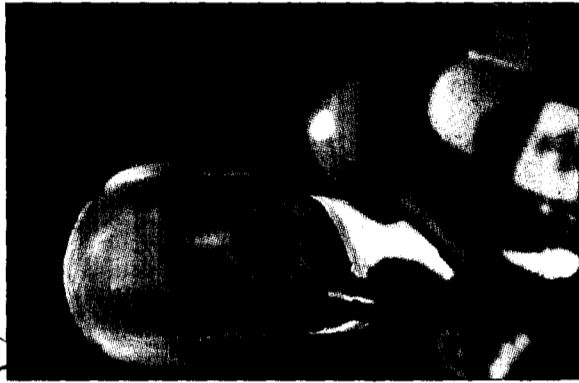
One EU diplomat said this precondition was almost certain to be Tehran insisting upon its right to enrich its own uranium.

"Their idea of accepting the Russian proposal is to be able to enrich in Russia and Iran, not just Russia," he told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

Europe and Washington have said they could not accept such a compromise.

Iran has been reported to the UN Security Council—which has the power to impose sanctions—after failing to convince the world that its nuclear ambitions are entirely peaceful.

Tehran flatly denies trying to develop



Iran's nuclear chief Gholamreza Aghazadeh in Bushehr on Sunday.

Associated Press

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Basic N-pact with Russia: Iran

nuclear arms. Konstantin Kosachev, head of the foreign relations committee in Russia's lower house of parliament, the State Duma, said the chances of an agreement were about 50-50.

"(Tehran) is now using the tactic of dragging out talks as long as possible. I do not think we can expect Iran to clarify its position any time soon. I would rather suggest that this will not happen before March 6," he told Interfax. March 6 is the date when the board of the United Nations' watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), meets in Vienna to discuss the IAEA's latest report on Iran's nuclear programme.

The report may determine whether the United States and European Union powers push the Security Council to impose sanctions on Iran.

—(With Louis Charbonneau in Berlin and Oleg Shchedrov in Moscow, Reuters)

27 FEB 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS



# Iraq: Civil war looms large

MICHAEL GEORGY AND  
LIN NOUEIHED  
BAGHDAD, FEBRUARY 25

A car bomb in a Shi'ite holy city and bloody battles around Sunni mosques in Baghdad that breached a second day's curfew on the capital heightened fears on Saturday that Iraq was heading for civil war.

Iraqi Defence Minister Saadoun al-Dulaimi called for calm and told a live televised news conference on state television: "If there is a civil war in this country it will never end."

Extending the curfew to Monday morning, Iraqi leaders are scrambling to break the

round of tit-for-tat reprisals, sparked by a suspected Al-Qaeda bombing of a major Shi'ite shrine in Samarra on Wednesday.

The biggest political bloc from the once-dominant Sunni Muslim minority said it might end a boycott of US-backed negotiations on forming a national unity government that Washington hopes can stifle sectarian strife that

has killed more than 200 people in Baghdad in three days.

But Iraq's most prominent Sunni cleric, blaming Shi'ite police for attacking his home, said live on pan-Arab television during the gunbattle: "This is civil war declared by one side."

It seemed that shooting may have been linked, however, to a gun attack on the passing funeral cortege of a



Bodies outside a hospital in Baquba on Saturday. Reuters

journalist killed as she reported from Samarra on Wednesday. The same mourners were hit by a roadside bomb on their return from the burial in western Baghdad. The two attacks left three security men dead.

Car bomb south of the capital, a remote-controlled car bomb killed eight people and wounded 31 in the Shi'ite holy city of Kerbala.

Overnight gunbattles around Sunni mosques in two parts of Baghdad were followed by the discovery of the bodies of 14 police commandos near one of the sites. Police said it was not immediately clear how or when their colleagues were killed.

—Reuters

26 Feb 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

# বেগতিক দেখে ইরাকে গৃহযুদ্ধ এড়াতে আবেদন জানালেন বুশ

ওয়াশিংটন, ২৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি: ইরাক জুড়ে শিয়া ও সুন্নিদের মধ্যে জাতিদাঙ্গা ক্রমশ ভয়াবহ হয়ে উঠছে। দাঙ্গা থেকে যে কোনও মুহূর্তে গৃহযুদ্ধ বেধে যেতে পারে বলেও আশঙ্কা করা হচ্ছে। পরিস্থিতি গুরুতর বুঝতে পেরে মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ বুশ ইরাকিদের শান্ত থাকার অনুরোধ জানিয়েছেন।

বুশ বলেন, “ইরাকের মানুষ কোন পথে যাবেন তা ঠিক করার সময় উপস্থিত। ইরাকের সাংঘাতিক অবস্থা। হয়তো আগামী কয়েক দিনে পরিস্থিতি আরও খারাপ হবে।” তবে এই সঙ্কটের মধ্যে ইরাকের মানুষ মাথা ঠাণ্ডা রাখবেন, এবং গণতন্ত্র বজায় রাখার চেষ্টা করবেন বলে তিনি আশাবাদী।

নতুন করে ইরাকে রক্তক্ষয়ী দাঙ্গার সূত্রপাত গত বুধবার। ওই দিন সামারা শহরে শিয়াদের পবিত্র ধর্মস্থান আসকারিয়া মসজিদে বোমা হামলা চালানো হয়। মারা যান প্রায় ২০০ জন। শিয়া-সুন্নি বিরোধে গোটা দেশ উত্তাল হয়ে ওঠে। সে দিন থেকেই বদলা আর

পাল্টা বদলার পর্ব সমানে চলেছে। দিনের বেলা কার্ফু জারি করেও সরকার কিছুই সামলাতে পারেনি। আজ সকালে বাগদাদে ইরাকের প্রধান সুন্নি সংগঠনের শীর্ষ নেতা দারির বাড়িতে হামলা হয়েছে।

সুন্নি মোল্লা সংগঠন সূত্রের খবর, হামলাকারীরা সরকারি গাড়িতে এসেছিল। তারা এলোপাথাড়ি গুলি চালালে নিরাপত্তা কর্মীরাও পাল্টা গুলি চালায়। দু’পক্ষের লড়াইয়ে দারির দুই ভাইঝি জখম হয়েছে। এক জনের বয়স ৪, অন্য জনের ১৫। পরে এক টেলিভিশন চ্যানেলে দেওয়া সাক্ষাৎকারে দারি হামলার জন্য সরাসরি সরকারকে দায়ী করেছেন। তাঁর অভিযোগ, সরকারি বাহিনীই গুলি চালিয়েছে। বাগদাদে হিংসা নিয়ন্ত্রণে কাল সকাল ছ’টা থেকে ২৪ ঘণ্টা শহরে গাড়ি চলাচল নিষিদ্ধ হয়েছে।

আজই আবার বুহরিজ শহরে অজ্ঞাতপরিচয় আততায়ীরা একটি শিয়া পরিবারের উপরে হামলা চালিয়ে ১৩

জনকে খতম করেছে। শিয়াদের পবিত্র শহর কারবালায় গাড়ি বোমা বিস্ফোরণে নিহত হয়েছেন অন্তত ৬ জন। আহতের সংখ্যা ১৬। সরকারি সূত্রের খবর, এক দল লোক ধর্মীয় রীতি অনুযায়ী একসঙ্গে রান্না করছিলেন। সেই সময় রিমোট কন্ট্রোলের মাধ্যমে বিস্ফোরণ ঘটানো হয়।

বুশ আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন, ইরাকে শান্তি প্রতিষ্ঠা ও সম্ভ্রাসবাদীদের শান্তি দিতে ইরাক সরকারকে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র সব রকম সাহায্য দেবে। ইরাকের বর্তমান পরিস্থিতিকে রাজনৈতিক প্রক্রিয়ার অন্যতম কঠিন পরীক্ষা বলে উল্লেখ করেছেন মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট। বার বার বলেছেন, এই মুহূর্তে ইরাকের মানুষকে ধৈর্যের পরীক্ষা দিতে হবে। সম্ভ্রাসবাদীরা ইরাকে গৃহযুদ্ধ শুরুর চক্রান্ত করছে বলে আজ জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন মার্কিন প্রতিরক্ষা দফতরের অতিরিক্ত সচিব পিটার রডম্যান। সেই চক্রান্ত ব্যর্থ হবে বলেও তিনি দাবি করেন। — রয়টার্স, এ পি

15/02/2006

ANADABAZAR PATEIKA

# Iran offers IAEA secret nuke info

## AGENCIES

Nassfeld (Austria), February 25

IRAN HAS offered the UN nuclear watchdog information on a secret project that US Intelligence has linked to high explosives and warhead design, both parts of a possible nuclear arms programme, two diplomats have said.

One of the diplomats said that a team of International Atomic Energy Agency experts was heading to Tehran this weekend to follow up on the offer to discuss the secret uranium processing project known as "Green Salt."

The diplomats said it was unclear if the information being offered by the Iranians would shed more light on suspicious aspects of Iran's nuclear programme. But Tehran's overture appeared to be an attempt to blunt the threat of firm UN Security Council action in coming weeks. The council has the authority to impose sanctions on Iran.

Iran has denied seeking atomic weapons and more than three years of IAEA probing have failed to produce concrete evidence to the contrary. But the agency has discovered suspicious Iranian activity, including plutonium experiments and long-secret efforts to develop uranium enrichment - an activity that can produce nuclear fuel or fissile cores for warheads.

Public mention of the "Green Salt Project" first surfaced in an IAEA report drawn up earlier this month for a meeting of the agency's 35-nation board of governors.

76 1996

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Iraq attacks surge despite curfew

ASSOCIATED Press  
Baghdad, February 25

A CAR bomb exploded in a Shi'ite holy city and 13 members of one Shi'ite family were gunned down in the northeast of the capital on Saturday in a surge of attacks that killed at least 50 people despite heightened security aimed at curbing violence following the bombing of a revered Shi'ite shrine.

At least one more Sunni mosque was attacked in Baghdad on Saturday after two rockets were fired at a Shi'ite mosque in Tuz Khormato, north of the capital, on Friday night. Shooting also broke out near the home of a prominent Sunni cleric as the funeral procession for an Al-Arabiya TV correspondent, slain in sectarian violence, was passing by. The police believed the procession was the target.

The violence occurred despite an extraordinary daytime curfew in Baghdad and three surrounding provinces. Stretched security forces could not be everywhere to contain at-

tacks that have killed more than 150 people since Wednesday's shrine bombing and pushed Iraq to the brink of civil war.

Political and religious leaders were anxious to contain the violence unleashed by extremists on both sides, which have frozen efforts to form a new government that Washington considers essential if it is to reduce the US troop levels this year.

On Saturday, the interior minister clamped a 24-hour ban on all vehicular movements in Baghdad and its suburbs starting at 6 am on Sunday, in an effort to contain sectarian violence following the bombing of a Shi'ite shrine three days ago in Samarra. The announcement came on the second straight day of a daylight curfew in Baghdad and three surrounding provinces.

The main Sunni Arab political bloc said on Saturday it "will not hesitate to reconsider" its decision to pull out of coalition talks if Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a Shi'ite, follows through on promises to ease the crisis.

FEB 25 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Car bomb attack in Karbala, shootings across Iraq

110-12  
26/12

Sectarian bloodshed rages; 12 farm labourers found shot dead in Diyala province

**BAGHDAD:** A series of bombings, including a car bomb attack in the Shia holy city of Karbala, and shootings across Iraq on Saturday have killed at least 24 persons and left dozens wounded, officials said.

Rebels attempted to keep sectarian tensions burning in Iraq on Saturday when they blew up a car bomb on a busy shopping street in Karbala killing five persons and wounding 52.

Karbala police chief Brigadier General Razeq al-Tayi told Iraqi television that police were alerted to a suspicious car parked 200 metres from a security checkpoint and went to investigate.

The car then exploded, killing three policemen and two civilians.

## Suspect nabbed

Akil Mohammed (30), said he saw two persons drive the explosives-packed vehicle into the street.

"I was with my friends near a square when two men drove up in a car, parked it near the shops and left. A few minutes later, the explosion happened," he said.

Gen. Tayi added that people pointed out to police a man in the crowd who had parked the car and security forces gave chase, eventually catching him.

The destruction on Wednesday in Samarra of one of the world's holiest Shia shrines has pushed Iraq to the brink of civil war, with Shia armed groups attacking Sunni mosques in revenge.

Defence Minister Sadoun al-Dulaimi put the death toll at 119

civilians since Wednesday, lowering the figure significantly from some media reports of 183 dead.

The sectarian-fuelled bloodshed raged on Saturday as 12 farm labourers were found shot dead in an orchard in the mixed province of Diyala on Saturday.

Both Shias and Sunnis were among the dead, a relative of the victims said.

"Eight belonged to the Anbaki tribe and four belonged to another tribe," Mohammed Jassem said.

The incident occurred despite a daytime curfew in Diyala that had been imposed on Friday by the Iraqi Government in an effort to quell Iraq's grave crisis.

Two policemen and one Iraqi soldier were killed and 10 wounded in a bomb attack and shooting on the funeral procession of an *Al-Arabiya* journalist kidnapped and shot dead while reporting on the bombing of the Samarra shrine, police said.

In other violence, three people, including a child, were killed when a rocket hit a house in Baghdad's Shia dominated Sadr City, an Interior Ministry official said. In another incident, one worker employed in a leather factory at Naharwan was killed and two wounded when gunmen stormed the factory.

The U.S. military announced on Saturday the death of a soldier from non-combat related injuries on Friday. According to Pentagon figures as of Friday, total U.S. military deaths in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion were at 2,289. — AFP



**ON GUARD:** A militant belonging to the Mehdi Army led by the radical Shia cleric Moqdata al-Sadr guards a Sunni mosque in the southern Iraqi city of Basra on Saturday. — PHOTO: AFP

26 SEP 2006

THE HINDU

# Iran offers IAEA info on uranium enrichment project

AGENCIES

VIENNA, FEBRUARY 24

IRAN has offered UN inspectors information about a uranium-processing project that Western intelligence has linked to missile warhead design and tests with high explosives, a senior diplomat said on Thursday.

The offer was made with the clock ticking towards a March 6 meeting of IAEA that could result in UN Security Council action against Iran for failing to clear up doubts about its nuclear programme.

The diplomat, close to the IAEA said IAEA inspectors would be in Tehran this weekend to check the information on the "Green Salt Project."

This could form an important part of a report IAEA head Mohamed El Baradei is to circulate to the UN nuclear watchdog's board members early next week in advance of their March meeting.



Syrian PM al-Otari (right) and Iran's first Vice-President Davoudi sign agreements at Damascus on Thursday. AP

Word of the Green Salt Project first emerged in a summary of investigations by an El Baradei deputy given to a February 2-4 IAEA board meeting that resulted in a vote to report Iran's case to the Council.

Meanwhile, Syria and Iran after consolidating political ties, the regional allies moved to strengthen economic ties by signing a host of cooperation agreements in the fields of economy, trade, oil, agriculture and others.

Syrian PM Naji al Otari said at a joint press conference with visiting Iranian Vice-President Parziv Davoudi on Thursday that the agreements included trade between the two countries, and establishing gas, oil, and electrical links between Syria and Iran through Iraq.

MoU were also signed spelling joint cooperation in the fields of electric power and a programme for cultural, scientific and educational cooperation, al Otari said.

## Road from Samarra

11-18 Mosque destruction escalates  
Iraq's Shia-Sunni strife

IRAQ now confronts a crisis that is familiar to the Indian subcontinent, most notably during the riots that followed the demolition of the Babri masjid in December 1992. The destruction of a holy mosque in Samarra, from where the Shia messiah whose return is expected is supposed to have vanished, has unleashed a wave of retaliatory violence directed against Sunni mosques, clerics and ordinary people. But Iraq looks worse because it is in a delicate phase of political transition which could be disrupted by the mayhem in the streets, and this in turn could further feed the violence. Shias have been angered because of persistent terror attacks aimed at their shrines and communities, while Sunnis allege death squads with links to the interior ministry are targeting them. Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the most senior Shia cleric, had played a major role in preserving the peace so far, by urging restraint on Shias. But he has now called on the faithful to protect their mosques, which has been interpreted as an endorsement of militias. Following the violence Sunni political leaders have also withdrawn from talks on power-sharing arrangements with ruling Shia parties, further damaging efforts at reconciliation.

The US had been drawing down its troops in Iraq and transferring responsibility to Iraqi security forces, but this strategy will be undone if the violence continues. In that case stemming the violence may involve curfews enforced by heavy deployment of American troops, since Iraqi forces are seen to be partisan. But this can hardly suffice in the longer term, for which the crisis stemming from the power vacuum in Baghdad will have to be solved. And the Americans don't have too much leeway here — if they offend Iraq's ruling Shias the government could simply ask the Americans to pack up and leave, drawing Iraq into an Iranian orbit. What would help is if political and religious leaders from both sides of the sectarian strife condemn their own followers' excesses as well as those of the other side, which would calm tempers. Otherwise the strife could continue and engulf other Arab nations, as the cartoon protests migrated recently. As for the Americans, they are stuck in the Iraq quagmire for now.

# Efforts on to pull back Iraq from the brink of civil war

Leaders call for calm; Sunni front pulls out of talks with Shias

Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** Hoping to prevent a full-scale civil war, Iraqi authorities have imposed a daytime curfew in four provinces affected by sectarian violence amid appeals by prominent religious and political leaders for calm. Night-time curfew imposed during the last two years was extended till 4 p.m. local time in Baghdad and Diyala, Salaheddin and Babil provinces. Civilian flights from Baghdad airport have been cancelled.

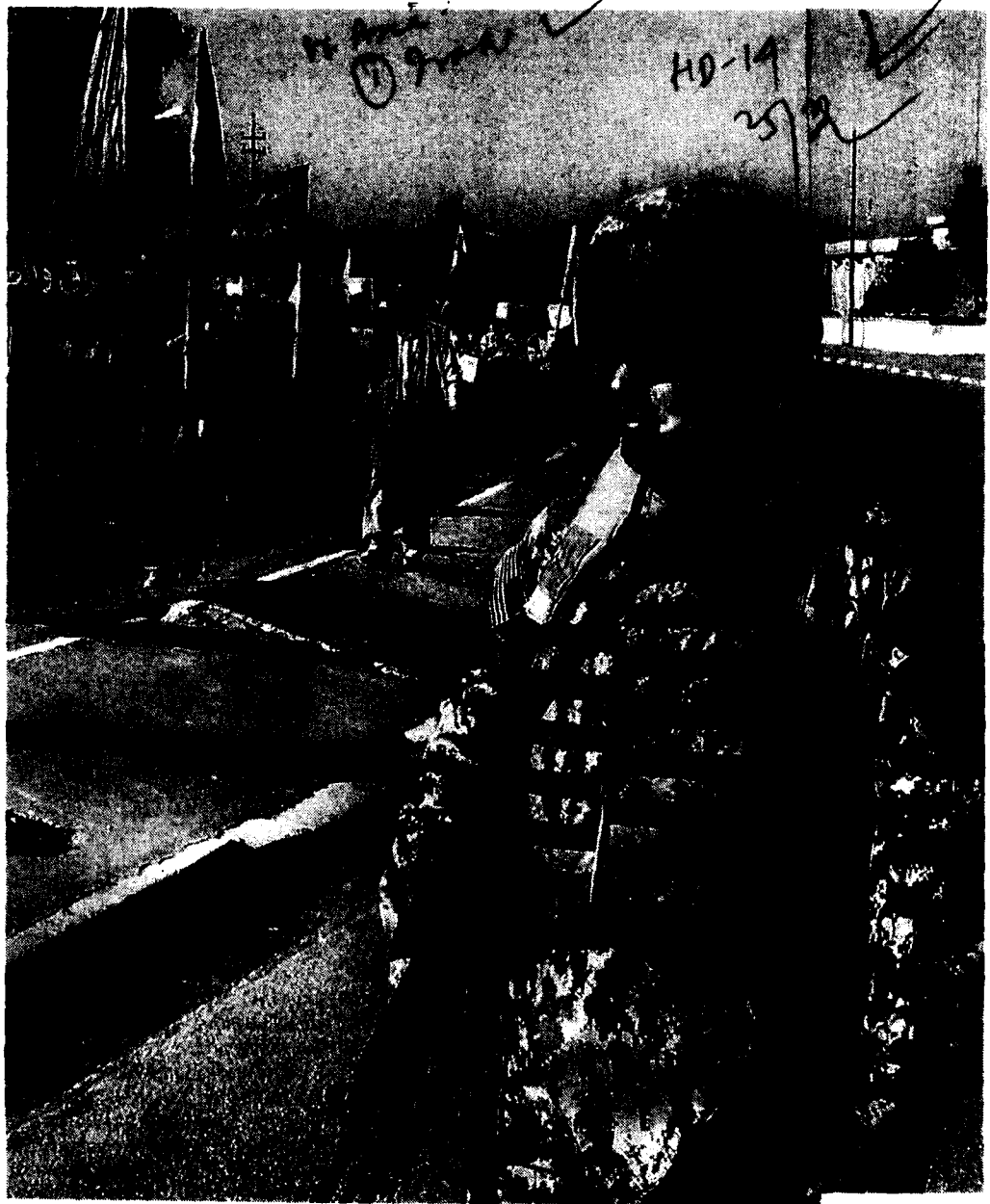
There has been relative calm in Iraq after nearly 140 persons were killed on Thursday in sectarian violence that followed the destruction of the golden dome of the historic Shia mosque in Samarra a day before. Twelve bodies were recovered in Baghdad subsequently, and gunmen reportedly killed three Shias in the town of Latifiya, south of the Iraqi capital. With country on the brink of a civil war, religious leaders have been calling for solidarity between the majority Shia and Sunni communities.

## Saddam loyalists blamed

Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the Shia leader of the influential Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), said in a statement that those who carried out the Wednesday bombing at the Al-Askari shrine in Samarra "do not represent the Sunnis in Iraq." He, instead, accused loyalists of former President Saddam Hussein and followers of Al-Qaeda for the atrocity. "We call for self-restraint and not to be dragged by the plots of the enemy of Iraq."

The leader of the Friday prayers at Baghdad's Sunni Abu Hanifa mosque also expressed similar sentiments. Imam Ahmed Hassan al-Taha denounced the attack in Samarra, describing it as a conspiracy to draw Iraqis into sectarian clashes.

A large number of people were expected to attend joint Shia-Sunni prayers at the Al-Askari shrine in Samarra, which had



**STANDING GUARD:** A U.S. soldier walks along side Iraqis holding a protest march against Samarra's Golden Mosque bombing in Mosul on Friday. - PHOTO: REUTERS

been attacked. Nearly 10,000 persons also gathered at Basra's Al-Adillah mosque, where a representative of Iraq's top Shia spiritual leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, called for a combined prayer service. But striking a discordant note, the Sunni Iraqi Accord Front, which had

contested recent parliamentary elections and won several seats, has pulled out of talks with Shia and Kurds to form a national unity government.

Sunni groups also boycotted across-the-board talks convened by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani to tide over the present crisis.

Meanwhile, the Associated Press quoted a Western official as saying that there had been discussions to rebuild the shrine in Samarra, as it would, in its present state, become a "lasting provocation." Italy, on Thursday, offered to rebuild the dome in order to combat "fanaticism."



# Russia may make new offer to Iran

## Moscow official in Teheran for talks to defuse crisis

Vladimir Radyuhin

**MOSCOW:** The visit to Teheran of Russia's atomic energy chief offers "a new opportunity" to resolve the deadlock of Iran's nuclear programme, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said as the head of Russia's Federal Atomic Energy Agency (Rosatom) Sergei Kiriyenko arrived in Teheran on Friday.

Rosatom sources said Mr. Kiriyenko will discuss the standing Russian initiative to enrich uranium for Iran on Russian soil.

However, Mr. Lavrov's remark, as well as comments by Iranian officials suggest the Russian plan may be expanded to pave the way for a compromise.

Commenting on the Moscow round of talks on Febru-

ary 20-21, Iran's negotiator Ali Hosseini-Tash said the discussions, which he described as "positive and constructive," had gone beyond the possible creation of an enrichment joint venture.

"We talked about the principles of a common formula and reached an agreement on those principles," Mr. Hosseini-Tash told Iranian television.

Echoing his remarks, Iran's Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani said the enrichment offer was just one of "several proposals" that could be finalised.

"The Russian proposal should be reviewed in a larger context. We had good talks in our recent negotiations, and the head of Russian atomic energy agency will be in Teheran on Friday

• Russia sees new opportunity to resolve deadlock

• Moscow may offer to build more reactors

• Existing plan may be expanded for a compromise

• Sale of missiles on the agenda

European Union and the United States, Russian officials said.

Therefore the "larger context" and the "common formula" for a possible deal probably involve some sweeteners to make Iran swallow the bitter bill.

Russia could offer to build 5, 10 or even 15 atomic power reactors in addition to the one Russia has constructed at Bushehr, experts said.

The possible compromise may also allow Iran to conduct initial uranium conversion, while the enrichment as such will be done in Russia.

Moscow has indicated it may accept Teheran's demand to set a time-frame for the operation of a joint venture to enrich uranium on Russian soil.

10-19  
29/2

20 FEB 2006 THE HINDU

## A destruction foretold

See it whichever way, the destruction of Iraq's Al-Askari mosque — one of Islam's holiest shrines, revered by millions of Shia Muslims — was determined the day troops of the United States-led coalition invaded the country in flagrant violation of international law and all canons of justice. The invasion opened the floodgates of sectarian violence by akrotically destroying the fabric of a nation. Although the Bush administration touted the holding of elections in December 2005 as the accomplishment of the U.S. mission to build democracy in Iraq — one of several pretexts advanced for the invasion — it has in fact contributed in a big way to the worsening of tensions among the majority Shias, the minority Sunnis, and the Kurds. All through 2005, Sunnis were targets of Shi'ite militias linked to the Interior Ministry in the Shia-run transitional government and to the leaders of the community. The victory of the Shi'ite United Islamic Alliance in the parliamentary election increased Sunni fears of a sectarian government. Just before the mosque was destroyed, Shia leaders were in talks with Sunni parties to explore the possibility of a government of national unity, a plan promoted by Washington in the belief this would bring down the levels of Sunni-led armed resistance. But if a Shia-Sunni reconciliation was never easy to achieve, the prospect has all but faded after the destruction of the golden-domed Al-Askari, and the subsequent sectarian clashes that have claimed more than 100 lives.

The Bush administration and British Prime Minister Tony Blair have accused Al Qaeda of destroying the 10th century mosque with the motive of damaging Shia-Sunni relations and plunging Iraq into further chaos. In Iraq, many believe it to be the work of the Sunni resistance to halt the task of government formation. Some even see it as a ploy by the occupying powers to justify their continuing presence in Iraq to discontented domestic audiences and to the world. While it is far from clear who was responsible for the monstrous vandalism at Samarra, it is more than evident that American and British troops have lost control of the situation. They have no role in restoring order. Much depends on how Iraq's Shia leadership responds to the current crisis. Of the two key leaders, Grand Cleric Ayatollah Ali Sistani has appealed to people to protest peacefully against the destruction of the mosque. Like the younger leader, Moqtada al-Sadr, a cleric who leads the Mahdi militia and inspired two uprisings against the occupying troops, Ayatollah Sistani blames the troops for failing to protect Shia shrines despite their large presence. Both leaders want the troop out of Iraq immediately. They have the potential to reach out to the Sunnis on the basis of the common political goal of the two communities — an immediate end to the American-led occupation of Iraq. In their political will to do this lies a key to Iraq's lost nationhood.

# Sectarian clashes rock Iraq

Dozens killed in attacks; private militias may takeover security of Shia shrines

Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** Violent sectarian clashes have erupted following the destruction of the golden dome of a historic Shia shrine in Samarra, bringing Iraq precariously close to a full-scale civil war.

The attack on the Al-Askari shrine on Wednesday triggered a spate of angry demonstrations nationwide, some of which turned violent. The Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS) — an influential Sunni body — has claimed that 168 mosques have been attacked, 10 clerics killed and 15 abducted. In Basra, militiamen set fire to a seventh century Sunni shrine.

## Journalists killed

Sectarian violence has already claimed 110 lives since Wednesday. At least 46 bodies have been recovered, most of whom appear to have been gunned down at close range, execution style. Several of these bodies were found dumped in several Shia dominated areas in Baghdad. The dead included a prominent woman correspondent from the Dubai based Al Arabiya television, along with two other Iraqi journalists, who had been covering the Samarra explosion. Their bullet-riddled bodies were found on the outskirts of city, which is 96 km north of Baghdad.

On Thursday, gunmen killed 47 factory workers after pulling them out of buses. The incident took place near Baquba, not far from Baghdad.

With confidence in the Government receding fast, Shia

leaders were preparing their private militias to takeover security of the shrines. Significantly, top spiritual leader Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani urged the Government "to shoulder its full responsibilities" to protect holy sites. Otherwise, "the believers are able to do so, by the aid of God." Analysts point out the Ayatollah Sistani might be threatening to deploy his own militia, Ansar Sistani.

Moqtada Al Sadr has also issued a statement that "Brothers in the Mehdi Army [his militia] must protect all Shia shrines and mosques, especially in Samarra." Thousands of Shias took out protest demonstrations.

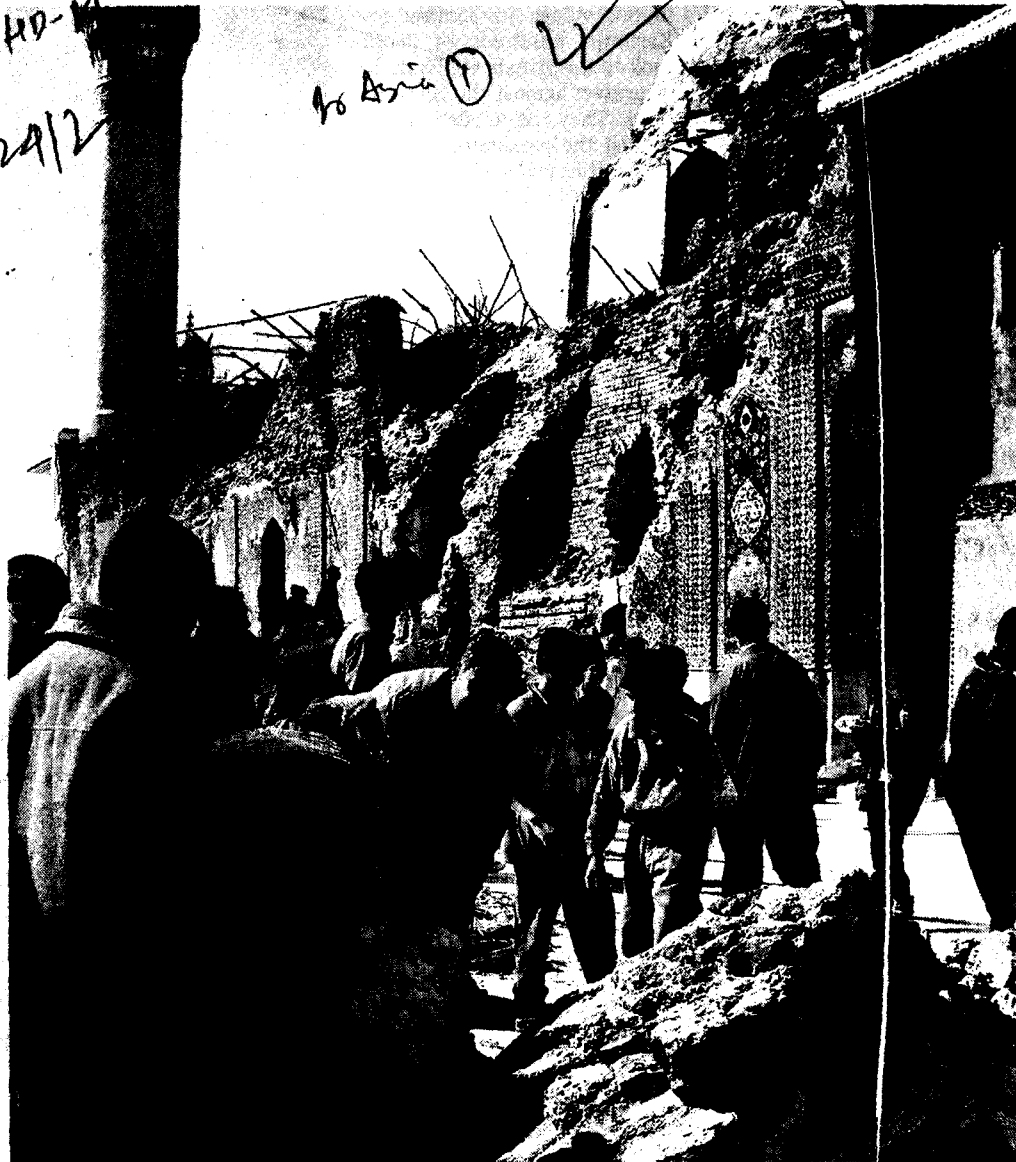
Sunni religious leaders are blaming their Shia counterparts for the mayhem. Spokesman for the AMS, Abdul-Salam Al-Kubaisi, said Shia leaders had called for demonstrations knowing fully well that "Iraqi borders are open and the streets are penetrated with those who want to create strife among Iraqis."

The on-going political dialogue between Sunni and Shia groups has been interrupted. A spokesman for the Iraqi Accord Front — a Sunni grouping that has won several seats in the recent parliamentary elections, said talks with Shia and Kurdish parties on the formation of a national unity government have stalled.

## Four U.S. soldiers killed

AP reports:

Four U.S. soldiers have been killed when their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb north of Baghdad, the U.S. military said.



Rubble being cleared from the destroyed holy shrine in Samarra on Thursday. — PHOTO: AFP

2006

# Civil war looms over Iraq

## Protesters shot and dumped



Shia Mehdi Army militants patrol a Basra street. Radical Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr ordered his Mehdi Army militia to protect Sunni mosques in majority Shia areas in southern Iraq. (AFP)

Baghdad, Feb. 23 (Reuters): Sectarian violence killed more than 130 people across Iraq and left dozens of mosques damaged or in ruins as the US appealed today to Sunnis and Shias to step back from the brink of civil war.

Dozens of bloody revenge attacks caused the death toll after yesterday's suspected al Qaida bombing of one of the holiest shrines in Shia Islam.

President George W. Bush stepped into the worst crisis since the US invasion, one that threatens efforts to form a stable, unity government and bring US troops home from Iraq.

"The voices of reason from all aspects of Iraqi life understand that this bombing is intended to create civil strife," Bush said as the military reported seven more US soldiers had been killed in two separate attacks yesterday.

The UN envoy Ashraf Qazi of Pakistan also stepped in, asking Iraqi leaders to join him in a meeting.

But the main Sunni political group said it pulled out of US-backed talks on forming a coalition after December's parliamentary election and leading clerics traded unusually frank sectarian criticisms that may do little to calm passions.

President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, pressed ahead despite

Baghdad, Feb. 23 (Reuters): Gunmen at a makeshift checkpoint outside Baghdad dragged more than 40 people from their cars and shot them dead today, dumping their bodies in a roadside ditch, police and other local officials said.

The victims were returning from a demonstration against the bombing yesterday of a Shia shrine in Samarra, police and interior ministry officials said.

They were found near the village of Nahrawan, just south of Baghdad, said Dhary Thoaban, the deputy chairman of the local council in the nearby province of Diyala. Police put the number of dead at 47 and said the victims included both Sunnis and Shias.

The police and interior ministry sources said the gunmen apparently set up the false checkpoint just outside the town of Kanaan in order to catch the protesters as they were returning home. It was not clear, however, whether all the victims had

been rounded up and shot dead in one group, or whether they had been pulled from their cars separately and shot.

Reuters Television footage showed the bodies, mostly of young men, laid side by side on the ground outside the main hospital building in Baquba, the capital of Diyala province. It was not clear from the pictures how the victims had died.



Iraqi journalist Atwar Baijati, who worked for al-Arabiya television, was killed near Samarra on Thursday. She was on her way to report on the bombing of a Shia shrine in Samarra. (AFP)

# Shrine blast fuels Shia fury in Iraq

Attackers disguised as commandos blow up one of Shi'ite Islam's holiest mosques

AP and The New York Times  
Baghdad, February 22

ASSAILANTS WEARING uniforms detonated two bombs inside one of Iraq's most revered Shi'ite shrines on Wednesday, blowing the top off its landmark golden dome and spawning mass protests and reprisal attacks against dozens of Sunni mosques.

The brazen assault — the third major attack against Shi'ite targets in as many days — threatened to enflame religious passions as talks among sectarian and ethnic parties on a new government have bogged down.

No group claimed responsibility for the dawn attack on the Askariya shrine in Samarra, 60 miles north of Baghdad, but suspicion fell on Sunni extremist groups.

A Shi'ite political leader and many demonstrators also blamed the United States and its criticism of Shi'ite-led security forces that have been blamed for alleged abuses against Sunnis. US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and the top American commander in Iraq called the bombings a deliberate attempt to foment sectarian strife and warned it was a "critical moment for Iraq." They also promised the US would contribute to the shrine's reconstruction. "Given the historic, cultural and religious importance of this shrine, this attack is a crime



A man brandishes a makeshift weapon in front of the bombed Askariya shrine in Samarra on Wednesday.

against humanity," Khalilzad and Gen. George Casey said in a joint statement.

Shi'ite leaders called for calm, but militants attacked Sunni mosques and a gunfight broke out between Shi'ite militiamen and guards at the offices of a Sunni political party in Basra.

About 500 soldiers were sent to Sunni neighbourhoods in Baghdad to prevent clashes between the sects.

Shi'ite spiritual leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani sent instructions to his followers for bidding attacks on Sunni mosques, especially the major politician, Tariq al-Hashimi,

urged clerics and politicians to calm the situation "before it spins out of control."

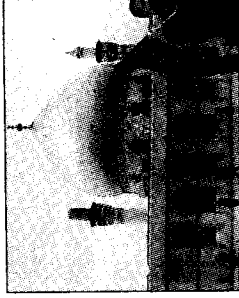
A government statement said "several suspects" had been detained in the attack on the mosque in Samarra.

The Askariya shrine contains the tombs of two revered Shi'ite imams, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad who are considered by Shi'ites to be among his successors.

In Iraq, negotiations over a new government are taking place slowly and with much acrimony. The volatility of the political process was exacerbated on Monday by suggestions from Zalmay Khalilzad, the US ambassador to Iraq, that the US might decrease financial help to a government that excluded some sects and ethnic groups. His comments were a veiled attack on Shi'ite leaders, some of whom have been accused of widening sectarian rifts in the past year by supporting government death squads that have kidnapped, tortured and killed Sunni Arabs.

On Tuesday, Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari scoffed at Khalilzad's remarks. "When we are asked, 'Do you want the government to be sectarian?' our answer is 'no,'" Jaafari said. "Not because the American ambassador says this and warns us, but because this is our policy. We think that sovereignty means no one interferes in our affairs."

## TARGET ASKARIYA



- The Askariya shrine is among Iraq's most sacred sites for Shi'ites, drawing pilgrims from around the Islamic world
- It contains the tombs of the 10th and 11th imams, Ali al-Hadi and his son, Hassan al-Askari
- The golden dome was completed in 1905 under Muzaffar al-Din Shah
- The shrine is near the place where the last of the 12 imams, Mohammed al-Mahdi, disappeared
- The shrine is in Samarra, one of four Shi'ite holy cities in Iraq, which has majestic ruins stretching along the eastern bank of the Tigris
- It was built by Caliph al-Mutassim in 836 AD to replace Baghdad as the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate, and abandoned by Al-Mutamid in 892 AD.

# Iran responds positively to new proposals

## Compromise formula moots allowing Teheran to pursue uranium enrichment for research

Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** As Iran engages the European Union (E.U.) and Russia in talks, new proposals are being put on the table that could help defuse the crisis surrounding Teheran's nuclear programme.

The first indications that new avenues are being sought to ease tensions have come from the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mohammad ElBaradei.

Outlining a new compromise formula to end the immediate cri-

sis, Mr. ElBaradei has been quoted as saying that the West should allow Iran to pursue uranium enrichment for research purposes only.

Iran, on its part, should not begin industrial scale production of enriched uranium as it has threatened to do after the IAEA board

reported its case to the U.N. Security Council on February 4.

Iran has so far responded positively to Mr. ElBaradei's suggestions to defuse the crisis.

Briefing the media in Brussels where he held talks with top E.U. officials, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said the IAEA chief's proposal was a "step forward".

He added, "If we reach some compromise, we continue our preparation from where we are now. That is, the research department will continue its activity."

### Russia, Iran to continue talks

Vladimir Radyuhin

**MOSCOW:** Russia and Iran will continue nuclear fuel enrichment talks in Teheran later this week. The Iranian

delegation left Moscow on Tuesday after two days of talks. Head of Russia's Atomic Energy Agency Sergei Kiriyenko said the talks will continue when he visits Teheran on February 23.

20 FEB 2006

THE HINDU

# 23 Iraqis killed in renewed violence

Bloodshed amid debate on "national unity" government L. Asia (1)  
MD-15

**BAGHDAD:** Twenty-three Iraqis were killed and scores more wounded in attacks across the country on Monday, including a suicide bombing which claimed the lives of a dozen persons on a Baghdad mini-bus.

The bloodshed comes as the ethnic and religious factions debate whether to form a government of "national unity" following the December general elections that gave the Shias a majority in the 275-seat Parliament.

## Shia area targeted

In the day's bloodiest attack, a suicide bomber killed 12 persons on a mini-bus in a Shia neighbourhood in northern Baghdad, an Interior Ministry official said.

Rescue teams were combing the blackened vehicle to extract charred human remains, the official said on condition of anonymity.

At least eight wounded were rushed to the hospital, he added.

The attacker struck in Kadhamiyah, which has been regularly targeted by Sunni extremists intent on fanning sectarian strife among Iraq's religious groups.

The bombing came as U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad warned that ethnic and religious conflict was "the fundamental problem" in Iraq.

The U.S. diplomat vowed not to fund any security forces run with a sectarian bias amid allegations that Shia death squads have infiltrated the Iraqi police.

In other violence, five Iraqis were killed when their truck convoy carrying building materials came under rocket and automatic weapons fire north of Baghdad, police in the northern city of Tikrit said. — AFP



**A BLOODY DAY:** A restaurant damaged in an explosion in Mosul, north of Baghdad, on Monday. Five persons died and 21 were injured in the incident. — PHOTO: AFP

2006 THE HINDU

# The nuclear issue and Iran's domestic debate

Atul Aneja

OVER A million Iranians poured into the streets of Teheran on February 11 to commemorate the 27th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. The turnout evoked memories of the Revolution's early days, when Ayatollah Khomeini drew heady crowds into the capital's streets soon after the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1979.

Then revolutionary zeal was the mobilising force. Last Saturday, it appeared a combination of national pride and, most importantly, a deep-seated anxiety that motivated people to emerge in such large numbers. As expected, Iran's nuclear standoff with the United States and the European Union, and the decision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board to "report" its case to the United Nations Security Council was the underlying theme of the march, which ended at the capital's Azadi Square.

The English language daily *Teheran* described the outpouring of humanity as a "referendum" on the nuclear issue. Another prominent newspaper, *Iran News*, said the present situation was comparable to 1951 when, despite opposition from colonial powers, Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh nationalised the Iranian oil industry, triggering a tidal wave of mass support.

The threat of a possible war with the U.S. and Israel has pulled all sections of the Iranians into the ongoing nuclear debate. There is a clear realisation that their nuclear facility in Natanz, where gas centrifuges for enriching uranium have been positioned, is only 1,700 kilometres from Israel. This is well within the reach of Israeli F-15 fighter jets, which can fly 4,500 km without refuelling. There is also the precedent of 1981 when Israel used these U.S.-built planes to destroy Iraq's Osirak reactor, thereby upsetting Baghdad's plans on nuclear energy permanently.

The situation has become alarming as 140,000 U.S. troops are on Iran's doorstep in Iraq. Hawkish statements by the Bush administration

While there is a consensus in Iran on acquiring nuclear know-how, there are deep differences on whether to go in for weapons capability.

But the threat of aggression by the U.S. or Israel could prove a rallying factor.

have further fuelled anxieties. In an interview to a German newspaper earlier this month, U.S. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld did not rule out the use of military force against Iran.

The Iranian establishment is also fully aware of CONPLAN 8022-02, a directive signed by U.S. President George W. Bush in January 2003. This plan envisages the use of air power, and does not preclude the deployment of earth penetrating "mini-nukes" to target underground sites as in Iran. It does not provide for the commitment of ground troops, and is therefore radically different from the Iraqi war plan. The Bush administration has been alluding to a "full spectrum global strike," which includes the use of precision bombs — both nuclear and conventional.

In the summer of 2005, Mr. Rumsfeld approved a top secret "Interim Global Strike Alert Order," under which the U.S. Strategic Command, which at one time focussed on nuclear forces alone, has been ordered to maintain round-the-clock readiness. The Bush administration is well aware that it is the threat of an attack that has been the driving force behind the Iranian nuclear programme. In his recent article "U.S. fuels Iran's nuclear policy," historian Gareth Porter quotes two former Central Intelligence Agency officials who have maintained that the Iranian nuclear programme was, to a considerable extent, the result of the perceived threat from the U.S. In the words of Paul Pillar, who wrote the CIA assessment reports on Iran between 2000 and 2005, the dominant view in the intelligence community over the past three

years has been that Iran would seek nuclear weapons capability because the threat from the U.S. and Israel was a major consideration, though not the only one. The reports concluded that Washington's willingness to allay Iran's security fears would have a significant impact on Iranian policy. Ellen Laipson, who is now president of the Henry L. Stimson Center in Washington and had worked on Iran as national intelligence officer in the early 1990s and later as Vice Chair of the National Intelligence Council, also agrees that there has been a linkage between Iran's threat perception and its nuclear programme.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 1990, the categorisation of Iran as part of an "axis of evil," and the refusal of the Bush administration to respond to Iran's overtures in May 2003 to open a dialogue on its nuclear programme as well as anti-Israeli groups over which it exercises considerable influence, has contributed significantly towards heightening Iranian threat perceptions.

While there is a consensus in Iran that the country must acquire nuclear know-how, there are deep differences on whether to translate capability into weapons. A large section of the Iranian intelligentsia believe acquisition of nuclear capability for civilian use alone would provide sufficient deterrence. "Mastering the full nuclear fuel cycle will give Iran the benefit of ambiguity about its programme, which is enough to serve as a deterrent," Arshin Adib-Moghadam, an Iran specialist at Oxford, told

*The Hindu*. However, there is another school of thought that recommends weaponisation citing the examples of India and Pakistan with whom the U.S.' rules of engagement were re-defined after they became full-fledged nuclear weapon powers in 1998.

Aware of their concerns, the Russians have already started hinting that in order to make progress on the nuclear issue, Iran should be made to feel more secure. There are now discussions within the Russian establishment and academic circles that the format of the dialogue between Iran and western countries needs to be altered drastically. Instead of three European Union countries (EU-3) — Britain, France, and Germany — which have been holding talks, Russia, China, and the U.S. must become essential participants. Recommending a new dialogue architecture, Vladimir Yevseyev, a specialist at the International Security Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences, says the American role in shaping a positive Iranian response would be crucial, provided it can issue concrete security guarantees to the Iranians.

The Russian establishment also appears to be giving considerable thought to quickly involving China in its diplomacy on Iran. In an interview to the Italian daily *La Stampa*, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov said he was hopeful that talks with Iran in the future would be held "with probable participation by the Chinese." He also warned that Russia would not "allow for a confrontation [with Iran] which could lead to conflict," adding that "any attempt to push Iran to a show of force could have irreversible consequences."

Contrary to the popular impression that the Iranian leadership, after Mahmoud Ahmedinejad assumed the Presidency, has been tactlessly confrontational, there is evidence to suggest that Teheran has been making conciliatory moves behind the scenes. The Iranian Persian language daily *Keyhan* reported that Teheran had made a six-point proposal that could guarantee the peaceful orientation of the nuclear programme. The offer included a promise to begin the ratification process of the Additional Protocol of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty that allows U.N. inspectors to carry out short-notice inspections of its nuclear facilities. Besides, it signalled its willingness to accept the Russian offer of undertaking uranium enrichment on its soil. The Iranians also said they were ready to continue their nuclear dialogue with the EU-3 for another two years. Iran-based journalists have reported that Javad Veidi, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, submitted the proposal to the EU-3 on January 30.

Some Iranian commentators have also been saying that a new group of decision makers has emerged in Iran with the backing of the Supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. It has drawn members from the political, military, and economic fields and has the support of some members of the elite Revolutionary Guards. The group has reportedly been formed in the wake of a number of government studies that showed that Iran, at the present juncture, was ill prepared to face economic sanctions.

Iran's former President and present head of the Expediency Council, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, is apparently behind this initiative. The move could undercut the influence of Iran's National Security Council, which is a parliamentary body packed with supporters of President Ahmedinejad.

Interestingly, Mr. Rafsanjani went on a highly publicised visit on January 29 to Iran's spiritual headquarters of Qom, where he met 11 of Iran's 14 Grand Ayatollahs. The *Aftabnews* website, which is known to be close to Mr. Rafsanjani, said the "nuclear problem" was the centrepiece of their discussions. While it has become clear that there are powerful vested interests in Washington that are clamouring for a war against Iran, there is still a window of hope that conflict can be avoided. Much would depend on a meeting in Moscow, scheduled for February 20 and the IAEA board meeting on March 6, on whether after the Iraq misadventure, another catastrophe, in which tactical nuclear weapons could come into play, can be averted.

## CARTOONSCAPE





Mr. Abdul Mahdi 42-10 1972

## Iraq faces more instability

**T**he election of Ibrahim al-Jaafari as Prime Minister of Iraq by just a single vote has only underlined the deep divisions between and within Iraqi communities that the United States-led military invasion opened up. Following the victory of the United Iraqi Alliance in the December 15 parliamentary election, the umbrella Shia grouping nearly came apart over who should be nominated Prime Minister. The matter had to be settled by a vote. It was only after striking a deal with Moqtada al-Sadr, the popular cleric who commands the biggest group within the UIA, that Mr. Jaafari of the Islamic Da'awa party managed his slender victory over his rival, Adel Abdul Mahdi of the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution (SCIRI) in Iraq. Although the Shiite bloc presented a united front after the election, it is clear that the Prime Minister has an uphill task. He starts out with the disadvantage of his association with the Iraq Governing Authority, the interim government that he led, under which violence in Iraq escalated with more suicide bombings, assassinations, shootings, and atrocities by the occupation forces. For both Iraqi Sunnis and Kurds, Mr. Mahdi was the potentially unifying figure. The Sunnis are angry with Mr. Jaafari for the killing of hundreds last year, for which they blame the interim government's Interior Ministry and associated Shiite militias.

The immediate challenge for Mr. Jaafari is the formation of something like a government. This, by conservative estimates, could take up to April. With only 128 out of 275 seats in the transitional National Assembly, the UIA needs to co-opt others for making up the two-thirds majority required to form the government. There is also some talk of a 'government of national unity' so that Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds can share power. The idea has the backing of the U.S., which believes this can bring down the levels of Sunni-led armed resistance in Iraq. The Sunnis have set two main conditions for participation in government: amendments to provisions in the Constitution that give the Shias and Kurds semi-autonomous control of oil-rich regions, and control of at least one of the two key Ministries, Interior and Defence. It is doubtful that these concessions can be made. To make matters worse, Mr. al-Sadr, whose support is important to the Prime Minister, has demanded that secular Sunnis, especially former Ba'ath party members, should be kept out of the new government. The Kurds may join hands with the Shiites as they did while forming the interim government. But with both Mr. al-Sadr and SCIRI demanding the immediate exit of the U.S.-led occupation troops, and with Kurds fearing their departure, the future of a Shia-Kurd alliance too is uncertain. More instability seems guaranteed in Iraq.

# Saddam Hussein on hunger strike

Handwritten notes: "HAWA" and "KD-15" written above the title, and "572" written to the right of the title.

## Ate nothing for three days: ex-President

**BAGHDAD:** Saddam Hussein and three former officials in his regime on Tuesday told the court handling their trial that they were on a hunger strike in protest of the judge overseeing the proceedings.

Mr. Hussein said he had not eaten in three days, while his former intelligence chief, Barzan Ibrahim, said he had been on strike for two days. Two other defendants, Awad Bandar and former Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan, also said they were on strike.

Their claims of a hunger strike could not be independently confirmed. The defendants are being held in U.S. detention, and U.S. officials could not immediately be reached to comment.

But investigative judge Raid Juhi did not deny the defendants were refusing food when asked about the strike after the day's three-hour session. "This is an administrative problem that the court is working to verify and it will work also to solve it... with the responsible parties

in the custodial authorities," he told reporters.

"But, as you could see, the defendants are in good health," he said. Chief judge Raouf Abdel-Rahman, who took over the court last month, has worked to impose order in a court where outbursts and arguments have frequently overshadowed the testimony.

But after a short period of shouting at the start of Tuesday's session, the court was calm as prosecutors continued for a second day trying to directly link Mr. Hussein and his co-defendants to arrests and executions of Shias carried out after a 1982 attempt on Mr. Hussein's life in the village of Dujail.

The prosecution presented a document said to be Mr. Hussein's approval for a recommendation of rewards to intelligence agents involved in the crackdown. Ibrahim, Saddam's half-brother, spoke at length to the tribunal, denying he had any part in the crackdown. —AP

1-11-2006

THE HINDU

# Iran puts off nuclear talks with Russia

Our offer for February 16 round stands, says Moscow

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Atul Aneja

DUBAI: A crucial meeting between Iran and Russia to help defuse the crisis surrounding Teheran's nuclear programme has been postponed.

The meeting was scheduled for February 16, a spokesman for President Mahmoud Ahmelinejad has said.

"The negotiations have not been cancelled but the date for the talks is another matter," said Gholam Hossein Elham. However, Russia said it was

still ready to go ahead with talks on Thursday.

"Our offer for the 16th still stands," said Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Kislyak.

The dialogue was expected to go into the details of a Russian proposal of enriching uranium for Iran in a joint venture facility on its soil.

If there were an agreement, the enriched uranium would then be transferred as fuel for the Iranian nuclear plant at Bushehr, which was being constructed by Moscow.

The Russian proposal has been backed by the U.S. and the European Union, as it would allow diversion of uranium by Iran for the possible manufacture of atomic weapons.

## Cautious response

Meanwhile, unnamed diplomats Vienna, headquarters of the IAEA, were quoted as saying workers at Iran's Natanz nuclear facility had started putting uranium hexafluoride (UF6) gas into centrifuges that are used to manufacture enriched uranium. Iranian officials had earlier said they would resume small-scale uranium enrichment by early March.

Enriched uranium is used for

• Dialogue to go into the details of Russian proposal

• Moscow's move backed by U.S., European Union

• Iran "begins uranium enrichment process"

In their public statements, Iranians have said they would wish to have enrichment work undertaken on their territory.

generating electricity, but forms the explosive core of a nuclear bomb when it assumes a highly purified form.

## Cautious response

AP reports: Israel gave a measured response on Monday to reports that Iran had begun a process that can produce fuel for nuclear reactors or bombs. "Israel believes that Iran has for too long been playing games with the international community and we support fully the decision to bring the Iranian nuclear program to the U.N. Security Council," said its Foreign Ministry.

17 FEB 2006

THE HINDU

# Iran doomsday picture

London, Feb. 13 (Reuters): Thousands of military personnel and hundreds of civilians would be killed if the US launched an air strike on Iran to prevent it developing nuclear arms, a British think tank said in a report released today.

The report by the independent Oxford Research Group said any bombing of Iran by US forces, or by their Israeli allies, would have to be part of a surprise attack on a range of facilities including urban areas that would catch many Iranians unprotected.

"I think there is at least a 50:50 risk of some sort of real crisis, probably with military action, before the end of next year," said the report's author, Professor Paul Rogers of the University of Bradford.

"There is always the possibility that the Israelis do (it). I don't think you can rule that out," he said. "For the Israelis, having an Iran which is getting anywhere close to a nuclear weapons capability is simply not acceptable."

An attack could eventually lead to a lengthy confrontation involving many other countries in the region, could mean the closure of the Gulf, and would probably have a "formidable" impact on oil prices, as well as spurring new attacks by Muslim radicals on western interests, the report said.

"A US military attack on Iranian nuclear infrastructure would be the start of a protracted military confrontation," the report said.

Such a confrontation would probably involve Iraq,

Israel and Lebanon as well as the US and Iran, with the possibility of Arab Gulf states being involved as well.

"Military deaths in (the) first wave of attacks against Iran would be expected to be in the thousands," it said.

"Civilian deaths would be in the many hundreds at least," it added. "If the war evolved into a wider conflict, primarily to pre-empt or counter Iranian responses, the casualties would eventually be much higher."

Western states suspect Iran of secretly aiming to build a nuclear bomb. Tehran says its nuclear facilities are intended to produce only electricity.

Washington and Jerusalem have said they would prefer to solve the dis-

pute through diplomacy but have not ruled out military action.

The report said an attack by the US or Israel on Iran would probably spur Tehran to work as rapidly as possible towards developing a nuclear military option.

It said US forces, already tied down in Iraq, would have a limited number of military options when dealing with Iran and would have to rely almost entirely on the air force and navy.

Any attack would have a "powerful unifying effect within Iran", bolster the Tehran government.

The report concluded that a military response to the crisis would be a "particularly dangerous option and should not be considered further".



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at a meeting of foreign ambassadors in Tehran. (Reuters)

# Use of force irks Saddam

Baghdad, Feb. 13 (Reuters): Saddam Hussein returned to court today after a two-session boycott, launching at once into a tirade against the new chief judge and complaining his own presence at his trial had been enforced.

In a resumption of chaotic hearings, two of his former senior aides told the chamber they were forced to appear as witnesses. One of them accused the chief prosecutor of being a former member of Saddam's intelligence services, throwing a new twist into a troubled trial.

Saddam, who condemns the court as an imperial creation of US military occupation, slammed his fist on the railing of his metal pen as he berated the chief judge.

"You don't have the right to sit on that chair because you are ignorant of the law," Saddam told judge Raouf Abdel Rahman, a slight man who appeared fed up with a barrage of verbal abuse. The court was later adjourned until tomorrow.

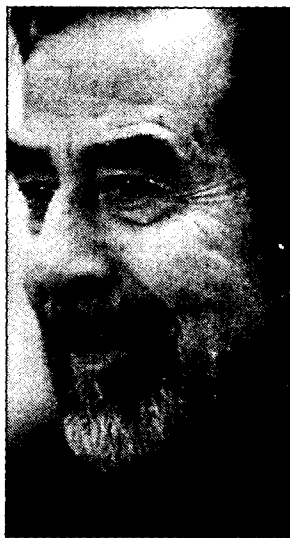
The toppled Iraqi leader refused an offer of court-appointed lawyers to replace his defence team, which walked out of the court last month to protest against the tough new chief judge.

Saddam has boycotted the last two hearings since he and several of his seven co-accused staged a walkout on January 29. The chief prosecutor signalled yesterday Saddam would be forced to attend.

Saddam and his half-brother Barzan al-Tikriti quickly went into attack mode today. "This is not a court, this is a game," said Saddam.

"I was forced into the courtroom. Exercise your right and sentence me in absentia," he told the judge. The trial has already been marred by the resignation of the first chief judge and the killings of 2 lawyers.

## RAGE RELIEF



Saddam Hussein at the trial in Baghdad.  
(Reuters)

04 13 2006

# Shia lawmakers choose Jaafari for Prime Minister

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Leaders set to begin the difficult task of government formation

Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** The United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), the Shia grouping that has won the maximum number of seats in Iraq's parliamentary elections, has picked Ibrahim al-Jaafari as its candidate for Prime Minister.

Mr. Jaafari defeated his rival, Vice-President Adel Abdel Mahdi, by a single vote in internal elections held on Sunday, in which 100 lawmakers participated. The voting took place at the fortified residence of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the head of the pro-

Iran Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the party to which Mr. Mahdi belongs.

## Al-Sadr wields clout

Shia lawmakers had to resort to balloting as they failed to agree on a common candidate during lengthy negotiations. Sunday's vote showed the growing clout of Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, as it was his group that swung the vote finally in Mr. Jaafari's favour.

Under the Iraqi Constitution, the President and two Vice-Presidents choose a Prime Minister

from the group with the most MPs, pending a simple majority approval in Parliament.

Mr. Jaafari, who was also Prime Minister in the outgoing government which had been appointed for a year to draft a new Constitution and conduct a national referendum to approve it, is likely to remain Prime Minister for a full four-year term.

Shia and Sunni religious parties along with the Kurdish Alliance have done well in the elections, where the secular parties of Iyad Allawi and Ahmed Chalabi were completely mar-

ginalised. The Kurds, who have won 53 seats, are likely to support the UIA, which secured 128 seats. The Sunni religious parties won 80 seats.

Following the contest, Shia leaders will begin the difficult task of government formation, which might take months to complete. "We have achieved our first mission, to nominate the alliance candidate for Prime Minister. We must now move ahead with the next step, which is the formation of the new government," Jawad al-Maliki of the Dawa Party to which Mr. Jaafari belongs said.

THE HINDU

# US plans blitz on Iran nuke sites

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, February 12

WASHINGTON IS raising the pitch against Tehran's nuclear programme, drawing up plans for bombing raids backed by submarine-launched ballistic missile attacks against Iran's nuclear sites as a "last resort" to block Tehran from developing nuclear weapons, says a report in London's *Sunday Telegraph*.

Faced with a lack of consensus in the international community on how to tackle Iran's civil nuclear programme from developing into a weapons programme, the Pentagon is drawing up potential targets to strike to disable Iran's development of nuclear weapons.

They claim Iran will develop nuclear weapons capability within a couple of years, a prospect even India is not comfortable with, causing New Delhi to vote to report Iran's nuclear programme to the UN Security Council. Diplomatic efforts have intensified to get Iran to agree to a Russian proposal that will allow enriched uranium supplies for Tehran's development needs, but ensure that the actual enrichment occurs in Russia.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is on record saying

## 'Tehran committed to NPT'

The Iranian foreign ministry affirmed Tehran's commitment to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty on Sunday and urged a peaceful solution to the dispute over its nuclear programme.

Spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi issued the latest declaration a day after the Iranian President threatened unspecified changes to the country's nuclear policy after it was reported to the UN General Assembly. "We are still committed to NPT provisions. But we can't accept its use as a political instrument," Asefi said. On Saturday, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad rejected US and European pressure to freeze Iran's nuclear programme and hinted that Iran might withdraw from the non-proliferation pact.



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

## EU flays Ahmadinejad threat

THE EUROPEAN Union has condemned the latest remarks by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad about Israel, in which he said that the Palestinians and "other nations" would eventually remove the Jewish state.

"That such completely unacceptable remarks are being repeated does not mean we should accept them in silence," Ursula Plassnik, foreign minister of Austria, which currently holds the EU presidency, said on Saturday. Speaking on the 27th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Ahmadinejad had once again described the Holocaust as a "fairy tale", and that the Palestinians with the help of "other nations" would one day remove Israel from the region.

AP, Tehran

When asked if they were planning any military action against Iran, Israeli strategic experts in Jerusalem had said recently Iran's nuclear programme was "the entire world's concern".

US Central Command and Strategic Command planners are identifying targets, assessing weapon-loads and working on logistics for an operation.

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

Tehran has dispersed its nuclear plants, burying some deep underground, and has recently increased its air defences, but Pentagon planners believe that the raids could seriously cripple Iran's nuclear programme.

Iran was reported to the UN Security Council by the International Atomic Energy Agency last weekend for its banned nuclear activities. Tehran reacted by announcing that it would resume full-scale uranium enrichment — producing material that could arm nuclear devices.

The White House says that it wants a diplomatic solution, but George W Bush has refused to rule out military action.

DPA, Tehran

The war strategists are reporting to Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, as the US is updating plans for action if the diplomatic offensive fails, the report said.

The prospect of military action could put Washington at odds with Britain which fears that an attack would spark widespread violence across West Asia, reprisals in the Western

# Talks fail, no consensus on Iraq PM

MARIAM KAROUNY  
BAGHDAD | FEBRUARY 11

IRAQ'S ruling Islamist Shi'ite alliance failed to pick a candidate for prime minister again in talks today with rivalries delaying negotiations on forming a government two months after elections.

A senior official in the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) said earlier that the grouping was expected to nominate Vice-President Adel Abdul Mahdi to lead the government after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

But today's talks dashed expectations that Abdul Mahdi, a leader in the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), would stand as the alliance's candidate and ease what appears to be an internal crisis in the alliance.

As the party with the biggest bloc in Parliament after winning 128 of the 275 seats, the alliance will be asked by the next president to name a prime minister, to be approved by a simple parliamentary majority, under



Jawad al Maliki (left) with Sheik Humam Hammoudi in Baghdad on Saturday. AP

the Iraqi constitution.

UIA leaders told a news conference that talks would resume on Sunday and officials would resort to a vote if a candidate is not chosen.

"The delay came because we are eager to safeguard the unity of the alliance behind its nominee," said Jawad al Maliki, a leader of the Dawa party, which along with SCIRI and other Shi'ite parties forms the Shi'ite bloc.

Maliki said most of the parties who requested a delay backed Dawa leader and incumbent Prime Minister Ibrahim al Jaafari for the top job in government.

—Reuters

17 FEB 2006



# Iran threatens to review nuclear policy

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**TEHERAN:** Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad warned on Saturday his country could quit the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and review its nuclear policy if forced by the West to limit its disputed nuclear programme.

In a strongly-worded speech to huge crowds marking the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the outspoken leader also repeated his view that Nazi Germany's mass killing of Jews was a "myth" and argued that Palestinians and Iraqis were suffering from "the real

- Teheran warns of quitting NPT
- Huge gathering marks anniversary of Islamic Revolution

Holocaust". "Until now, the Islamic republic's policy was to use nuclear technology for peaceful ends," the President said, a week after Iran was reported to the U.N. Security Council amid fears it is seeking nuclear weapons. "The Islamic

Republic of Iran has continued its nuclear drive within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the NPT, but if we see that you want to deprive us of our right using these regulations, know that the people will revise their policy in this regard," he said in a thinly-veiled warning.

Hundreds of thousands were out, answering a call from Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to put on a show of force in the face of mounting international pressure.

The West wants Iran to aban-

don uranium enrichment work, which can be extended from making reactor fuel to the fissile core of a nuclear weapon.

Iran maintains that it only wants to generate electricity and that its fuel cycle work is permitted by the NPT.

But the reporting of Iran to the Security Council marked a turning point in the long-running crisis by exposing the country to the danger of sanctions unless it returns to a nuclear freeze and cooperates more with the IAEA. — AFP

12/18/2006

THE HINDU

# US allies pull out from Iraq

**Vienna:** The Ukrainians are long gone. So are the Norwegians. The Italians and South Koreans are getting ready to leave, and the Britons and Japanese could begin packing their bags later this year.

Slowly but steadily, US allies in Iraq are drawing down or pulling out as Iraqi forces take more responsibility for securing the country. By year-end, officials say, the coalition—now 25 nations supporting a dwindling US contingent of 138,000—may shrink noticeably.

The continuing withdrawals and reductions will test the Iraqis' ability to tamp down attacks and rebuild, said Anthony Cordesman of the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, warning in a new report: "It is too soon to predict the extent to which Iraqi

forces can eventually replace coalition forces."

Britain, with about 8,000 troops in Iraq, is the US' most important coalition ally. Officials repeatedly have said they hope to begin bringing home some of those troops later this year, though Defence Secretary John Reid has played down recent reports that Britain has settled on a timetable for withdrawal. "We are going to hand over to the Iraqi security forces...whenever they are ready to defend their own democracy. We are there as long as we are needed and no longer," Reid said in an interview in London.

On Tuesday, however, he also made clear that "if things in Iraq continue to progress as they are, there will be significantly fewer British forces there by next

year."

Poland's new president, Lech Kaczynski, said his country might keep its scaled-down contingent of 900 troops in Iraq into 2007. But other countries have abandoned the coalition, shrinking the overall size of the force to 157,500, including the roughly 138,000 US troops.

The Pentagon says the American contingent itself has been cut to its lowest level since last summer. Among the larger contributors to pull out of Iraq was Ukraine, which withdrew its last contingent of 876 troops in December. Bulgaria also brought home its 380 infantry troops. Key coalition members such as South Korea and Italy—the US' No. 2 and 3 partners in Iraq after Britain—will begin drawing down later this spring. AP

FEB 2008

THE STATES OF INDIA

# Iran situation dangerous: Cheney

**Washington:** Vice-President Dick Cheney on Tuesday said the nuclear stand-off with Iran was a dangerous situation that had been aggravated by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's "outrageous statements."

Cheney welcomed the action of the UN nuclear watchdog to report Iran to the Security Council as "the right step". He said the United States was pursuing diplomacy to resolve the impasse over Teheran's nuclear ambitions but said no options, including military action, were off the table.

"We think it's dangerous and I think the international community believes that," Cheney said in an interview to be aired on PBS's 'Newshour'.

"I think everybody also has had their level of concern increase because of the current leadership in Iran," Cheney said. "The new president has made some pretty outrageous statements."

Ahmadinejad has prompted international condemnation for anti-Israel rhetoric in recent months, including saying the Jewish state should be wiped off the map and also calling into question the Holocaust.

"When you think about a government



like Iran which has a history of sponsorship of terrorist organisations... a nation now governed by a man who has talked repeatedly, for example, about the destruction of Israel, everybody's concerned that if Iran were equipped with nuclear weapons it would become a major source of instability in that part of the world," Cheney said.

Teheran insists its nuclear programme is aimed at generating electricity for its economy but the United States and other international powers charge it is seeking to develop atomic weapons.

Cheney rejected parallels between Iran and Iraq, which the United States invaded in 2003 in part because of the belief it had weapons of mass destruction.

Cheney noted Teheran's rejection of a Russian plan to enrich uranium for a civilian reactor in Iran and then reclaim the spent fuel as a sign that Teheran wanted its "own enrichment capacity to be able to go all the way to the levels required for a nuclear weapon."

"So there doesn't seem to be any doubt of what their intentions are." Reuters

## Castro's invitation to Ahmadinejad

**Havana:** Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has accepted an invitation to visit Cuba from President Fidel Castro, in gratitude for Cuba's support of Iran's nuclear programme, the official Granma newspaper said.

Ahmadinejad accepted the invitation in Teheran from Cuban Ambassador Felipe Perez Roque. During his visit here, the Iranian leader will attend the September 11-16 Non-Aligned Summit in Havana, the daily said.

On Saturday in Vienna, Cuba, Venezuela and Syria voted against a resolution of the IAEA to refer Iran to the UN Security Council over a nuclear programme the West suspects is weapons-oriented. AFP

## The origins of the Great War of 2007

# Twilight of the West

NIALL FERGUSON

**A**re we living through the origins of the next world war? Certainly, it is easy to imagine how a future historian might deal with the next phase of events in the Middle East:

With every passing year after the turn of the century, the instability of the Gulf region grew. By the beginning of 2006, nearly all the combustible ingredients for a conflict — far bigger in its scale and scope than the wars of 1991 or 2003 — were in place.

The first underlying cause of the war was the increase in the region's relative importance as a source of petroleum. On the one hand, the rest of the world's oil reserves were being rapidly exhausted. On the other, the breakneck growth of the Asian economies had caused a huge surge in global demand for energy. It is hard to believe today, but for most of the Nineties, the price of oil had averaged less than \$20 a barrel.

A second precondition of war was demographic. While European fertility had fallen below the natural replacement rate in the Seventies, the decline in the Islamic world had been much slower. By the late Nineties, the fertility rate in the eight Muslim countries to the south and east of the European Union was two and half times higher than the European figure.

This tendency was especially pronounced in Iran, where the social conservatism of the 1979 revolution — which had lowered the age of marriage and prohibited contraception — combined with the high mortality of the Iran-Iraq war and the subsequent baby boom to produce, by the first decade of the new century, a quite extraordinary surplus of young men. More than two-fifths of the population of Iran in 1995 had been aged 14 or younger. This was the generation that was ready to fight in 2007.

This not only gave Islamic societies a youthful energy that contrasted markedly with the slothful senescence of Europe. It also signified a profound shift in the balance of world population. In 1950, there had been three times as many people in Britain as in Iran. By 1995, the population of Iran had overtaken that of Britain and was forecast to be 50 per cent higher by 2050.

The author is Laurence A. Tisch Professor of History at Harvard University  
[www.niallferguson.org](http://www.niallferguson.org)

Yet people in the West struggled to grasp the implications of this shift. Subliminally, they still thought of the Middle East as a region they could lord over, as they had in the mid-20th century.

The third and perhaps most important precondition for war was cultural. Since 1979, not just Iran but the greater part of the Muslim world had been swept by a wave of religious fervour, the very opposite of the process of secularization that was emptying Europe's churches.

Although few countries followed Iran down the road to full-blown theocracy, there was a transformation in politics everywhere. From Morocco to Pakistan, the feudal dynasties or military strongmen, who had dominated Islamic politics since the Fifties, came under intense pressure from religious radicals.

The ideological cocktail that produced 'Islamism' was as potent as either of the extreme ideologies the West had produced in the previous century, communism and fascism. Islamism was anti-Western, anti-capitalist and anti-Semitic. A seminal moment was the Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's intemperate attack on Israel in December 2005, when he called the Holocaust a 'myth'. The state of Israel was a 'disgraceful blot', he had previously declared, to be wiped 'off the map'.

Prior to 2007, the Islamists had seen no alternative but to wage war against their enemies by means of terrorism. From the Gaza to Manhattan, the hero of 2001 was the suicide bomber. Yet Ahmadinejad, a veteran of the Iran-Iraq War, craved a more serious weapon than strapped-on explosives. His decision to accelerate Iran's nuclear weapons programme was intended to give Iran the kind of power North Korea already wielded in East Asia: the power to defy the United States; the power to obliterate America's closest regional ally.

Under different circumstances, it would not have been difficult to thwart Ahmadinejad's ambitions. The Israelis had shown themselves capable of pre-emptive air strikes against Iraq's nuclear facilities in 1981. Similar strikes against Iran's were urged on President Bush by neo-conservative commentators throughout 2006. The United States, they argued, was perfectly placed to carry out such strikes. It had the bases in neighbouring Iraq and Afghanistan. It had the intelligence proving Iran's contravention of the non-proliferation treaty.

But the president was advised by his secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, to opt instead for diplomacy. Not



Myth-maker

just European opinion but American opinion was strongly opposed to an attack on Iran. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 had been discredited by the failure to find the weapons of mass destruction Saddam Hussein had supposedly possessed and by the failure of the US-led coalition to quell a bloody insurgency.

Americans did not want to increase their military commitments overseas; they wanted to reduce them. Europeans did not want to hear that Iran was about to build its own WMD. Even if Ahmadinejad had broadcast a nuclear test live on CNN, liberals would have said it was a CIA con-trick.

So history repeated itself. As in the Thirties, an anti-Semitic demagogue broke his country's treaty obligations and armed for war. Having first tried appeasement, offering the Iranians economic incentives to desist, the West appealed to international agencies — the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations security council. Thanks to China's veto, however, the UN produced nothing but empty resolutions and ineffectual sanctions, like the exclusion of Iran from the 2006 World Cup finals.

Only one man might have stiff-

ened President Bush's resolve in the crisis: not Tony Blair, he had wrecked his domestic credibility over Iraq and was in any case on the point of retirement — Ariel Sharon. Yet he had been struck down by a stroke as the Iranian crisis came to a head. With Israel leaderless, Ahmadinejad had a free hand.

As in the Thirties, too, the West fell back on wishful thinking. Perhaps, some said, Ahmadinejad was only sabre-rattling because his domestic position was so weak. Perhaps his political rivals in the Iranian clergy were on the point of getting rid of him. In that case, the last thing the West should do was to take a tough line; that would only bolster Ahmadinejad by inflaming Iranian popular feeling. So in Washington and in London, people crossed their fingers, hoping for the *deus ex machina* of a home-grown regime change in Tehran.

This gave the Iranians all the time they needed to produce weapons-grade enriched uranium at Natanz. The dream of nuclear non-proliferation, already interrupted by Israel, Pakistan and India, was definitively shattered. Now Tehran had a nuclear missile pointed at Tel-Aviv. And the new Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu had a missile pointed right back at Tehran.

The optimists argued that the Cuban Missile Crisis would replay itself in the Middle East. Both sides would threaten war — and then both sides would blink. That was Secretary Rice's hope — indeed, her prayer — as she shuttled between the capitals. But it was not to be.

The devastating nuclear exchange of August 2007 represented not only the failure of diplomacy, it marked the end of the oil age. Some even said it marked the twilight of the West. Certainly, that was one way of interpreting the subsequent spread of the conflict as Iraq's Shi'ite population overran the remaining American bases in their country and the Chinese threatened to intervene on the side of Tehran.

Yet the historian is bound to ask whether or not the true significance of the 2007-2011 war was to vindicate the Bush administration's original principle of pre-emption. For, if that principle had been adhered to in 2006, Iran's nuclear bid might have been thwarted at minimal cost. And the Great Gulf War might never have happened.

FROM THE DAILY TELEGRAPH  
© NIALL FERGUSON

# Iran seeks nuke way out in talks

**Tehran, Jan. 29** (Reuters): Iran today insisted the only solution to its nuclear dispute with the West was negotiations rather than referral of its atomic dossier to the UN Security Council.

Iran, which the US and other major Western powers suspect is trying to make a nuclear bomb, urged more diplomacy before talks on the issue among the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany in London on Monday.

On the same day, Iran will meet diplomats from Britain, France and Germany — three European Union powers that have negotiated with Tehran over its nuclear programme — in Brussels, a Tehran foreign ministry spokesman said.

Iran, which says its nuclear programme is to make electricity not a bomb, has responded positively to a Russian compromise proposal, also backed by the US, for uranium to be enriched in Russia instead of Iran.

"The only way to reach an understanding and to get out of the current situation is talks," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said.

"Referring Iran to the Security Council will not solve anything."

France Britain and Germany have warned Iran it could be hauled before the Security Council over its disputed atomic work for a vote on economic sanctions, but they have also hoped for a diplomat-

ic way out of the standoff.

US President George W. Bush's administration has also urged diplomacy.

"The President has always been clear — he has said explicitly the military option is not off the table but we are engaged in a diplomatic effort," US assistant secretary of state Daniel Fried said today.

Asefi warned the European Union of the consequences of a Security Council referral. "Hardening the atmosphere will have no results. Imposing sanctions on Iran will pressure the EU more than us," Asefi said.

Monday's London talks is at foreign minister level and seeks agreement on a referral of Iran to the UN Security Council at an emergency meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna on February 2.

Javad Vaeedi, deputy head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, will meet the diplomats from the three EU powers, called the EU3, in Brussels.

"Europeans should be patient and try to find a formula to resolve this nuclear issue," Vaeedi said.

"We are determined to remove any ambiguities over our nuclear ambitions and also protect our right."

Asefi said Tehran and Moscow were discussing the proposal under which uranium would be enriched for Iran's nuclear reactors under a joint venture in Russia.

THE TELEGRAPH

30 JAN 2006

# Iran rules out talks with USA

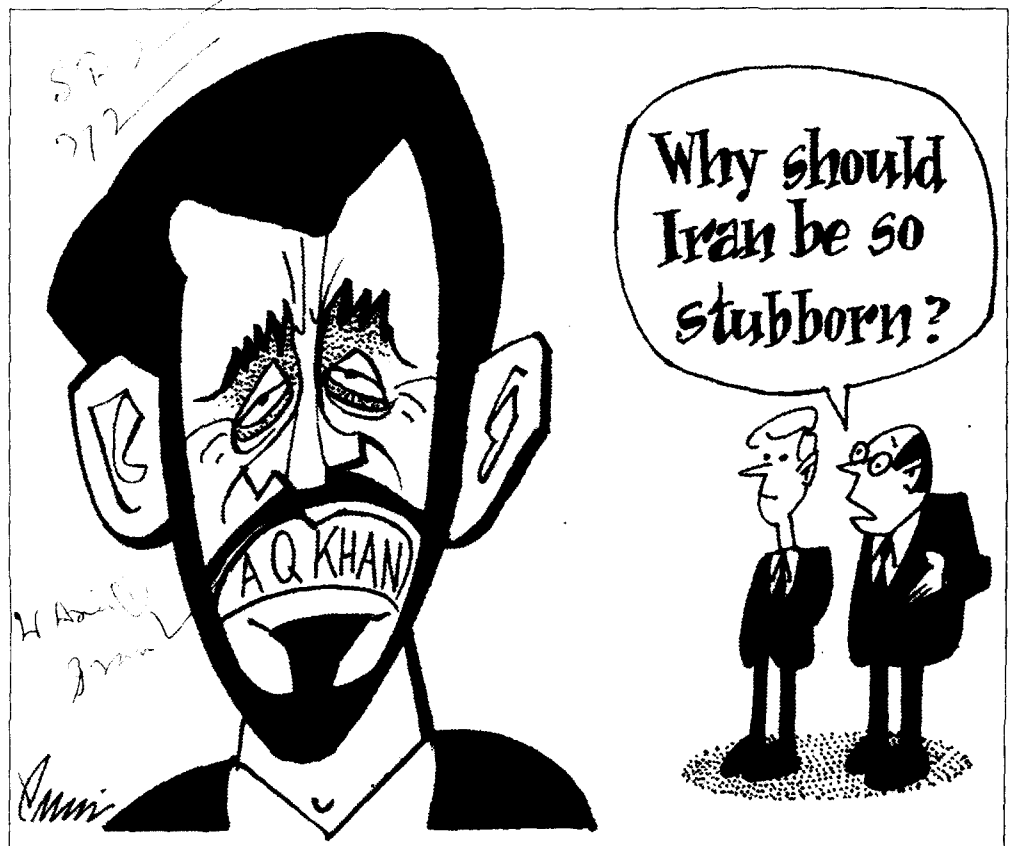
## Agencies

TEHERAN, Feb. 6. — Iran said today there was no room for negotiation with the USA over its nuclear program after it was reported by the UN's nuclear watchdog to the UN Security Council.

"Our policy is the same toward the USA that it has so far been. There is no debate about relations and negotiation with the US. There has been no change in our policy," said Mr Gholamhossein Elham, spokesman of Iran's government, when he was asked if the country was ready to negotiate with Washington.

Mr Elham said the West made "a big mistake" by making the referral, because he contended the action indicated the West's opposition to Iran's development. Iran said yesterday that it had ended all voluntary cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog agency, saying it would start uranium enrichment and bar surprise inspections of its facilities.

The decision came a day after the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors, lobbied by the USA, voted to report Iran to the UNSC over fears that it was seeking an atomic bomb. The Security Council has the power to impose economic and political sanctions, but it is considered unlikely it will do so. In Moscow, meanwhile, a top Russian diplomat said today it would be possible to create a joint



venture to enrich uranium for Iran in Russia only if Tehran resumed its moratorium on enrichment activities, the Interfax news agency reported.

But Mr Elham also insisted on Iran's right to have uranium enrichment on its soil. He reiterated that the "door of negotiation" was open. Uranium enriched to a low degree can be used for nuclear reactors, while highly enriched uranium is suitable for warheads.

Iran said today that large-scale uranium enrichment work, the focus of fears it is seeking nuclear weapons, will begin in "due course" in response to the IAEA's decision to report the clerical regime to the UNSC. It has also asked the UN agency to remove surveillance cameras and agency seals from sites and nuclear equipment that go beyond minimal commitments to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty by next week, the IAEA said.

## Israel aggressive

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6. — With the Iran nuclear imbroglio showing no sign of an early resolution, Israeli defence experts have claimed that their Air Force has the ability "to cripple" Tehran's nuclear programme by striking at the "weak" spots. Hitting and destroying two or three key facilities would probably be sufficient, Shlomo Brom, a former Israeli armed forces member was quoted as saying by *Newsweek* here. — AP

THE STATESMAN

7 FEB 2006

# Iran will not back down: President

Era of bullying is over: Ahmadinejad

TEHERAN: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Sunday brushed off a decision by the International Atomic Energy Agency to report his country to the U.N. Security Council, vowing the Islamic republic would not back down over its disputed nuclear drive.

"You can issue as many resolutions as you like and have fun with it, but you cannot prevent Iran's progress," he was quoted as saying by the official news agency IRNA.

"You know that you cannot do anything, because the era of bullying is over and you have to accept the realities," he said in comments directed at the Western powers who led the push for Iran to be reported to New York.

"They think they are in the dark ages, but the era of them sitting in glass palaces and de-

cidating for other nations is over," he said. "They want to visit our military sites in the name of the IAEA to know more about our defence capacities, but we will not let them," Mr. Ahmadinejad said.

Meanwhile, Russia on Sunday urged Iran to provide "unequivocal answers" to mounting international concerns over its nuclear programme in a call for continued diplomacy with the Islamic republic.

"Russia still believes that as long as possible it's better to keep the matter in the International Atomic Energy Agency's hands," said Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov.

"We expect unequivocal answers" from Iran, Mr. Ivanov said, referring to suspicions in Western capitals that Iran is trying to build a nuclear bomb. — AFP

- 6 FEB 2006 ..

THE HINDU

# Iran ends cooperation with IAEA

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401  
672  
to Asefi  
Iran

## Teheran will begin full-scale production of enriched uranium

Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** Iran declared on Sunday that it had stopped all voluntary cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This follows the agency's decision on Saturday to refer it to the United Nations Security Council on its nuclear programme. Teheran, however, said it was ready to hold exploratory talks with Russia to ease tensions.

"We have ended all voluntary cooperation we have been extending to the IAEA in the past two-and-a-half to three years on the basis of the President's order," Iran's Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said.

The declaration implies that Teheran will begin full-scale production of enriched uranium. It was halted following talks with Germany, France and Britain in 2003. It would also end the IAEA's short-notice inspections of Iran's facilities, under the framework of the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signed by it.

"We do not have any obligation towards the additional protocol [any more]," Mr. Mottaki said.

### Still subscribes to NPT

Iran fully subscribed to the NPT but would resist moves to deny it the right to pursue a peaceful nuclear programme on its soil, the Minister said.

"Adoption of the policy of resistance doesn't mean we are on non-speaking terms or non-cooperative. We had two options. One was resistance and the other surrender. We chose resistance," he said.

At a press meet on Sunday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said Teheran was ready to consider the

• **Ready for exploratory talks with Russia**

• **No more inspection of nuclear facilities**

• **"India not under any pressure"**

Russian proposal provided it was suitably amended in line with the latest developments.

Russia has offered to carry out uranium enrichment on its territory in a joint venture with Iran. This has the backing of the United States and the European Union, as it promises to eliminate the possibility of Iran diverting enriched uranium for making weapons.

"The situation has changed. Still, we will attend talks with Russia on February 16," Mr. Asefi said. However, "the proposal has to conform itself with the new circumstances," the spokesman said.

India's Ambassador in Teheran Manbir Singh told the Islamic Republic News Agency that India was not under any pressure to vote for Iran's referral to the Security Council. "We are for peace and stability in the region, [and are] willing to invite Iran and the negotiation parties to dialogue."

Asked whether the Indian vote would have an impact on the Iran-India gas pipeline project, he said it was in the interest of the people of India, Pakistan and Iran.

To a question whether India's vote meant that it had chosen the U.S. nuclear technology over Iranian gas, he said: "That's not true, we need both."

Editorial on Page 10  
More reports on Page 14

THE HINDU

11 6 FEB 2006



REFERRAL TO UNSC | Iran to cooperate with IAEA within framework of NPT

# Iran: negotiations still possible

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TEHRAN, FEBRUARY 5

IRAN said on Sunday that it was still willing to negotiate with the international community over its nuclear programme while Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad mocked the referral by the UN nuclear watchdog to the Security Council.

"The door for negotiations is still open," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told a morning press conference, at the same time downplaying Saturday's referral. "We don't fear the Council. It's not the end of the world."

The IAEA on Saturday reported Iran to the Security Council over fears it wants to produce nuclear arms. Iran responded by saying it would no longer allow intrusive IAEA inspections of its facilities and would restart full-scale work on uranium enrichment.

In the past, Iran had allowed short-notice, intrusive inspections of its facilities, including military sites as a goodwill gesture to build trust.

But Parliament passed a law



Iranian Foreign Minister, Manouchehr Mottaki during a press conference in Tehran on Sunday. AP

## Ahmadinejad vows Iran will not back down

TEHRAN: President Ahmadinejad on Saturday vowed Iran would not back down over its disputed nuclear drive.

"You can issue as many resolutions as you like and have fun with it, but you cannot prevent Iran's progress," he was quoted as saying by IRNA. "You know that you cannot do anything, because the era of bullying is over and you have to accept the realities," he said in comments directed at the western powers who led the push for Iran to be reported to New York.

"They think they are in the dark ages, but the era of them sitting in glass palaces and deciding for other nations is over," he fumed.

"They want to visit our military sites in the name of the IAEA to know more about our defence capacities, but we will not let them," Ahmadinejad said.

—AFP

late last year requiring the government to block intrusive inspections of Iran's facilities if the country is put before the

Council. It also required the government to resume all suspended nuclear activities, chief among them, uranium

enrichment.

Ahmadinejad ordered the implementation of the law today and Vice-President Gholamreza Aghazadeh said he would enforce the presidential order today itself.

"(Nuclear) research and development activities and preparations for utilising the nuclear fuel production technology for peaceful purposes needs to be seriously enforced," Ahmadinejad said in his presidential order, but stressed that Iran would stick to its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Aghazadeh said the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, which he heads, was preparing an official letter to the IAEA informing it that Iran was suspending all its voluntary steps.

Asefi also reiterated today that Iran would cooperate with the IAEA "within the framework of the NPT and the safeguard agreement."

"We chose our way wisely. We have solutions for all situations that may develop. Referring Iran to the Security Council will definitely harm the other party more than Iran," Asefi said.

## World won't let Iran have nukes: Bush

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
CRAWFORD, FEB 5

THE UN nuclear watchdog's decision to report Iran to the UN Security Council is a clear message that the world will not allow Iran to have nuclear weapons, US President George Bush has said.

"This important step sends a clear message to the regime in Iran that the world will not permit them to gain nuclear weapons," he said on Saturday. The IAEA voted 27-3 in Vienna to report Iran to the Council in a month's time if it fails to allay fears it is hiding a nuclear weapons programme.

But Bush added, "the vote is not the end of diplomacy or the IAEA's role. It is the beginning of an intensified diplomatic effort to prevent the Iranian regime from developing nuclear weapons. We will continue working with our international partners to achieve that common objective."

He said he expected the Council to back IAEA calls for Iran to suspend all uranium enrichment and return to negotiations.

"The path chosen by Iran's new leaders—threats, concealment, and breaking international agreements and IAEA seals—will not succeed and will not be tolerated by the international community. The regime's continued defiance only further isolates Iran from the world," he said.

Bush also directly addressed "the Iranian people", saying that the IAEA vote was not aimed at denying them access to civilian nuclear power.

## Russia to Iran: Cooperate with IAEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MOSCOW, 6, FEBRUARY

IN THE wake of the IAEA resolution to report Iran's controversial nuclear programme to the UN Security Council, Russia has urged Tehran to closely cooperate with the world body's nuclear watchdog and said that its proposal to set up a joint venture on its soil for Iranian uranium enrichment is still on the table.

"We urge Iran to give a constructive response to the IAEA board of governors' call for full cooperation on the remaining problems, this includes restoration of the voluntary moratorium on works con-

nected with uranium enrichment," Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said last night.

"We would like to hope that Tehran will show readiness for the most serious cooperation. In this case, the next session of the IAEA board of governors could state an improvement of the situation, and it could eventually be settled without a substantive interference of the Security Council," Kamynin was quoted as saying by ITAR-TASS. He also reiterated that Moscow's proposal to set UPA joint venture on Russian soil for Iranian uranium enrichment is on the table and expected Iranian delegation's visit on February 16 as

was earlier planned.

Meanwhile, explaining Moscow's stance on the pro-US resolution, Russian Ambassador Berdennikov in a TV interview said: "We believe the UN will get a clear picture of the situation after the IAEA director general informs the Security Council on what has been done about the Iranian nuclear conflict and what steps the IAEA board of governors expects from Tehran."

"This was our understanding of the essence of the draft resolution, and proceeding from it Russia decided to support it," Berdennikov told Russia's channel 1 TV.

6 FEB 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

# IAEA refers Iran to UNSC

## India-Backed Resolution May Result In New Curbs On Teheran

Vienna: Supported by India and 26 other countries, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Saturday reported Iran to the UN Security Council in a resolution which expressed concern that Teheran's nuclear programme might not be "exclusively for peaceful purposes".

The decision of the UN nuclear watchdog's 35-nation board sets the stage for future action by the top UN body that could include economic and political sanctions on the Islamic nation. Still, any such moves are weeks, if not months, away, with two permanent council members, Russia and China, agreeing to the referral only on the condition that no council action be taken until at least March.

An European resolution, backed by the US, calling for the referral was supported by 27 nations, including India whose stance on the referral was unclear until the vote at the meeting. While Cuba, Syria and Venezuela voted against the move, Algeria, Belarus, Indonesia, Libya and South Africa abstained from voting.

A copy of the resolution links the decision to Iran's breach of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and the IAEA's lack of confidence in Teheran's claim that it is not trying to make weapons. Expressing serious concerns about Iran's nuclear programme, the resolution pointed out "Iran's many failures and breaches of its obligations to the non-proliferation treaty".

It requested IAEA director general Mohamed ElBaradei to "report to the Security Council" the steps Iran that needed to be taken to dispel suspicions about Iran's nuclear ambitions.

The resolution called on Iran to take steps to build confidence and resolve questions about whether its nuclear

It took a night of haggling for the members to agree on the final wording of the text. The decision came about after Washington compromised on a dispute with Egypt over linking fears about Tehran's atomic programme to a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, an indirect reference to Israel.

The wording of the final resolution recognised "that a solution to the Iranian issue would contribute to global non-proliferation efforts and ... the objective of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, including their means of delivery".

A Western diplomat at the meeting said the US felt strongly about not linking its ally, Israel, to nuclear concerns in the Middle East while considering Iran the real threat in the region. However, in the face of the overwhelming support for the inclusion of such a clause from its European allies spearheading the resolution, the US was forced to agree to it.

Egypt, whose support to the resolution was key to bringing other Arab board members to back it, was looking to link the Israel issue to satisfy broad domestic concerns.

However, even before Saturday's vote, diplomats said support for Iran had shrunk among board members since Russia and China swung their support behind a referral at a meeting with the US, France and Britain—the other three permanent council members earlier in the week.

### A fight on cards

Iran has decided to limit UN nuclear inspections in retaliation for being reported to the UN Security Council over its disputed atomic programme. Iran will "suspend the voluntary implementation of the additional protocol," Javed Vaidi, head of the Iranian delegation to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meeting, said. The nuclear non-proliferation treaty's additional protocol allows for wider IAEA inspections of the country's nuclear facilities.

programme was indeed peaceful. It also called for steps, including re-establishing full and sustained suspension of nuclear-related activities, reconsidering the construction of a heavy-water research reactor, ratifying an additional protocol allowing inspections of nuclear facilities and, pending ratification of the draft, continuing to act in accordance with the provisions of the additional protocol.

- 5 FEB 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

# Iran threatens to drop uranium plan

George Jahn  
VIENNA 3 FEBRUARY

IRAN warned on Friday it would abandon a proposal meant to defuse concerns about its uranium enrichment ambitions if it's referred to the UN Security Council by the 35-nation board of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The deputy head of Iran's National Security Council, Javad Vaeidi, said Tehran would no longer consider a proposal to move its uranium enrichment programme to Russia. A move that could prevent the pro-

gramme from being used to make weapons — if Iran's nuclear file goes to the Security Council. If the Security Council becomes involved, "there will be no way we can continue with the Russian proposal," Mr Vaeidi said.

His comments were the first to state outright that Iran would stop considering the plan, which has broad international backing from nations concerned about Iran's ambitions.

Referral by the 35-nation IAEA board appeared to be a certainty, but its Friday meeting was adjourned, allowing the US

and European diplomats to engage in informal negotiations in their bid to seek broad backing for reporting Tehran to the council. Mr Vaeidi acknowledged referral seemed unavoidable, telling reporters: "This is an adopted draft. It means that the US and the EU-3 are intending to kill two issues, first to stop diplomacy and second to kill the Russian proposal."

He was alluding to France, Britain and Germany, the countries proposing referral in a resolution before the board.

Mr Vaeidi reiterated earlier threats that Iran will resume

full-scale work on uranium enrichment and stop honouring an agreement giving IAEA inspectors broad powers to conduct short-notice inspections of his country's nuclear programme. "I advise them not to make a historical mistake," he said.

Backing Iran at the Vienna meeting appeared to be limited, on Friday. Cuba, Venezuela, Syria and a few other countries represent at the meeting of the agency's 35-nation governing board remained opposed. India was said to be leaning toward supporting referral.



4 FEB 2006

The Economic Times

# IAEA underplays Iran nuke threat

Associated Press

VIENNA, Feb. 2. — Iran's nuclear programme is not an "imminent threat," the head of the UN nuclear watchdog — the International Atomic Energy Agency — said today as his agency met to hear a call to haul the Islamic Republic before the UN Security Council.

Meanwhile, the head of the US government's intelligence establishment has told the Congress that he does not believe that Iran has a nuclear weapon.

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei said Iran needed to do "confidence building" but that the international crackdown on Teheran's nuclear ambitions "is not about an imminent threat. I should make that very clear." "We are reaching a critical phase but it is not a crisis situation," Md ElBaradei said. Western intelligence estimates say Iran is from several years to a

decade away from being able to make a nuclear weapon, something Tehran strongly denies it intends.

The UN nuclear watchdog met in an emergency session today and "Russia and China have said they are going to vote for the resolution" on referral to the Security Council, a Western diplomat said. The diplomat said that if Russia went back on its promise "it would cause a problem in bilateral relations with the USA." A European diplomat said negotiations among the five permanent UNSC nations on a resolution for the IAEA had been "very constructive." "No one tried to chip away for his own position," the diplomat said.

The IAEA's board of governors was meeting in emergency session, with no vote expected today as the USA and Europe continue lobbying for wide support on the 35-nation body. A decision is expected tomorrow, a diplomat close to the agency said.

# Iran and the IAEA M. Arora 9/2/06

The IAEA report on Iran paints a picture that is far from bleak. Some old questions remain but many examples of cooperation are cited.

Siddharth Varadarajan

AN INTERIM report prepared by the International Atomic Energy Agency on the implementation of nuclear safeguards in Iran has cited numerous instances of Iranian cooperation with its inspectors but has also stressed the need for Teheran to provide further information on three outstanding issues relating to past activities.

The confidential 'update brief' prepared by IAEA Deputy Director-General Olli Heinonen – a copy of which is with *The Hindu* – contains no new allegations or facts based on discoveries the agency might have made in Iran during its visits in November and January. However, the report says that a 15-page document voluntarily shown by Iran to IAEA inspectors for the reduction of UF<sub>6</sub> to metal in small quantities and the casting of enriched and depleted uranium metal into hemispheres was "related to the fabrication of nuclear weapon components." The report adds: "[The document] did not, however, include dimensions or other specifications for machined pieces for such components."

Though the draft resolution circulated by the U.S. at the IAEA Board of Governors meeting in Vienna on Thursday refers twice to this issue, the document in question was actually first made available to IAEA inspectors last year and its existence was duly noted in the Director-General's report on November 18, 2005.

Pointing to the availability of bomb-making manuals on the Internet, a senior Indian nuclear scientist told *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity that the document in question was not the smoking gun the U.S. and its allies believed it to be. The Iranians have said the document was provided to them on the initiative of the Khan network and "not at the request of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran (AEOI)." Observers also believe the fact that Iran voluntarily showed the document to the IAEA despite its potentially incriminating nature makes the official explanation for its existence more credible.

In general, the latest IAEA report notes: "Iran has continued to facilitate access under its Safeguards Agreement as requested by the Agency, and to act as if the Additional Protocol is in force, including by providing in a timely man-

ner the requisite declarations and access to locations."

Among the acts of Iranian cooperation cited are the provision of additional information on its enrichment programme, the confirmation of the purchase by a contractor of magnets for the P-2 centrifuge design, providing access to a military site at Parchin, and the presentation of "documentation the Agency had previously requested on efforts by Iran, which it has stated were unsuccessful, to acquire a number of specific dual use items." In addition, high vacuum equipment, high strength aluminium and corrosion resistant steel, valves, and filters were made available to inspectors for environmental sampling.

On the negative side, the IAEA said the Iranians refused to allow inspectors to interview a professor who used to be head of the Physics Research Centre at the former military complex at Lavisan-Shian. However, the granting of such interviews are not mandatory under the terms of either the Safeguards Agreement or the Additional Protocol. The IAEA is also still seeking clarification on the timing and purpose of certain trips taken by AEOI scientists in the mid-1990s. All told, the three issues remaining are questions on the extent of the P-1 and P-2 centrifuge programmes and the use the above-mentioned professor might have had for the dual-use equipment he had ordered.

The only new issue to figure in the report is an unconfirmed allegation based on "information that has been made available to the Agency," a euphemism for material provided by the intelligence services of an IAEA Board member, presumably the U.S. This information is "about alleged studies, known as the Green Salt Project, concerning the conversion of uranium dioxide into UF<sub>4</sub> ["green salt"], as well as tests related to high explosives and the design of a missile re-entry vehicle, all of which could have a military nuclear dimension and which appear to have administrative interconnections."

Indian nuclear scientists have told *The Hindu* that UF<sub>4</sub> is an "intermediate product" which had legitimate civilian uses. In any event, the Iranian government told the IAEA on January 23 that the "issues related to baseless allegations" but agreed to "provide further clarifications later."

03 FEB 2006

THE HINDU

# Ahmadinejad for Bush's public trial

**Teheran:** Iran's hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Wednesday labelled George W Bush a warmonger who should be dragged before a "people's tribunal", the day after the US president called for a "free and democratic Iran".

"God willing, in the near future we will judge you in a people's tribunal," Ahmadinejad said in a speech on state television.

"You who support the Zionist puppet regime, you who support the destruction of Palestinian homes, you have no right to talk about liberty or human rights," Ahmadinejad said in comments directed at the United States president.

In his State of the Union address on Tuesday, Bush called the Islamic republic "a nation now held hostage by a small clerical elite that is isolating and repressing its people". Speaking about the nuclear issue, Ahmadinejad said his country would not surrender its nuclear ambitions and blasted an agreement between the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to take up the case.

"Those who possess stocks of nuclear arms meet together and take decisions and think that the Iranian people will submit to their decisions," he said. Agencies



# Iran threatens to end diplomacy on n-programme if reported to the U.N.

XD-16  
'Decision to resume uranium enrichment research irreversible'

Atul Aneja

112 14/8/80  
10/2/80  
DUBAI: Iran has warned that it would end diplomacy surrounding its nuclear programme if its case was reported to the United Nations Security Council for possible action.

The Iranian response came after the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China agreed on Monday in a meeting in London that Teheran's case should be referred to the Security Council. However, on Russian insistence, it was agreed that the Council would delay any response to the referral till at least March, in order to give possible last-ditch negotiations a chance. The 35-member board of the International Atomic Energy Agency is to meet in Vienna on

Thursday and could forward Iran's nuclear file to the Security Council.

"Informing the Security Council or referring the Iranian case to it will bring an end to diplomacy and that is not at all positive," the head of Iran's National Security Council, Ali Larijani, stressed. Iran has held negotiations with Germany, France and Britain to convince them that it was committed to a peaceful nuclear energy programme.

Its referral to the Security Council, however, could end the possible revival of this dialogue. Similarly, it is not clear what impact will the Security Council referral have on the on-going nuclear dialogue between Iran and Russia.

Russia has offered Iran that uranium enrichment could be carried out on its soil, thereby preventing the possible diversion of nuclear material for the manufacture of weapons.

"I do not want to use the term scandalous," Mr. Larijani said in reference to Monday's agreement, while Iranian Atomic Energy Agency chief Gholamreza Agazadeh said there was no "legal basis" for calling in the Security Council.

Iranian officials have also asserted that Teheran would not reverse its decision to carry out uranium enrichment research, which they had been recently resumed in a facility in Natanz. The head of Iran's nuclear negotiating team, Javad Vaidi, said

the decision to resume uranium enrichment research was "irreversible". The Iranian move had triggered a chain of events that led to the agreement in London.

Mr. Larijani clarified that Iran was not intending to walk out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — a move that would free it of its obligations to cooperate with the IAEA, including inspections of its nuclear facilities. Iran "will use all peaceful means to achieve its nuclear technology rights within the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty", he said.

Iranian Oil Minister Kazem Vaziri Hamaneh, meanwhile, said there was "no reason" for the Islamic republic to stop its exports of oil.

# Iran issue for Security Council

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WASID Iran 1/2

## 'Quartet' provides time till March

W

Hasan Suroor

**LONDON:** All five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — Britain, the United States, France, China and Russia — and the European Union on Tuesday agreed to urge the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to "report" Iran to the U.N. on its controversial nuclear programme. The 35-member IAEA board meets in Vienna on Thursday.

But significantly they left the door open for a last-minute compromise, saying the Security Council should not take any action on the IAEA's recommendation till March. This is seen as a concession to Russia and China, which are opposed to a confrontationist approach and are pressing for a negotiated solution.

During the one-month "cooling off" period, efforts would be made to get Iran to agree to a

compromise deal, under which its uranium enrichment programme could be carried out in Russia.

At a meeting with E.U. officials in Brussels on Monday, Iran was reported to have suggested amendments to the original Russian proposal. Further talks to fine-tune the deal are to be held between Iran and Russia in Moscow on February 16.

The decision to call upon the IAEA to take the issue to the Security Council was taken after a meeting here of the so-called "Quartet" group which, besides the five permanent members, includes Germany.

The talks, attended by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw and other E.U. Foreign Ministers, started late on Monday and continued till early on Tuesday.

In a joint statement, the group said the IAEA "should report to

the Security Council its decision on the steps required of Iran, and should also report to the Security Council all IAEA reports and resolutions as adopted relating to this issue." It called for an "extensive period of confidence-building" by Iran after its recent actions such as the decision to break the U.N. seals on a nuclear facility, triggering protests in Western capitals.

### Serious differences

There were serious differences behind the apparent public show of unity, it is understood. A French official was reported by the Associated Press as saying Russia and China were reluctant to go with the idea of referring Iran to the U.N. but were "persuaded" to agree in order to present a "united front."

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More reports on Page 16

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# Teheran threatens to resume nuclear activities

to Amir  
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Feb 16  
112

**TEHERAN:** Iran's top nuclear negotiator said on Tuesday that Iran will resume suspended nuclear activities and bar surprise U.N. inspections of facilities if it is referred to the U.N. Security Council.

Negotiator Ali Larijani stopped short of specifying that Iran will restart its uranium enrichment programme, which has been suspended for nearly two years.

"In case of referral ..., we have to start all nuclear work that has been voluntarily suspended and stop implementation of the Additional Protocol," Mr. Larijani told reporters.

"Europeans should pay more attention. Iran has called for dialogue and is moving in the direction of reaching an agreement through peaceful means. The Islamic Republic of Iran doesn't welcome this. We still think that this issue can be resolved peacefully. We recommend them not to do it," he said.

He also said Iran would "end

all voluntary measures and cease the application of the additional protocol" to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

A move by Iran to cut off cooperation or push ahead with nuclear fuel work would lead to a further escalation of the crisis, but Iranian compliance with IAEA demands to cease such work and greater cooperation with IAEA inspectors could defuse the situation.

Iran has also been appealing for more time to negotiate with Moscow on a compromise -- but it remains unclear if an expected Security Council referral will speed up these talks or prompt Iran to pull out of them altogether.

Russia's idea is for Iran's uranium to be enriched on Russian soil, something that could allay Western fears that the clerical regime will acquire sensitive dual-use technology but at the same time guarantee Iran's access to nuclear energy. — AP  
AFP

THE HINDU

01 FEB 2006

# Saddam cries torture, blames US

**ASSOCIATED Press**  
Baghdad, December 21

SADDAM HUSSEIN launched into an extended outburst at his trial on Wednesday, alleging he had been beaten and tortured by his American captors while in detention after a witness testified that his agents had tortured people by ripping off their skin.

Chief prosecutor Jaafar al-Mousawi assured the deposed dictator that he would investigate and that if American-led multinational forces were abusing the former Iraqi leader, he would be transferred to the custody of Iraqi troops.

"I want to say here, yes, we have been beaten by the Americans and we have been tortured," Saddam said, before gesturing to his seven co-defendants around him, "one by one."

After sitting quietly through several hours of testimony, Saddam said he'd been beaten "everywhere on my body. The marks are still there."

Saddam and his co-defendants are on trial in the deaths of more than 140 Shiites following a 1982 assassination attempt against him in the town of Dujail, north of Baghdad.

Standing in the fenced-in defendant's area, Saddam complained at length about the conditions of his detention, engaging in a debate with al-Mousawi. Some of the exchange was edited out of the televised feed of the trial, which later adjourned until Thursday. Saddam also told the court that he knew the name of the per-



**REUTERS**  
Sunni Arabs protest against the preliminary election results in Baghdad on Wednesday. Sunni leaders have warned of an escalation in violence if the Shia majority clinches the polls.

son who betrayed his hiding place when US forces found him in December 2003.

Earlier, Saddam was composed as a witness testified that his regime killed and tortured people by administering electric shocks and ripping off their skin after pouring molten plastic on it.

Two weeks ago, Saddam had called the

Al-Haidari, whose brother had been the trial's inaugural witness, testified that seven of his brothers were executed by Saddam's regime and their bodies have not been found. He said that they were taken to Baghdad and thrown into a security services prison, where people from "9 to 90" were held.

Blood poured from head wounds and skin was pale from electric shocks, he testified. Security officials would drip melted plastic hoses on detainees, only to pull it off after it cooled, tearing skin off with it, he said.

During previous sessions, Saddam has been defiant and combative, often trying to dominate the courtroom.

But on Wednesday, he was initially calm, appearing clean-shaven and in fresh clothes, wearing a dark suit but no tie. At previous sessions, Saddam has appeared dishevelled and has complained about being held in unsanitary conditions.

After greeting the court with a traditional "Peace be upon you," he sat quietly in the defendants' area and appeared to pay close attention to the proceedings, at times taking notes.

Later on, Saddam interrupted al-Haidari, and asked the judge if the court could take a break for prayer. Though the witness agreed, the judge ordered the trial to continue. About 10 minutes later, Saddam swung his chair to the left, closed his eyes and repeatedly bowed his head in what appeared to be about a minute-long prayer, the first time he has done that in court.

court "unjust" and boycotted a session.

Ali Hassan Mohammed al-Haidari was the prosecution's first witness on Wednesday, testifying about killings and torture in Dujail after the attempt to assassinate Saddam. Al-Haidari, who was 14 in 1982, started off by quoting from the Quran about how evil would be defeated.

# Iraq Shi'ites win, but must form coalition

*Security clampdown in Baghdad*

**ASSOCIATED Press**  
Baghdad, January 20

AN ALLIANCE of Shi'ite religious parties won majority seats in Iraq's new parliament but not enough to rule without coalition partners, the election commission said Friday. Sunni Arabs gained seats over previous balloting.

With Baghdad all but sealed off by security forces on alert for attacks by Sunni rebels who accused the ruling Shi'ite Alliance of cheating in last month's poll, two civilians were killed in one of several bomb attacks on US and Iraqi patrols.

The Shi'ite United Iraqi Alliance captured 128 of the 275 seats in the December 15 election, down from the 146 it won in January 2005 balloting, said commission official Safwat Rasheed. It needed 138 to rule without partners.

A Sunni ticket, the Iraqi Accordance Front, won 44 seats. Another Sunni coalition headed by Saleh al-Mutlaq finished with 11 seats, Rasheed said. A few other Sunnis won seats on other tickets.

That will give the Sunni Arabs a bigger voice in the legislature than they had in the outgoing assembly, which included only 17 from the community forming the backbone of the insurgency. Many Sunnis had boycotted the January vote.

Despite a better showing, Sunni politician, Salman al-Jumaili, expressed disappointment and renewed complaints about election irregularities. Nevertheless, he said the Sunnis will "take part in the coming (parliament) and government and present our (election) challenges to the Iraqi judicial system."

Kurds saw their seat total reduced. An alliance of the two major Kurdish parties won 53

## **Scribe release urged**

A SENIOR Sunni Arab leader has urged kidnappers to release US reporter Jill Carroll, just hours before a deadline for her execution expired. "I call on the kidnappers to release this journalist and I promise to work towards the release of Iraqi women," Adnan Dulaimi, the leader of the Iraqi People's Conference, said. Yasser al-Serri, director of the London-based Islamic Observatory, also called on the Brigades of Vengeance to release Carroll rather than tarnish the image of Islam.

**AFP, Baghdad**

seats, down from the 75 they took in the January 2005 vote. A rival Kurdish ticket, the Kurdish Islamic Group, won five seats.

A group headed by former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, a secular Shi'ite, won 25 seats, down from 40 in the outgoing assembly. The US had installed Allawi as interim prime minister in 2004 and applauded both his tough stand against insurgents and his secular approach to politics.

This time, however, US diplomats appeared resigned to the fact that Iraqis would generally vote along sectarian lines and that secular candidates would not fare well.

US officials here had said privately they hoped only that religious Shi'ites would win fewer seats to curb their power somewhat, and that more-moderate Sunnis candidates like Adnan al-Dulaimi would fare better than hard-liners - which was the case.

Saad Asem al-Janabi, a prominent member of Allawi's ticket, said his group's showing was unexpected and "a real disappointment for the democracy in Iraq."

# Iraqi leaders explore formation of national unity government

Amir  
H. Ghannam  
18 2/11

Sunni, Shia and Kurdish communities far from achieving breakthrough

Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** Iraq's Sunni, Shia and Kurdish communities are discussing the formation of the new government, but are still far from achieving a breakthrough.

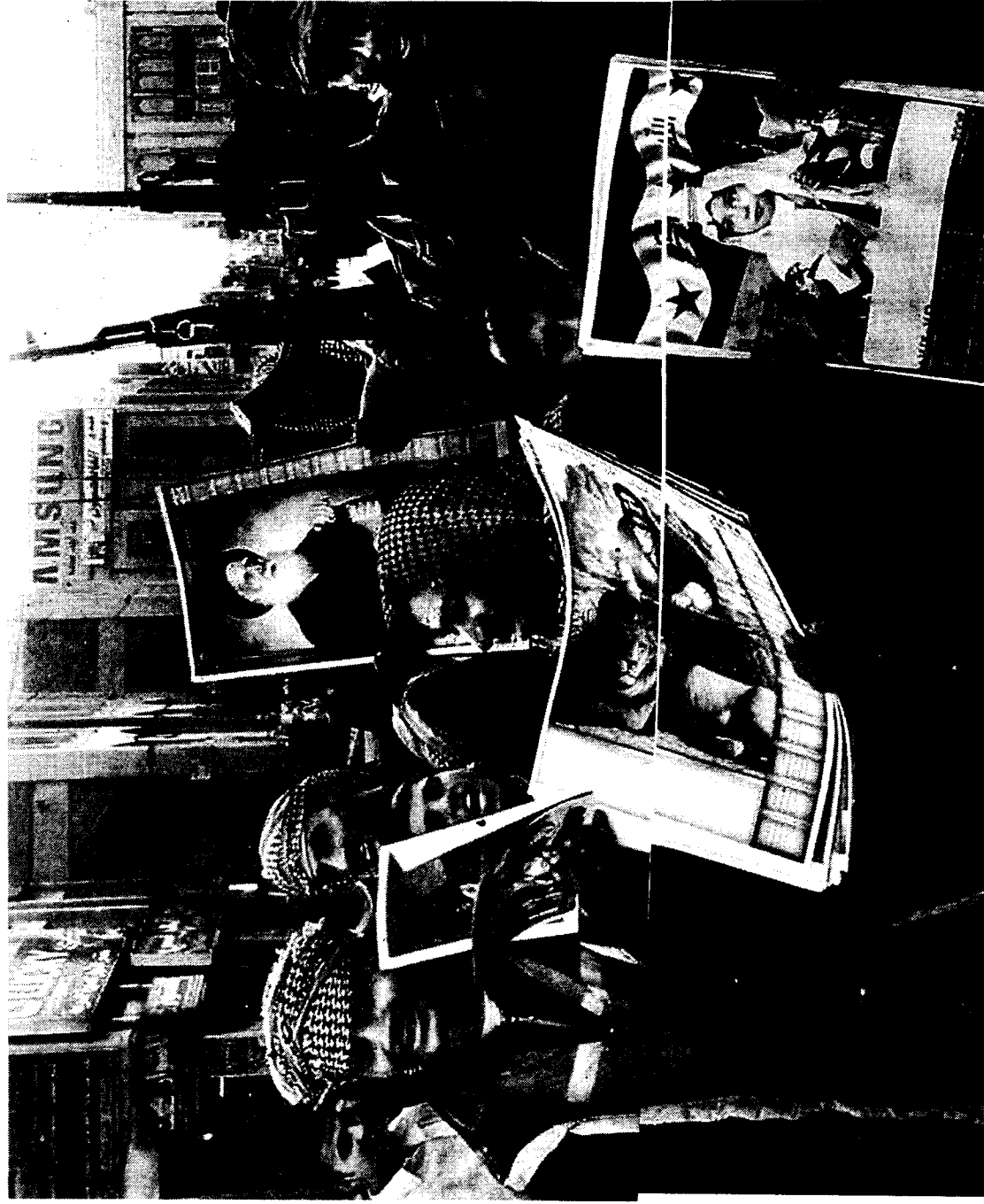
Top Sunni politicians Adnan al-Dulaimi and Tarek al-Hashmi, who are part of the Iraqi Accord Front (IAF) are leading a delegation for talks with Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq, Iraqi Prime Minister and Shia leader Ibrahim Jaffari has also held talks with Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani. It is, however, not yet clear whether a three-way meeting of Sunnis, Shias and Kurds has taken place. The focus of the dialogue appears to be the formation of a national unity government, in which the Sunni community would also feature prominently.

The Americans have been backing this move, in the hope that political accommodation of the Sunnis, who have been spearheading the armed resistance, would result in a drop in violence, thus allowing a sustained U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.

## Talabani in talks

President Jalal Talabani, who is of Kurdish origin, is also pursuing this track. Last week, the top Shia leader Abdulaziz al-Hakim held talks with Mr. Talabani and conveyed the impression that his pro-Iran group — the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) — was inclined to forge a national political coalition. However, there has been a setback to this move, as another Shia group, led by Moqtada al-Sadr has set new conditions for a tie-up with the Sunnis.

The Arabic daily, *Al Hayat* has reported that Mr. Al-Sadr has demanded that secular Sunnis represented in the Iraqiyah list of



**PLEASING VERDICT:** Shias celebrate on a street after election results were announced, in Najaf, about 160 km south of Baghdad, on Friday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi be excluded from any political arrangement. Mr. Allawi's party includes some of the former Ba'ath party functionaries that Mr. Al-Sadr's group has

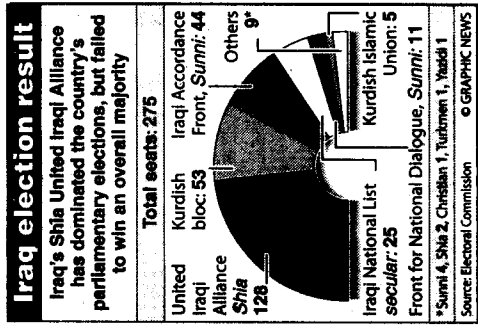
strongly opposed.

Meanwhile, the Americans, SCIRI. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Peter Pace, who have been advocating the inclusion of the Sunnis in the Iraqi security establishment, which

has now been dominated by the SCIRI. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Peter Pace, who

spent the New Year in Iraq has said the Iraqi Government needs to reach out more to people, especially the minority Sunni community.

The armed wing of the SCIRI has been accused of fighting street battles with Sunni guerrilla groups, thereby threatening civil



war conditions and undermining chances of an early American exit from Iraq.

There has been an assassination attempt on the life of the Turkish ambassador to Iraq. Gunmen attacked the envoy's convoy on the Baghdad airport road, injuring him slightly.

## Short of majority

Meanwhile, the results of the Parliamentary polls were announced in Baghdad on Friday. The Shia-based coalition won the elections but fell short of an absolute majority. The United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) that headed the outgoing Parliament won 128 seats, comprising 46 per cent of the total in the 275-member Assembly. The Kurdish Alliance, which was the UIA's main partner, won 53 seats. The two Sunni parties have won a total of 55 seats.

The Iraqi Accord Front, which is the largest Sunni party, got 44 seats, while its partner, the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue, secured 11. Mr. Allawi's secular-based Iraqiyah party won 25 seats and the Kurdish Islamic Party got five seats.

# Sanctions-wary Iran moves assets

REUTERS

Tehran, January 20

IRAN IS moving its foreign assets to an undisclosed destination, apparently to shield them from any UN sanctions over its nuclear programme, the central bank governor was quoted as saying on Friday.

Iran, threatened with referral to the Security Council for possible punitive measures, has bitter memories of its US assets being frozen shortly after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

"We have started transferring foreign reserves to wherever we see as expedient," Ebrahim Sheibani told the

IRANIAN PRESIDENT Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, on a visit to ally Syria, met militant Palestinian factions in Damascus on Friday and pledged support to their cause. The talks came a few

## Ahmadinejad meets Palestinian militants

hours after Israel's defence minister accused Iran and Syria of being directly responsible for Thursday's suicide bombing in Tel Aviv which injured 30 people.

Reuters, Damascus

ISNA students' news agency when asked about the need to shift Iran's holdings.

The West suspects Iran of seeking nuclear weapons under the cover of a civilian atomic program. Tehran denies this.

The US and the EU want the International Atomic Energy

Friday urged Iran to halt nuclear work and return to talks, but argued against taking Tehran to the Security Council.

When asked if the money was being moved to Asian accounts, as reported in the London-based *Asharq al-Awsat*, Sheibani did withheld comment. He told reporters earlier this week that Iran stood ready to repatriate the money it held abroad should this prove necessary.

It is far from clear how placing assets in Asia or anywhere abroad would protect them from being frozen as few governments or major banks would be willing to flout UN sanctions openly.

REUTERS

21 JAN 2008

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Why threats against Iran will not work

## Threats to haul Iran to the Security Council on the nuclear issue could see Teheran harden its stand.

Mr. Aneja (P) 9/10/11 20/11

Atul Aneja

**UNDETERRED** BY threats of possible sanctions, Iran has made it clear it will not reverse its decision to carry out nuclear fuel research at Natanz, 250 km south of Teheran. On January 11, Iran, in the presence of inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations nuclear watchdog, removed the seals at the Natanz Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant (PFEP).

Teheran insisted it took this step in order to conduct nuclear fuel research and not to produce large quantities of enriched uranium. IAEA chief Mohammad ElBaradei also acknowledged that the Iran intended to produce enriched uranium on a "small scale." Seals were also removed from two other connected sites, Pars Trash and Farayand Technique.

The removal of the IAEA seals has triggered an aggressive response from key western countries, led by the United States and Britain. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her EU counterpart Javier Solana have demanded that the case be referred to the U.N. Security Council. From the Iranian standpoint, the most damaging statement

has come from Mr. ElBaradei. In an interview to *Newsweek* magazine, Mr. ElBaradei said: "If they [Iran] have the nuclear material and they have a parallel weaponisation programme along the way, they are really not very far — a few months — from a weapon."

On January 16, the five Security Council members — the U.S., Britain, France, Russia, and China — along with Germany, met in London, where they called upon Iran to reverse its decision. An emergency meeting of the 35-nation IAEA board, of which India is a member, would now be held in Vienna on February 2, to discuss various options, including the possible referral of Iran to the Security Council for further action.

The Iranians had frozen all aspects of uranium enrichment, since November 2003, in deference to talks with the EU-3 countries — Germany, France, and Britain — and vigorous interaction with the IAEA that had since begun. After two years of hard negotiations, the Iranians concluded that the dialogue with the EU-3 had not made headway because, in their view, the Europeans were trying to freeze their enrichment programme permanently. They saw the European response as an implicit breach of the

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which allows members such as Iran to carry out the entire process of fuel enrichment on their own, provided their facilities are kept under IAEA supervision, ensuring that nuclear material was not diverted for weapons-manufacture.

In order to allay western fears about its intentions, Iran signed the Additional Protocol to the NPT. By doing so, it agreed to allow IAEA inspectors to visit its facilities at short notice, denying itself any lead time to cover up suspected covert enrichment for weapons.

While there appears to be a consensus in Iran about acquiring advanced nuclear technology, there is an active debate on whether this should be converted into weapons. But threats to haul Iran to the Security Council for punitive action, with the possibility of military action against it in the future, is likely to swing this debate in favour of those who advocate that acquiring atomic weapons alone will guarantee Iran security.

There are already enough arguments that can be cited to justify Iran's drive for weapons, should it choose to do so. Its neighbourhood is bristling with nuclear weapons. Three nuclear powers — Pakistan, Israel,

and Russia — are on its doorstep, and two others — India and China — are not far away. Of these, Israel, with an estimated 100 nuclear warheads, is definitely hostile. Besides, arch-foe U.S. has a physical presence in neighbouring Afghanistan and Iraq, and its warships, armed with long-range missiles, are lurking in the Persian Gulf.

Alarm bells are ringing in Iran as Israel, which bombed Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981, has moved to have an economic blockade against Iran imposed via the Security Council route.

The assertive new generation leadership in Iran is also less likely to accept an unfair compromise with the west. President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad is part of the Abadgaran group, which cut its teeth during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s and moved into leadership positions in Iran over the last couple of years. The Abadgaran has close ties with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards — the elite defenders of the 1979 Islamic revolution. Some, in this new leadership, claim to have personally experienced the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Iraqi military during the eight-year war, forcing them to consider acquisition of atomic weapons as a possible security option.

NUKES ■ Emergency IAEA meeting on February 2 to discuss referral to UNSC

# Iran says it's ready to compromise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, JANUARY 19

IRAN has said it was ready to compromise on its atomic programme and willing to discuss concerns about its suspected nuclear weapons ambitions and offer guarantees, in an apparent softening of stance even as pressure mounted from US and EU for referring Tehran to the UN Security Council.

"We are willing to discuss concerns about an alleged weapons programme and offer guarantees," Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Larjani told BBC on Wednesday night. "We have not closed the path to compromise. In principle, I believe some complicated international issues can be best solved through talks," he added.

"For obtaining nuclear fuel, there are many methods and formulas, and we can continue negotiations and use the different opportunities that there are in the world. I don't think the path is closed however," said Larjani.

Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Ali Asghar Soltaneih threat-



Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Larjani. Reuters

ened to withdraw cooperation with international nuclear inspectors if a decision was taken to refer it to Security Council, a move that could lead to international sanctions.

"The IAEA inspectors will no longer be allowed access to nuclear facilities if Tehran's activities are reported to the UN," Soltaneih told BBC.

The US and EU said there was no point in further negotiations unless Iran offered fresh proposals. Britain,

France and Germany, who have been trying to win guarantees that Iran will not use its atomic energy drive as a cover for weapons development, have called for an emergency meeting of IAEA on February 2 in response to Iran's resumption of uranium enrichment research early this month.

The IAEA emergency meeting of February 2 will discuss whether to refer Iran to the Security Council. The uranium enrichment activity which Iran

has resumed is part of a process which could be used both to generate electricity and to make nuclear weapons.

Asked whether there were any circumstances in which Iran would suspend enrichment research, Larjani answered in the negative, saying, "they should not ask a brave nation with very good scientists to expect not to engage in nuclear research." However, he called for a resumption of talks in search for a compromise. "If they want guarantees of no diversion of nuclear fuel, we can reach a formula acceptable to both sides in talks."

But, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, "Iran must not be allowed to get a nuclear weapon. It must not be allowed to pursue activities that might lead to a nuclear weapon and on that we are fully united," she said.

EU has been circulating a draft IAEA resolution referring Iran to the Council which can impose sanctions. China and Russia opposed stern measures against Iran at talks on Monday. Russia has said a compromise offer is still on the table, and China has urged all parties to continue negotiations.

# Waiting for Iran 11-6

**C**HINA AND Russia's agreement with the US, Britain, Germany and France, that Iran must completely suspend its nuclear enrichment activities is a positive development. There is yet no agreement on whether the case should be referred to the UN Security Council. The EU-3 — Britain, France and Germany — and the US favour such a reference, which they feel is long overdue. But while the Chinese and the Russians agree that Iran should fully suspend its activities, they are hesitant to endorse that course of action at this juncture. India, too, would qualify to be in this category. It had agreed to vote with the Western powers last September at the meeting of the 35-member board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, on the understanding that there would be no immediate referral, and, diplomacy would be given more time to resolve the problem.

There may be no agreement on reference to the UNSC, but there is acceptance that Iran's nuclear activities are a matter of concern, no matter what Teheran says. The area of agreement

between China and Russia and the Western powers, may be limited, but they are clear enough to give Teheran some food for thought. It must decide whether it would like to keep to the path of confrontation and deal with the world community through threats, such as that to cut off all ties with the IAEA in the wake of a UN referral or ratchet up oil prices, or tackle it by negotiated compromise.

Simultaneously, to keep up the pressure, the three EU countries that have been trying to work out a negotiated settlement with Iran, Britain, France and Germany, have called for an emergency meeting of the IAEA on February 2. Iran now has about three weeks to act on these issues, as well as to make up its mind on a perfectly reasonable Russian offer to produce enriched uranium for Iran in its territory to prevent its diversion to a weapons programme. There is a lot at stake for everyone on the issue and so both Iran and the Western countries must exercise great caution in handling the situation in the coming weeks. //

18 JAN 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



# West, China split on Iran

Beijing says referring nuclear issue to U.N. will complicate the crisis

Ewen MacAskill and  
Nick Paton Walsh

**LONDON/MOSCOW:** Differences between the West and Russia and China were exposed on Monday during a meeting in London to discuss the strategy for tackling the crisis over Iran's suspected nuclear weapons programme.

After seven hours of talks, Britain, France and Germany announced they are to seek Iran's referral to the United Nations Security Council at a meeting on February 2 and 3 of the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Javier Solana, E.U.'s foreign affairs chief, said he was "confident" Russia and China will back

the referral. But both countries expressed serious reservations about future handling of the crisis, in particular the prospect of the Security Council imposing sanctions on Iran.

Russia, though slowly shifting

towards the West's position, is still holding out hope that Teheran may yet accept a compromise.

China, which has close economic ties with Iran, is the most hardline in opposing tough ac-

tion against Teheran.

One European diplomat said: "What is really crucial is support from Russia and China. China does not look too good. China is the major obstacle."

He added that China, which has a veto on the Security Council, felt squeezed between pressure from the West and dependency on Iranian oil.

A British diplomat said: "There was serious concern about Iranian moves to restart enrichment contrary to the appeals of the international community" He added, "there was a thorough exchange of views" on the role of the Security Council.

— ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006

## Teheran warns against U.N. referral

Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** Iran has warned that it would resume uranium enrichment and stop tough inspections of its nuclear facilities by the United Nations if its case was

referred to the U.N. Security Council.

Iran's ambassador to the Vienna-based IAEA, Ali Asgar Soltaniyeh said Teheran would end the voluntary suspensions on certain nuclear fuel work.

# Talks on Iran referral hit China roadblock

**EWEN MacAskill and  
Nick Paton Walsh**  
London, January 17

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN the West and Russia and China were exposed on Tuesday after the five veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council met in London to discuss a strategy for tackling Iran's suspected nuclear weapons programme.

After seven hours of talks on Monday, Britain, France and Germany announced they would seek Iran's referral to the Security Council, and said they hoped Russia and China would back the resolution. On Tuesday, EU countries began working on a resolution asking the International Atomic Energy Agency to refer Iran to the UN Security Council, and the US started lobbying member nations to vote for the measure early next month.

The draft text of the resolution urges the 15-nation council to press Tehran "to extend full and prompt cooperation to the agency" in its more than three-year probe of suspect nuclear activities. It also asks the council to make clear to Iran "that additional transparency measures are indispensable" if it hopes to prove to the world that it does not want to make nuclear weapons.

But both Russia and China expressed serious reservations about handling of the crisis, in particular the prospect of the security council imposing sanctions on Iran. Russia, though slowly shifting towards the West's position, is still holding out hope that Tehran may yet accept a compromise. China, which has close

squeezed between pressure from the West and dependency on Iranian oil.

On Tuesday, it urged the European Union to return to the negotiating table. A senior British official dismissed as "vacuous" the Iranian offer made in a letter from Javad Vaedei, deputy head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

President Vladimir Putin, after meeting Angela Merkel on her first visit to Moscow as German chancellor, signalled exasperation with Iran's decision to break the seals. Indicating he was moving towards the west's position, he said: "As for Russia, and Germany, and our European partners and the US, we have very close positions on the Iranian problem."

But he cautioned against "abrupt, erroneous steps" and suggested the issue could still be defused without reference to the UN. He said Iran has not excluded the possibility of accepting a Russian compromise in which Tehran would conduct uranium enrichment in Russia rather than Iran. "One of the main problems is the enrichment of uranium. We proposed to Iran to set up a joint enrichment venture on Russian territory ... our partners told us they did not exclude the implementation of our proposal."

Britain, France and Germany called off the talks last week after Tehran resumed nuclear research.

Washington and its EU allies say it is time the UN nuclear watchdog agency sent Iran's case to the UN Security Council, which could eventually decide to impose sanctions on Iran.

**The Guardian and Agencies**



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad speaks to reporters on the nuclear crisis in Tehran on Tuesday.

## Defiant Tehran vows reprisals

IRAN VOWED on Tuesday to put an end to tough UN inspections of its disputed atomic programme and fully resume sensitive nuclear fuel work if its case is referred to the Security Council.

Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Ali Asgar Soltaniyeh, also said a decision to kick-start nuclear research was "irreversible".

At the same time, Tehran called on Britain, France and Germany to return to the negotiating table. "As I said recently, if Iran's nuclear case leaves the framework of the IAEA for the Security Council, the government — in line with the law voted by parliament — will end voluntary cooperation," Soltaniyeh told the ISNA news agency.

He said this included an end to voluntary suspension of nuclear fuel work agreed to with Britain, France and Germany in 2003 and 2004.

While Iran has restarted uranium enrichment research — a move that prompted the latest crisis — it is for now sticking to a freeze on large-scale enrichment. Enrichment is at the centre of international concerns, given the process to make reactor fuel can be extended to weapons production.

Soltaniyeh said the reprisals would also include Tehran ending the application of the additional protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which gives more power to IAEA inspectors.

"This message is very clear and very direct, and the secretariat and members must understand this," he stressed. Iran is facing the threat of being referred to the Security Council for resuming research work.

AFP, Tehran

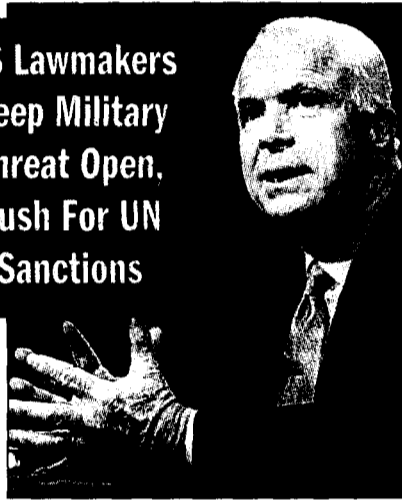
# Teheran brandishes oil card in tense N-standoff

Washington: The prospect of higher energy prices should not stop the world from imposing sanctions against oil-rich Iran after the Middle Eastern country restarted its nuclear research, several United States senators said on different American TV programmes on Sunday.

In addition, the senators agreed that the US should pursue penalties and diplomatic options before taking military action against Iran. However, Senator John McCain, a Republican from Arizona, said the military option remained on the table. "There's only one thing worse than the United States exercising the military option—that is a nuclear-armed Iran," said McCain, a leading contender for the White House race in 2008. "Now, the military option is the last option but cannot be taken off of the table," he told CBS-TV's *Face The Nation*.

McCain said the standoff over Teheran's nuclear programme "is the most grave situation that we have faced

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Push For UN  
Sanctions**



since the end of the Cold War, absent the whole war on terror". He said massive military commitments in Iraq should not allow the US to rule out responding with force against Iran.

But he said that such measures should be resorted to only after peaceful

methods have been exhausted, including immediate UN Security Council (UNSC) action. Iran restarted its research at a nuclear facility last week after a two-year freeze. The Bush administration says Iran wants to make nuclear arms and is pursuing harsh penalties against the Middle Eastern country through the UNSC.

"We must go to the UN now for sanctions," McCain said. "If the Russians and the Chinese, for reasons that would be abominable, do not join us," then the US should pursue the sanctions anyway with other nations that are willing to support them.

Senator Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, said Bush should do whatever he can to get support from Russia and China. "They need stuff from us," Schumer said on Fox News television on Sunday. "They need trade. They need all kinds of assistance. We ought to play hardball with them." McCain said imposing sanctions will be tough, but "if the price of oil has to go up, then that's a consequence we would have to suffer". Iran is OPEC's second-largest oil producer, and trade restrictions could increase already-high prices across the globe, even for nations that don't import oil from Iran.

Senator Trent Lott, a Mississippi Republican, said penalties should be imposed as a response to Iran's "irresponsible" behaviour. "We cannot be intimidated by economic threats from their side," Lott said on CNN's *Late Edition*. Senator Dianne Feinstein, a California Democrat, said on 'Face the Nation', "I don't think it's a stretch to say that if the Iranians had a nuclear missile that this President (Ahmadinejad) might well use it against Israel." Sen Evan Bayh, an Indiana Democrat, said Iran is the foremost sponsor of terrorism in the world and a "force for instability and death". "I'm glad the President (George W Bush) is finally speaking out about this, but for four long years they have ignored this problem," Bayh told *Late Edition*.

In London on Sunday, a day ahead of when US, European and Chinese officials are slated to discuss whether to bring Iran before the UNSC, Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief, said the international community is not considering military action against Iran.

## ElBaradei ups heat on Iran too

Washington: The head of the UN nuclear watchdog agency is preparing to tell the world he cannot yet confirm the peaceful nature of Iran's atomic programme, according to an interview released on Sunday.

Mohamed ElBaradei, who won the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize along with his International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said Teheran "might not seem to care, but if I say that I am not able to confirm the peaceful nature of that programme after three years of intensive work, well, that's a conclusion that's going to reverberate... around the world".

In the interview with *Newsweek* magazine, ElBaradei said Iran knows what it must do to satisfy his concerns and he will not extend the deadline for his next report on the nuclear programme beyond a March 6 deadline.

"For the last three years we have been doing intensive verification in Iran, and even after three years I am not yet in a position to make a judgment on the peaceful nature of the programme," he said. "We still need to assure ourselves through access to documents, individuals (and) locations that we have seen all that we ought to see and that there is nothing fishy, if you like, about the programme." Asked if Iran was buying time to build a bomb, ElBaradei replied: "That's why I said we are coming to the litmus test in the next few weeks." ElBaradei said he does not exclude the possibility that Iran may have another more secret nuclear weapons programme that is separate from the activities the IAEA knows about. "And if they have the nuclear material and they have a parallel weaponisation program along the way, they are really not very far—a few months—from a weapon," he said. A growing nuclear dispute exploded last week when Iran, defying the United States and major European powers, resumed nuclear research after a two-year moratorium. Iran, the world's fourth biggest oil exporter, says it aims only to make power for an energy-needy economy, not build atom bombs. But it hid nuclear work from the IAEA for almost 20 years before exiled dissidents exposed it in 2002. Reuters

# Iran's UN referral a 'done deal'



AP  
An anti-Iran protester with a mock hangman's noose around his neck demonstrates outside the British Foreign office in London on Monday.

AGENCIES  
London, January 16

THE FIVE permanent members of the UN Security Council agreed on Monday that Iran must fully suspend its nuclear programme, Britain's Foreign Office said after a the powers met to discuss Tehran's decision to resume uranium enrichment activities. But a diplomatic source disclosed that referring Iran to the Security Council was now a "done deal", with Russia having agreed.

"The Russians have changed their position. The Chinese are still a little hesitant, but effectively a Security Council referral is now a done deal. It will go to the Security Council," said the source.

Diplomats also announced plans to call for an emergency meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency board of directors on February 2-3 to discuss what action to take against Tehran.

The Foreign Office said all five veto-wielding members — the US, Britain, France, Russia and China — and Germany had shown "serious concern over Iran's moves." They agreed on the need for Iran to "return to full suspension," according to a statement.

Iran, which has close trade and energy ties with China and Russia, denies that its nuclear ambitions are anything other than peaceful.

Getting IAEA to refer Iran's non-compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and IAEA resolutions would be a prelude to possible UN sanctions, or a mandatory order to Tehran to halt its nuclear research.

The IAEA has found Iran in violation of an international treaty intended to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons technology.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said the "onus is on Iran" to prove its programme is peaceful. He said the world's confidence had been

## TEHRAN COMPARISON IRKS INDIA

obligations under international treaties and agreements."

"We regret this reference to India," Sarna said frostily. Larjani was quoted as saying that the Americans did not trust Iran's nuclear programme because they fear that 10 years hence, Tehran could develop nuclear weapons.

But, in a statement that raised New Delhi's hackles, "compare that to India," Larjani said, in response to a question about why Iran is not trusted. "It (India) does have nuclear weapons but they have extensive relations in the nuclear field. This dual standard is detrimental to international security," Larjani said. "Why should the world turn international right into a debate about intentions?" Larjani said.

**Nilova Roy Chowdhury, New Delhi**

"undermined by a history of deception" by Iran. Straw said the dialogue with Russia and China was of "crucial importance." Both hold veto power in the Security Council and therefore could thwart efforts against Tehran.

Tony Blair's official spokesman said the talks signalled "international concern at the behaviour of the Iranian government and at the words of the Iranian President, who has called for Israel to be 'wiped off the map'."

Iranian state radio reported on Monday that the government had allocated \$215 million for the construction of what would be its second and third nuclear power plants. Iran plans to build 20 more nuclear plants, and Russia has offered to build some of them.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza

# 'Sanctions may hike oil prices'

ROBERT TAFT  
Tehran, January 16

IRAN warned on Sunday that oil prices could soar if it is subjected to economic sanctions. Iran's economy minister, Davoud Danesh-Jafari, said the country's position as the world's fourth-largest oil producer meant such action would have grave consequences.

"Any possible sanctions could possibly, by disturbing Iran's political and economic situation, raise oil prices beyond levels the West expects," he said.

His comments echoed fears voiced by market analysts after crude oil prices last week rose above \$64 a barrel as hopes faded of a diplomatic solution to the dispute.

Last week, Manouchehr Takin, of the Centre for Global Energy Studies, argued that crude prices could hit \$100 a barrel if Iran stopped exporting.

REUTERS  
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad speaks at a news conference on Saturday.



President on Saturday that Iran had a "cheap means" of achieving its "rights". Ahmadinejad said, "You (the West) need us more than we need you."

Recognising the danger, Gernot Erler, Germany's deputy foreign minister, said on Sunday: "We are seeing desperate measures by Asian countries to get hold of energy resources, and for them Iran is a partner they can't do without." He said it was "dangerous" to put restrictions on trade relations "which could hurt one's own side more than the other side".

The Guardian

# India regrets Iran's statement

NEW DELHI, Jan. 16. — India has regretted the statement by the Iran National Security Council secretary, Mr Ali Larijani, that the "dual standard" of the West to have nuclear cooperation with India which has nuclear weapons is a threat to international security.

This statement was made in reply to a query in an interview with CNN broadcast on 12

January. The interviewer had posed a query that most people doubted Iran's intention on developing nuclear energy.

Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Mr Larijani replied that there was no way to measure a country's intention and pointed out that Iran was ten years away from nuclear weapons according to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"In comparing American behaviour to Iran with countries that recently developed nuclear

weapons, they are being harmonious now because they think that in 10 years' time we will develop nuclear weapons," he said, adding, "But compare that to India, it does have nuclear weapons but they have extensive relations in the nuclear field. This dual standard is detrimental to international security."

Today, the external affairs ministry spokesperson, Mr Navtej Sarna, said, "We regret this reference to India".

He added that India is a

"responsible nuclear weapon state" and has always been in compliance with its obligations under international treaties and agreements.

In an indication to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, Mr Sarna said, "We have consistently maintained that it is a state's sovereign right to enter into treaties and international agreements. Every state must fully comply with its international obligations and commitments and in a transparent manner".

# Rice beats war drums on Iran

16/11  
11-19  
Iran

## But Britain Opposes Military Strikes, While Teheran Dismisses American Threats

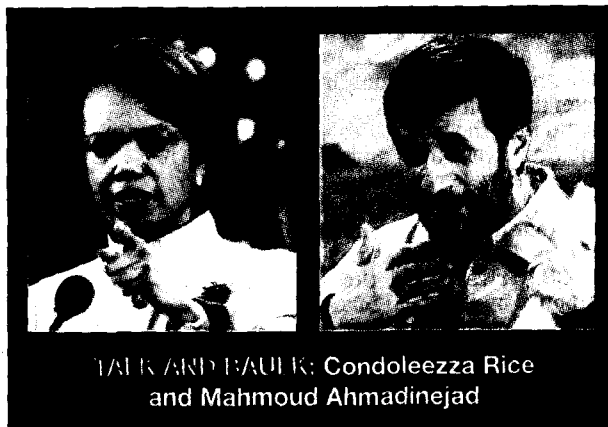
London and Washington were at odds on Saturday after the United States refused to rule out launching military strikes against Iran. US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice said the US would not dismiss any option as it battled to resolve the tense stand-off with Iran over the latter's nuclear programme.

But she was contradicted by British foreign secretary Jack Straw, who said there was no question of anyone considering military action against Iran. The tensions emerged as Teheran warned that it would end co-operation with the United Nations if it was referred to the Security Council for removing seals placed on its nuclear plants.

Rice said intensive diplomatic efforts were still being made to persuade the Iranian regime to fall into line and accept UN monitoring of its nuclear programme. She also made clear, however, that military action remained an option that Washington was ready to deploy.

"The President of the United States never takes any of his options off the table. We are on a diplomatic track and it's not on the agenda at this point to move from that diplomatic track," she said in a TV interview.

Her comments were at odds with the message delivered by Straw, who brushed aside fears that the world was sliding towards another



TALK AND BALK: Condoleezza Rice and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

war in the Middle East caused by Iran repeatedly flouting its international obligations to prove that it was not trying to develop a nuclear weapons programme.

"Obviously, if Iran failed to comply, the Security Council would then consider sanctions," he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

Asked about concerns that Iran could face military action, he added: "No one is talking about invading Iran or taking military action against Iran."

Last night, Teheran vowed to end all co-operation with the UN if it was referred to the council, leaving it facing the prospect of sanctions. Iranian foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki said: "In case Iran is referred to the Security Council the government will be obliged to end all of its voluntary cooperation."

Iranian President Mah-

moud Ahmadinejad also rejected international criticism.

"Iran is not frightened by the threat of any country and it will continue the path of the production of nuclear energy," he said. "Iranian people do not allow foreigners to block their progress."

As the tensions mounted, Britain's most senior naval officer spoke out against military action in Iran.

Admiral Alan West said an attempt to force Teheran's hand through bombing raids or an invasion would be "quite appalling". The admiral added that if the Israelis were to try to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities, as they did against Iraq in 1981, it would be difficult to ensure that every site was destroyed.

This is because at least 45 plants are thought to be involved in Iran's nuclear programme. Daily Mail

# Nuclear issue threats not to deter Iran

Tehran

14 JANUARY

IRAN has stated it would not succumb to international threats and pressure over its nuclear programme even as the West is seeking to refer the issue to the United Nations Security Council. Iranian chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani said told CNN in an interview that it is Iran's inalienable and legitimate right to conduct uranium enrichment and this right should be guaranteed, the semi-official Mehr News Agency reported.

Larijani, also secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, said on Thursday: "We believe that in the present situation, threats and pressures against Iran would not have positive effects." Iran broke UN seals on its Natanz nuclear enrichment facility this week. It insisted its nuclear programme is peaceful and it has the right to restart its facilities in accordance with international law. But several Western countries, including the US, fear Tehran is intent on developing a

nuclear bomb.

The European Union trio of Germany, France and Britain, negotiating with Tehran over the nuclear issue, Thursday called for an emergency session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to vote on referring Iran's nuclear issue to the UN Security Council, which could lead to sanctions on the Islamic

Republic. The US has expressed support to the EU call of referral but ruled out military actions on Iran. Larijani said, "We want to settle the nuclear issue peacefully, and in this way both Europe and Iran will be the winners of this game."

Questioned about Moscow's proposal to conduct uranium enrichment for Iran in Russia, Lari-

jani said that Iran would study the proposal. "The Russians are our friends and neighbours who have presented their views, and we believe that this proposal can be discussed. "We have reached a compromise with the Russians that Iran has the right to enrich uranium and no country has the right to deprive another IAEA member that seeks to enrich uranium for peaceful means," he said.

"Iran is ready to clear up any ambiguities and favours negotiations aimed at clearing up ambiguities," Larijani said. "The issue of nuclear research had nothing to do with the talks. "Before resuming the talks, we had asserted that we did not consider the issue of nuclear research as a part of the talks." Larijani stressed that Iran had not carried out any measure without the supervision of IAEA inspectors. He said that the door for negotiations was still open, adding, "We have started research on nuclear technology and have not resumed enrichment." —IANS

## Missile contract on: Russia

Moscow

14 JANUARY

Russia will fulfil a \$700-million contract for the supply of modern air defences to Iran despite an escalating crisis over Tehran's nuclear programme, Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov has said. "The contract for these weapons systems and the conflict around the Iranian nuclear issue are in no way related," he said on Friday. Moscow and Tehran signed a deal for the supply of Tor-M1 ground-to-air missiles in late

2005 amid international criticism.

The minister denied that negotiations were underway over the additional sale to Iran of heavier S-300 air defence missiles.

The Russian newspaper Kommersant reported on Friday that a military delegation had demonstratively broken off talks in Tehran about the supply of S-300s in response to Iran's decision this week to deactivate its uranium research. Both missile systems are exclusively for air defence and are incompatible with any Iranian development of nuclear weapons. —DPA

15 JAN 2006

The Financial Times

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## Iran Restarts Uranium Program

Advertisement

Enhanced Access For U.N. Inspectors Halted at Facilities

By Molly Moore  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Wednesday, February 15, 2006; A01

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PARIS, Feb. 14 -- Iran announced Tuesday that it had resumed uranium enrichment efforts in defiance of international pressure to curb its nuclear program and said it will no longer comply with voluntary measures designed to enhance international inspectors' access to its nuclear facilities.

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"The order to resume uranium enrichment has been issued," Javad Vaeidi, deputy head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, told reporters in Tehran, according to Iranian news agencies. "The Iranian Atomic Energy Organization has restarted the process."

Monitors from the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed during inspections Tuesday that Iran had begun the first small-scale steps in the years-long process of enriching uranium that could be used for nuclear power, or eventually weapons production, according to a Western diplomat close to the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency. The diplomat spoke on condition of anonymity because the monitoring team's report will not be released officially for several weeks.

Although Iranian officials said Tuesday that they are years away from being able to produce atomic fuel on an industrial scale, the decision to restart uranium enrichment represents a significant escalation of the political crisis between Tehran and foreign governments.

"They've now walked across the line in such a blatant way that it's hard to see where any other red line could be drawn," said Mark Fitzpatrick, an analyst with the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London and a former U.S. liaison to the IAEA in Vienna. "Now they've done what everybody was afraid of."

Iran's announcements and the IAEA monitoring team's findings increased pressure on the U.N. Security Council to take action against Iran for breaching international agreements on its nuclear program, diplomats in Vienna said.

The 35-member IAEA governing board, which includes the five permanent members of the Security Council, reported "serious concerns" about Iran's nuclear intentions to the Security Council on Feb. 4. Diplomats agreed that the Security Council would not take action until an IAEA board meeting on March 6, when the agency's director general, Mohamed ElBaradei, is scheduled to present an update on Iran's actions.

ElBaradei's report will include the finding of IAEA monitors that Iran last weekend began feeding uranium hexafluoride gas into a handful of centrifuges, which spin the material at supersonic speeds to create enriched uranium, a Vienna-based diplomat said.



"This means the IAEA will have to produce a report that is quite negative with regard to Iran," Fitzpatrick said. "The director general would have been looking to produce a report that described ways in which Iran was cooperating. . . . Iran is not giving ElBaradei anything to work with here."

In Washington, White House press secretary Scott McClellan said Iran was "continuing to choose defiance and confrontation over cooperation and diplomacy."

The IAEA team, after its inspection of Iran's Natanz nuclear facility about 150 miles south of Tehran, reported that Iran is using fewer than five centrifuges, the diplomat said.

Vaeidi, the Iranian national security official, said during comments to reporters Tuesday that Iran needed 60,000 centrifuges for large-scale enrichment, adding, "We need some time to reach that."

Iranian officials Tuesday also said they would end voluntary compliance with an addendum to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that allows IAEA inspectors access to any nuclear facility within two hours of their request. It also grants the IAEA greater access to certain documentation and information about Iran's nuclear program.

"We are in the transition state and the inspectors will work under the NPT," Mohammad Saeedi, deputy of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, said on state television, referring to the treaty. "We will not do anything beyond our commitments to the NPT."

Western diplomats in Vienna said Iran's refusal to comply with the additional voluntary agreements will impede the IAEA's ability to monitor Iranian activities. "It is very difficult for us to provide assurance that there is no parallel or secret program happening," one diplomat said.

Iranian officials describe their decision to move ahead with uranium enrichment as an act of independence in the face of criticism and mistrust on the part of the United States and other Western countries, which Iran accuses of trying to hobble its efforts to produce nuclear energy.

Gholam-Ali Haddad Adel, Iran's parliament speaker, said during a visit Tuesday to Caracas, Venezuela, that U.S. opposition to Iran's nuclear program was "only a pretext."

He added, "They are worried that we want to be independent."

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reiterated in a televised speech Saturday that Iran was trying to develop nuclear technology for fuel in the face of dwindling oil supplies.

"We ask them why they are against our nuclear technology," Ahmadinejad said in the speech. "They answer: Because they do not trust us."

He warned the Iranian people to brace for possible economic sanctions in the coming months.

The Security Council has not indicated a course of action it might take against Iran. The United States and Europe have been pushing hardest for some type of strong political retribution, while Iran's allies and major trading partners, including Russia and China, are wary of the intentions of the Western governments.

Russia, which has invested about \$1 billion in constructing an Iranian nuclear facility, has attempted to act as broker, offering to enrich uranium in Russia and turn the product over to Iran.

Ahmadinejad scoffed at the proposal in his speech Saturday, telling his Tehran audience, "They say that they will produce the fuel somewhere else and then they will hand it over to us.

"We say, what a surprise!" he continued. "Do you expect us to be stupid enough to believe you?"

Iranian officials have scheduled a meeting with Russian authorities on Feb. 20 to discuss the proposal.

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washingtonpost.com

# Iran Tells Nuke Agency to Remove Cameras

By GEORGE JAHN  
The Associated Press  
Tuesday, February 7, 2006; 1:09 AM

VIENNA, Austria -- Iran has told the International Atomic Energy Agency to remove surveillance cameras and agency seals from sites and nuclear equipment by the end of next week in response to referral to the U.N. Security Council, the agency said Monday.

Iran's demands came two days after the IAEA reported Tehran to the council over its disputed atomic program.

In a confidential report to the IAEA's 35-member board on Monday, agency head Mohamed ElBaradei said Iran also announced a sharp reduction in the number and kind of IAEA inspections, effective immediately. The report was made available to The Associated Press.

Iranian officials had repeatedly warned they would stop honoring the so-called "Additional Protocol" to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty \_ an agreement giving IAEA inspectors greater authority \_ if the IAEA board referred their country to the council.

A diplomat close to the Vienna-based IAEA told the AP that Iran had also moved forward on another threat \_ formally setting a date for resuming full-scale work on its uranium enrichment program. Iran says it wants to make fuel through enrichment, but the activity can also generate the nuclear core of warheads.

The diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the matter was confidential, refused to divulge the date.

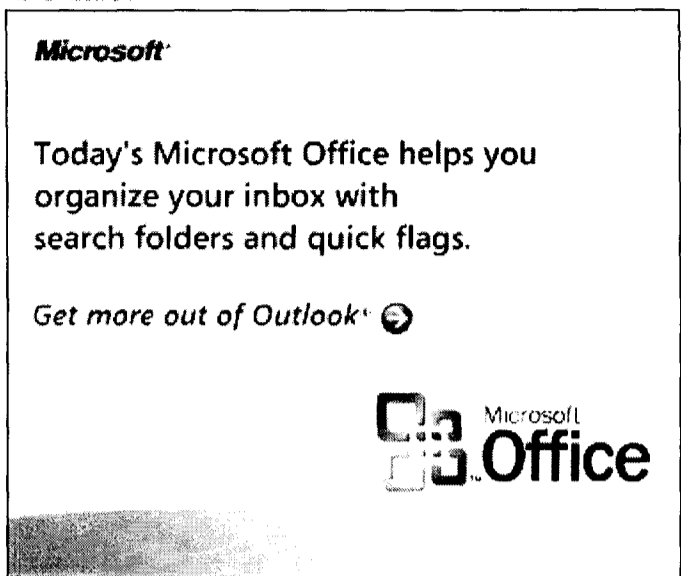
Robert G. Joseph, the U.S. undersecretary of state for arms control, said Monday that Iran used negotiations with the European Union to play for time and develop its capabilities.

"I would say that Iran does have the capability to develop nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them," he said in a response to a question.

In Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he was still hopeful that Iran will take confidence-building measures with the IAEA.

"It's not the end of the road," Annan said of the Security Council referral. "I hope that in between, Iran will take steps that will help create an environment and confidence-building measures that will bring the partners back to the negotiating table."


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In his brief report, ElBaradei cited E. Khalilipour, vice president of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, as saying: "From the date of this letter, all voluntarily suspended non-legally binding measures including the provisions of the Additional Protocol and even beyond that will be suspended."

Calling on the agency to sharply reduce the number of inspectors in Iran, Khalilipour added: "All the Agency's containment and surveillance measures which were in place beyond the normal Agency safeguards measures should be removed by mid-February 2006."

Earlier, Russia's foreign minister warned against threatening Iran after Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld reportedly agreed with an interviewer at the German daily newspaper Handelsblatt that all options, including military response, remained on the table.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called for talks to continue with Tehran, adding: "I think that at the current stage, it is important not to make guesses about what will happen and even more important not to make threats."

U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, urged the Security Council to impose strict sanctions on Iran if it fails to comply with U.N. resolutions and arms agreements and warned that inaction would greatly increase the chances of military conflict. He nonetheless stressed that the United States favors a diplomatic solution.

"Diplomatic and economic confrontations are preferable to military ones," Lugar said. But he cautioned that "in the field of nonproliferation, decisions delayed over the course of months and years may be as harmful as no decisions at all."

The Additional Protocol was signed by Iranian officials in 2003 as pressure intensified on Tehran to cooperate with IAEA inspectors probing more than 18 years of clandestine nuclear activities.

The protocol gives the agency inspecting powers beyond normal, allowing for inspections on short notice of areas and programs suspected of being misused for weapons activity.

North Korea \_ the world's other major proliferation concern \_ quit the Nonproliferation Treaty in January 2003, just a few months before U.S. officials announced that Pyongyang had told them it had nuclear weapons and may test, export or use them depending on U.S. actions.

Iranian officials have repeatedly said they will continue honoring the Nonproliferation Treaty. Still, the agreements linked to that treaty are insufficient for agency inspectors trying to establish whether Iran has had a secret nuclear arms program.

Unless Iran relents, the move to curtail voluntary cooperation means that ElBaradei will be stymied in trying to close the Iran nuclear file by March. And that could backfire on Tehran.

Russia and China agreed to Security Council referral on condition that the council take no action until March, when the IAEA board next meets. But if ElBaradei reports to that March 6 meeting that he was unable to make progress in establishing whether Iran constitutes a nuclear threat, the council will likely start to pressure Iran, launching a process that could end in sanctions.

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Associated Press writers Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations, Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow and

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Barry Schweid in Washington contributed to this report.

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February 7, 2006

## Iran, Defying Atomic Agency, Says It Will Resume Nuclear Work

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TEHRAN, Feb. 6 (Agence France-Presse) — Iran on Monday defied mounting international calls for restraint by announcing that it was poised to restart delicate nuclear work that could enable it to make an atomic bomb.

Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, said that Iran had officially notified the International Atomic Energy Agency, whose 35-nation board voted Saturday to report Iran to the Security Council, that its inspectors would no longer be allowed to conduct short-notice, wide-reaching inspection trips and that uranium enrichment work would resume.

The retaliation to the vote ends more than two years of efforts by Britain, France and Germany to win a moratorium on the nuclear research, which Iran says it needs to develop a peaceful nuclear industry to generate electricity.

In a letter delivered Monday, Iran informed the nuclear agency's director, Mohamed ElBaradei, of the measures and asked for the agency's "additional containment and surveillance measures" to be "removed by mid-February 2006."

The United States immediately condemned Iran's "threats and confrontation," while the secretary general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, appealed to Tehran's conservative leadership to "take steps that would help create an environment of confidence-building."

"The actions and comments coming out of the regime only further isolate it from the rest of the world," said Scott McClellan, the White House press secretary. "So far all we see is continued threats and confrontation rather than diplomacy and cooperation."

Iran resumed uranium conversion — a precursor to enrichment — in August and laboratory-scale enrichment on Jan. 10, moves that prompted the present crisis. Enrichment is a process that involves feeding uranium gas through cascades of centrifuges. When purified to low levels the result is reactor fuel, but the process can be extended to make the fissionable core of a nuclear bomb.

An Iranian government spokesman, Gholam Hossein Elham, said that while "the door for voluntary measures has been closed, what remains open is the door of negotiation."

But speaking in Dubai, Mr. Annan said it was up to Iran to take the steps that "would bring back the parties to the negotiating table."

Iranian officials have changed positions abruptly in the past, but on Monday they did not sound as if

they were prepared for more negotiations. "If they want to pass the case to one another and refer it to one another so the Iranian nation will give up its right, then they can continue doing so for the next 500 years," said President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Other officials dismissed the threat of sanctions or possible military strikes. "Nobody would dare to attack Iran," Mr. Larijani said. "All the experts say there is a minimal possibility for this option."

Sanctions are equally implausible, they said. "We are in a position of power when it comes to energy," Mr. Elham said, maintaining that sanctions would "hurt the consumers and not the producers."

In New York, oil prices ended Monday slightly lower on world markets.

washingtonpost.com

## Nuclear Inspections Are Curbed by Iran

Russian Plan Still Negotiable, Aide Says

By Ali Akbar Dareini  
Associated Press  
Monday, February 6, 2006; A11

TEHRAN, Feb. 5 -- Iran ended voluntary cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency on Sunday, saying it would start uranium enrichment and bar surprise inspections of its facilities after being reported to the U.N. Security Council over fears it is trying to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran left open the possibility of further negotiations about its nuclear program and, in an apparent softening of its position, said it was willing to discuss Moscow's proposal to shift large-scale enrichment operations to Russian territory in an effort to allay suspicions.

A day earlier, an Iranian official at the IAEA meeting in Vienna said the Russian proposal was "dead." The comment was made after the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors voted to report Iran to the council, which can impose economic and political sanctions.

"The door for negotiations is still open," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said Sunday.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said the West "can't do a thing" to stop Iran's progress.

"The era of coercion and domination has ended," Ahmadinejad was quoted as saying by the official Islamic Republic News Agency. "Issue as many resolutions like this as you want and make yourself happy. You can't prevent the progress of the Iranian nation.

"In the name of the IAEA, they want to visit all our nuclear facilities and learn our defense capabilities, but we won't allow them to do this."

Enriched to a low degree, uranium can be used for nuclear reactors, while highly enriched uranium is suitable for warheads. Iran says it wants only to generate electricity, but the United States and some allies say Tehran is trying to build a weapon.

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said Sunday that Iran had ended all voluntary cooperation with the IAEA. The action, ordered by Ahmadinejad, was required by a law passed last year.

The announcement means Iran has resumed uranium enrichment and will not allow unannounced IAEA inspections of its nuclear facilities, a voluntary measure it allowed in recent years to build trust under a protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.



Iran repeatedly has stressed that it will continue to honor its commitments under the treaty but that it has the right to pursue a peaceful nuclear program.

The IAEA resolution stipulates that the agency's director general, Mohamed ElBaradei, should "report to the Security Council" the steps Iran needs to take to dispel suspicions about its nuclear ambitions.

Among these steps, Iran must again freeze uranium enrichment, consider stopping construction of a heavy-water reactor that could be a source of plutonium, ratify the agreement allowing the IAEA greater inspection authority and give the agency more power to investigate Iran's nuclear program.

Tension escalated last month after Iran removed U.N. seals and resumed nuclear research, including in the field of small-scale uranium enrichment.

That followed months of talks between Iran and Britain, Germany and France, negotiating on behalf of the 25-nation European Union.

Asefi, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, said Iranian diplomats would attend talks in Moscow Feb. 16 concerning Russia's enrichment proposal.

"The proposal has to conform itself with the new circumstances," Asefi said. "If the Russian proposal makes itself compatible with the new conditions, it can be negotiated."

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# Iran To Face Security Council

## Tehran Defiant On IAEA Vote

By John Ward Anderson  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Sunday, February 5, 2006; A01

VIENNA, Feb. 4 -- Members of the International Atomic Energy Agency voted Saturday to report Iran to the U.N. Security Council over concerns that the country is trying to develop nuclear weapons, decisively ending Iran's years-long effort to forestall action that could lead to further pressure on Tehran.

The 35-member IAEA board sent a resolution to the highest U.N. body, expressing "serious concerns" about Iran's nuclear ambitions after nearly three years of trying to verify whether the country was pursuing a nuclear program for civilian or military purposes.

In response to the IAEA vote, Iran announced that it would resume its uranium enrichment activities and would no longer allow IAEA inspections of its nuclear facilities.

The decision, 27 to 3, handed the United States and European countries a diplomatic victory. Russia and China were initially reluctant to report Iran to the council but joined the stepped-up campaign after demanding that any action against Iran be deferred at least until March. In the end, just three countries -- Syria, Cuba and Venezuela -- voted against the measure. Five countries abstained.

The vote left unclear what action Iran might face. The Security Council could impose economic sanctions or an oil embargo against Iran. But Russia and China, which as permanent members of the council wield veto power, have expressed strong opposition to any significant punitive measures. U.S. and European diplomats have said that they envision a "graduated" diplomatic approach to slowly build pressure on Iran.

In forwarding the matter to the Security Council, the board's resolution cited "Iran's many failures and breaches of its obligations to comply" with the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the "absence of confidence that Iran's nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes resulting from the history of concealment."

The resolution signifies "a continuing lack of confidence in Iran's nuclear intentions," said British envoy Peter Jenkins. "Board members simply cannot understand why Iran is so determined to press on with its enrichment program." Some forms of enriched uranium can be used to make nuclear weapons, though Iran maintains its research will be used only to produce electrical power.

The Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, chastised the IAEA governing board for yielding to "political pressure of a few countries and without any legal justification."

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"As of Sunday, the voluntary implementation of the additional protocol and other cooperation beyond the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty has to be suspended under the law," Ahmadinejad said in a letter to Vice President Gholamreza Aghazadeh, who also is the head of the Iran's nuclear agency, Reuters reported.

In Washington, President Bush said in a statement that "the path chosen by Iran's new leaders -- threats, concealment, and breaking international agreements and IAEA seals -- will not succeed and will not be tolerated by the international community."

Undersecretary of State R. Nicholas Burns called the vote "a powerful message of condemnation" and a "clear rebuke" of Iran.

"Diplomacy is now in a new phase," he told reporters in a conference call, warning that the Iranian government faces tough decisions in the coming month. "I cannot say we are filled with hope the Iranians will do the right thing."

Burns said that under an agreement reached in London this week with other permanent members of the Security Council, the United States will not press to bring up the Iranian issue this month, while the United States holds the council's presidency. But he said five demands made of Iran in the resolution -- including suspending enrichment activities and granting inspectors enhanced access to its facilities -- were the minimum steps Iran needed to take to avoid a Security Council debate in March.

"Iran is going to have to meet those conditions and show it has taken a fundamentally different course," Burns said. "We are going to have to see a change of heart by Iran."

It was unclear whether Iran -- which has endured years of diplomatic isolation -- would step back from its positions. Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and its chief nuclear negotiator, recently said the country's decision in January to resume uranium enrichment activities after a voluntary, two-year suspension was "nonnegotiable." It was that decision that triggered the IAEA board meeting this week.

Some Iranian officials have also threatened to withdraw from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or to raise oil prices if their case was forwarded to the Security Council. Political analysts have also warned of Iran's ability to foment problems in neighboring Iraq.

Russian officials have offered to enrich uranium for Iran on Russian soil, a compromise that would allow Iran access to enriched uranium but prevent it from becoming engaged in one of the most sensitive aspects of the nuclear fuel production cycle. But Javed Vaeidi, an Iranian nuclear negotiator, told the Associated Press on Saturday that the idea was now dead.

As a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran has the right to develop nuclear technology and to enrich uranium. But it became enmeshed in controversy in 2002 when Iranian dissidents disclosed that the country had concealed its nuclear programs for almost two decades. Iran suspended the most controversial parts of its activities, and European diplomats agreed not to pursue Security Council action while they conducted intensive negotiations to ensure that Iran's program was and would remain peaceful.

The negotiations floundered in August when Iran resumed uranium conversion, a prelude to enrichment, and again in January when it restarted work on its uranium enrichment program, prompting the Europeans to declare their negotiations at an impasse and to begin a drive to report Iran to the Security

Council. U.S. officials said that move was long overdue.

In recent months, international inspectors have found documents in Iran that were related to bomb-making but no evidence of a bomb-making program. The inspectors have complained, however, that they have been unable to make a solid determination because Iran has not provided the relevant information or access to people, documents and facilities.

Recent provocative remarks by Ahmadinejad -- including questioning the Holocaust, saying Israel should be "wiped off the map" and offering to transfer nuclear know-how to other Islamic countries -- have increased concern about Iran's intentions and raised the pressure for the IAEA board to demand tougher confidence-building measures.

Several factors contributed to the lopsided vote Saturday, including a decision this week by the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China -- the five permanent members of the Security Council -- to give Iran a one-month grace period to adopt a more conciliatory approach.

The final resolution also removed any reference to Iran's "non-compliance" with its nuclear treaty obligations and the article of the Non-Proliferation Treaty that it has violated.

In an effort to win support from 16 members of the Non-Aligned Movement, a group dating from the Cold War, the resolution included a paragraph "recognizing that a solution to the Iranian issue would contribute to global non-proliferation efforts and realizing the objective of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, including their means of delivery."

The language significantly softened the movement's demand for a reference to creating a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East, which the United States saw as a slap at Israel.

The resolution is ambiguous about whether the IAEA board must act again at the end of the one-month grace period in order to officially request Security Council action. The United States believes the resolution moves the issue to the Security Council.

But other countries -- including many from the Non-Aligned Movement -- say the resolution simply informs the council about the issue, and that the IAEA board must vote again in another month if it wants the council to actually take action.

*Staff writer Glenn Kessler in Washington contributed to this report.*

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## Text: European Draft Resolution on Iran

Associated Press

Thursday, February 2, 2006; 10:07 AM

*The text of the draft resolution on Iran submitted by European nations to the 35-nation board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency on Wednesday, the eve of a key meeting on the nuclear standoff with Tehran:*

The Board of Governors

(a) Recalling all the resolutions adopted by the Board on Iran's nuclear program,

(b) Recalling also the Director General's reports,

(c) Recalling that Article IV of the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons stipulates that nothing in the Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable rights of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of the Treaty,

(d) Commending the Director General and the Secretariat for the professional and impartial efforts to implement the Safeguards Agreement in Iran of the suspension,

(e) Recalling that in reports referred to above, the Director General noted that after nearly three years of intensive verification activity, the Agency is not yet in a position to clarify some important issues relating to Iran's nuclear program or to conclude that there are no undeclared nuclear materials or activities in Iran,

(f) Recalling Iran's many failures and breaches of its obligations to comply with its NPT Safeguards Agreement and the absence of confidence that Iran's nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes resulting from the history of concealment of Iran's nuclear activities, the nature of those activities and other issues arising from the Agency's verification of declarations made by Iran since September 2002,

(g) Recalling that the Director General has stated that Iran's full transparency is indispensable and overdue for the Agency to be able to clarify outstanding issues (GOV/2005/67),

(h) Recalling the requests of the Agency for Iran's cooperation in following up on reports relating to equipment, materials and activities which have applications in the conventional military area and in the civilian sphere as well as in the nuclear military area (as indicated by the Director General in GOV/2005/67),

(i) Recalling that in November 2005 the Director General reported (GOV/2005/87) that Iran possesses a

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document related to the procedural requirements for the reduction of UF<sub>6</sub> to metal in small quantities, and on casting and machining of enriched, natural and depleted uranium metal into hemispherical forms,

(j) Expressing serious concerns about Iran's nuclear program, and agreeing that an extensive period of confidence-building is required from Iran,

(k) Reaffirming the Board's resolve to continue to work for a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

1. Underlines that outstanding questions can best be resolved and confidence built in the exclusive peaceful nature of Iran's program by Iran responding positively to the calls for confidence building measures which the Board has made on Iran, and in this context deems it necessary for Iran to:

- re-establish full and sustained suspension of all enrichment-related and processing activities, including research and development, to be verified by the Agency;

- reconsider the construction of a research reactor moderated by heavy water;

- ratify promptly and implement in full Additional Protocol;

- pending ratification, continue to act in accordance with the provisions of the Additional Protocol with Iran signed on 18 December 2003;

- implement the transparency measures, as requested by the Director General, including in GOV/2005/67, which extend beyond the former requirements of the Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol, and include such access to individuals, documentation relating to procurement, dual use equipment, certain military-owned workshops and research and development as the Agency may request in support of its ongoing investigations;

2. Requests the Director General to report to the Security Council of the United Nations that these steps are required of Iran by the Board and to report to the Security Council all IAEA reports and resolutions, as adopted, relating to this issue;

3. Expresses serious concern that the Agency is not yet in a position to clarify some important issues relating to Iran's nuclear program, including the fact that Iran has in its possession a document on the production of uranium metal hemispheres, since, as reported by the Secretariat, this process is related to the fabrication of nuclear weapon components; and requests Iran to maintain this document under Agency seal and to provide a full copy to the Agency;

4. Deeply regrets that, despite repeated calls from the Board for the maintaining of the suspension of all enrichment related and reprocessing activities which the Board has declared essential to addressing outstanding issues, Iran resumed uranium conversion activities at its Isafahan facility on 8 August 2005 and took steps to resume enrichment activities on 10 January 2006;

5. Calls on Iran to understand that the Board lacks confidence in its intentions in seeking to develop a fissile material production capability against the background of Iran's record on safeguards as recorded in previous Resolutions, and unresolved questions; and to consider its position both in relation to confidence-building measures and in relation to negotiations that can result in increased confidence;

6. Requests Iran to extend full and prompt cooperation to the Agency, which the Director General deems

indispensable and overdue, and in particular to help the agency clarify possible activities which could have a military nuclear dimension;

7. Requests the Director General to continue with his efforts to implement the Agency's Safeguards Agreement with Iran, to implement the Additional Protocol to that Agreement pending its entry into force, with a view to providing credible assurance regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, and to pursue additional transparency measures required for the Agency to be able to resolve outstanding issues and reconstruct the history and nature of all aspects of Iran's past nuclear activities;

8. Requests the Director General to report to the next regular session of the Board on the implementation of this and previous resolutions and convey to the Security Council that report together with any Resolution from the March Board;

9. Decides to remain seized of the matter.

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# China Backs Talks In Iranian Standoff

Russia's Compromise Plan Endorsed

By Edward Cody  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Friday, January 27, 2006; A14

BEIJING, Jan. 26 -- China endorsed a Russian compromise proposal for breaking the stalemate over Iran's nuclear program Thursday and joined Iran's visiting nuclear negotiator in calling for patience and more discussions on the Russian idea.

The Chinese stand, issued during talks with Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, suggested that the idea of having Iran send uranium to Russia for enrichment might become the common denominator of an agreement on preventing the Iranian government from developing nuclear weapons, rather than the sanctions envisioned by the Bush administration.

"We oppose impulsively using sanctions or threats of sanctions to solve problems," the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Kong Quan, told reporters at a regular briefing.

Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick had urged the Chinese leadership on Tuesday to join the United States and other nations in taking urgent steps to make sure Iran does not expand its nuclear research program into weapons production. China agrees that Iran should not have nuclear weapons, he said afterward, but differs with Washington over how to prevent it and how fast a solution has to be found.

Without mentioning the United States or its European allies directly, Quan urged other countries to pursue a solution to the crisis through more negotiations, and said China's leaders view the Russian suggestions as a good place to start. Larijani, at a news conference later, said that, in this regard, the views of China and Iran were "very close."

"The Russian idea is fruitful, but it needs to be discussed more, and we are in the process of this negotiation," he said, adding that another round of talks had been scheduled with Russia for mid-February.

"It needs to be considered in a broader package," he added. "There are different aspects around this idea. . . . So we need to be patient."

The United States, France and Britain have said they are running out of patience. They have urged the International Atomic Energy Agency, at an emergency session scheduled Feb. 2, to refer the Iranian nuclear standoff to the U.N. Security Council, which could impose sanctions or some other form of warning.

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Since then, however, President Bush has hailed the Russian suggestion as a promising compromise. And on Thursday at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the head of the IAEA, Mohamed ElBaradei, said Moscow's plan could offer "the beginning of a solution," according to the Reuters news agency.

In Washington on Thursday, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the time for referral had come. "The Iranians are doing nothing but trying to throw up chaff . . . and people shouldn't let them get away with it," she said in an interview with Reuters.

The foreign ministers of the five permanent Security Council members -- the United States, Britain, Russia, China and France -- plan to gather Monday in London, along with Germany, to lay groundwork for the IAEA decision.

The crisis atmosphere swelled this month when Iran removed U.N. seals on equipment that can be used to enrich uranium. The Iranian leadership repeatedly has said it has no intention of making weapons but retains the right under international conventions to enrich uranium for nuclear energy production.

Larijani has said that if the IAEA does refer Iran to the Security Council, Iran will take the next step and begin enriching uranium, in effect moving from research to making what could become weapons material. Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki has warned that such a step would prompt Iran to halt cooperation with the IAEA, including its surprise checks at nuclear research sites.

Against that background, Russia offered its compromise proposal, saying Iran could send its uranium to Russian facilities for enrichment to make sure none is diverted into weapons production.

China, which has veto power in the Security Council, traditionally has shied from the use of sanctions in international disputes. But Chinese analysts predicted that China would likely abstain in a vote on sanctions, seeking to maintain its good relations with Washington.

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## Iran Says It Is Open to Russian Plan on Nuclear Program

By Peter Finn  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Thursday, January 26, 2006; A21

MOSCOW, Jan. 25 -- Iran's leading negotiator on nuclear issues said here Wednesday that his country was open to a compromise proposal from Russia that it enrich uranium for Iran on Russian soil to guarantee it would be used only for peaceful purposes, not to create nuclear weapons. But he said the idea needed fine-tuning in advance of further talks scheduled for the middle of next month.

"Our attitude to the proposal is positive," said Ali Larijani, head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, after talks here with the secretary of the Russian Security Council, Igor Ivanov. "The project won't have the full potential to resolve all problems. It should be fine-tuned, together with other measures."

The foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council -- the United States, China, Russia, France and Britain -- plus Germany plan to meet Monday in London in advance of a Feb. 2 emergency session of the board of the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency.

The United States, France and Britain are pushing for a vote at the IAEA to refer Iran to the Security Council, which can impose sanctions. They fear that Iran is attempting to develop nuclear weapons, and enrichment is a key step in that process. Iranian officials say their nuclear program is solely for the purpose of generating electricity but that Iran has the right to control the entire nuclear fuel cycle.

The positions of Russia and China on referring Iran to the Security Council remain unclear. Russia, which has expressed doubts about the idea, is helping Iran build a nuclear power plant. Iran is a major supplier of energy to China, which needs power for its rapid industrialization.

Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick said Wednesday in Beijing that he told Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao that it would be "extremely dangerous" to allow the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and that it would damage China's interest in energy security. Larijani is scheduled to arrive in China for talks Thursday.

Larijani said Wednesday that if the Feb. 2 meeting referred Iran to the Security Council, the country would begin enrichment. "In this case," he said, "our activities will not be limited to research and we'll begin industrial enrichment of uranium."

Some Western officials fear that the Iranians are appearing to consider the Russian offer in order to buy time and prevent any Russian vote to send the matter to the council.

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By Peter Finn

Washington Post Foreign Service  
Wednesday, February 1, 2006; Page A19

MOSCOW, Jan. 31 -- Russian President Vladimir Putin described the electoral victory of the radical Islamic group Hamas in the Palestinian elections as "a big blow to American efforts in the Middle East, a very serious blow," but he said Russia would not support any efforts to cut off financial assistance to the Palestinians.

"Our position on Hamas is different from that of the United States and Western Europe," said Putin, speaking at an annual news conference in the Kremlin. "The Russian Foreign Ministry has never regarded Hamas as a terrorist organization. But this does not mean that we totally approve and support everything that Hamas has done."

Russia joined with the four other permanent members of the U.N. Security Council -- the United States, Britain, France and China -- and Germany in London on Monday to call on Hamas to renounce violence and recognize Israel's right to exist. In the news conference, Putin called on Hamas to engage with international governments and repeated the call for recognition of Israel's right to exist. But he said the diplomatic process to find a solution to the conflict should not be dominated by the United States.

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"I think if we want to deal with complex global problems, we only have to do this together," he said. "And we should not invite certain participants in some or other process to make cats' paws of them," using an expression that means to toy with someone. "We should sit down together and listen and hear what others say, and we should make concerted decisions."

Held in the Kremlin Grand Palace's Round Hall, a vast throwback of a room with a gargantuan chandelier and marble walls, the televised news conference brought together foreign, national and provincial journalists for a marathon question-and-answer session. It lasted 3 hours 26 minutes, a new record for Putin.

Speaking without notes, the president showcased his command of myriad subjects, answering 64 questions. The news conference also provided rare glimpses into the lighter and saltier side of a man who in the West often appears to have the austere and glowering personality associated with his former career as a spy for the KGB.

At one point, for instance, he seemed to be harboring doubts about the durability of the thousand journalists arrayed before him after he had finished a lengthy answer on demographic trends and cited specific payments to hospitals for prenatal care. "Dear colleagues, we have been working for 2 1/2 hours now," Putin said. "I doubt that any of us put on Pampers before coming here. So we need a break."

He then plowed on for 56 more minutes.

Journalists from the provinces, who were invited to Moscow for the occasion, held up signs with the names of their cities so Putin would choose them. "A city with a very good name," he said, calling on a woman from Vladimir, which is about 110 miles east of Moscow.

The subjects covered were as diverse as private ownership of small vegetable plots, pension supplements in the Arctic North and guidelines for the development of gold production in the Far East.

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Putin visibly bristled when questioned about some of his critics' statements that Russia is not fit to chair this year's meetings of the Group of Eight leading industrial nations because of the Kremlin's centralization of power.

"There are devoted Sovietologists who do not understand what is happening in our country, do not understand the changing world," Putin said. "They deserve a very brief response: 'To hell with you.' "

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## Iraqi Shiite Cleric Pledges to Defend Iran

Sadr, With Powerful Militia, Vows to Respond to Attack by West on Neighbor

By Ellen Knickmeyer and Omar Fekeiki  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Tuesday, January 24, 2006; A13

BAGHDAD, Jan. 23 -- An Iraqi Muslim cleric who leads a major Shiite militia pledged to come to the defense of neighboring Iran if it were attacked, aides to the cleric, Moqtada Sadr, said Monday.

The commitment, made Sunday in Tehran during a visit by Sadr, came in response to a senior Iranian official's query about what the cleric would do in the event of an attack on Iran. It marked the first open indication that Iraq's Shiite neighbor is preparing for a military response if attacked in a showdown with the West over its nuclear program.

The pledge was also one of the strongest signs yet that Iraq could become a battleground in any Western conflict with Iran, raising the specter of Iraqi Shiite militias -- or perhaps even the U.S.-trained Shiite-dominated military -- taking on American troops here in sympathy with Iran.

Sadr is a top leader of the Shiite coalition that leads Iraq and dominates its security forces. His pledge might be seen as an indicator of how the Iraqi government may respond to a potential attack on its neighbor.

"If there was an attack on Iran, even a limited military strike, this would provoke anger through the entire Muslim world. It would certainly jeopardize the already fragile position of the United States in Iraq," said Joseph Cirincione, an Iraq and nuclear weapons expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington.

"Whether that would mean an uprising, direct military clashes or simply demands that the United States would leave Iraq, we don't know," Cirincione said in a telephone interview. "But it won't be good."

Iraq is led by a coalition of Shiite religious parties. They include Sadr's bloc, which won 29 parliament seats in Dec. 15 elections. Sadr and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which is allied with Iran, each maintain militias of thousands of men.

Fighters in Sadr's Mahdi Army appear to be highly disciplined and loyal. They often march in step through Baghdad in parades that are a mix of martial pride and religious mourning. At times they have mounted rapid, lethal strikes on rivals and enemies. Together, the two militias control much of Iraq's Shiite-dominated south, which borders Iran.

Sadr remained in Tehran on Monday. The Shiite cleric, about 30, has been slowly making his way home from a religious pilgrimage to Mecca, stopping to meet with regional leaders along the way.

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Sadr is influential as the scion of a religious family revered by millions of Iraq's Shiites. He has been a steadfast opponent of the U.S. occupation. His fighters battled U.S. forces in Najaf, laying down arms only after a brokered resolution.

Ali Yasiri, the head of Sadr's political office in Baghdad, said the request to Sadr came from the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larijani.

"They asked him a question: 'What would be the Mahdi Army's role if any neighboring country were attacked?' " Yasiri said. "And Moqtada Sadr said, 'If any Arab country, or neighboring country, were attacked, Iraq will help.'

"That doesn't mean that he meant the Mahdi Army," Yasiri said. "He meant Iraq as a country will help, and not necessarily militarily."

Yasiri said his account came from Sadr officials accompanying the Iraqi cleric in Tehran.

However, a Sadr spokesman in Najaf, the Shiite holy city in southern Iraq that is Sadr's base, gave a different account of the agreement between Sadr and Iran, as did Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency.

"Moqtada Sadr said, 'If any Islamic state, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran, is attacked, the Mahdi Army would fight inside and outside Iraq,' " said the spokesman, Sahib Amiri.

"Iran is an Islamic country that has strong relations with the Shiites in Iraq. We do not forget these relations," Amiri said.

Amiri said Sadr was visiting Iran "to support the Iranian people and government against any possible attack against the Islamic republic."

In Tehran, the state news agency also reported that Sadr had committed his Iraqi militia to fight on Iran's behalf.

"If neighboring Islamic countries, including Iran, become the target of attacks, we will support them," IRNA quoted Sadr as saying. "The Mahdi Army is beyond the Iraqi army," Sadr said, according to IRNA. "It was established to defend Islam."

Iran revived its atomic research program earlier this month, ending a two-year moratorium. While Iran says it intends to develop nuclear energy solely for electricity, Western countries fear the Shiite theocracy is in pursuit of its own atomic bomb.

Israel, a reported atomic power, which destroyed an Iraqi nuclear facility in an airstrike in 1981, has issued what some have seen as threats of similar preemptive strikes in Iran.

French President Jacques Chirac said Thursday that France was prepared to launch a nuclear strike against any country that sponsors a terrorist attack against French interests. He said his country's nuclear arsenal had been reconfigured to include the ability to make a tactical strike in retaliation for terrorism.

Iran has responded unflinchingly, with its Foreign Ministry saying Sunday that Israel would be making a "fatal mistake" if it resorted to military action.



Iraq's Shiite-led government, which came to power after the 2003 toppling of Saddam Hussein, has affirmed close ties with Iran. Prospective candidates for Iraq's prime minister post have first gone to Tehran for approval. Iran has poured aid into Iraq, and trade agreements have blossomed.

U.S. and British diplomats and commanders accuse Iran of allowing -- or encouraging -- transport of arms and fighters into Iraq to stage attacks.

On Monday, a senior U.S. military intelligence official said the British government had issued a formal protest to Tehran after sophisticated bombs began appearing in southeastern Iraq. The devices used the same kind of electronic triggers found in bombs made by the militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon, the official said.

"Our belief is that the machining is done somewhere in Iran," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Aides to Sadr said the cleric also visited Saudi Arabia, where he asked King Abdullah to press the United States for a deadline for a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. The aides said Sadr also visited Lebanon, where he had an appointment with Hasan Nasr Allah, a Hezbollah leader.

Ridha Jawad Taqi, a spokesman for the Supreme Council, Iraq's dominant party, would not comment Monday on whether Iran had asked for similar help from the party or its militia, the Badr Organization, in the event of attack, or on what the Supreme Council's response might be if Iran did make such a request.

*Staff writer Thomas E. Ricks and special correspondent Bassam Sebt in Baghdad, and special correspondent Saad Sarhan in Najaf contributed to this report.*

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January 19, 2006

## Iran's Ayatollah Affirms Peaceful Nuclear Plans

By NAZILA FATHI

TEHRAN, Jan. 18 - The rest of the world cannot deter the will of the Iranian people to pursue their nuclear program, the country's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said Wednesday, the official IRNA news agency reported.

"The West knows very well that we are not seeking to build nuclear weapons," Ayatollah Khamenei said in a meeting with Tajikistan's president, Emomali Rahmonov. "Nuclear weapons are against our political and economic interests and our Islamic beliefs. Therefore, the Islamic Republic will not fear the uproar and will continue the path of scientific progress relying on its principles, and the world cannot influence the will of our people."

The comments were the first by Ayatollah Khamenei reported publicly since last week, when Iran defied an agreement with Britain, France and Germany and broke internationally monitored seals at its nuclear site in Natanz to resume research activities. The three countries have begun drafting a resolution to submit to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations nuclear monitoring agency, that calls for Iran to be referred to the Security Council for possible punitive actions.

Iran has warned that if the case is sent to the Security Council, Iran will retaliate by banning United Nations inspectors from visiting its sites and resuming the sensitive work of enriching uranium.

Iran says it wants to enrich uranium to low levels to produce fuel for its nuclear power plants.

On Wednesday, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki urged Europe to refrain from "hasty actions," referring to the call to send Iran's case to the Security Council.

"I hope the Europeans have understood Iran's clear and direct message and do not make any hasty decision which would complicate the situation for all sides," he said in a meeting with journalists at Parliament, the ISNA news agency reported.

The foreign minister added that Iran had clarified its willingness to continue negotiations in messages discussing its plans for producing nuclear fuel that it has exchanged with Europe, China, Russia and the nonaligned states of the atomic energy agency.

Russia and China, both of which have vetoes on the Security Council, are among Iran's allies and Iran hopes they will oppose sanctions. Russia has helped Iran build its first nuclear power plant in the southern city of Bushehr.

**The New York Times**

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January 30, 2006

## A New Face in Iran Resurrects an Old Defiance

By MICHAEL SLACKMAN

TEHRAN, Jan. 29 — Since he took office as Iran's president nearly six months ago, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been the subject of many jokes sent via text messages on cellphones across Iran. He has been spoofed on television and radio, here and abroad, as a bumpkin and a bigot for declaring the Holocaust a "myth" and causing international outrage over Iran's nuclear program.

One joke has the president combing his hair in a mirror and saying, "O.K., male lice to the left, female lice to the right," ridiculing him as a religious extremist who wants to separate the sexes in public places.

But that is just part of the picture.

Beyond the prosperous tree-lined hills of northern Tehran, Mr. Ahmadinejad appears to be solidifying his support. He has traveled around the country, doling out promises of economic aid in some of the poorest regions, sticking with the humble clothing and religion-infused language that attracted his voters in the first place.

"He is leading a simple life," said Zabiollah Baderlou, 18, as he worked in a bakery in the city. "TV showed us his house. It was very simple. He is making these efforts for the people and all he wants is Iran's dignity."

Most of all, despite the limited powers of Iran's presidency, Mr. Ahmadinejad, an ultraconservative former militia member, has used Western opposition to Iran's nuclear program to generate national unity and purpose.

Those dynamics have compelled even people who oppose him to give him room to maneuver. Stop Iranians on any street in any neighborhood and they are likely to demand that Iran be allowed to pursue a nuclear energy program, a sentiment that has served as a launching platform for Mr. Ahmadinejad's firebrand politics.

"You get the feeling that Iran, under the present leadership, is looking for isolation and to go it alone," said a Western diplomat based in Tehran who spoke on the condition of anonymity so as to be able to continue working here. "They want to show their way is the right way, and the former guys were wrong."

While the top leadership had decided to take a more confrontational approach with the West even before Mr. Ahmadinejad was elected, the new president began with such a harsh style that many officials were initially unnerved. But when the West failed to stop Iran from defiantly restarting its nuclear program, or to punish it, some opponents reluctantly accepted that Mr. Ahmadinejad was right and they were wrong.

"First we thought he is not right," said a senior government official who consults frequently with the

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/30/international/middleeast/30iran.html?ei=5094&en=1...> 1/30/2006

30 JAN 2006

ruling clergy. "Now we understand he is right. You need us more than we need you," he said of the West.

The nuclear issue has provided fertile ground for the president to try to cultivate a new political class, one that is ideologically driven to provide a new, and at the same time reactionary, face to Iran.

After years of reformers controlling the government, Mr. Ahmadinejad is doing exactly what he promised, resurrecting the priorities of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, chastising the West at every turn and striving to forge a distinctly anti-Western national identity while re-establishing Iran's revolutionary influence across the Muslim world.

At a conference in October titled "The World Without Zionism" he effectively called for wiping not just Israel off the map, but America, too.

"Many have tried to disperse disappointment in this struggle between the Islamic world and the infidels," he said. "They say it is not possible to have a world without the United States and Zionism. But you know that this is a possible goal and slogan."

While sprinkling like-minded people into positions of power across the country, Mr. Ahmadinejad and his allies have demonstrated that they are undeterred by the complaints of the establishment, whether liberal or conservative.

They have instead taken their appeal directly to the poor and middle-class masses who are generally disgusted with a system widely viewed as corrupt and uncaring.

For the time being, they also have the quiet support of the nation's ultimate ruler, the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Even those members of Parliament who charge that the president's foreign and domestic policies are sending the nation hurtling toward disaster find there is little to do but watch from the sidelines.

"Right now, Ahmadinejad is an individual representing a new body in the whole Iranian political system that had been marginalized and disorganized," said a political professor who has close ties to many people in the government and was afraid he would suffer retaliation if identified. "They are in the process of making their identity — and making history."

Mr. Ahmadinejad was largely unknown when he ran for office in June. He was the mayor of Tehran, the son of a blacksmith who had served in the hard-line Basiji militia — a volunteer Islamic vigilante force — and the Revolutionary Guard, and he was not expected to win. When he was elected, he was expected to fall into lockstep with the conservative forces that controlled every other institution of government.

Instead, he has charted his own course.

From the start he alienated many hard-liners by ignoring their nominees for important cabinet posts, turning to people he knew well, but who were largely unknown. Most of his choices had backgrounds in the military, the Basiji or the security services.

Mr. Ahmadinejad has come to represent a generational split among conservatives, some political analysts said. They said he belonged to a group of ideologically conservative veterans of the Iran-Iraq war who effectively parked themselves among the so-called hard-liners. With Mr. Ahmadinejad's election, they have begun to coalesce into their own political force.

With his team around him, Mr. Ahmadinejad has become the public face of Iran: aggressive, provocative and heatedly anti-American. He has adopted the phrase "world oppressor," in place of Great Satan, and his speeches are laced with religious references, including an emphasis on one of the central principles of the Shiite sect of Islam: an appeal for justice.

Since ultimate power here is vested in the hands of appointed clergy, Mr. Ahmadinejad does not exert direct control over foreign affairs or nuclear policy.

But his ascension came at a time when the region was in turmoil, with Iraq bogged down in a violent insurgency, Islamic groups like Hamas in Gaza and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt emerging as powerful political forces, and Iran itself determined to develop a nuclear program that it says is peaceful and the West charges is aimed at developing weapons. And that insulates him from criticism.

"If it wasn't for the foreign pressures, perhaps Mr. Ahmadinejad, and his ministers, would have been called to the Majlis many times to explain themselves," said Akbar Alami, a member of the foreign affairs committee of the Majlis, or Parliament, and an outspoken critic of the president. "As the pressure has increased, the safety margins for him to operate have widened."

Moreover, Mr. Ahmadinejad is looking beyond Iran, seeking to fashion himself as a pan-Islamic leader, much the way Ayatollah Khomeini did. His ideological framework has been heavily influenced by his mentor and spiritual leader, Muhammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, a senior hard-line cleric who runs a school in the religious center of Qum and who advocates a strict Islamic government.

It is not clear whether Mr. Ahmadinejad decided to push to make Iran a regional leader, or whether he is trying to carry out a decision made at a higher level. But that posture is increasingly part of Iran's defiant public statements.

"The nuclear challenge is a big deception in the West where they know we do not want nuclear weapons," Muhammad Javad Larijani, brother of the nation's chief nuclear negotiator said during a Friday prayer ceremony. "What they are really concerned about is an advanced Islam. They are concerned the Islamic expansion will be a success, following the same concern they had for Communism."

It is still very early in the president's term, and there is ample evidence that many powerful people within the establishment are still worried by the tone and direction Mr. Ahmadinejad has taken. And some people speculated that the supreme leader might in the end muzzle him, should consequences turn out to be too dire. But for now, hampered by nationalist reaction to the West's pressure on Iran, even some of his harshest critics are treading lightly.

"I am saying that we have reached a sensitive point," Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the chairman of the Expediency Council, which has oversight of the executive branch, said in a recent speech, referring to Iran's relations with the West. "There is a need for prudence on both sides." Mr. Rafsanjani ran against Mr. Ahmadinejad in the election for president, emphasizing a platform of engagement with the West.

"We all agree in the country that we should have a peaceful nuclear program," said Kazem Jalali, a member of Parliament. "The difference is over how we can have an effective diplomacy. In the past months we have seen our officials use tough language in the foreign policy. They are adopting a confrontational approach, which does not seem to be acceptable by the international community. This is not balanced. We must pursue our interests in our foreign policy based on balanced relations with all

countries."

From the sidelines, reformers are now trying to regroup. Many of them say that the best factor in their favor is the president himself. The feeling is that the president can not, ultimately, meet all his economic promises, and that his policy of confrontation will undermine rather than improve people's lives.

Abdullah Momenie, a leader within the student movement that called for a boycott of the presidential election, said: "We see the sensitivity of the world community as a positive thing. Although we think it is an unwise action of power which may take the country to destruction, this might produce an opportunity for a democratic movement."

But so far the president has the upper hand.

President Ahmadinejad's comments at an Islamic conference in Mecca about wiping out Israel brought him international condemnation — and applause from his target audience.

"He raised the question in Mecca and he received a huge amount of praise," said Mehdi Chamran, the chairman of the Tehran City Council and a close adviser to the president who often travels with him. "The people living in these countries, within their hearts, they are happy to hear these statements. If we can strengthen ties with the people that is most important. When we hear the Egyptians take him as a role model, this is a real sign he has reached the people."

In practical terms, the management of Iran has begun to change since the new government came to power. The Parliament has been fighting with the executive branch over a budget proposal, saying that its generous spending could threaten inflation. But the budget seems to reflect the president's campaign promise to spend more money on people's immediate needs. The president has taken a few swipes at tightening some social freedoms, banning Western music, for example, but that edict has hardly been enforced.

President Ahmadinejad is forging a distinct style. For the first time, an Iranian president is regularly holding cabinet meetings in provinces around the country. He has so far visited five provinces and one city with his cabinet, walking the streets, shaking hands, kissing local people and promising a bevy of development projects.

After a cabinet meeting in Hormozgan in the south, his aides announced that the government would allocate money to rebuild old buildings, install a gas pipeline, build and equip health centers, provide land for building a mosque, buy equipment for a hospital, build an athletic center for women and offer low-interest loans to families who lost their homes in an earthquake.

No one says where the money will come from, or when, but the retail politics has won him affection from the base he continues to cultivate.

"In my opinion, Ahmadinejad is a good person, a trustful person who believes in God, and I hope he is able to fulfill his pledges," said Morovat Asaadi, 36, a construction painter as he walked near Tajrish Square in Tehran. "I like him very much. He is a good person."

Nazila Fathi contributed reporting for this article.

washingtonpost.com

# Iran Says It Is Open to Russian Plan on Nuclear Program

By Peter Finn  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Thursday, January 26, 2006; A21

MOSCOW, Jan. 25 -- Iran's leading negotiator on nuclear issues said here Wednesday that his country was open to a compromise proposal from Russia that it enrich uranium for Iran on Russian soil to guarantee it would be used only for peaceful purposes, not to create nuclear weapons. But he said the idea needed fine-tuning in advance of further talks scheduled for the middle of next month.

"Our attitude to the proposal is positive," said Ali Larijani, head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, after talks here with the secretary of the Russian Security Council, Igor Ivanov. "The project won't have the full potential to resolve all problems. It should be fine-tuned, together with other measures."

The foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council -- the United States, China, Russia, France and Britain -- plus Germany plan to meet Monday in London in advance of a Feb. 2 emergency session of the board of the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency.

The United States, France and Britain are pushing for a vote at the IAEA to refer Iran to the Security Council, which can impose sanctions. They fear that Iran is attempting to develop nuclear weapons, and enrichment is a key step in that process. Iranian officials say their nuclear program is solely for the purpose of generating electricity but that Iran has the right to control the entire nuclear fuel cycle.

The positions of Russia and China on referring Iran to the Security Council remain unclear. Russia, which has expressed doubts about the idea, is helping Iran build a nuclear power plant. Iran is a major supplier of energy to China, which needs power for its rapid industrialization.

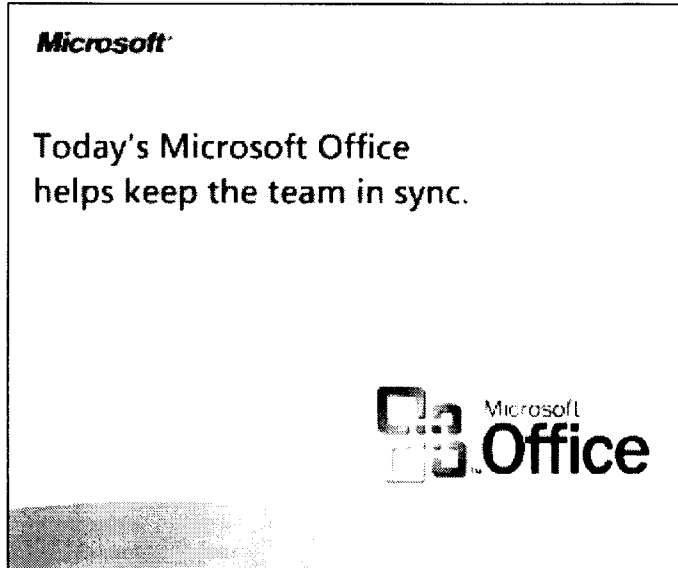
Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick said Wednesday in Beijing that he told Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao that it would be "extremely dangerous" to allow the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and that it would damage China's interest in energy security. Larijani is scheduled to arrive in China for talks Thursday.

Larijani said Wednesday that if the Feb. 2 meeting referred Iran to the Security Council, the country would begin enrichment. "In this case," he said, "our activities will not be limited to research and we'll begin industrial enrichment of uranium."

Some Western officials fear that the Iranians are appearing to consider the Russian offer in order to buy time and prevent any Russian vote to send the matter to the council.


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# Iran Threatens Full-Scale Enrichment

By GEORGE JAHN  
The Associated Press  
Monday, January 23, 2006; 8:17 PM

VIENNA, Austria -- Iran upped the ante Monday in its nuclear standoff, warning that it will immediately begin developing a full-scale uranium enrichment program if it is referred to the U.N. Security Council.

The message, delivered by Ali Asghar Soltaniyeh, Iran's senior envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency, reflected Tehran's defiance in the face of growing international pressure over its nuclear program. Enrichment can be used in electricity production but it is also a pathway to making nuclear weapons.

Negotiations intensified ahead of a Feb. 2 meeting of the IAEA's 35-nation board to decide on referral.

Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, planned to travel to Moscow on Tuesday to discuss a proposal to have Iran's uranium enriched in Russia, then returned to Iran for use in the country's reactors \_ a compromise that would provide more oversight and ease tensions.

A European official said the two sides would discuss the possibility of allowing Iran to conduct small-scale experimental enrichment itself if it agreed to move all industrial production to Russia.

The official, who demanded anonymity in exchange for discussing confidential details of the negotiations, refused to say whether Britain, France and Germany \_ the key European nations behind the U.S.-supported push for referral \_ would tolerate such a deal.

Those European nations and EU representatives also intensified diplomatic efforts, with diplomats telling the AP they were sending senior representatives to Brazil, Russia, China and Indonesia to persuade the key IAEA board members to drop their opposition to referral.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday called for a step-by-step diplomatic approach in the standoff, saying she wants "the largest majority possible" for whatever course of action is decided upon by the IAEA.

While the Europeans believe they have enough votes to get Iran hauled before the council Feb. 2, they want broad support, including from key developing countries as well as skeptics Russia and China.

In Washington, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said "referral absolutely has to be made" on Feb. 2, while remaining vague on what action the Security Council would take \_ and when.

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Iran removed IAEA seals from equipment Jan. 10 and announced it would restart experiments, including what it described as small-scale enrichment \_ a move that led the European negotiators to call for the Feb. 2 emergency board session.

The Europeans also began drafting a resolution calling for the Security Council to press Tehran to re-impose its freeze on enrichment and fully cooperate with the U.N. agency in its investigation of suspect nuclear activities \_ though it stops short of asking for sanctions.

Soltaniyeh, in comments to The Associated Press, warned against referral, suggesting such a "hasty decision" would backfire.

Whether Iran's suspension of its full-scale enrichment program remains in effect "depends on the decision of Feb. 2," he said. If the board votes for referral, he said, Iran would resume efforts to fully develop its nascent enrichment activities.

Iran insists its nuclear ambitions do not go beyond wanting to generate fuel, but concerns are growing that its focus is on making nuclear weapons.

An exchange of letters, made available to the AP Monday, reflected differences over Iran between IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei and the United States, Britain, France and Australia \_ other key supporters of referral.

In a letter dated Friday, Gregory L. Schulte, the chief U.S. representative to the IAEA, asked ElBaradei to prepare a report on the "status of IAEA efforts to investigate indications of an Iranian nuclear weapons program." Similar letters from the other countries were dated Thursday and Monday.

In a reply Monday, ElBaradei wrote that a detailed report would only be available in March, the next scheduled meeting of the IAEA board. Instead, ElBaradei \_ who had argued against the special Feb.2 meeting saying he needed until March to probe Iran's nuclear program \_ offered an "update brief" for the Feb. 2 meeting.

Separately, Merkel, speaking at a news conference with President Jacques Chirac, defended the French leader's threat last week that France might use its nuclear weapons against state-sponsored terrorism or to thwart an attack involving weapons of mass destruction \_ comments that drew criticism from elsewhere in Europe and from Iran.

"We know that France is a country with nuclear capabilities, capabilities that exist exclusively for deterrence and, for me, there are no grounds there for criticism," she said.

Chirac said he had simply delivered a reminder of France's nuclear doctrine.

"The nature of the threat, the definition of a country's vital interests, and thus the very nature of the response that might be employed, evolves with time," he said.

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On the Net: <http://www.iaea.org>

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2 / 2



January 18, 2006

## Iran Proposes New Talks With Europeans

By ELAINE SCIOLINO

PARIS, Jan. 17 - Apparently in an effort to win international support and avoid censure by the United Nations Security Council, Iran on Tuesday proposed a resumption of nuclear talks with the Europeans, a move that was immediately rejected by Britain as "vacuous."

The proposal came eight days after Iran resumed nuclear work at three sites in violation of an agreement 16 months ago with France, Germany and Britain that froze most of Iran's nuclear activities. The resumption prompted the European trio to declare the talks dead and call for the Security Council to pass judgment on Iran.

In a letter on Tuesday, Javad Vaeedi, deputy head of the Supreme National Security Council, emphasized Iran's determination to "continue its full cooperation" with the International Atomic Energy Agency, adding that Iran "spares no effort in removing any ambiguity on its peaceful nuclear activities through dialogue and negotiation," according to a copy of the letter obtained by The New York Times.

Expressing appreciation for the Europeans, it added that Iran "considers dialogue and negotiation as the best course of action" and "is prepared to make the process a success."

But the letter, addressed to the three foreign ministries and sent through their missions in Vienna, gave no indication that Iran would resume the freeze on its conversion, enrichment and reprocessing of uranium as required by the agreement.

"It is unacceptable," said a German official, who described the letter as "a lot of nice words without any concrete offer."

Indeed, Ali Asghar Soltaniyeh, Iran's representative to the international nuclear agency in Vienna, said in a telephone interview from Vienna that Iran's decision to resume nuclear fuel research was "legal and irreversible."

He added: "We are ready to negotiate with the Europeans and the Russians. It is now their turn to understand us."

He called it unfair that Iran's scientists had not been able to conduct their nuclear research under the freeze, saying, "The philosophy of telling scientists not to think and research is contrary to human rights principles and the United Nations Charter."

The letter came on a day of intense diplomacy in several capitals.

The United States and the Europeans have begun a campaign to lobby some of the 35 nations that make up the decision-making board of the international nuclear agency to support their position that the

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/18/international/middleeast/18iran.html?pagewanted=pri...> 1/18/2006

18 JAN 2006

Iranian nuclear crisis should be dealt with by the Security Council. The board will consider the issue in a special session starting Feb. 2.

France, Germany and Britain began drafting a resolution for consideration by the board that calls on Mohamed ElBaradei, the nuclear agency's director, to send a report about Iran's history of deception and lack of full cooperation with the agency to the Security Council, according to two European officials.

The officials described the outlines of the draft on condition of anonymity because of normal diplomatic rules.

In September, Iran was found in violation of its obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty because of nearly two decades of deceiving the agency.

The draft resolution also expresses regret that Iran violated its voluntary freeze on sensitive nuclear activities. It asks the Security Council to urge Iran "to extend full and prompt cooperation" to the agency. It also requests that the Council inform Iran that "additional transparency measures are indispensable" if it hopes to prove that its nuclear program is peaceful and not intended to produce nuclear bombs.

The draft, which is in a very early stage, does not include a recommendation of punitive measures like sanctions, the officials said.

The strategy of both the United States and Europe is to slowly ratchet up the diplomatic pressure on Iran. A number of governments, including Britain, Germany, France and Japan, have said talk of sanctions is premature, and Russia and China, which wield veto power in the Security Council, oppose sanctions.

"We don't see this leading straight into sanctions," a senior British official told reporters under the condition that he not be identified, adding: "We want to build gradual sustained pressure over time. This is a long-term issue."

The official described Iran's call for a renewal of negotiations as "vacuous because the Iranians have created the conditions to make it impossible to talk."

China and Russia, meanwhile, have shown no willingness to take Iran's case to the Security Council.

Asked in a news briefing in Moscow when Russia would be willing to refer Iran to the Security Council, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was vague, saying: "This is a very schematic approach. Politics allow no such approach." He added, "I don't think the I.A.E.A. board of governors has run out of possibilities."

China on Tuesday called for a resumption of negotiations as the best way to defuse the crisis.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said Beijing favored diplomacy and urged all sides to "keep patient and make utmost efforts to resume negotiations" between the Europeans and Iran.

Russia is particularly keen on wresting the diplomatic initiative from the other Europeans by negotiating with Iran to accept its offer to allow Russia to enrich Iran's uranium on Russian soil and under strict Russian control to prevent diversion for a weapons program.

Iran's letter to the Europeans also stated Iran's desire to pursue negotiations with Russia as scheduled

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/18/international/middleeast/18iran.html?pagewanted=pri...> 1/18/2006

next month in the belief that they "will continue seriously and constructively."

Mr. Lavrov on Tuesday reiterated the offer to Iran to enrich Iran's uranium, but he also warned Iran to resume its freeze on all uranium work. "Talks presuppose an obligation," he said. "The Iranian obligation was to stick to the moratorium."

Iran, he said, "must do much more than what it has done already."

Underscoring Russia's opposition to sanctions, however, he said: "The question of sanctions against Iran puts the cart before the horse. Sanctions are in no way the best, or the only, way to solve the problem."

In London, the British official briefing reporters expressed skepticism that the Russian-Iranian talks showed promise.

"I think Iran is playing with the Russia proposal for tactical reasons," the official said.

Alan Cowell contributed reporting from London for this article, and Andrew E. Kramer from Moscow.

January 16, 2006

## Iran Warns Against Sanctions as Move in Nuclear Standoff

By REUTERS

TEHRAN, Jan. 15 (Reuters) - Iran said Sunday that only diplomacy, not threats to refer the country to the United Nations Security Council for possible punishment, could defuse a standoff over its nuclear work, and warned that any Western push for sanctions could force up world oil prices.

At the same time, Republican and Democratic senators in Washington said that the United States might ultimately have to undertake a military strike to deter Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, but that it should be the last resort.

"That is the last option," Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, said on the CBS News program "Face the Nation." "Everything else has to be exhausted. But to say under no circumstances would we exercise a military option, that would be crazy."

The Security Council's five permanent members and Germany planned to meet Monday in London in search of a common strategy to tackle Iran's resumption of atomic fuel research and development after a two-year moratorium.

Iran says it wants only to make power for its energy-needy economy. But the United States and a number of other Western countries are convinced that Iran has ambitions to build nuclear bombs and they note that it had hidden nuclear work from international monitors for almost 20 years.

Last week, after many starts and stops in talks to meet Iran's energy requirements while satisfying Western concerns about its becoming a nuclear power, Tehran scrapped its suspension of research.

Nevertheless, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamid Reza Asefi, said Sunday at his weekly news conference: "Diplomacy is the only clear answer to the current situation. There is no legal basis for referring Iran to the Security Council. But if that were to happen, Iran is not afraid."

Economy Minister Davoud Danesh-Jafari warned that any sanctions "could possibly, by disturbing Iran's political and economic situation, raise oil prices beyond levels the West expects."

Iran is the world's fourth-largest exporter of crude oil.

Many European Union, Russian, Chinese and developing world companies also conduct lucrative energy-related trade with Iran, suggesting economic sanctions are anything but inevitable if the Security Council takes up the matter.

Mr. Asefi called on the countries attending the London meeting - the United States, Britain, France,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/16/international/middleeast/16iran.html?fta=y&pagewan...> 1/19/2006

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Russia, China and Germany - to refrain from "the language of intimidation and threats."

"Better results will definitely be achieved by resorting to negotiations and using respectful language," he said.

However, Senator McCain and other American lawmakers said force could not be ruled out entirely.

Mr. McCain called the standoff "the most grave situation that we have faced since the end of the cold war, absent the whole war on terror."

"We must go to the U.N. now for sanctions. If the Russians and the Chinese, for reasons that would be abominable, do not join us then we will have to go" with the nations that are willing, he said.

Senator Evan Bayh of Indiana, a Democratic member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said on the CNN program "Late Edition" that there were elements of Iran's nuclear program that, if attacked, "would dramatically delay its development."

"But that should not be an option at this point," he said. "We ought to use everything else possible to keep from getting to that juncture."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said last week that using force was not an option "at this point."

In an interview with Newsweek released on Sunday, Mohamed ElBaradei, who leads the international monitoring agency, said he could not yet confirm the peaceful nature of Iran's program.

Dr. ElBaradei said Iran "might not seem to care, but if I say that I am not able to confirm the peaceful nature of that program after three years of intensive work, well, that's a conclusion that's going to reverberate" around the world.

washingtonpost.com

# U.S. Wins Support In Iran Dispute

China, Russia Join Call to Suspend Nuclear Program

By Mary Jordan and Dafna Linzer  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Tuesday, January 17, 2006; A01

LONDON, Jan. 16 -- China and Russia agreed with the United States, Britain, Germany and France on Monday that Iran must completely suspend its nuclear program, the British Foreign Office said. Although the countries failed to agree on whether Iran's case should be referred to the U.N. Security Council, the Europeans applied new pressure on the Iranian government by calling for an emergency meeting of the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency on Feb. 2.

With all six nations declaring that they sought a diplomatic solution to the escalating confrontation with Iran, Russian President Vladimir Putin offered a glimmer of hope for a compromise. Putin said the Iranian government was considering a proposal from Moscow that Russia would produce enriched uranium for Iran, to ensure the material could be used only for peaceful purposes.

Iran has adamantly reserved the right to develop its nuclear program, stating that its intention is to produce peaceful nuclear energy. But many world leaders are increasingly alarmed by the attitude of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad -- who has called for Israel to be "wiped off the map" -- and fear he could be trying to build nuclear bombs. Intense deliberations began last week after the Iranian government ordered the removal of seals on equipment at an enrichment plant where it had ceased operations two years ago.

"The onus is on Iran to act to give the international community confidence that its nuclear program has exclusive peaceful purposes," said British Foreign Minister Jack Straw. Straw added that confidence in Iran has been "sorely undermined by its history of concealment and deception."



Britain, France and Germany -- the three countries that have been leading negotiations with Iran -- and the United States all favor referring the case to the Security Council. Following a meeting of the six nations in London on Monday, a British Foreign Ministry official said Russia and China now agree on the importance of Iran "fully suspending" its nuclear program. On the issue of referral to the Security Council, another government official said that China remained "slightly hesitant" but that Russia was "coming around" on the issue. Still, neither the Bush administration nor the Europeans were able to wrangle any guarantee from Russia or China for support once the issue gets to the Security Council, and Western diplomats said they doubted whether Moscow or Beijing would be willing to impose any sanctions on a major trading partner.

Britain, France and Germany then called for an "extraordinary" meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna next month. The U.N. agency's 35-nation board could refer the issue to the

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Security Council. Iranian officials have threatened to block U.N. inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities if the case is referred to the council.

In addition, Iranian officials have warned that U.N. sanctions would lead to major increases in world oil prices, which have skyrocketed in the last year and could rise significantly if there were another international crisis.

Putin spoke in Moscow after discussing Iran in a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Offering rare optimistic words on the issue, Putin said, "Our partners said that they do not rule out the possibility of putting our proposal into practice."

Putin also cautioned against what he called any rash moves in dealing with Iran, a close economic partner of Russia and China. "The Iranian nuclear problem requires a very accurate approach without rash or erroneous moves," Putin said. "Russia will continue to cooperate with European and U.S. colleagues in promoting a solution to the issue. Russia, Germany, our European partners and the United States -- we all have very similar approaches to the Iranian problem."

Iran's ambassador to Russia praised Putin's proposal on Russian television, according to the Associated Press. "As far as Russia's proposal is concerned, we consider it constructive and are carefully studying it. This is a good initiative to resolve the situation. We believe that Iran and Russia should find a way out of this jointly," Gholamreza Ansari said.

U.S. and European officials said the scheduling of the Feb. 2 IAEA meeting would give Iran time to suspend its enrichment-related work and seriously reexamine the Russian offer. U.S. officials also said they hoped the outcome of the London meeting would be seen as a clear message both to Iran and to other members of the IAEA board that the five permanent members of the Security Council -- China, Russia, France, Britain and the United States -- were united on some basic aspects of the Iran case.

The IAEA would also have more time to complete an assessment of the current status of Iran's program. The IAEA, in its third year of an investigation of Iran's nuclear program, has not found proof of a weapons program. But a final conclusion is impossible, IAEA officials have said, until the Iranian government provides full access to several sites as well as answers to outstanding questions about the history of the nuclear effort.

U.S. officials had been pushing for an IAEA board meeting next week ahead of President Bush's State of the Union address. But European officials felt strongly that more time was needed to win support from Russia, China, India and some other influential board members, such as Brazil and South Africa.

*Linzer reported from Washington. Correspondent Peter Finn in Moscow contributed to this report.*

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# EU trio pushes Iran to UN

*W. Amin  
Iran  
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**Berlin, Jan. 12 (Reuters):** The EU's three biggest powers said today that talks with Iran had reached a dead end and agreed it should be hauled before the UN Security Council over its nuclear programme.

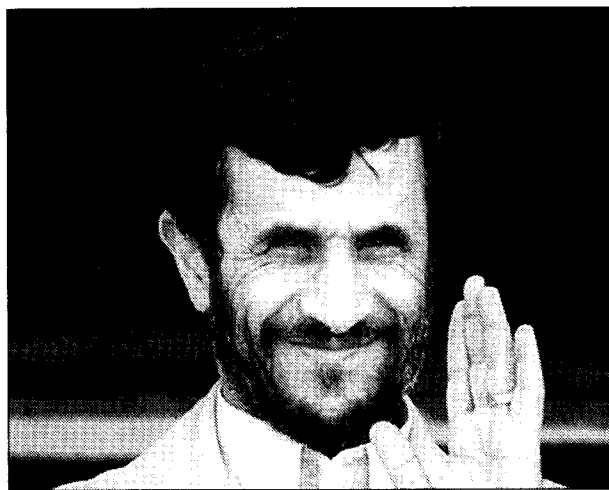
Accusing Tehran of turning its back on the international community, they said it had consistently breached its commitments and failed to show the world its nuclear activities were peaceful.

"Our talks with Iran have reached a dead end," German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said after talks in Berlin with his British and French counterparts and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana.

A joint statement from the "EU3" countries said: "We believe the time has now come for the Security Council to become involved." They said they would call for an extraordinary meeting of the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN nuclear watchdog, to seek a referral to the council, which has the power to impose sanctions.

Oil prices climbed to a three-month high as mounting tension over Iran stoked fears of supply disruption from the world's fourth biggest crude exporter, though they later pulled back.

US crude futures were up



**Iran President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Bandare Lengeh 800 km south of Tehran. (Reuters)**

76 cents to \$64.70 by 1702 GMT, easing from a session high of \$64.90, which was the highest level since early October.

After holding a news conference, the EU ministers headed straight to a teleconference on Iran with US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice.

The announcement by the EU3 signified the end of two and a half years of attempts to convince Iran to abandon its uranium enrichment programme, which they suspect it intends to use to produce fuel for nuclear weapons.

Iran says it only aims to develop a civilian nuclear power programme in accordance

with international law. It said today it was not worried by the threat of referral to the Security Council.

Tehran raised the stakes on Tuesday when it began to remove IAEA seals on equipment used to enrich uranium.

In their statement, the EU3 deliberately did not mention the possibility of UN sanctions, an option they are holding in reserve in the hope that simply bringing Iran to the Security Council will persuade it to comply.

Russia and China, permanent council members with veto powers, will hold the key to deliberations.

# Iran heads then & now for N-future

Associated Press

TEHERAN, Jan. 11. — Iran's Presidents, the present and past, came out staunchly in support of the defiant posture on nuclear programme adopted by the country. President Mr Mahmoud Ahmadinejad today said Iran was not intimidated by the international "fuss" over its resumption of nuclear fuel research and was determined to carry on with the nuclear programme.

Similarly, Iran's nuclear programme will not be impeded by any sanctions or action the West may take, former President Mr Hashemi Rafsanjani said today. Mr Rafsanjani said he was "astonished" by the West's attempt to "bully" Iran. He accused the West of trying to limit the progress of the developing world. "Keeping the Third World and the Islamic world several steps behind has been the West's traditional colonial policy," he

said. "I am telling all the powers that the Iranian nation with firmness and wisdom, will continue its path in seeking and utilising peaceful nuclear energy," he said in a speech in Bandar Abbas. "God willing in the near future this precious energy will serve the progress of Iran. The Iranian nation is not intimidated by the fuss you have made," the hardline president added. The Bush administration has also warned Iran that its decision to start work on nuclear fuel is a matter of "serious concern." Putting pressure on Iran, Mr Tony Blair also echoed the sentiments of Mr Bush: "The first thing is to secure agreement for a reference to the UNSC if that is indeed what the allies decide, as I think seems likely."

Russia has offered to enrich uranium jointly with Iran at a site on its territory a proposal generally supported by the West. But it says it is still awaiting a response from Teheran.

# Blair says will take Iran to Security Council

REUTERS

LONDON/TEHRAN, JANUARY 11

**B**RITISH PM Tony Blair said on Wednesday he aimed to get international agreement to refer Iran to the UN Security Council after it restarted research into nuclear fuel this week.

"The first thing to do is to secure agreement for a reference to the Security Council...", he told Parliament. "Then...we have to decide what measures to take and we obviously don't rule out any measures at all."

However, in Tehran, influential former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani dismissed as futile any move to slap sanctions on Iran for its nuclear fuel programme. Iran removed UN seals at uranium enrichment research facilities on Tuesday and announced it would resume "research and development" on producing uranium fuel, prompting angry reactions from Washington, the European Union and Russia.

The foreign ministers of Germany, France and Britain will meet in Berlin tomorrow to discuss the crisis caused by Iran's



**Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer during a media conference in Sydney on Wednesday. Reuters**

move to reactivate a nuclear fuel programme mothballed under a November 2004 deal with the EU

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rio. Iran's action had sent shockwaves through oil markets on Tuesday, helping push up the price of crude for a while.

Blair was responding to a question on how Britain would ensure any action taken against Iran was effective. Blair said Iran's decision to resume sensitive nuclear work was very serious. "I don't think there is any point in...hiding our deep dismay about what Iran has decided to do," he said.

He said Britain was in close touch with other countries to formulate a response which may include a referral to the UN Security Council.

ity Council, a move that could prompt sanctions.

However, speaking at Tehran University, Rafsanjani said: "Adopting harsh measures like imposing sanctions cannot bring about the desired outcome... They will regret creating any problems for us."

German Deputy Foreign Minister Gernot Erler said the 'EU3' had no choice but to end talks with Iran unless it promised not to begin enriching uranium.

Germany has issued some of the harshest EU condemnations of Iran's President Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad, who has said he doubted the Holocaust happened and called for the destruction of Israel. Late last month Erler said "a trade embargo on Iran could not be ruled out".

Rafsanjani, head of the Expediency Council which arbitrates on legislative disputes between Parliament and a hardline watchdog body, said Iran's nuclear impasse could still be resolved through diplomacy rather than confrontation. "They cannot take this (nuclear) knowhow from us. The issue could be resolved through patience and wisdom," he said.

of Iran's President Mahmoud

# Teheran dismisses western response

**Bullying is astonishing, says Rafsanjani**

Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** Iran's former President, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, has denounced renewed assertions by western nations that Teheran could be referred to United Nations Security Council after it decided to resume nuclear fuel research.

Mr. Rafsanjani said he was "astounded" by the "bullying, particularly in the era of democracy, freedom and human rights". "This is a sensitive issue. We cannot give up our rights. No Iranian will be ready to give up our rights, and they should know that we will remain firm," said Mr. Rafsanjani, who heads Iran's powerful expediency council, after officials on Tuesday removed the U.N. seals at the Natanz nuclear facility.

Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Mohammed El Baradei said Iran planned to use centrifuges to enrich uranium "on a small scale."

Enriched uranium can be used for generating electricity, but forms the explosive core of an atomic bomb when purified to a high degree.

Mr. Rafsanjani, who was addressing a special sermon marking the end of the Haj pilgrimage at the Teheran university campus, denied that his country had any intention to make

**This is a sensitive issue. We cannot give up our rights.**

atomic weapons, adding that the West wanted to keep Iran underdeveloped.

Iran's decision has triggered a sharp response in the United States and the European Union. British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw said that he would hold emergency talks on Thursday with E.U. Foreign Minister Javier Solana and his counterpart from Germany and France to discuss the issue.

He confirmed that Iran's possible referral to the U.N. Security Council was on the agenda at these talks. Analysts say the E.U. meeting could result in an emergency meeting of the IAEA's Board of Governors in two to three weeks time, leading to Iran's possible referral to the Security Council.

In the U.S., White House spokesman Scott McClellan said Iran was risking a "serious escalation" following its action. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow was taking "active measures together with the Iranian side in order to keep this [Iranian] moratorium effective."

# Bush: Only honest criticism on Iraq

## is acceptable

By David E Sanger

Washington: US President George Bush issued a stark warning to Democrats on Tuesday about how to conduct the debate on Iraq as mid-term elections approach, declaring that Americans know the difference between "honest critics" and those "who claim that we acted in Iraq because of oil, or because of Israel, or because we misled the American people".

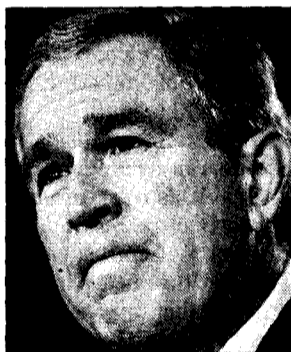
In a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars here, Bush appeared to be trying to pre-empt a renewal of arguments about whether to begin a withdrawal immediately, as Representative John Murtha argued in November, or whether to keep a large presence in Iraq through the year.

Democrats themselves have been deeply divided on that issue, even while criticising Bush's conduct of the war. In some of his most combative language yet directed at his critics, Bush said Americans should insist on a debate "that brings credit to our democracy, not comfort to our adversaries". That follows a theme that Vice President Dick Cheney set last week, when he said critics of the administration's conduct of the war risked undercutting the effort to defeat the insurgency.

At a meeting at the White House on Thursday with former secretaries of state and defence, Bush was warned several times that if he neglected to build support at home, he could face the problems that the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations faced with Vietnam.

*W. A. D. Gray*  
Bush's response was to insist that he had a strategy to win the war in Iraq—something administration officials say they do not believe their predecessors had in Vietnam—and he repeated that in his speech. "We have a responsibility to our men and women in uniform, who deserve to know that once our politicians vote to send them into harm's way, our support will be with them in good days and in bad days," Bush said. "And we will settle for nothing less than complete victory."

By referring to a vote.



Bush was apparently alluding to the Congressional resolution authorising the use of force against Saddam Hussein, if necessary. Part of the White House strategy in recent months has been to note how many of the administration's critics voted for that resolution, and turned against the war only after it became difficult.

Bush was speaking in the same hotel ballroom where last month he described the effort to reconstruct Iraq, admitting to major mistakes in the early part of that process. But in that speech he faced a sceptical audience. NYT News Service

# Iran breaks seals at nuclear site, set to begin fuel research

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## Teheran positions gas centrifuges used for uranium enrichment at Natanz facility

Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** The nuclear standoff between Iran and key Western countries has intensified with Teheran removing the seals in an atomic research facility after a two-and-a-half years gap.

The seals were removed in the presence of inspectors belonging to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the Iranian nuclear facility at Natanz, 256 km south of Teheran. By resuming research, Iran appears to have revived all aspects of its atomic programme except enrichment of uranium.

Enriched uranium can be used for generating electricity, but can be used in atomic weapons if purified to a high degree. The United

States has alleged that Iran intends to make nuclear weapons, and has led an international campaign to prevent it from doing so.

### "No fuel production"

However, Mohammad Saeedi, the deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, clarified that Iran was not resuming the production of nuclear fuel, which would involve uranium enrichment.

"What we resume is merely in the field of research, not more than that," he said at a press conference.

He said there was a difference between "research on nuclear fuel technology and production of nuclear fuel", and added that

### • Standoff between Iran, West intensifies

### • IAEA Board to be informed of development

### • Supreme Leader rules out backtracking

### • Russia calls for diplomatic effort

"production of nuclear fuel remains suspended."

Despite Iranian assurances, IAEA spokesperson Melissa Fleming declined to comment on whether Iran planned to start enrichment or merely test the equipment used in the process.

She said all the 35 countries on the IAEA's board of governors would be informed about Iranian intentions. Iran has positioned gas centrifuges used for uranium enrichment in its facility in Natanz.

Responding to the Iranian decision, Germany on Monday said that the move was "very, very ominous."

In Washington, the Bush administration warned that Iran may be referred to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions over its decision.

Russia, however, emphasised that dialogue with Iran under the IAEA framework was the best way forward.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ivanov told Russian televi-

sion, "On the whole, I think that this problem must be resolved primarily within the political and diplomatic framework, and on the current stage, within the IAEA framework."

Iran has denied that it intends to build atomic weapons, and has stressed that it has a right to fully develop a peaceful nuclear programme under the terms and conditions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which it has signed.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Monday said Iran would not give up its nuclear programme.

Meanwhile, Iran and Russia would hold fresh talks centred on uranium enrichment on February 16.

**The New York Times**  
nytimes.com

January 9, 2006

الاسي (i) ايران

## Iran Says Nuclear Sites Will Be Unsealed

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEHRAN, Jan. 8 (AP) - Iran said Sunday that inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency would remove seals from some nuclear facilities by Monday, opening the way for the Iranians to resume research on fuel production.

The plan to resume research, which Iran first announced last week, has heightened concerns in the West that the Iranians are moving toward building atomic weapons.

"Iran is ready to resume the research activities after the inspectors remove the seals," said a Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamid Reza Asefi. He also reiterated Iran's contention that it has the right to conduct nuclear research under the nonproliferation agreement. Inspectors from the agency arrived in Tehran on Saturday to remove seals they had affixed to the research sites after Iran voluntarily agreed to stop all enrichment-related activities more than two years ago.

Russian officials, meanwhile, conferred with Iranian counterparts here about Moscow's proposal that both countries conduct uranium enrichment, a process that can produce nuclear fuel for reactors or weapons, on Russian territory. They agreed to continue those talks next month.

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/09/international/middleeast/09iran.html?pagewanted=print> 1/9/2006

09 JAN 2006



# 9/11 N-cargo sent from UK to Iran: Paper

**London:** Britain has allowed the export to Iran of a cargo of radioactive material that experts believe could be used by the Islamic Republic as part of a nuclear weapons programme, The Observer reported on Sunday.

The newspaper said a truck carrying 1,000kg of zirconium silicate from a British firm was stopped by customs officials in Bulgaria.

It quoted an expert as saying that zirconium metal can be extracted from the substance. The metal's trade is usually tightly regulated, and it can be used to prevent fuel rods corroding in nuclear reactors and as part of a nuclear warhead.

But the truck, which had travelled unchecked from Britain through Germany and Romania without being stopped, was allowed to continue its journey to Teheran after a two-month investigation found an export licence was not needed.

British and Bulgarian officials in Sofia reportedly looked into whether the cargo had breached technical rules on how much of the substance contained another rare metal, hafnium.

The Observer quoted a UK Department of Trade and Industry spokeswoman as saying analysis of levels of

hafnium in the substance meant a licence was not required. "This particular case raises no WMD (weapons of mass destruction) end-use concerns," she added.

The Observer's dispatch came as Iran looked set to end its two-and-a-half year suspension of nuclear fuel re- search on Monday or Tuesday, despite calls not to from the international community, including the European Union. Talks with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government are currently deadlocked over the issue, with the West fear-

ing Iran's fledgling nuclear programme is a front for developing atomic weapons.

Independent nuclear consultant John Large told The Observer: "It is not a very sophisticated process to extract the zirconium from such material. Even though it appears that technically this cargo does not fall within the international controls, I would still be concerned.

Zirconium is used for two purposes: one for cladding nuclear fuel rods inside a reactor and as a material for a nuclear weapon. If Iran wanted this material for any illicit purposes, this would be one way it could get its hands on it." AFP

## NUCLEAR CONCERNS

9 JAN 2006  
THE TIMES OF INDIA

# Bullying Iran is not an option for the west

Before western leaders seek sanctions against Iran, they should put their own houses in order on nuclear weapons and nuclear power.

Mary Riddell

**T**HIS WEEK, barring a last-minute climbdown, Iran may get back to building a nuclear bomb. It is a small moment, and a big one. Small because the threat has lingered for years; big because the consequences could convulse the world.

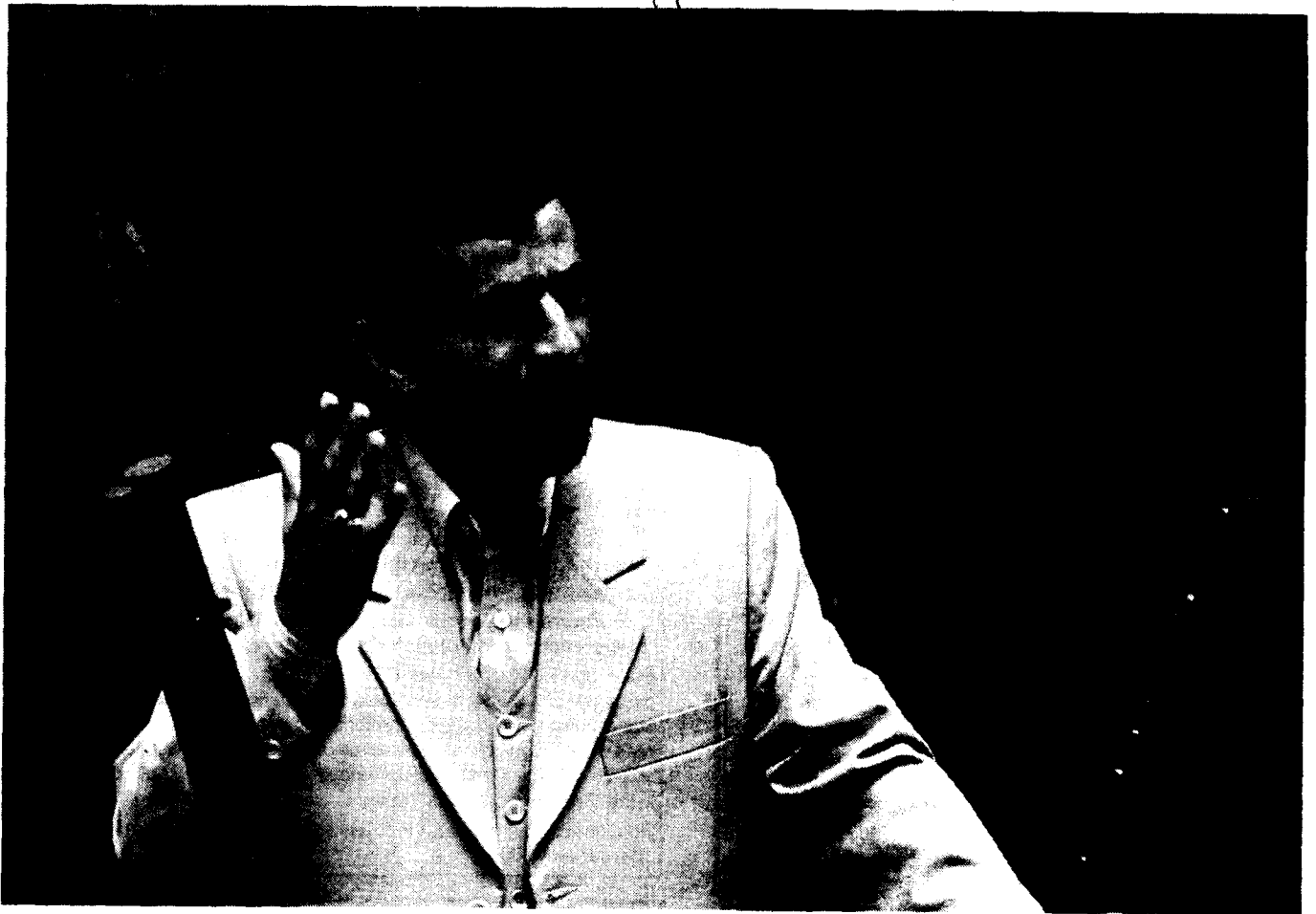
If Iran ends its 30-month freeze on uranium tests, the long diplomatic mission by the west will be in ruins. The British Foreign Office says all bets will be off; Condoleezza Rice signals that Iran is heading for the United Nations Security Council, and thus for resolutions and sanctions. Every diplomat and onlooker knows the steps of that quadrille. They danced it for Iraq.

As Iran moves towards the ultimate in WMD, George W. Bush must be thinking he fought the wrong war. Now, as Israel says Iran's nuclear missile programme "can be destroyed," the scent of another conflict hangs in the air. Even if President Ahmadinejad steps back from the brink, as he is prone to, there is a wider threat.

In the last few days, a 55-page European intelligence assessment has surfaced. This document is an audit of the quest, by rogue states, to buy the kit to make weapons of mass destruction. Syria and North Korea have been stocking up, along with Pakistan, and Iran is allegedly working towards a long-range missile that would reach Italy. In addition, *New York Times* reporter James Risen claims in a new book that the CIA inadvertently helped Iran build a nuclear bomb by supplying flawed blueprints that the country's scientists may have corrected and used. Obviously, leaked intelligence on WMD comes with some health warnings. How dodgy, exactly, are these dossiers?

Maybe the CIA is daft enough to offer up DIY bomb manuals, though this sounds implausible. The Tesco-isation of the nuclear trade raises another caveat. According to the leaked European report, the world is a shopping mall for nukes and the boardrooms and universities of Europe are the bombers' Bond Street.

Hardly any of this is top secret or new. Dubious regimes have indeed been stockpiling illicit technology. A briefing for the Carnegie Endowment think-tank, published in September 2005, two months after the leaked report was written, lists a worldwide history of nuclear deals, including Iran's links with the Pakistani scientist, Abdul Qadeer Khan. Nuclear arms never held many surprises. J. Robert Oppenheimer, their inventor, called himself "the destroyer of worlds"; hopes that lavish death could forge a better universe faded faster than the prayers of the pastor who commended to god the Enola Gay, bound for Hiroshima.



**DEFIANT:** Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad speaks to lawmakers in Parliament in Teheran. - PHOTO: REUTERS

Sixty years on, the notion of nuclear nemesis has not sunk in. Last year's make-or-buy U.S. conference to revive the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty achieved nothing. The pact, ratified in 1970 and signed by 187 countries, was designed to ensure that unarmed states never acquired weapons and that armed nations, in return, would wind down their arsenals.

That cornerstone of a peaceful world is crumbling, partly because Mr. Bush wants new weapons while demanding that other regimes forswear them, but also because the treaty is fatally flawed. Its aims, to eradicate nuclear weapons while championing the spread of nuclear energy, are irreconcilable. Atoms for Peace, suspect in Eisenhower's day, is an oxymoron in a globalised age.

Any state can build up a civil programme, opt out of the treaty with six months' notice and begin making weapons.

Israel is stacked with unauthorised nukes, a NATO base sits at Herat and the U.S. Fifth Fleet trawls the Persian Gulf. Why should Iran, so besieged, not have a deterrent?

One answer is that Mr. Ahmadinejad is a Holocaust-denier who thinks Israel should be "wiped off the map." No one could sleep easy with his finger trembling on a nuclear button. But there are more dangerous prospects even than the Iran bomb. Professor Paul Rogers, of Bradford University, thinks it conceivable that Israel could launch a pre-emptive attack against its loose-mouthed neighbour. Ariel Sharon's successor, needing to look tough, may be keener than his predecessor to do so.

Israel would have to move fast, though. A few months from now, Iran's powerful Bushehr reactor could be up and running and few attackers would dare unleash a reprise of Chernobyl. Such a threat may seem far-fetched, but the tolerance of Mr. Bush for a regime he calls "the world's primary sponsor of terror" is as thin as skin.

What a year for Britain to announce a £25 billion replacement for the Trident missile, plus a new generation of nuclear power stations. More weapons for Britain would be a come-on to every failed state on the planet.

In Israel, a leader lies in hospital. In Iraq, 130 people were blown up last Thursday. In North Korea, promises of nuclear disarmament have withered. In Iran, the nuclear scientists resume their work. This may be the most dangerous time since superpowers threatened mutually assured destruction.

The world, once an atomic Athenaeum, has become a bomber's eBay, full of murky bidders with pseudonyms and of nukes for auction. The nuclear aristocracy is dead, destruction is democratised and Iran, angry at the west's hypocrisy on the nuclear race, believes that what's good for Totnes is good for Teheran.

There is also hope. Iran's theocrats might oust Mr. Ahmadinejad. American voters may elect a President who realises, as Mr. Blair must too, that the west has to reduce its own arms if it is to persuade others to do likewise. But, for now, Cold War politics looks easy. The abyss was always safer than the quicksand. This time, we cannot simply walk away. - ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006

9 JAN 2006

# Iran poised to resume nuclear fuel research

## U.S. threatens to refer issue to the U.N. Council

Atul Aneja

*H. Amin*  
*D. G. ...*  
**DUBAI:** Disregarding calls for restraint, Iran has announced that it would resume atomic fuel research on Monday even as talks with Russia on easing tensions over its nuclear programme were underway.

"Iran has told the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it is ready to resume its nuclear research on Monday," Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi said during his weekly press conference on Sunday.

He added that the seals at the sites where Iran intends to conduct research work should be broken, adding, "We announced our readiness to start the work tomorrow (Monday). The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should carry out part of the work and then research will be resumed."

Earlier, Hossein Entezami, the spokesman of Iran's top security body, said that the IAEA would supervise the proposed Iranian "research activities."

However, IAEA spokesperson Melissa Flemming said in Vienna the U.N. body was seeking more information after receiving a letter from Iran.

"We received some information in a letter from Iran. It did not satisfy our information requirements, we still need information in more details," she said.

### Inspectors arrive

Iranian officials said that IAEA inspectors were already in Iran, but an agency official in Vienna said that the team was on a "routine" visit to Iran.

Iran's decision to resume fuel research after a two-and-a-half year gap has triggered strong objections from the European Union (E.U.), and a reiteration from the United States of imposing possible sanctions on Tehran.

Austria, the current E.U. President warned Iran not to resume nuclear research as it could undermine talks with the E.U. trika represented by France, Germany and Britain. "The E.U.

regrets that Iran has chosen to announce this unilateral move at a moment when international confidence in the peaceful nature of its programme is far from restored," a statement said.

"It finds it surprising and unreasonable that Iran proposes to do this at a moment when ... Britain, France and Germany with the E.U. were exploring with Iran the possibility of a return to negotiations."

In the United States, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice threatened to refer Iran to the U.N. Security Council.

"If negotiations have been exhausted, we have the votes, there is a resolution sitting there on the Security Council, we'll vote it."

Meanwhile, Iran and Russia were holding talks that include a proposal about uranium enrichment being undertaken in a joint facility on Russian soil.

The E.U. and the U.S. back Moscow's proposal as a way out to make sure that Iran does not divert enriched uranium for atomic weapons.

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9 JAN 2006

THE HINDU



January 8, 2006

8/11 2006

# Russians Visit Iran on Nuclear Plan

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By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TEHRAN, Jan. 7 (Reuters) - Russian diplomats sought a compromise on Saturday to Tehran's disputed nuclear program, but Iran confirmed it was poised to resume atomic fuel research.

Hossein Entezami, a spokesman for Iran's Supreme National Security Council, told the Fars news agency that talks with Russian diplomats in Tehran had been "satisfactory" and would continue Sunday, a day before Iran has said it will resume unspecified nuclear research.

Britain, France and Germany want Iran to allow Russia to produce its nuclear fuel, to ensure it is processed only to the low grade needed for power stations, not to higher levels more suitable for use in bombs, as the Europeans and the United States contend is Iran's true goal.

Iran, which hid nuclear work from international inspectors for 18 years, until 2003, insists it needs enriched uranium to generate electricity and says it has every right to produce its own nuclear fuel from the uranium it mines in its central deserts.

Iranian envoys had been expected to meet last Thursday in Vienna with Mohamed ElBaradei, who heads the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency, to explain the decision to resume nuclear fuel work. However, they failed to show up.

European diplomats say resumption of Iran's nuclear activities would lead to further calls for Iran to be referred to the United Nations Security Council for possible sanctions. The United States has said Iran's actions show it does not want a diplomatic solution to the dispute.

United Nations inspectors arrived in Tehran to supervise resumption of the nuclear research, Mr. Entezami said Saturday.

Melissa Fleming, a spokeswoman for the nuclear monitoring agency, said the inspectors had gone "for routine work." She said the agency had received a letter from Iran about its plans, but "not all the required information was there." She said, "We await further clarifications."

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# Straw calls for a unified Iraq

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Associated Press

LONDON, Jan. 7. — Iraqis remain optimistic about the future despite suffering through a particularly violent week, British foreign secretary Mr Jack Straw said during a visit to Baghdad today.

A spasm of bloodshed has killed nearly 200 people in Iraq in two days. "I was trying to avoid any kind of pretense about the situation here in Iraq," Mr Straw, who is in Baghdad to press for a unified government, told British Broadcasting Corp. radio. "It is very difficult. People are being killed by terrorism." "At the same time, and this is not contradictory, I'm struck by the continued optimism I meet in most Iraqi politicians with whom I have discussions," he said.

Iraqi politicians had told him terrorists were now targeting all sections of their divided society, Mr Straw said. "They also expressed their determination to see the Iraqi security forces continue to be strengthened, to fight this terrorism themselves," he said. He sensed a commitment to a "broad-based coalition government of national unity." "All Iraqi politicians know in their



British foreign secretary Mr Jack Straw with Iraqi President Mr Jalal Talabani during a Press conference in Baghdad on Saturday. AFP

head, if not quite in their heart yet, (such a government) has to be the future for Iraq," he said. Mr Straw said there had been a "dramatic" increase in the number of trained Iraqi security forces over recent months. "What is more there is now very great day-to-day, hour-to-hour, cooperation between the coalition commanders and Iraqi commanders in very many of (the country's) provinces," he said.

## Scribe kidnapped

Gunmen kidnapped a female American journalist and killed her Iraqi translator in western Baghdad, an interior ministry official said today. Maj. Falah Mohamadawi said gunmen kidnapped the American journalist and killed her translator.

According to Mohamadawi, the translator told police before he died that she had been kid-

napped and that they had been heading to meet Adnan al-Dulaimi, head of the Sunni Arab Iraqi Accordance Front who lives in the Adel neighbourhood — dominated by Sunni Arabs and considered one of the toughest in Baghdad.

Insurgents have kidnapped more than 250 foreigners in the past two years, aiming to force Multinational troops to leave Iraq.

7 JAN 2006

# Iran scuppers deal with West on uranium tests

to Britain (1)

## Teheran officials fail to attend IAEA meet

Ian Traynor

119-13  
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Iran is expected to resume testing machinery next week that can be used to make weapons-grade uranium in a move that appears calculated to scupper the prospects of a settlement of its long-running nuclear dispute with the West.

Senior Iranian officials on Thursday snubbed Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, by failing to show up at a scheduled meeting in Vienna after the IAEA chief demanded an explanation of Iran's plans.

Earlier this week, Teheran told the IAEA that it was resuming research into nuclear fuel which was suspended more than two years ago, but refused to supply details on what kind of research.

Iranian officials flew from Teheran to Vienna on Thursday to brief Mr ElBaradei, but then decided against doing so in a move that baffled diplomats and IAEA officials.

A senior official familiar with

the details of the exchanges between the IAEA and Iran earlier in the week said Iran would probably resume work next week with uranium centrifuges, work that has been frozen for 30 months under the terms of negotiations with Britain, Germany and France.

"They suspended certain activities and now they have decided to resume certain activities," said the senior official.

"All those activities were enrichment-related. It sounds like they will start some experiments with centrifuges."

### Breach of orders

Such a step would be in breach of previous IAEA orders that Iran suspend "all uranium enrichment-related activities" and of the terms of the negotiating agreement between Iran and Britain, Germany, and France.

It could deal a death blow to the long-running but currently deadlocked negotiations and may reflect the more aggressive and confrontational positions taken on foreign policy and the

nuclear issue by Iran's new President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

On Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signalled growing impatience with Iran, indicating that time is running out for it to avoid being brought before the U.N. Security Council.

"When it's clear that negotiations are exhausted, we have the votes," she told reporters. "There is a resolution sitting there for referral. We'll vote it. That's not sabre rattling, that's diplomacy ... and diplomacy includes what you do in the Security Council."

Russian officials were due to travel to Teheran this weekend to try to cobble together a compromise on Iran's uranium enrichment projects.

It is not clear whether the visit will go ahead. The E.U. troika was also scheduled to restart exploratory talks with the Iranians in a fortnight. Those also now look in jeopardy. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006

7 JAN 2006

THE HINDU

**The New York Times**  
nytimes.com

January 6, 2006

6/1/2006

## Iran's Nuclear Team Fails to Keep a Date With the U.N.

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By ELAINE SCIOLINO

PARIS, Jan. 5 - Iran threw negotiations over its nuclear program into disarray on Thursday, abruptly canceling a high-level meeting with the United Nations' monitoring agency in Vienna. The leader of Iran's negotiating team was said to be returning to Tehran.

The unexpected turn of events stunned and frustrated officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency and foreign diplomats, who scrambled to make sense of Iran's decision. The meeting had been scheduled so Iran could explain its decision to restart nuclear research and development on Monday.

"There was no explanation," said Melissa Fleming, a spokeswoman for the agency. "We're still seeking clarification."

One possible explanation is that Iran has decided to defy the rest of the world and plunge ahead with nuclear activities, which risk international censure or sanctions and could shatter a 14-month agreement with France, Britain and Germany under which Iran agreed to suspend most of its nuclear work.

Another explanation is that in the face of strong international criticism, Iran's negotiating strategy is in chaos. Since President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took power last year in Iran, officials who were part of its national security apparatus, including its nuclear negotiating team, have been replaced with people who are driven by hard-line views.

Certainly Iran's failure to explain its intentions erodes trust in the country as a reliable negotiating partner. In its letter to the atomic energy agency two days earlier announcing its research plans, Iran gave assurances that it intended to carry out the work under the supervision of agency inspectors, and asked the agency to take the necessary steps for the research to start again.

That position raised speculation that Iran was trying to test whether it could proceed with its nuclear program and stay within the boundaries of its international legal obligations, even if that violated its agreement with the Europeans.

In an address in Qum carried on state television on Thursday, Mr. Ahmadinejad repeated his assertions of Iran's intention to carry out nuclear research, saying some people "have said the Iranian nation has no right to nuclear research, but they should know that the Iranian nation and government will defend the right to nuclear research and technology, and will go forward prudently."

The negotiating team, led by Mohammad Saeedi, the deputy chief of Iran's atomic energy agency, had been expected to meet at 10 a.m. on Thursday with the director of the United Nations agency.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/06/international/middleeast/06iran.html?pagewanted=print> 1/6/2006

06 JAN 2006

At first, the Iranians said in a telephone conversation that they would be late. Then, in a later telephone call, they canceled the meeting. Mr. Saeedi was returning home, the Iranian delegation told the agency.

That move suggested that there would be no explanation of Iran's intentions before it resumes its research on Monday.

American and European officials and some experts at the atomic energy agency said they were concerned that the research could focus on small-scale enrichment experiments, which could help advance Iran's knowledge about how to produce nuclear fuel - either for civilian plants or, at higher enrichment levels, for weapons.

In Washington on Thursday, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned Iran not to resume nuclear research, saying, "They shouldn't do it because it would really be a sign that they are not prepared to actually make diplomacy work."

She expressed confidence that the United States would succeed in taking Iran's case to the Security Council for an unspecified punishment should negotiations fail. However, the United States has thus far failed to persuade Russia and China to seek punitive measures, a difficult step because there is no clear-cut violation of Iran's obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Iran's decision in August to restart uranium enrichment activities in Isfahan violated the European agreement. But inspectors from the United Nations agency were there to break the seals on the equipment and have been monitoring the activities, which do not violate Iran's obligations under the treaty.

One official close to the talks said the Iranians were believed to have withdrawn because they had been caught off-guard by the uncompromising stance of Mohamed ElBaradei, the agency's director, in messages and in a meeting on Wednesday with Iran's ambassador to the United Nations office in Vienna, Mohammad Mehdi Akhondzadeh.

The official declined to be identified by name or even national origin because the official is not authorized to speak for attribution.

Dr. ElBaradei and his colleagues have harshly criticized Iran's decision to restart nuclear research, warning Iran of potential consequences of its action.

Among the issues outstanding are Iran's refusal to allow inspectors access to a site in Tehran called Lavisan-Shian, which was bulldozed by Iran in 2004 before it could be inspected. The agency wants to interview scientists who worked there and determine whether they were conducting nuclear research.

Another mystery is how Iran first obtained centrifuges used to enrich uranium. The agency is also still not convinced by Iran's explanations about the sources of both low- and high-enriched uranium found in Iran.

The Iranian delegation was apparently unprepared to respond to questions like these on Thursday, the official close to the talks said.

A number of Iranian officials, including President Ahmadinejad, have boldly asserted Iran's right to conduct nuclear research and its intention to proceed as scheduled, despite warnings from that to do so would risk punitive measures.



Iran's right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful energy purposes is extremely popular in Iran, and the president's remarks on Thursday were greeted with cries of "Ahmadinejad, our hero, we support you," Reuters reported from Tehran.

# Sharon suffers life-threatening stroke

David Osborne

JERUSALEM, Jan. 5. — Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon suffered a massive, life-threatening stroke today and underwent lengthy surgery to drain blood from his brain. Powers were transferred to his deputy, Mr Ehud Olmert.

Hospital officials said Sharon wasn't in a vegetative state and that his reflexes were responding to stimulation. Sharon is in

deep sedation, following a seven-hour surgery to stop a brain haemorrhage. Dr Mor-Yosef also defended doctors' decision to treat Sharon with blood thinners after an earlier stroke suffered on 18 December, saying Sharon received appropriate doses. Independent experts said the medication was likely to blame for the severity of this stroke, but said his doctors should not be criticised for prescribing it. Mr Sharon was put in an

ambulance at his ranch in the Negev Desert after complaining about feeling unwell.

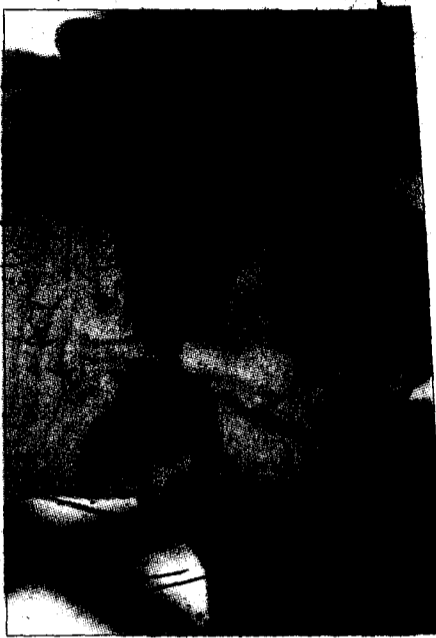
Mr Sharon's cerebral hemorrhage, or bleeding stroke, came at a time of upheaval among Palestinian factions in Gaza and in the midst of both Israeli and Palestinian election campaigns.

In the USA and around the world, members of the Jewish diaspora wished Mr Ariel Sharon a recov-

ery from his devastating illness while sharing their concern about the potential set-back his disappearance from Israel's political scene might deal the peace process.

However Sharon aide Mr Gissin warned Israel's enemies not to take advantage of this. And a hardliner Palestinian echoed the sentiments by saying that the stroke was a "gift of god."

— **The Independent**  
(with AP inputs)



**The New York Times**  
nytimes.com

January 5, 2006

5/1/2006

## Iran Declares Its Nuclear Plan Nonnegotiable

By ELAINE SCIOLINO

in Asia (1 - 2006)

PARIS, Jan. 4 - Iran vowed Wednesday to proceed with a plan to restart nuclear research next week, though the government has yet to explain to the United Nations' nuclear monitoring agency what activities it intends to carry out.

Ali Larijani, the senior official in charge of nuclear issues, was quoted on Iranian state television on Wednesday as saying the decision to resume nuclear research was "nonnegotiable."

Responding to criticism that the decision would violate Iran's formal agreement with Europe to suspend all uranium conversion and enrichment activities, he said: "Research has its own definition. It is not related to industrial production. Hence, it was never part of the negotiations."

Late Tuesday, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took a similar hard line. "We will not take a step back on our path," he was quoted by state television as saying.

The Iranian news agency ISNA further quoted Mr. Ahmadinejad as saying Western countries "are so rude that if we allow them, they will tell us to shut down all our universities, whereas research has no restrictions or red lines."

Iran informed the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna in writing on Tuesday that it planned to resume nuclear fuel research and development next Monday and asked the agency to make the necessary preparations to monitor the activities.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the agency's director, pressed Iran's ambassador to the I.A.E.A., Muhammad Mehdi Akhondzadeh, for an explanation of Iran's intentions and warned him that Iran should not proceed, according to officials from two European nations briefed on the meeting.

Dr. ElBaradei told the ambassador that the decision to restart nuclear research on its fuel cycle was a regrettable development, adding that Iran must consider the potential consequences, the officials said.

The ambassador responded that Iran was not ready to provide the agency with the technical details of its decision, the officials said. The technical meeting was tentatively scheduled for Thursday, when Muhammad Saeedi, the deputy head of Iran's atomic energy agency, is expected to arrive in Vienna to lead the delegation that will clarify Iran's announcement, they added.

The officials insisted on anonymity because their governments do not authorize them to talk on the record. I.A.E.A. officials declined to comment.

Criticism of the Iranian decision continued Wednesday. "We regard the recent announcement by Iran of its intention to resume research and development activities with concern," Martin Jaeger, a spokesman

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/05/international/middleeast/05iran.html?pagewanted=print> 1/9/2006

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for Germany's Foreign Ministry, said at a news conference in Berlin. "We would encourage Iran to abstain from unilateral steps."

The French Foreign Ministry spokesman, Jean-Baptiste Mattei, told reporters that the announcement was "very worrying" and added, "We firmly call on Iran to revoke this announcement."

On Iranian state television on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki insisted that "Iran is ready for negotiations with the European Union" this month.

The next round of talks is scheduled for Jan. 18. But Britain, France and Germany, the three nations that negotiated the November 2004 nuclear accord with Iran, have said Iran's decision could jeopardize talks.

# Iran trying to assemble nuclear missile: report

Syria, Pakistan also buying rocket technology

Ian Cobain and Ian Traynor

**LONDON:** The Iranian government has been successfully scouring Europe for the sophisticated equipment needed to develop a nuclear bomb, according to the latest western intelligence assessment of the country's weapons programmes.

Scientists in Teheran are also shopping for parts for a new ballistic missile capable of reaching Europe, with "import requests and acquisitions ... registered almost daily," the report seen by the *Guardian* concludes.

The warning came as Iran raised the stakes in its dispute with the United States and the European Union on Tuesday by notifying the International Atomic Energy Authority that it intends to resume nuclear fuel research next week.

The 55-page intelligence assessment, dated July 1, 2005, draws upon material gathered by British, French, German and Belgian agencies and has been used to brief European government Ministers and to warn leading industrialists of the need for vigilance when exporting equipment or expertise to so-called rogue states. It concludes that Syria and Pakistan have

also been buying technology and chemicals needed to develop rocket programmes and to enrich uranium.

## Concern in the West

But it is the detailed assessment of Iran's nuclear purchasing programme that will most alarm western leaders, who have long refused to believe Teheran's insistence that it is not interested in developing nuclear weapons and is trying only to develop nuclear power for electricity. Governments in the west and elsewhere have also been dismayed by recent pronouncements from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has said Holocaust denial is a "scientific debate" and that Israel should be "wiped off the map."

The leak of the intelligence report may signal a growing frustration at Iran's refusal to bow to western demands that it abandon its programme to produce fuel for a Russian-built nuclear reactor due to come on stream this year.

The assessment declares that Iran has developed an extensive web of front companies, official bodies, academic institutes and middlemen ded-

icated to obtaining — in western Europe and the former Soviet Union — the expertise, training, and equipment for nuclear programmes, missile development, and biological and chemical weapons arsenals.

The document lists scores of Iranian companies and institutions involved in the arms race. It also details Teheran's growing determination to perfect a ballistic missile capable of delivering warheads far beyond its borders. It notes that Iran harbours ambitions of developing a space programme, but is currently concentrating on upgrading and extending the range of its Shahab-3 missile, which has a range of 750 miles — capable of reaching Israel.

Iranian scientists are said to be building wind tunnels to assist in missile design, developing navigation technology, and acquiring metering and calibration technology, motion simulators and x-ray machines designed to examine rocket parts. The next generation of the Shahab ("shooting star" in Persian) should be capable of reaching Austria and Italy. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

THE HINDU

05 JAN 2006

The New York Times  
nytimes.com

January 4, 2006

1/11/2006

## Iran to Resume Its Nuclear Work; U.S. Warns of Seeking Restraints

By ELAINE SCIOLINO

to Asia (Iran)

PARIS, Jan. 3 - Iran announced Tuesday that it planned to restart nuclear research, a move that jeopardized an agreement with the Europeans, complicated a Russian initiative and prompted an American threat.

The decision, contained in a brief letter delivered Tuesday to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, declared that Iran "has decided to resume" research and development "on the peaceful nuclear energy program" that was suspended under an agreement with France, Germany and Britain in late 2004.

The letter did not define the research, but said the activities would resume Monday and be conducted "in accordance with Iran's safeguards agreement" with the I.A.E.A., the nuclear monitoring agency of the United Nations.

"Research" has been a code word for experiments in enrichment of uranium at the previously secret facility at Natanz in central Iran. There is particular concern that Iran intends to reopen that site, perhaps to conduct modest enrichment experiments or even to manufacture and assemble centrifuges for enrichment, the most sensitive part of the nuclear fuel cycle.

Iran's move complicates a Russian initiative to break the deadlock over whether Iran has the right to enrich uranium. Russia has proposed that Iran be allowed to conduct uranium enrichment activities in Russia, as a way to guarantee that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful. A delegation from Moscow is scheduled to arrive in Tehran for talks this weekend, although Iranian officials have been less than enthusiastic about the proposal.

The United States warned Iran that it could face unspecified consequences if it resumed nuclear activities. "If Iran takes any further enrichment-related steps, the international community will have to consider additional measures to restrain Iran's nuclear ambitions," said Sean McCormack, a State Department spokesman.

After receiving the letter, I.A.E.A. officials described its contents to representatives of the 35 countries that make up its board, which could censure Iran by referring its case to the United Nations Security Council.

Iran has argued consistently that its decision to enter into an agreement with the Europeans to suspend all uranium conversion and enrichment activities was temporary, not required under its international treaty obligations and dependent on receiving a broad range of economic, technological, political and security incentives which it said have not been forthcoming. It has also insisted repeatedly that it has a sovereign right to develop the nuclear fuel cycle in its own territory.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/04/international/middleeast/04iran.html?pagewanted=print> 1/9/2006

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Indeed, in defending Iran's decision, the letter said that the suspension of the country's nuclear-related activities under the European agreement had been "voluntary and non-legally binding."

But the United States, and to an increasing extent the Europeans, are convinced that Iran is determined to become a nuclear power and have taken a forceful stance in trying to ban Iran from conducting any nuclear activity that could help in a weapons program.

This most recent decision is certain to further erode foreign confidence in Iran's leadership.

The Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has faced broad international condemnation recently for his inflammatory statements that the Holocaust is a myth and that Israel should be "wiped off the map." On Sunday, Mr. Ahmadinejad said Europe had decided to create Israel as a "Jewish camp" in the midst of Muslim countries as the best way to rid Europe of Jews.

Last August, Iran angered its European negotiating partners and the United States when it resumed the process of converting uranium at its site at Isfahan, a clear violation of the European agreement, but only a preliminary step in mastering the nuclear fuel cycle.

Criticism of Iran's decision to restart nuclear research and development activities was swift.

Besides the American threat, a statement from the British Foreign Office called Iran's letter "unhelpful and provocative," while Cristina Gallach, a spokeswoman for the European Union, branded it "a step in the wrong direction."

France called on Iran to reverse its decision. "We want Iran to abide by the suspension of all activities related to enrichment and reprocessing," a Foreign Ministry spokesman, Jean-Baptiste Mattei, told reporters.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the director of the nuclear agency, also called on Iran in a statement to maintain "its suspension of all enrichment-related activity as a key confidence-building measure" and to resolve other issues about its nuclear program.

The I.A.E.A. has repeatedly criticized Iran for failing to fully cooperate with requests to open certain facilities to its inspectors.

The agency has summoned Iranian officials to a meeting in Vienna on Wednesday to explain their intentions on research.

In a proposal presented last spring to the three European governments, Iran outlined steps that it said would advance its nuclear program, while providing assurances that its program was peaceful. Among the proposals was the installation of 3,000 centrifuges at Natanz.

On Monday, the head of the national security commission in Parliament, Alaeddin Borujerdi, said in Tehran that Iran was "determined" to reactivate the Natanz facility.

Iran could be gambling that even if it restarts nuclear research activities, it would once again avoid international sanctions. Despite threats by both the United States and the Europeans to refer Iran to the Security Council for punitive action after it resumed activities at Isfahan, the countries were forced to back down in the face of opposition from China and Russia, which each have veto power there.

In Tehran on Tuesday, Mohammad Saeedi, the deputy head of the atomic energy agency, said on state television that Iran would resume research, without providing details.

He stressed that the research "has no connection with the production of nuclear fuel," but did not specify whether that ruled out all activities related to uranium enrichment.

He also portrayed the decision as one of national self-interest, explaining that the suspension of key nuclear activities under the agreement with the Europeans had hurt Iran. "During this period our experts incurred heavy losses and many of our researchers have lost their jobs," he said.

The letter to the I.A.E.A., which was signed with a scrawl, but without a typed name identifying the official, was written on stationery of the Permanent Mission of Iran to the United Nations in Vienna.

Parts of the letter were quoted in an I.A.E.A. news release while other parts were disclosed by a European diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the fears surrounding the nuclear issue.

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# Iraq: government formation talks remain inconclusive

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## Al-Sadr has set new conditions for a tie-up with the Sunnis

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Atul Aneja

**DUBAI:** Iraq's Sunni, Shia and Kurdish communities are discussing the formation of the new government, but are still far from achieving a breakthrough.

Top Sunni politicians, Adnan al-Dulaimi and Tarek al-Hashmi, who are part of the Iraqi Accord Front (IAF) are leading a delegation for talks with Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq, Iraqi Prime Minister, and Shia leader, Ibrahim Jaffari has also held talks with Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani. It is, however, not yet clear whether a three-way meeting of Sunnis, Shias and Kurds has taken place.

The focus of the dialogue appears to be the formation of national unity government, in which the Sunni community would also feature prominently. The Americans have been backing this move, in the hope that political accommodation of the Sunnis, who have been spearheading the armed resistance, would result in a drop in violence, thus allowing a sustained U.S.

withdrawal from Iraq. President Jalal Talabani, who is of Kurdish origin, is also pursuing this track.

Last week, top Shia leader Abdulaziz Al Hakim held talks with Mr. Talabani and conveyed the impression that his pro-Iran group — the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) was inclined to forge a national political coalition.

However, there has been a setback to this move, as another Shia group, led by Moqtada Al Sadr has set new conditions for a tie-up with the Sunnis. Arabic daily *Al Hayat* has reported that Mr. Al Sadr has demanded that secular Sunnis represented in the Iraqiyah list of the former Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, be excluded from any political arrangement. Mr. Allawi's party includes some of the former Ba'ath party functionaries that Mr. Sadr's group has strongly opposed.

Meanwhile, the Americans, fixated on an "exit strategy," have been advocating the inclusion of the Sunnis in the Iraqi security establishment, which has now been dominated by

SCIRI. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Peter Pace, who spent the new year in Iraq, has said the Iraqi Government needs to reach out more to people, especially the minority Sunni community. The armed wing of the SCIRI has been accused of fighting street battles with Sunni guerilla groups, thereby threatening civil war conditions and undermining chances of an early American exit from Iraq.

An international team of election experts arrived in Baghdad on Monday, to review the results of the parliamentary poll.

Preliminary results indicate that the UIA could get 130 seats — short of the 184 seats needed to have a two-thirds majority in the 275-member Assembly. The Kurds could get about 55 seats, the main Sunni Arab groups about 50 and the Iraqiyah party around 25.

There has been an assassination attempt on the life of the Turkish Ambassador to Iraq. Gunmen attacked the envoy's convoy on the Baghdad airport road, injuring him slightly.