

An Iran-U.S. dialogue and Arab anxieties

Apprehensions about the capacity of Iran — as a wealthier and more influential regional power — to stir up trouble in West Asia through a growing trans-national Shia network are growing.

Atul Aneja

THE UPCOMING dialogue between Iran and the United States on Iraq is fuelling anxiety in the Arab world.

On April 8, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, in an interview to the Dubai-based Al Arabiya satellite TV channel said that Iraq was on the brink of a civil war. He alleged that Shias living in Arab states bordering Iraq were more loyal to Iran than to their own countries.

Mr. Mubarak's comments, revealing his apprehensions about Iran's capacity to stir trouble in West Asia through a growing trans-national Shia network, came after intelligence chiefs from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey had met in Cairo. That meeting was part of an ongoing dialogue, which has focussed on two key questions. First, what will be the fallout on the region of a possible civil war in Iraq? Secondly, how can the growing Iranian influence in Iraq be contained?

The Shia connection

Iran exercises considerable influence in Iraq by means of a large number of Shia institutions, which have occupied the political centre stage after the December 15

parliamentary elections. It is a well-recorded fact that the Iranian revolutionary guards have trained and armed the Badr Corp, the military wing of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The SCIRI is one of the key constituent bodies of the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), which won the maximum number of seats in the parliamentary elections. Its leader Abdel Aziz Al Hakim, who spent two decades in exile in Iran, is one of Iraq's most influential political figures today. The Iraqis are also close to the Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani, the President of Iraq.

Iranian officials have stressed that Mr. Al Hakim and Mr. Talabani had requested Teheran to open a dialogue with the U.S. on Iraq. In an interview with the state-run daily Iran, Iranian Charge d'Affaires in Iraq Hasan Kazemi Qomi said that through these talks Teheran hoped to improve the security situation and advance political stability in Iraq. The process of government-formation in Iraq had stalled after the UIA elected Ibrahim Jaafari the Prime Minister. The Americans, under the stewardship of their Ambassador in Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, opposed Mr. Jaafari's candidature, saying his leadership would impede the formation of a stable national unity government. Backed by the Amer-

icans, the Sunnis and the Kurdish communities of Iraq strongly objected to Mr. Jaafari's candidature. However, efforts to dislodge Mr. Jaafari, which were capped by a combined visit to Baghdad on April 3 by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, did not yield immediate results.

Mr. Qomi, who will lead the talks with Mr. Khalilzad, compared the upcoming dialogue to an earlier situation in Afghanistan, wherein Teheran and Washington had engaged in talks in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. He recalled that both sides were part of the "six-plus-two" group on Afghanistan, which also included key Central Asian republics, Pakistan, China and Russia.

The two had also worked together at the Bonn conference on Afghanistan's reconstruction, as well as for the emergence of a democratically elected government in Kabul. Both Mr. Qomi and Mr. Khalilzad have known each other well as they had participated in the Afghan talks.

Despite the possibility that the nuclear crisis revolving around the Iranian atomic programme could obstruct the dialogue on Iraq, Iraq's Arab neighbours have been wary about these talks. They fear that success in the Iran-U.S. dialogue would alter the status quo in West Asia in a fundamental

sense. Iran's influence in Iraq, they apprehend, would deepen and acquire legitimacy. The recognition of its role in Iraq, in turn, would have serious long-term implications.

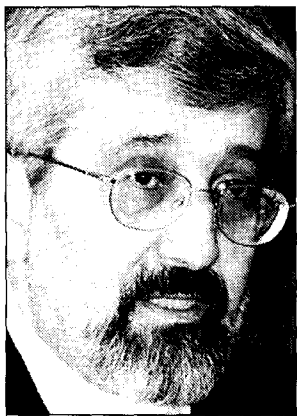
For instance, Iran would be well placed to manoeuvre Iraq's oil politics once its political linkages with the Iraqi establishment were formalised. Already the fourth largest oil producer in the world, Iran's capacity to influence Iraqi oil supplies in future would challenge the existing international petroleum order led by Saudi Arabia. Iran, in other words, could emerge wealthier and, consequently, a more influential regional power.

Besides, there has been an undercurrent of Sunni-Shia tensions in the region, which had got accentuated since Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979. Since both countries have majority Shia populations, a closer bonding between Iran and Iraq would raise the Shia profile in the entire region, where the Sunnis have been politically influential so far. Iran already has established close ties with Shias, who are in a majority in Lebanon. A large number of Shias live in Saudi Arabia's sensitive, oil-bearing Al Hawsa province. Iran's influence is significant in Bahrain, where the majority Shia community is ruled by a Sunni monarchy.

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Nuke deal with Russia, says Iran



Soltanieh: Atomic games

Tehran, April 22 (Reuters): Iran's ambassador to the UN nuclear watchdog said today that Iran had a basic deal to enrich uranium in a joint venture in Russia but said details were still being worked out, Iranian state radio reported.

Russia has offered to enrich uranium for Iran to allay concerns that Tehran could use domestically-produced enriched uranium to make nuclear bombs.

But progress on the deal has been hindered by Iran's refusal to bow to international demands that it halt all home-grown enrichment work.

A "basic agreement" on enrichment with Russia was previously announced by Iran in February but talks subsequently appeared to stall.

However, late tonight Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) played down the agreement and said no new deal had been struck.

Earlier, Soltanieh said a full agreement was now close. "He ... announced the basic agreement on a joint uranium enrichment firm on Russian soil and said that there are only some issues regarding technical, legal and financial matters that need more assessment or exchange of ideas," radio quoted Soltanieh as saying from Russia.

Western nations, who are threatening to press for UN sanctions, accuse Iran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons and insist Iran stops enrichment, which has military and civilian uses. Iran says it only wants to produce electricity.

Moscow, while joining Washington and European powers in calling on Iran to end enrichment, has made it clear it would not at this stage back imposing sanctions on the Islamic state.

Iran announced earlier this month that it had produced its first batch of enriched uranium and was pressing ahead with plans to produce nuclear fuel on an industrial scale.

Ali Hoseinitash, a deputy secretary on Iran's Supreme National Security Council, rejected any suspension of Iran's nuclear work, which Iran considers a national right, state television reported earlier today.

"We are seeking to choose the right paths and to solve the problems (in Iran's nuclear case) by some sort of negotiation and understanding. However, if reaching those paths comes on the condition of handing over our rights, it will not take place in the current situation," television quoted Hoseinitash as saying.

2 1 APR 2006

THE TELEGRAPH

ইরানের প্রত্যাখ্যান

ইরান তাহার পরমাণু জ্বালানি প্রকল্পে অবিচল। এই অবিচলতা তাহাকে অদূর ভবিষ্যতে নিরাপত্তা পরিষদ মারফত আন্তর্জাতিক অর্থনৈতিক অবরোধের সম্মুখীন করিতে পারে, এমনকী মার্কিন আগ্রাসনেরও। সম্প্রতি এ সংক্রান্ত অচলাবস্থা ঘুচিবার সম্ভাবনা দেখা দিয়াছিল। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র ইরানের সহিত সরাসরি আলোচনার প্রস্তাব দিয়াছিল। গত ছাব্বিশ বছর ধরিয়া ইরান-মার্কিন কূটনৈতিক সম্পর্ক নাই। তবু বৃশ প্রশাসন ইঙ্গিত দিবার চেষ্টা করিতেছিল যে, আমেরিকা আলাপ-আলোচনার শান্তিপূর্ণ পথে ইরানের পরমাণু উচ্চাকাঙ্ক্ষার সমস্যাটি মিটাইয়া ফেলিতে চায়। কিন্তু সেই সঙ্গে একটি পূর্বশর্তও ছিল, যাহাতে ইরানকে তাহার পরমাণু কর্মসূচি বাতিল করিতে বলা হয়। ইরান প্রস্তাব প্রত্যাখ্যান করিয়াছে। ইহার ফলে সমস্যা বাড়িয়া যাওয়ারই কথা। কারণ স্বতঃপ্রণোদিত মার্কিন প্রস্তাব ইউরোপীয় শক্তিগুলি এবং রাশিয়া ও চিনকে উৎসাহিত করিয়াছিল এবং সঙ্কটের গ্রহণযোগ্য মীমাংসার সম্ভাবনা উজ্জ্বল হইতেছিল। ইরানের প্রত্যাখ্যান অতঃপর ওই দেশগুলিকেও মীমাংসার ব্যাপারে হতাশ হইয়া মার্কিন চাপের কাছে নত হইতে প্ররোচিত করিতে পারে।

মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র প্রথমাবধি ইরানকে নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে টানিয়া আনিবার পক্ষপাতী। গণধ্বংসের অস্ত্র নির্মাণের কাল্পনিক অভিযোগে ইরাককেও একই ভাবে নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে টানিয়া লওয়া হয়। অতঃপর পরিষদের অনুমোদনক্রমে আমেরিকা ও তাহার মিত্র জোট যে সামরিক আগ্রাসন চালায়, তাহার দুর্ভাগ্যজনক পরিণাম আজ সকলের সামনে। ইরানে যাহাতে ইরাকের পুনরাবৃত্তি না হয়, সে জন্যই ফ্রান্স, জার্মানি, রাশিয়া ও চিন সচেষ্ট। তাহারা ইরানকে সঙ্কট হইতে একটি নির্গমনপথের হৃদিশ দিতে চায়। কিন্তু ইউরেনিয়াম সমৃদ্ধকরণের সিদ্ধান্ত হইতে ইরান সরিতে নারাজ। এই বস্তুটি হস্তগত হইলে ইরানের পক্ষে পরমাণু বোমা বানানোও যে সহজ হইবে, সেই দুর্ভাবনাই ইউরোপ-আমেরিকাকে কুরিয়া খাইতেছে। জ্বালানি অর্থাৎ পরমাণু বিদ্যুৎ উৎপাদনের জন্য ইউরেনিয়াম সমৃদ্ধকরণের জেদ তাহার সম্পর্কে পশ্চিমে সংশয় সৃষ্টি করিয়াছে। সন্দেহ, জ্বালানি তৈরির আড়ালে ইরান হয়তো 'ইসলামি বোমা' তৈয়ার করিতেছে, ১১ সেপ্টেম্বরের ঘটনার পর যাহা পশ্চিমের কাছে মূর্তিমান জুজু।

এ জন্যই ইউরোপীয় দেশগুলি পরমাণু জ্বালানি তৈরির একটি বিকল্প প্রযুক্তি ইরানকে সরবরাহ করিতে চায়। কিন্তু ইরান নিজে সমৃদ্ধকরণ প্রক্রিয়া করায়ত্ত করিতে বন্ধপরিকর এবং প্রেসিডেন্ট আহমদিনেজাদ ইহাকে একটি জাতীয় মর্যাদার প্রশ্নে পরিণত করিয়াছেন। তাই নিজস্ব পরমাণু প্রকল্প খারিজ করিলে ইরানকে ইউরোপ যে রকমারি অর্থনৈতিক ছাড় দিতে চায়, ইরান তাহাকে 'উৎকোচ' বলিয়া গণ্য করিতেছে। মুশকিল হইল, সর্বশেষ ইউরোপীয় প্রস্তাবটি ফিরাইয়া দিলে ইরানকে হয়তো অর্থনৈতিক অবরোধের মুখে পড়িতে হইবে। ঘরের পাশে ইজরায়েল অপেক্ষা করিতেছে তাহার 'সার্বভৌমত্বের পক্ষে বিপজ্জনক' ইরানি পরমাণু চুল্লিতে আকস্মিক বিমান হানার জন্য, যে ভাবে অতীতে সে দেশ ইরাকের পরমাণু কেন্দ্রও ধ্বংস করিয়াছিল। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের তরফেও মাঝেমাঝেই ইরানের পরমাণু প্রকল্পে নিয়ন্ত্রিত আণবিক হামলার ভয় দেখানো হইতেছে। অথচ ইরান উত্তরোত্তর দৃঢ়প্রতিজ্ঞ। প্রতিস্পর্ধী দুই তরফের এই কাঠিন্যই আবার পশ্চিম এশিয়ায় যুদ্ধ ও রক্তক্ষয়ের সম্ভাবনা ঘনাইয়া তোলে। ইরাক প্রমাণ করিয়াছে, গায়ের জোরে বাহির হইতে গণতন্ত্র আমদানির চেষ্টা কী সমূহ মানবিক ও রাষ্ট্রীয় বিপর্যয় সৃষ্টি করে। আফগানিস্তান ক্রমশই আর এক ইরাক হইয়া উঠিতেছে। পারসিক সভ্যতার সাবেক পীঠস্থান এবং শিয়া ইসলামের একমাত্র আঁতুড়ঘরটিও মেসোপটেমিয়া ও কাবুলের রক্তপথে প্রেরিত হইবে কি না, কে জানে। তবে সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলেরই উচিত, তাহা ঘটিতে না দেওয়া।

03 JUN 2006

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Iran bans official newspaper over cartoon insult

QF
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REUTERS

TEHRAN, MAY 23

IRAN has suspended publication of its official state newspaper after it published a cartoon that sparked violent ethnic protests in the northwestern city of Tabriz, a senior judiciary official said on Tuesday.

The cartoonist and the editor-in-chief of the *Iran* newspaper were arrested over the lampoon that was deemed to insult Iran's Azeri minority, Tehran's chief Prosecutor Saeed Mortazavi said.

"Some charges were brought against both of them and they were transferred to Evin prison," he told

state television, without specifying the charges. The official IRNA news agency said the cartoonist, Mana Neyestani, and the editor-in-chief, Mehrdad Qasemfar, were detained for "further investigation".

Furious members of the Azeri minority pelted government buildings and banks with stones in Tabriz on Monday night, enraged by the cartoon. The cartoon, which appeared in Friday's edition of *Iran*, showed a boy repeating the Persian word for cockroach in different ways while the uncomprehending bug in front of him says "What?" in Azeri.

Azeris account for about 25 per cent of the Iranian population.

24 MAY 2005

NUCLEAR STAND-OFF ■ EU plans to offer a light-water reactor, Tehran says it was offered 'candies for gold'

Ahmadinejad scorns N-power incentives

CHRISTIAN OLIVER

TEHRAN, MAY 17

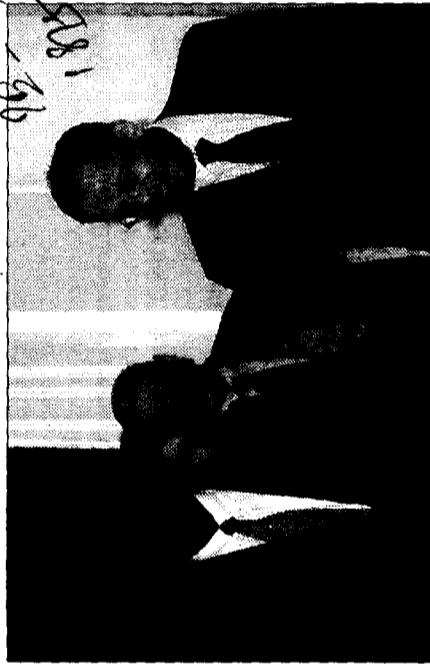
IRANIAN President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad today ruled out any idea of halting nuclear fuel work in return for EU incentives, saying the Europeans were offering "candy for gold".

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 Tehran to freeze its uranium enrichment programme.

"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 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)," he said. "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.



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (right) said on Wednesday that Tehran should be coaxed into dialogue over its nuclear programme rather than punished. AP

Ahmadinejad warned that programme could produce adverse pressure on Iran over its nuclear verse reactions. "Don't force

governments and nations which are signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to pull out of it," he said.

The permanent five members of the UN Security Council and Germany have delayed a meeting on Iran scheduled for this week to allow more time to prepare the EU proposal, a British Foreign Office spokesman said.

The US has taken a wary approach. "The package has not yet been agreed," said US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns. "It is under development and we'll be meeting probably next week in Europe to look at it. I'll be going over to London for conversations."

An EU diplomat familiar with

the negotiations on Iran said on Tuesday the EU3 and Solana were planning to offer Tehran a European light-water reactor if it suspended enrichment.

Nuclear experts say light-water reactors are harder to use for weapons purposes than heavy-water plants such as the one under construction in Arak.

EU diplomats said the new offer would be more specific, partly because they were confident of US support. But they made clear they saw little prospect that Iran would accept, and were aiming above all to demonstrate to sceptics such as Russia and China that the West was not trying to deprive Iran of civilian nuclear energy. —Reuters



Another Saddam lawyer shot dead

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BAGHDAD, JUNE 21

ONE of Saddam Hussein's lawyers was shot dead today after he was abducted from his home by men wearing police uniform in Baghdad, court and police officials said.

Khamis al-Obeidi, who represented Saddam and his half-brother Barzan Ibrahim, was abducted from his house today, Saddam's top lawyer Khalil al-Dulaimi said.

Chief prosecutor Jaafar al-Moussawi said Al-Obeidi had been killed, although he did not provide more details.

Al-Obeidi was shot dead and his body was found on the street near the Shiite slum of Sadr city, the police said.

Unlike Al-Dulaimi, who shuttles between Amman, Jordan, and the Iraqi capital, Al-Obeidi chose to continue to live in Baghdad despite the tenuous security and the killing of two members of the trial's defence team last year.

Al-Dulaimi blamed the Interior Ministry, which Sunnis have alleged is infiltrated by so-called Shiite death squads.

"We strongly condemn this act and we condemn the killings done by the Interior Ministry forces against Iraqis," he said, adding US-led forces also bore responsibility because the war had allowed Shiite militias to gain influence.

Iran buying time' over N-incentives

Baku, June 20

IRAN'S FOREIGN Minister Manoucher Mottaki told journalists in Baku on Tuesday that Tehran had yet to make a decision on a deal offered by Western governments aimed at defusing the standoff over its nuclear program.

"It is not decided yet," Mottaki told reporters on the sidelines of a pan-Islamic conference in the capital of Azerbaijan.

"I can't say for the time being when the answer will be finalised. There can be some questions and doubts which should be clarified," he said. Iran's reluctance to respond swiftly to proposals aimed at ending a nuclear standoff is less a time-wasting tactic and more a sign of a real debate among decision-makers on how to reply, analysts and diplomats say.

Some Western critics have accused Iran of delaying to buy time to master uranium enrichment, a process the West says Iran is using to build atomic bombs despite Tehran's denials.

But the analysts say the Iranian leadership appears tempted by the offer, particularly by US-backed incentives that Iran views as acknowledging the role in regional security it has long sought. This is encouraging serious consideration, they say.

Nations will not back down: Bush

President George W. Bush told Iran on Monday that nations worldwide will not back down from their demand that Tehran suspend uranium enrichment.

"Iran's leaders have a clear choice. We hope they will accept our offer and voluntarily suspend these activities so we can work out an agreement that will bring Iran real benefits," Bush said a day before leaving for Vienna, Austria.

AP, New York

THE HONGKONG TIMES
21 JUN 2005

Iran's tactics pay off in nuclear standoff

Washington's willingness to talk directly to Teheran is a significant departure from the past.

Atul Aneja

IRAN'S SKILLED nuclear diplomacy has forced the United States to think afresh, and opened the door for a sustained round of negotiations with the West that could have far-reaching consequences.

There was a sense of hard-earned success in the Iranian establishment after the European Union foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, concluded his visit to Teheran on June 6. Apart from offering negotiations, Mr. Solana, representing all the five Security Council members and Germany, presented Iran with a full package of incentives.

For the Iranians, the content of the package was of lesser importance. The seeming turnaround in the approach of the Americans and the Europeans towards the crisis revolving around its nuclear programme was the key.

After a gap of two-and-a-half decades, the Americans were showing a willingness to talk directly to Teheran — a significant departure from the past. Not long ago, selective leaks in the media suggested that the American establishment was considering the use

of mini-nuclear weapons to destroy Iran's underground nuclear facilities. In the lexicon of the Bush administration, Iran was part of an axis of evil — a term that signified Washington's obsession with "regime change" in Teheran.

The state-run *Iran Daily* noted what it perceived as the real significance of Mr. Solana's visit: "What new proposals known as 'nuclear incentives' he [Mr. Solana] brought to convince our statesmen to reverse the nuclear programme is not and should not be very important. The fact that Britain, France, Germany and the neocon enclaves in Washington have set aside their arrogance and recklessness is worthy of notice."

Restrained response

Notwithstanding their gains, the Iranians have been restrained in their response. They have made two key observations that could set the tone for future negotiations. First, they have signalled that the West recognise it no longer holds the initiative in its nuclear diplomacy with Iran. Speaking in Shanghai on the sidelines of the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Iranian Pres-

ident Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared that Mr. Solana's June 6 offer was a "positive step." However, he stressed that Iran would respond to the proposals in "due time."

Secondly, the Iranians have made it clear that the West must learn to treat them with respect. At a recent meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Iran's representative, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, emphasised that, "in the case of Iran, humiliation and the use of language of threat of referring the nuclear dossier to the U.N. Security Council ... have had serious impact on mutual trust and confidence on parties involved and thus the process of negotiations."

Several factors have played their part in prodding the West to engage Iran differently. Of these, Teheran's capacity to turn the post-invasion situation in Iraq to its advantage is, arguably, the most important. Iran's ability to influence the appointment of key Shia leaders well disposed towards it in top positions after the U.S. invasion has already yielded rich dividends.

Realising that they were bogged down in Iraq and aware of the Iranian influence there, the Americans began seriously to de-

bate approaching Teheran for a bailout. This became evident when the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, sought a dialogue with Iran over Iraq. The Iranians have been lukewarm to these "tactical" overtures. Instead, they have sought a full-spectrum dialogue that could bring about a turnaround in their frosty relationship with the West.

A period of brief turbulence followed the exit of the former Iranian President, Mohammad Khatami, last year. But the Iranian establishment has emerged far more cohesive after Mr. Ahmadinejad assumed office. He belongs to the Abadgaran group that is strongly influential among Revolutionary Guards, the elite defenders of the Iranian revolution. This non-clerical segment, with active military links, now dominates Parliament and exercises considerable influence in the national security establishment.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, also appears well disposed towards Mr. Ahmadinejad. With dissonance in the system reduced considerably, the Iranians have been able to coordinate their diplomacy in dealing with the nuclear crisis more effectively than before.

RD-11
V. K. Jagan

AK

How good is US intelligence on Iran?

FOR the first time since Iran walked away from negotiations with France, Germany and Great Britain in August 2005, there are rays of optimism in the crisis over the Islamic Republic's nuclear programme. Before breaking out the champagne to celebrate a diplomatic solution, it may be appropriate to pause for reflection: on the potential scope of Iran's secret bomb programme. Twice shy after overrating Iraqi WMD, the American intelligence community may be seriously underestimating Iran's progress toward a nuclear bomb.

The USA has broken with 27 years of official policy and agreed to join the Europeans in negotiating directly with Iran - conditional on Iran suspending uranium-enrichment activities that could lead to a bomb. EU High Representative Javier Solana presented Tehran with a package of carrots coupled with the threat of sticks. The specifics of the offer, not yet public, are likely to include new proliferation-resistant light water reactors, international nuclear-fuel assurances including five years worth of nuclear fuel in Iran, and other commercial and technological rewards.

The essence of the agreement on the nuclear issue will reaffirm Iran's right to the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy in return for Iran postponing actual enrichment for a specified period.

Yet, the current approach to Iran is predicated on the largely unexamined assumption that its overt enrichment programme at Natanz is the problem and that a deal to freeze or dismantle the enrichment facility constitutes a solution. The strategy does not address what US secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld calls "known unknowns" - gaps in knowledge that have been recognised but not filled.

How good is US intelligence about nuclear facts on the ground in Iran? In April, when asked about Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's claim that "Iran has joined the club of nuclear countries," the National Intelligence Coun-

After overrating Iraqi WMD, American intelligence may now be underestimating Iran's nuclear programme, writes GRAHAM ALLISON



For information on Iran's possible clandestine activities, Russia is indispensable

cil chairman Tom Fingar stated that there is no dissent within the 15 US intelligence agencies that Iran will get a nuclear bomb no sooner than "early to mid next decade".

This American view stands in stark contrast to the Israeli intelligence judgment, with the head of Mossad reporting in December 2005 that Iran could have a nuclear bomb within two years.

Could the unanimity of American intelligence be "déjà vu all over again", only the reverse of the Iraq WMD fiasco? In the lead-up to the Iraq war, American intelligence agencies expressed "high confidence" that "Iraq is continuing, and in some areas expanding its chemical, biological, nuclear, and missile programmes." They were dead wrong.

In the aftermath of that intelligence failure, the Silverman-Robb Commission examined the capacity of US intelligence agencies to assess WMD developments abroad. It concluded: "Across the board, the intelligence community knows disturbingly little about the nuclear programmes of many of the

world's most dangerous actors."

Consider also that members of the CIA have described the agency's covert action abilities inside Iran from 2000 through 2004 as

The IAEA has surprised even the Iranians with the quality of its investigations, including when it proved that plutonium samples did not match Iran's alibi for them

"unchanged: they're zero". As James Risen reports in *State of War*, a US intelligence blunder allowed Iranian security officials to "roll up" the American network of spies in Iran. Most important revelations on Iran's nuclear programme have come either from informants who "walk in" to

US embassies or from Iranian dissident groups with uncertain agendas.

Might Western intelligence services have underestimated Iran's nuclear programme? The judgment that Tehran is five to 10 years away from a bomb focuses primarily on its overt enrichment programme at Isfahan and Natanz. The dog that hasn't barked is Iran's covert programmes for acquiring nuclear weapons. Four huge "known unknowns" lie at the heart of judgments about the threat posed by Iran.

First, is success in Iran's overt effort a necessary condition for success in its covert programmes? President Bush and his European colleagues operate on the assumption that it is. Otherwise their operational objective - a moratorium on research activities at Isfahan and Natanz - would be beside the point.

Second, have Iranian nuclear scientists and engineers already learned enough at the Natanz facility about assembling and operating a cascade of centrifuges that they can now independently build and run such a cascade? Have

they passed what has previously been called a "point of no return"?

Third, has Iran bought highly enriched uranium from former Soviet stockpiles, Pakistan or elsewhere? Are they clandestinely building nuclear bombs using Chinese warhead designs acquired from AQ Khan? If so, engaging the USA in bargaining about enrichment activity at Natanz could be a way to distract attention and buy time.

Fourth, has Iran purchased actual nuclear warheads from the former Soviet arsenal or from Pakistan to mate with its Shahab-3 missile?

Three "known" bits of evidence are hard to fit into the jigsaw puzzle that American intelligence has assembled. First, in August 2004, Iran test-fired a Shahab missile that featured a nose cone usually reserved for nuclear weapons. Second, IAEA director General Mohamed ElBaradei has disclosed a connection between Iran's nuclear programme and its military activity, including a missile reentry vehicle.

Third, the father of the Pakistani nuclear programme, Dr AQ Khan, sold Iran advanced P2 centrifuge designs that are still unaccounted for. President Ahmadinejad's recent declaration that Iran is using P2 centrifuges could mean that Iran is much closer to its goal.

In the face of such uncertainty, President Bush should first and foremost assure that the intelligence judgments on which the current US strategy is predicated are as solid as they can possibly be. The President should assemble a "Team B" of sceptics and task them to pursue all known unknowns on the basis of all sources of information.

The best information on Iran's declared facilities is gathered by IAEA inspectors. The IAEA has surprised even the Iranians with the quality of its investigations, including when it proved that plutonium samples did not match Iran's alibi for them.

For information on possible clandestine activities, however, Russia is an indispensable nation. First, Rus-

sia is completing construction of Iran's first civilian nuclear reactor at Bushehr, giving it a working relationship with Islamic Republic's nuclear engineers. Second, in the mid-1990s, Moscow negotiated an agreement to supply Iran with technology and equipment for an enrichment facility - which was eventually cancelled under US pressure. Russian intelligence undoubtedly gleaned useful information about the scope of Iranian needs in negotiating this deal. Moreover, Russian arms sales have established connections between the two militaries. Indeed, the Tor-M1 air defence systems that Iran bought from Russia for \$1.4 billion will be used to defend its nuclear sites.

President Bush should thus ask his friend President Putin for a favour: Russian and US intelligence experts should be assigned to produce a joint assessment of Iran's nuclear programme. President Putin will extract a price for Russia's help in such an undertaking, one President Bush can afford to pay.

Taqiyya is an important concept in Shia Islam, which translated means "concealing or disguising one's beliefs, convictions, ideas, feelings, opinions, or strategies at a time of eminent danger, whether now or later in time, to save oneself from physical or mental injury." Some Islamic commentators call this "diplomacy". In negotiating with Iran, the USA and its allies should be wary of the conjurer's trick: distracting the viewer with one hand while the other pulls a rabbit from a hat.

Graham Allison is director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He is author of *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis and Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe*.

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Iran, Syria sign defence agreement

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
TEHRAN, JUNE 15

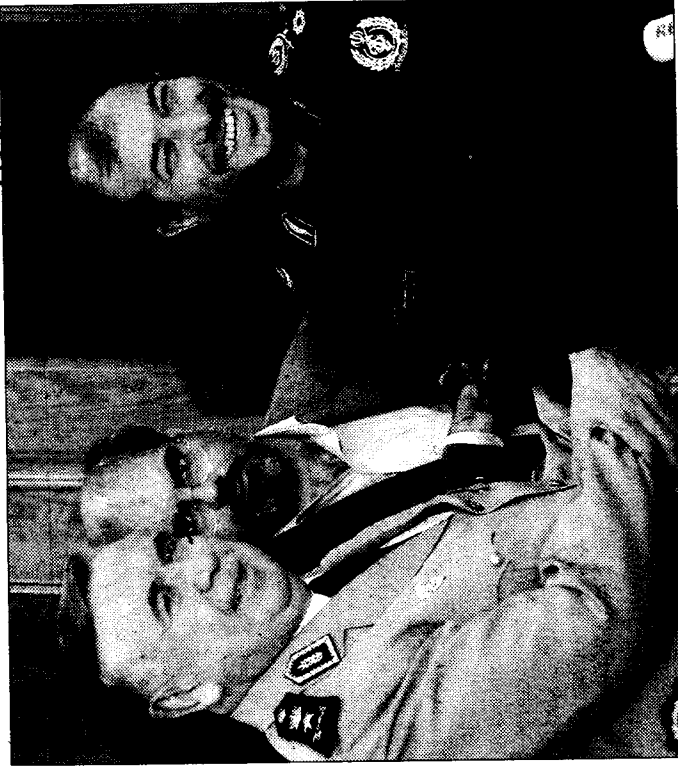
Defence ministers from close allies Iran and Syria today signed an agreement for military co-operation against what they called the "common threats" presented by Israel and the United States.

In a joint press conference, Iranian Defence Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar and visiting Syrian counterpart Hassan Turkmani said their talks had been aimed at consolidating their defence efforts and strengthening support for one another.

"Our cooperation is based on a strategic pact and unity against common threats. We can have a common front against Israel's threats," Turkmani told reporters after two intensive rounds of talks with Najjar.

"Our cooperation with the Iranians against Israeli threats is nothing secret and we regularly consult about this with our friends," he said.

Before the press conference, Iran's Defence Ministry said the two sides "stressed strengthening mutual ties and the necessity to preserve peace and stability in the region".



Iranian Defence Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, (R), with his Syrian counterpart, Hassan Turkmani in Tehran on Thursday. AP

The Defence Ministry statement also said they discussed "ridding the region of weapons of mass destruction", in an apparent reference to the widely-held belief that Israel possesses nuclear warheads.

The United States has led Opposition to Iran's nuclear programme, which Tehran insists is aimed at civilian energy purposes but which Washington suspects is a cover for atomic weapons-making.

Iran minister optimistic, hopes to continue N-talks

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
TEHRAN, JUNE 15

IRAN today was optimistic about proposals by world powers aiming to convince the country to suspend its uranium enrichment activities and was hopeful that negotiations would resolve the issue.

"They have submitted their package and asked about our opinion, without the 'take-it-or-leave-it' attitude they showed previously on the last year's package. This is a positive step forward," Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said on state television.

"We are optimistic about the current atmosphere," Mottaki said. "As soon as we finish studying the package, we will bring up our points and opinions and start talks," the foreign

minister said. "We expect Europe and all negotiation parties show goodwill and honesty." EU Foreign Policy chief Javier Solana on June 6 presented a package of proposals drawn up by Britain, France and Germany and backed by the United States, Russia and China in a bid to defuse the crisis over Iran's nuclear plans.

Iran refuses to give up uranium enrichment, which it says is part of a civilian nuclear power programme, but its actions have raised fears that the Islamic republic could be trying covertly to build a nuclear weapon.

Mottaki's comments came as the UN nuclear watchdog was meeting in Vienna to discuss Iran's disputed nuclear programme.

IRAQ PM | Launches major security crackdown, says no role for those behind bloodshed

Maliki opens door for talks to rebels

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BAGHDAD, JUNE 14

IRAQI Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki on Wednesday opened the door for talks with insurgents opposed to the country's political process, but he said any negotiations would exclude those responsible for bloodshed.

Al-Maliki also dismissed recent threats by al-Qaeda in Iraq's new leader, saying he would suffer the same fate as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was killed in a US airstrike a week ago.

The Prime Minister made his comments as he formally launched a major security crackdown in Baghdad and promised to unveil a new



Iraqi demonstrators remove a barricade as they attack Iran's consulate in Basra. They chanted slogans outside the consulate and set fire to a reception area of the building during a protest against an Iranian satellite station, accusing it of insulting a Shi'ite cleric in Iraq.

national reconciliation plan hope that they would review their stances because they will not be able to hamper the political process," he said.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq's new leader, identified by the *nom de guerre* Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, vowed in a Web statement on Tuesday to avenge al-Zarqawi's death and threatened horrific attacks "in the coming days."

Al-Maliki said the threats showed the group was "shaken and suffering from rifts" and was desperately trying to find new footing.

"The successor is not different from the predecessor in the degree of crime," al-Maliki said of the new terror leader, adding that "his fate will be similar to the fate al-Zarqawi."

He stressed he personally had not had contact with "the leaders of those insurgents who oppose the political process." "But those whose hands were not stained with the Iraqi blood, we will open a dialogue with them and we

Iran rebuffs US on N-issue

Says It Won't Stop Enrichment

Teheran: Iran insisted on Monday on its right to enrich uranium, expressing reluctance to suspend the key nuclear process as a condition for negotiations over a package of incentives offered by the world powers.

Iran has not responded formally to the incentives that are intended to persuade it to step back from enrichment. But it has said that parts of the package were acceptable, others were not, and the key issue of uranium enrichment—a process that can make fuel for a nuclear power plant or material for an atomic bomb—needed clarification.

At a news conference on Monday, Iranian spokesman Gholam Hossein Elham gave no indication of when Iran would reply to the package presented June 6.

When asked if Iran would suspend enrichment for the sake of negotiations—as the world powers, notably the US, have demanded—Elham avoided a direct answer, but repeated the government line that enrichment was Iran's "obvious right."

"Our country will not negotiate over its obvious rights," he said. "This is a non-negotiable issue."

Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani said on Sunday that the incentive package was "unclear" on enrichment.

"These are things where the finishing touches must be made," Larijani told reporters in Cairo after talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Arab League chief Amr Moussa. Egypt is one of the members of the UN nuclear watchdog's board of directors, which the US and Europe are lobbying efforts to pressure

Iran to accept the deal. The directors of the watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, met on Monday in Vienna. Larijani warned Iran would reject the package outright if Western powers threatened to apply sanctions. "We will not accept negotiations under pressure," he said.

The package, presented by permanent Security Council members the US, Russia, China, France and Britain, plus Germany, contains a series of incentives for Iran to suspend uranium enrichment. They include promises that the United States and Europe will provide Iran nuclear technology and that Washington will join direct talks with Teheran. Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said on Sunday that Iran

would not be rushed into responding to the package. It would take "as long as is necessary" to study it.

However, EU foreign policy supremo Javier Solana said Monday he expected Iran to respond "this

week." He spoke to reporters in Luxembourg where the European Union was holding a foreign ministers meeting. Asefi said the package includes "points which are acceptable. There are points which are ambiguous. There are points that should be strengthened, and points that we believe should not exist." The US accuses Iran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons, which Teheran denies, saying its program seeks only to develop energy. But the package drops demands for an all-out scrapping of enrichment, instead asking Iran to suspend such activity. AP



Gholam Hossein Elham

Iran says atomic offers contains problems

AGENCIES

CAIRO, JUNE 11

IRAN on Sunday gave its most negative assessment of proposals offered by six world powers aimed at persuading Tehran to give up sensitive nuclear work that the West fears is being used to make bombs.

Chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larjani said the package offered to Iran last week, which includes both incentives and penalties, contained "problems". In previous comments, he had only referred to "ambiguities" that needed removing.

Details of the package have not been publicly announced and Iran has yet to identify specific items to which it objects, but the deal is premised on the demand Iran abandons uranium enrichment, a step Tehran has said was unacceptable.



Iranian Top Nuclear Negotiator Ali Larjani (left) with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, during their meeting in Cairo, Egypt, on Sunday. AP

that was approved by the United States, China and Russia. It was delivered to Tehran by European Union foreign policy Chief Javier Solana on Tuesday.

Some details from the proposals or early drafts have leaked from Western diplomats and other sources and they include offering Iran a light-water reactor and guaranteeing nuclear fuel supplies.

But the offer also includes possible penalties if Iran rejects it, such as imposing travel bans on Iranian individuals, freezing assets and imposing an embargo on arms sales to Iran and some Iranian exports, such as refined oil and gas products.

Larjani, who heads Iran's Supreme National Security Council that has been entrusted with handling nuclear talks, said no deadline had been set for Iran to accept the package. "It was said that

Iran was given a limited time period to agree...this is incorrect," he said.

Meanwhile, the UN nuclear watchdog meets in Vienna tomorrow with the world waiting to see if Iran accepts an international offer to rein in its nuclear programme.

A vigorous debate but no resolution or major initiative is expected at the regular meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-nation board of governors, which is expected to run several days and discuss routine matters besides an Iranian nuclear programme that has raised fears Tehran seeks the bomb.

"The decision to be made is in Tehran, not at the board," a European diplomat said about the offer. The diplomat asked not be named due to the sensitivity of the issue.

Kingpin killed

Iraq's woes won't end

Relief and elation would mark the scene in Baghdad after an American air strike neutralised the man projected as the kingpin of the Sunni insurgency that has wreaked more havoc in Iraq than all the collected evil works of Saddam Hussein. While the elimination of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi could be a key factor in containing that insurgency, it would be premature and foolish to conclude it has unlocked the passage to peace. There are in fact several insurgencies being played out, some sectarian-driven, others essentially criminal in nature, the common thread being hatred of the alien occupation forces. Iraq's woes will not end with Zarqawi's death, but there could be some closure to a truly brutal dimension of the insurgency - abductions and beheading of hostages, often videotaped and circulated to spread terror. For that, even those not directly affected will be grateful.

A crucial query that might be answered in coming weeks is just how powerful was Zarqawi. Did he really hold sway over the now-marginalised Sunnis? Was the Jordanian's outfit as closely linked with Al Qaida as it was, for obvious convenience, projected? Was he truly a master-strategist without whom the insurgency will lose direction and dissipate? These questions acquire added relevance given suspicions that he was not the huge figure he was made out to be simply because the Americans always find it necessary to put a "face" to their foes: witness their portrayal of bin Laden, Gaddafi, Khomeini, Castro, Chavez... They have not succeeded doing that in North Korea - probably because they get tongue-tied by oriental names. Thus the ghost of Zarqawi could come to haunt them. As does the image of George W Bush declaring "mission accomplished" from a warship, or Washington's points-man in Baghdad gleefully pronouncing "We got him". For some Americans would hope that his death would set in motion a process by which a withdrawal might be contemplated. Time alone will tell. Probably as significant as Zarqawi's elimination was evidence of progress in filling the critical slots for defence and interior in the new government. But in Iraq, as in so many similar situations, restoration of law-and-order or "security" is only one strand in the resurgence exercise: reconstruction of infrastructure and economic revival being the other critical ones. They intertwine, and the death of one insurgent leader will not accelerate the recovery.

Fiasco in Presidency

Authorities play footsie with SFI

A stumbling principal's office has on occasions been responsible for the collapse of administration in Presidency College, Kolkata. Either the incumbent has been whimsical or finds it expedient to genuflect in the direction of the ruling party and government. This week's fiasco in the season of admission stems largely from the authorities' rather pathetic failure to regulate the distribution of admission forms. Of course the gherao of the principal, followed the next day by the blocking of her car, amounted to irresponsible, even indefensible, conduct. That said, Mamata Roy also owes an explanation as to how and why Students' Federation supporters got hold of the forms and then put them up for sale to those who had queued up. Also to be explained is the almost willful deviation from convention - reports suggest that unlike in previous years the marksheets were not stamped after the students were issued admission forms. This is an abject failure of the college office and if the Principal chose not to pay heed to complaints, the conclusion must be that the authorities, and the faculties put together, must have winked at this gross irregularity. The net result was the incredibly unauthorised sale of forms, a government stationery, by a union that owes its affiliation to the party that runs the government. Both the authorities and the SFI need to come clean on the suspicion that forms are being provided through the backdoor and whether the ultimate objective of the SFI is to enlist the next batch of freshers.

The situation is fast going out of control and the Principal's refusal to set up a teachers' council to monitor the admission process - the immediate provocation for Friday's blockade - has served to exacerbate the crisis. The entry procedure is strictly a matter for the administration and the faculties to handle. It ought not to be left to the devices of a students' union - Left, Right, Centre or Independent.

Lesson learnt

India treads warily on Nepal aid

Because times have changed in Nepal, India needs to appraise its policy. It is just as well that while promising full support to that country's economic recovery and reconstruction, Delhi has adopted a cautious approach by saying this would be "within its means" - meaning it would not commit itself at this juncture when the political situation in that country is still uncertain. Obviously India has learnt from its hasty support of King Gyanendra's offer last April to restore power to the people which provoked widespread criticism in both countries. Prime Minister GP Koirala has always advocated a policy of friendship with India but this has also alienated a large number of Nepalese, particularly the Leftists who called the 1992 Tanakpur hydel project "a sellout to the big neighbour". There is a strong anti-India undercurrent and some sections of Nepali society are ultra-sensitive to closer ties. Not many parliamentarians were happy with Koirala's recent visit to India, particularly when he did not have the people's mandate. In the past there had been allegations of his Nepali Congress government selling some public sector undertakings to Indians.

There is no alternative to close cooperation between the two countries but to ensure its success Kathmandu must guarantee security for Indian business interests and joint ventures. Of late these are being targeted by mafia gangs. President Abdul Kalam's suggestion to introduce the Providing Urban Facilities in Rural Areas scheme also deserves attention. Apart from Kathmandu valley, large parts of the country are still in a primitive stage. It would be in India's interest to help in this field when the situation stabilises. While dealing with the next government Delhi must also determine that whatever agreements it signs are done with finesse so as to leave no doubts in Nepalese minds about this country's intent.

One world order~I

India Can Be A Powerful Player And Ally

When in 1946 the United States put forward its proposal for the international control of atomic energy, the so-called Baruch Plan, this was conceived by many as a plan for world government.

The United Nations would be given real enforcement powers, and the central control of atomic energy was to ensure that nations could peacefully - and safely, under a global nuclear umbrella - disarm, with collective security eventually guaranteeing each nation's safety from foreign attack and exploitation.

At the time the US was the only country possessing nuclear weapons. The first atomic bomb, as Albert Einstein and others, among them US Senator J William Fulbright and Justice Owen J Roberts proclaimed in an open letter published in the *New York Times* in October 1945, had "destroyed more than the city of Hiroshima. It also exploded our inherited, outdated political ideas".

UN Charter

Moreover, the UN Charter in their opinion was "a tragic illusion unless we are ready to take further steps necessary to organise peace". The UN Charter - and democratic constitutions like the Japanese Peace Constitution - can only point the way and advocate certain steps that would have to be taken eventually.

The opinion of nuclear scientists helped shape government policies. The Association of Los Alamos Scientists (ALAS) working in the atomic bomb laboratory of Los Alamos in New Mexico, declared in November 1945 that a world "in which nuclear weapons are owned by many nations and their use held back only by the fear of retaliation will be a world of fear, suspicion, and inevitable final explosion". They were confident that "we are left but only one course of action... (to) cooperate with the rest of

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Klaus Schlichtmann

the world in the future development of atomic power". Utilisation of "atomic energy as a weapon" had to be "controlled by a world authority". This would require the "loss of some degree of national sovereignty".

The transfer or limitation of national sovereignty

United Nations too weak to safeguard a fragile peace. Others denied the UN Charter actually was a workable blueprint for a future world authority with enforcement powers. Soviet mistrust and reluctance to cooperate soon thwarted the American plans for the international



Today, in 2006, the nuclear state of the world is the most likely environment fit to bring about disarmament and a one world order

eighty in support of the United Nations was to be one of the most important steps necessary for the organisation of peace.

In Japan after the war nuclear scientist and Nobel laureate Hideki Yukawa and with him numerous lawmakers supported the idea of a world federation.

Indian diplomats at the UN also emphasised that disarmament must be accompanied by "the establishment of reliable procedures for the peaceful settlement of disputes; that is to say, that something is to be substituted for arms, if arms are taken away, in order to maintain what arms are supposed to be doing: to keep the peace" (Menon 1961).

Those wishing for an effective international organisation or world federation considered the exist-

tations, to mend ties and agree on nuclear and general and complete disarmament, strengthening the United Nations and the International Court of Justice, and abolishing all institutions of war including military budgets and all. Europe being the focal point and breeding ground of contention, support from the old continent (and the still colonial powers) was conspicuously absent.

India and Japan as non-nuclear nations vigorously supported nuclear and conventional disarmament. When in 1961 Japanese Prime Minister Ikeda and Russian President Khrushchev were engaged in negotiations to further friendly and peaceful cultural, commercial and scientific exchanges, Indian diplomats at the UN focussed on disarmament as "a step to something more important: namely, the outlawing of war", which was now "incorporated in this agreement", i.e., the historic McCloy-Zorin Accords between the United States and the Soviet Union referred to above.

Disarmament

Today, in 2006, the nuclear state of the world is the most likely environment fit to bring about disarmament and a one world order, if its rationale can somehow be turned around in a positive more. Toward this end India can be a powerful player and ally.

Japan and India persistently tried to obtain assurances against the use of nuclear weapons. In 1970, the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty came into force. In Article VI, which commits the (nuclear) powers "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control", it essentially codified the McCloy-Zorin accords which President John F Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev had sponsored in 1961.

Enforcement action by a powerful nation or coalition of the willing, in the absence of an effective UN system of collective security, is highly problematic, especially if national interest determines and dominates the action, as is the case with the USA.

The steps necessary to an organised peace were essentially defined in 1961. While the Cold War in Europe was heating up, the United States and Soviet Russia tried, after years of painstaking nego-

(To be concluded)

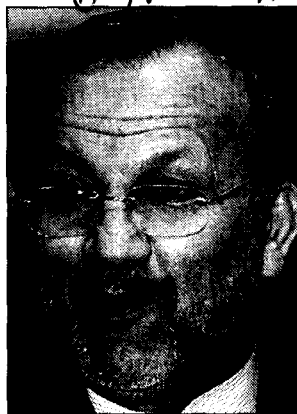
Iran scripts N-reply

Tehran, June 10 (Reuters): Iran may send its own nuclear package in response to proposed incentives agreed by six world powers that seek to persuade Tehran to stop its atomic fuel work, foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki said today.

He did not specify what changes to the package Iran might seek, but Tehran has repeatedly rejected the crux of the proposal — that it should give up enriching uranium.

“We hope that shuttle diplomacy will lead to a genuine proposal from the Islamic Republic that could possibly be sent to European counterparts as an amendment or a counter-package and that will be assessed carefully by the Europeans,” Mottaki was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency.

Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani has com-



Mottaki: It's our call

plained about the incentives’ “ambiguities”.

Iran has been referred to the UN Security Council where it could face sanctions, after failing to convince the international community that its atomic scientists are seeking to build power sta-

tions, not weapons.

The US, France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China have agreed on a set of incentives for Iran on the condition that it stops making nuclear fuel, something Tehran has said it will never do.

US President George W. Bush yesterday said Iran had “weeks not months” to respond to the proposals and Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel has said Iran has until next month’s Group of Eight (G8) summit to consider the offer.

But Mottaki told the Mehr news agency: “We have not defined a deadline for assessing the proposal.”

THE TELEGRAPH

1 1 JUN 2006

Teheran to make counter-proposals.

Iraqi leader mediates in nuclear crisis

TEHERAN: Iran said on Saturday it has started to study the West's offer to resolve the nuclear crisis and could make counter-proposals through shuttle diplomacy, as Iraq mounted a mediation effort.

"We have opened the package, and we are studying it, and afterwards we will officially reply to the Europeans," Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki was quoted as saying following talks visiting Palestinian Foreign Minister Mahmud al-Zahar.

Contents not made public

"We hope ... a shuttle diplomacy will be started for the Islamic republic's proposals in the form of amendments or counter-proposals to be studied seriously by the Europeans," he said.

Asked if a suspension of uranium enrichment was raised in the international package, he said: "We cannot outline details of the proposals, since we have not announced the content of the package."

Mr. Mottaki gave no timing for Iran's official response. "We have not defined a deadline for our reply".

U.S. President George W. Bush said on Friday that Teheran had "weeks and not months" to accept the offer and warned the U.N. Security Council would act if Iran did not comply.

A senior cleric close to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the same day that Teheran would not suspend ura-

nium enrichment, amid reports from the U.N. nuclear watchdog that the country had accelerated enrichment work.

In related developments, Iraqi Vice-President Adel Abdel Mahdi met Iran's top nuclear negotiator in Teheran in a bid to help mediate an end to the crisis, a source close to the Iraqi leader said on Saturday.

He said the meeting with Ali Larijani took place on Friday, a day after Mr. Mahdi met in Baghdad with the ambassadors of Britain, France and Germany whose countries have been at the centre of efforts to resolve the crisis.

It was unclear who initiated the mediation.

Last month, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said his country respected "the right of Iran to have nuclear technology" but feared an arms race in the area, after a meeting in Baghdad with his Iranian counterpart.

China seeks role in talks

China wants a place at the negotiating table in talks on proposals between the Western powers and Iran, the German weekly *Der Spiegel* says in its edition dated Monday.

Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao expressed this wish during a telephone conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, it says. It quotes diplomats as saying Beijing is seeking a place at the negotiating table as it does not want to be a step behind other powers. — AFP

Al-Zarqawi dies in air strike

37-1

Al-Zarqawi

not Amin (A)
from

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, June 8: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaida's leader in Iraq who led a bloody campaign of suicide bombings and kidnappings, has been killed in an air strike, US and Iraqi officials said today. His identity was confirmed by fingerprints and a first-hand look at his face - a major victory in the US-led war in Iraq and the broader war on terror.

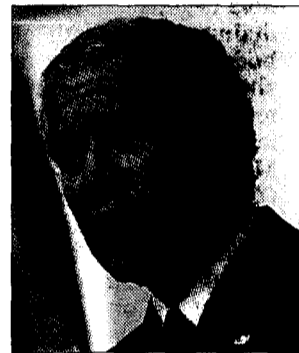
Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki said al-Zarqawi was killed along with seven aides, including two women, last evening in a remote area 50 km north-east of Baghdad in the volatile province of Diyala, near the provincial capital of Baqouba.

Loud applause broke out as Al-Maliki, flanked by US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and US Gen. George Casey, told a Press conference here that "al-Zarqawi was eliminated." Gen. Casey said al-Zarqawi's spiritual adviser Sheik Abdul Rahman also was killed.

"Those who disrupt the course of life, like al-Zarqawi, will have a tragic end," al-Maliki said. He also warned those who



A severe blow to Al-Qaida and it is a significant victory in the war on terror
~ Bush



would follow the militant's lead that "whenever there is a new al-Zarqawi, we will kill him. This is a message for all those who embrace violence, killing and destruction to stop and to (retreat) before it's too late," he said.

The death of Iraq's most-wanted militant, who was responsible for the majority of Iraq's worst atrocities, was welcome news for Iraqi and US-led forces after several recent setbacks, but President Bush and US military leaders acknowledged it was unlikely to stop the unrelenting violence in the country.

The news came amid more attacks, with two bombs striking a market and a police patrol in Baghdad, killing at least 19 people and wounding

more than 40.

Al-Zarqawi's death "is a severe blow to al-Qaida and it is a significant victory in the war on terror," Mr Bush said at the White House. "We have tough days ahead of us in Iraq that will require the continuing patience of the American people. It is an opportunity for the Iraqi government to turn the tide of this struggle," Mr Bush said in a statement he read out from the White House Rose Garden.

The announcement was a much-needed boost to the Shi'ite prime minister, whose nearly three week old government of national unity has been beleaguered by rampant sectarian violence and political infighting.

Al-Maliki also moved ahead with his efforts to

promote national reconciliation among Iraq's fractured ethnic and sectarian groups, gaining parliamentary approval for new ministers of defence, interior and national security and ending a three-week stalemate.

US military spokesman Maj.-Gen. William Caldwell showed a picture of al-Zarqawi after he was killed and a videotape of an attack in which he said F-16 fighter jets dropped two 500-pound bombs on the site.

"We had absolutely no doubt that Zarqawi was in the house," Caldwell said. Al-Qaida in Iraq confirmed al-Zarqawi's death and vowed to continue its "holy war," according to a statement posted on a website.

■ See also page 2

THE STATESMAN

Iraq frees 600 Sunni prisoners

Baghdad: Iraq on Wednesday released almost 600 detainees, mostly Sunni Arabs, in a bid to promote national reconciliation amid sectarian violence that has left thousands dead in the last few months.

Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki on Tuesday ordered the release of 2,000 prison detainees, which he said was the first step of its kind "to promote national reconciliation".

Three buses full of detainees arrived at central Baghdad's Allawi bus station on Wednesday, carrying 103 detainees, part of the total 594 released during the day. The release comes a few days after senior Sunni politician Adnan Al Dulaimi recommended such a step to Maliki to calm the ongoing sectarian violence. "You are rejoining society now and you will serve your society and mix again with people," said Omar Al Juburi, the human rights representative for the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party, told the freed prisoners at the bus station.

On behalf of the party's leader, Tareq Al Hashemi, also the nation's vice president, he gave each released detainee \$200, as they left to take buses back to their home towns. "We will exert the utmost efforts to release detainees and bring a smile back to prisoners' faces," Juburi told the crowd.



A woman kisses her son on his release from prison

Detainee Raed Jamil, a former martial arts coach to the national team, spent two years in US-run Camp Bucca on trumped up charges, he said, of aiding the insurgency. "I am optimistic it won't happen again and I'm going back to my job and my family," Jamil said. He however scoffed at the number of releases.

"It's nothing, because on an average they are ar-

resting 1,000 people daily," he said.

As of April 30, 2006, a total of 28,700 detainees were being held in Iraqi and US prisons across the country, said the Iraqi human rights ministry. Iraq is engulfed in tit-for-tat Shiite-Sunni sectarian violence that has rocked the already insurgency-wracked country since the February 22 bombing of a revered Shiite shrine in the northern town of Samarra.

On Tuesday the BBC reported that Baghdad's main mortuary received nearly 6,000 bodies since the start of this year, most of whom had died violently.

Meanwhile, kidnapers of the 50 people seized two days ago from a Baghdad street released 17 of the victims late on Tuesday night, with many showing signs of torture, said police and defence officials.

Police originally came across eight victims wandering aimlessly together late at night on Canal street, the major north-south highway in east Baghdad. Police patrols were then alerted to search for others and another seven were found singly throughout the area, three of whom had bullet wounds in their legs.

The 50 people were snatched on Monday in broad daylight by armed gunmen dressed in commando uniforms from central Baghdad's Salhiya street where several travel agencies are located. AGENCIES

Iran gets EU's anti-nuke incentives

ALI AKBAR DAREINI
TEHRAN, JUNE 6

THE incentives designed to persuade Iran to curb its unclear programme contain "positive steps" and "ambiguities," Iran's top nuclear negotiator said on Tuesday.

Speaking on state television after receiving the proposals from EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, Ali Larjani said they had "constructive" talks and Iran would respond after studying the incentives.

The proposals, which the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany agreed to last Friday, represent a major effort to persuade Iran to step back from uranium enrichment—a process that can be used for making nuclear bombs as well as fuel for reactors that

generate electricity. "The proposals contain positive steps and also some ambiguities, which must be removed," Larjani said.

Larjani did not identify the "ambiguities," but he said more talks would be required. "We hope we will have negotiations and deliberations again after we have carefully studied the proposals to reach a balanced and logical result," Larjani said.

Solana, who arrived in Tehran on Monday night, met Larjani for two hours at the Supreme National Security Council building in central Tehran. Journalists were barred from the building.

State-run television, in Persian, quoted Solana after the meeting as saying that the talks were "constructive" and that he looked forward to a "bright future."

Solana said at Tehran airport the West wanted "a new relation-



EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana with Iranian Foreign Minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, at a meeting in Tehran on Tuesday. AP

ship" with Iran and that the package would "allow us to engage in negotiations based on trust, respect and confidence."

Details of the proposals have not been made public, but an early draft indicated that if Iran agrees to abandon uranium enrichment, the world would offer it help in building nuclear reactors, a

guaranteed supply of nuclear fuel, and European Airbus aircraft.

The United States has reportedly sweetened the offer by saying it would lift some bilateral sanctions on Iran, such as a ban on Boeing passenger aircraft and related parts, if Iran agrees to an enrichment freeze.

The offer contains the implicit threat of UN Security Council sanctions if Iran continues to insist on enriching uranium.

Iran has rejected any halt to enrichment, saying it has the right to carry out the process for peaceful purposes under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The world is suspicious of its nuclear plans because it concealed significant aspects of its programme for many years. The United States and France accuse Iran of seeking to build nuclear bombs. Iran says it aims strictly to generate electricity. —AP

Iran "positive" on nuclear offer

Teheran for dialogue on "some ambiguities" in the package

H. Amin (C)

HQ-15

7/6

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: Amid expressions of cautious optimism, European Union (E.U.) foreign policy chief Javier Solana has presented Iran with a set of incentives that it could avail itself in case it suspended its uranium enrichment programme.

Details of the package compiled by the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany have not been made public.

Proposal contents

After concluding talks with Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, Mr. Solana said the press and the public would have to wait a few days before the contents of the proposals were revealed.

He said he was hopeful that the package would evoke a positive response from Iran. "We

- Solana hopes for permanent agreement with Iran
- Ali Larijani says more discussions are required
- Speculation rife about the contents of package
- Teheran welcomes E.U. initiative to hold dialogue

have submitted a package of proposals by the E.U. countries, the U.S., China and Russia to the Islamic Republic of Iran and we hope to receive a positive response from Iran."

Iran's Fars news agency quoted Mr. Solana as saying it was his hope that the proposals that he had brought with could lead to a permanent agreement with Iran.

Soon after his arrival on Monday evening, Mr. Solana said the group of six nations that he was representing wanted to start with Iran "new relations based on mutual respect and confidence."

"We believe that proposals that we plan to present to Iran allow us to enter talks within an atmosphere of mutual respect and confidence."

"Positive attributes"

Head of Iran's supreme national security council Ali Larijani, whom Mr. Solana met earlier on Tuesday, also described the proposals as having positive attributes.

However, more discussions were required as the proposals included "some ambiguities," he said.

Mr. Larijani praised the Europeans for choosing dialogue

with Iran as the mechanism for resolving differences.

"This is exactly the same thing that Iran has frequently stressed since the beginning of the issue." His remarks coincided with Mr. Solana's observation that further discussion with Mr. Larijani on the offer would be required.

There has been considerable speculation about the contents of the package.

The AFP news agency has reported that based on an earlier draft, the proposals include transfer of light water reactors along with an assured fuel supply.

Iran would be allowed to participate in "an international fuel cycle centre in Russia" to enrich uranium.

Besides, "dual-use technology which has peaceful but also military applications" would be made available to Iran.

07 JUN 2006

THE HINDU

U.S. must drop terms: Iran

Teheran optimistic of solution to nuclear impasse

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: Iran has said the impasse over its nuclear programme could end if the United States dropped its conditions for talks.

"We think that if there is goodwill, a breakthrough to get out of a situation [the European Union and U.S.] have created for themselves... is possible," Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said.

Mr. Mottaki made this observation ahead of receiving a formal package of incentives that the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany had compiled on Thursday in Vienna. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had said on the eve of these talks that Washington would be ready for a face-to-face dialogue provided Teheran suspended the enrichment of uranium. Enriched uranium is used for generating electricity. However, when enriched to a high degree, it can be used as the explosive core of a nuclear bomb.

According to Mottaki, Teheran's response to the package that European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana was expected to present in Teheran shortly, could yield positive

results. "We think that the views we will present our partners could prepare the ground for a comprehensive understanding," Mr. Mottaki said at a press conference on Saturday.

He, however, said Iran would not negotiate under preconditions. "These negotiations have to be with-

out any conditions." In Belgium, Mr. Solana's spokeswoman Cristina Galach confirmed he would be visiting Teheran soon. "The trip is not going to be a negotiating trip, the objective is to present the proposals of the international community," she said.

As Mr. Solana prepared to leave for Teheran, the United States said Iran should promptly respond to the offer. Otherwise, it warned, Iran could face penalties. Mr. Mottaki observed that Iran would study the package "within the necessary timeframe."

Earlier on Friday, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said his country would not buckle under pressure. "Pressure by certain Western countries aiming to make us abandon our rights will not show results," he warned.

In Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin has said speaking about sanctions against Iran would be premature. "As far as sanctions are concerned we think it is a bit too early at the moment to talk about that," he said during a meeting with the chiefs of international news agencies. "We need to have a deep conversation with the Iranian leadership," Mr. Putin said.

China for dialogue

BEIJING: China supports all the efforts made to resolve the nuclear issue through diplomatic negotiations, said Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing on Friday.

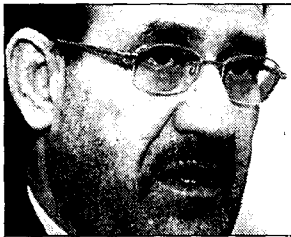
Mr. Li spoke to Mr. Mottaki on phone and exchanged views on the developments.

During a telephone conversation, Chinese President Hu Jintao told his U.S. counterpart George Bush that China was ready to maintain contact with the U.S. and play a constructive role in resuming negotiations as soon as possible. — Xinhua

06 JUN 2006

THE HINDU

Iraq rejects US clean chit



Nuri al-Maliki: Firm stand

h. Azam
Q. Arw
T. M
2/16

Baghdad, June 3 (Reuters): Iraq today vowed to press on with its own probe into the deaths of civilians in a US raid on the town of Ishaqi, rejecting the US military's exoneration of its forces.

Adnan al-Kazimi, an aide to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, said the government would also demand an apology

from the US and compensation for the victims in several cases, including the alleged massacre in Haditha last year.

"We have from more than one source that the Ishaqi killings were carried out under questionable circumstances. More than one child was killed. This was not fair for the Iraqi people and the children who were killed," he said.

The US military had issued a statement about Ishaqi saying allegations that US troops "executed a family... and then hid the alleged crimes by directing an air strike, are absolutely false".

It said troops had been fired on as they raided a house to arrest an al Qaida suspect. They returned fire and called in air support, which destroyed the building, killing one militant and resulting in "up to nine collateral deaths".

The military had previously said one guerrilla, two women and a child were killed in the March 15 raid in Ishaqi, 100 km north of Baghdad.

It has repeatedly pledged to punish any soldier found guilty of atrocities in Iraq, but the decision to clear the troops in Ishaqi fuelled deep mistrust among ordinary Iraqis three years after the US invasion.

Russian diplomat shot dead

Baghdad, June 3 (Reuters): Gunmen killed one Russian embassy employee and kidnapped four others in Baghdad today, Russian and Iraqi officials said, in the latest attack on foreigners in the lawless capital.

A car bomb in the southern city of Basra killed at least 27 people, hospital sources said, three days after new Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki announced a security crackdown there.

The violence was yet another reminder of the challenges that Maliki, a tough-talking Shia Islamist, faces in delivering on his pledge to restore stability in Iraq.

Key to that will be the naming of non-sectarian interior and defence ministers who can quell communal and insurgent violence, after the two jobs remained empty because of wrangling when Maliki's government took office two weeks ago.

04 JUN 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Solana in Iran with the deal

Nuclear package offers incentives

Atul Aneja

HD-13
6/6
DUBAI: Foreign policy chief of the European Union Javier Solana arrived in Teheran late on Monday amid expectations that his visit could set in motion a productive nuclear dialogue between Iran and the West.

He was due to meet head of supreme national security council Ali Larijani on Tuesday. During the meeting he was expected to handover a package of incentives compiled by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany to persuade Teheran not to pursue uranium enrichment.

There has been speculation that Iran is being offered an advanced light water nuclear reactor along with assured supply of fuel as part of the package. Iran, in return, would have to suspend all enrichment work, which the U.S. and its European allies fear would allow Teheran to acquire the know-how to produce an atomic weapon.

Iran's Fars news agency quoted the head of the Iranian Parliament's national security and foreign policy commission, Aladdin Boroujerdi, as saying the proposals that the E.U. delegation would present would be different from what has been projected by the media so far.

He stressed that the Europe-

• Solana set to hold talks with Ali Larijani

• "Iran not interested in making atom bombs"

ans were aware that Iran would not suspend nuclear enrichment. "The halt of enrichment activities is impossible from the technical point of view too.

Europeans have unofficially accepted the impossibility for the suspension of our enrichment activities, and the United States too has no way out but to consider Iran's suspension of nuclear enrichment an impossibility."

Meanwhile, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has conveyed to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan that his country "respected" the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) but wanted it to be implemented fairly.

In a related development, Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei has said Teheran is not interested in building atomic weapons. "The accusation that Iran is trying to produce an atomic bomb is false and a sheer lie," he said. "We do not need a nuclear bomb. We consider nuclear weapons an affront to Islamic precepts."

06 JUN 2006

THE HINDU

44-8
5/6

Time to talk to Iran

W. K. M. J.

For a quarter of a century, the United States has doggedly refused formally to engage Iran in anything resembling a dialogue process. Prior to 1980, Teheran was one of Washington's most allied allies, a heavily armed outpost that practised repression against its own people, looted the oil wealth of the country, and helped in the projection of American power in the Persian Gulf and West Asia. But the Islamic revolution changed all that. The Reagan administration supported the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq in its aggression against Iran and the 1990s saw the erection of a range of sanctions aimed at stifling the Iranian oil industry. Through this period, the U.S. has pursued a policy of unremitting hostility towards Iran and has never hidden its aim of bringing about 'regime change'. The nuclear issue has now brought Washington to the verge of war, though its hand has been stayed by the Iraq fiasco as well as by its failure to secure the support of even one country other than Israel for any military action. Even its desire to get the United Nations to impose sanctions has hit a major roadblock, with Russia and China so far refusing to walk down that path. It is essentially the lack of options that has compelled President George Bush to signal his willingness to participate in multilateral negotiations with Iran over the future of its nuclear programme. Unfortunately, his offer to talk is not unconditional and the one precondition spelt out — that Iran should end all its activities relating to nuclear fuel enrichment — is unlikely to appeal to Teheran.

It is clear that the negotiating process must be unconditional. Washington also needs to realise that Iran will not accept being singled out as the country that must give up its right to the nuclear fuel cycle. If there is a general international move towards the multinational fuel cycle approaches outlined by the International Atomic Energy Agency's Pellaud report, Iran may agree to be part of that constructive effort. But in the context of illegal pressure involving the threat of sanctions and the use of force, Teheran is unlikely to accept Washington's demand to give up its enrichment programme. The Iranian nuclear issue also needs to be examined in the context of the demand for a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in which Israel renounces nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. As for the wider set of issues, any grand bargain must involve the lifting of U.S. sanctions on the Iranian energy and banking sectors; the de-freezing of Iranian assets; and a comprehensive security dialogue on the right of the Palestinians to a viable state of their own on all the territories Israel occupies illegally and on Israel's right to exist within its own secure territories. Many of these issues are no doubt unpalatable to the Bush administration but it must start the dialogue process without preconditions and without delay.

06 JUN 2005

THE HINDU

Iran may disrupt oil supplies

HC-12



AFP
Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei delivers a speech marking the 17th anniversary of the death of Islamic revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in Tehran on Sunday.

ASSOCIATED Press
Tehran, June 4

IRAN'S TOP leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warned on Sunday that energy shipments from the Gulf region would be disrupted should Iran come under attack from the US, insisting that Tehran will not give up its right to produce nuclear fuel. "If you make any mistake (invade Iran), definitely shipment of energy from this region will be seriously jeopardised. You have to know this", Khamenei said in a speech broadcast live on state-run radio.

Khamenei also warned that, should a disruption occur, the US and its allies would not be

able to provide security to all the oil shipments that transit close to Iran's coast. Much of the world's oil supply passes through Strait of Hormuz, which links the Gulf with the Indian Ocean and separates Iran from the Arabian peninsula.

"You'll never be able to protect energy supply in this region. You'll not be able to do it", he said, addressing the West.

Khamenei, however, did not specify how oil supplies would be disrupted, and insisted Iran would

not start any war. "We won't be the initiator of war", he said. Iran is the world's fourth largest oil exporter and second biggest power within the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Iranian officials have repeatedly ruled out using oil as a weapon in the nuclear standoff with the West.

The supreme leader's harsh rhetoric came a day after Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said a breakthrough in negotiations over Tehran's contentious nuclear programme was possible and welcomed unconditional talks with all parties, including the United States. Ahmadinejad said late on Saturday that his government would

not rush to judge an incentives package offered by Western countries to persuade Iran to cease enriching uranium. Khamenei appeared to be taking a tougher line on Sunday. "That a country has no right to achieve proficiency in nuclear technology means it has to beg a few Western and European countries for energy in the next 20 years", he said. "Which honest leader is ready to accept this?"

Khamenei said Iran was not a threat to any country and that Tehran was not seeking nuclear weapons. "We've not threatened any neighbour ... accusation that we are seeking nuclear bomb is wrong, a sheer lie", he said.

05 JUN 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Iran's top leader warns of energy disruption if attacked

REUTERS

TEHRAN, JUNE 4

AYATOLLAH Ali Khamenei, Supreme leader of Iran, said on Sunday that if the US makes a "wrong move" towards Tehran, energy flows in the region would be endangered.

Iranian officials have in the past ruled out using oil as a weapon in Iran's nuclear standoff with the West, but Khamenei's comments suggested Iran could disrupt supplies if pushed.

His remarks, which are likely to unsettle wary oil markets, come days before EU foreign policy Chief Javier Solana is due to deliver a package of incentives agreed by six world powers and designed to persuade Iran to abandon plans to make nuclear fuel.

"If you (the United States) make a wrong move regarding Iran, definitely the energy flow in this region will be seriously endangered," Khamenei, who has the last word in all matters of state, said in a speech which discussed the dispute.

have not been publicly announced, but diplomats have been working on themes ranging from offering nuclear reactors to giving security guarantees.

A date for Solana's visit to Iran to deliver the package has yet to be announced. Iran said the visit was expected in the next few days.

Khamenei did not explicitly refer to enrichment in his speech that marked the anniversary of the death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic. But he said: "We are committed to our national interests and whoever threatens it will experience the sharpness of this nation's anger."

He also praised the efforts of the country's nuclear scientists in developing home-grown nuclear technology as a "brave move" and dismissed the campaign against the Iran's atomic programme.

"Today our nation has taken a step forward and has bravely resisted," he said. "There is no international consensus against Iran's nuclear programme except by some...monopolist countries and this consensus has no value."



All Khamenei (left) at the death anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini, with grandson Hassan Khomeini outside Tehran on Sunday. AP

The US says it wants a diplomatic solution but has refused to rule out military action. Washington has offered to join European countries in talks with Iran about the nuclear programme, but says Iran must first suspend uranium enrichment. Iran has so far rejected the demand, saying enrichment is a national right.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Saturday Iran would consider the proposals from the US, Russia, China, France, Germany and Britain but also insisted that the crux of the package was unacceptable.

The incentives being offered

21 killed in Iraq, deal yet on security jobs

QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA
BAGHDAD, JUNE 4

GUNMEN killed 21 people, including a dozen high school students, after they dragged them off buses northeast of Baghdad. The gunmen spared four Sunni Arabs in one of the worst sectarian atrocities in recent weeks.

The mayor of Qara Tappah, Serwan Shokir, said one person was also wounded in the attack which occurred in the early morning after three mini buses left his town headed for Baqouba—located 60 km northeast of Baghdad. There were 26 people on the buses, including the 12 students who were killed. The students were apparently headed for Baqouba to take exams. Of the dead, 19 were Shi'ite Turkomen and two were Kurds. The four Sunni Arabs who survived were being questioned at Qara Tappah police station, Shokir said.

Parliament was postponed on Sunday after Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki again failed to reach any consensus on candidates for the crucial ministers who will run the country's armed forces and police. Al-Maliki had promised to name candidates for approval by the 275-member parliament despite the disagreement, but was apparently convinced to wait.

Deputy Parliament Speaker Khalid al-Atiya, a Shi'ite, said that due to the large number of candidates and failure to reach any agreement, the political parties decided "to give the prime minister another chance

Haditha lawyer flays US compensation

BAGHDAD: A lawyer who had several relatives among 24 Iraqis allegedly slain by US Marines last fall and is representing kin of other victims complained in a videotape on Saturday that American compensation paid to the families was inadequate. Khaled Salem Rsayef also said US officers accused him and other relatives of lying when they recounted the shootings in their first meeting with the military after the November 19 deaths in the western town of Haditha. He did not say when they met.

In an interview, 9-year-old survivor Iman Walid Abdul-Hameed demanded that those responsible be executed. "Because they hurt us, we want the Americans to be executed," Iman said.

—Associated press

to have more negotiations."

Al-Maliki engaged in last minute negotiations on Sunday with Sunni Arabs, Shi'ites and Kurds in an effort to find a solution. The talks delayed by hours and then suspended the convening parliament, which was to have voted on the candidates for the posts of defence, interior and minister of state for national security. They have been staffed by al-Maliki and one of his deputies in the two weeks since his government of national unity took office.

The Interior Ministry post will go to a Shi'ite, the Defence Ministry to a Sunni Arab in an effort to provide balance on security matters.

—Associated Press

05 JUN 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

West readies 'make or break offer' for Iran

Condoleezza Says Teheran Has Weeks, Not Months, To Respond

Vienna: Major world powers prepared on Friday to deliver a pivotal proposal to Iran combining incentives to halt work that could produce nuclear weapons with a threat of UN Security Council action if it refuses.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Iran had weeks, not months, to respond. "They need to make a choice," she told CNN in an interview. "The international community needs to know if negotiation is a real option."

A European Union diplomat said EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana was on standby to deliver the offer to Iran, pending the result of contacts with Teheran. "We have to wait a little bit. There is a lot of diplomatic traffic going on now with the Iranians on when to go ahead and announce that Solana will go," the diplomat said.

There has been no official reaction so far from Iran. But senior cleric Ahmad Khatami, addressing worshippers at Friday Prayers in Teheran said the Islamic state would not be intimidated into giving up its nuclear drive.

"The Iranian nation is ready to pay any price to protect its right (to nuclear technology)," Khatami said.

Officials who finalised the Iran package at a meeting of United Nations Security Council permanent members plus Germany and the EU in Vienna on Thursday said it included an offer to remove Iran's case from the Security Council.

"We have agreed a set of far-reaching proposals as a basis for discussions with Iran. We believe they offer Iran the chance to reach a negotiated agreement based on cooperation," British foreign secretary Margaret Beckett said in a statement. Seeking to coerce as well as coax Iran, US officials said the world powers had agreed to "measures with teeth"



ONE VOICE: Iranian worshippers shout anti-US slogans during Friday prayers in Teheran

if it spurned the gesture, although officials declined to specify what actions could be taken.

Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov insisted military action against Iran was not on the cards. "I can say unambiguously that all the agreements from yesterday's meetings rule out in any circumstances the use of military force," Lavrov was quoted by RIA news agency as saying.

US officials, while saying diplomacy was their main focus, have refused to rule out armed action against Iran alto-

gether. Russian and Chinese opposition to any trigger for tough sanctions on Iran, arguing that it poses no imminent threat, dragged out talks with Western powers on a package for weeks.

Iranian officials had said in advance they would never barter away the Islamic state's drive to enrich uranium, likening the proposal as akin to exchanging "candies for gold". Iran, the world's No. 4 oil producer, denies seeking a nuclear arsenal. It says its quest for nuclear technology will generate electricity that will not be diverted into bomb making. REUTERS

03 JUN 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Saddam's ex-intelligence chief thrown out of court

Baghdad: The chief judge in Saddam Hussein's trial threw the ousted Iraqi leader's intelligence chief out of court during a heated argument after the defence accused the prosecution of trying to buy testimony from a witness.

The confrontation came on Wednesday as defence lawyers stepped up their attempt to undermine the prosecution case, demanding that all its witnesses be re-examined to determine whether they were telling the truth. The lawyers also said all prosecution documents should be reviewed if it turns out that some Shiites the defendants are accused of killing are alive.

Tension in the court grew when one defence witness, testifying from behind a curtain, claimed that chief prosecutor Jaafar Al Moussawi tried to bribe him to testify against Saddam over a crackdown launched against Shiites in the town of Dujail in the 1980s.

The witness said he and his father were arrested in Dujail but released. He said that in 2004 he met Al Moussawi and recounted his story. Al Moussawi "told me, 'This testimony will not serve the Iraqi people. We want to sentence Saddam to death.'"

"He gave me \$500," the witness said. "He told me to say



It was the second time that Ibrahim, the former chief of the Mukhabarat intelligence agency, has been thrown out of court during the trial, which began in October

that my father was arrested and killed in detention."

Al Moussawi accused the defence of making up the testimony and demanded the witness face criminal charges. "There has been a fabricated attack on the prosecution in the past two days," he said. "It must be determined who recruited him to fabricate his testimony."

When chief judge Raouf Abdel Rahman warned the witness he could be prosecuted if he were lying, Barzan Ibrahim—Saddam's half-brother and one of his seven

co-defendants—stood and chided the judge, telling him he should "be patient."

"Every session you have a lecture," Abdel Rahman snapped, shouting at Ibrahim to sit down.

When Ibrahim argued back, Abdel Rahman shouted, "Get him out of the court!" Three guards then escorted Ibrahim away, one of them holding him by the wrist. It was the second time that Ibrahim, the former chief of the Mukhabarat intelligence agency, has been thrown out of court during

the trial, which began in October last year.

Saddam and his co-defendants face possible execution by hanging if convicted on crimes against humanity in the Dujail crackdown, which was sparked by a 1982 assassination attempt on the then-Iraqi leader. They are accused of arresting hundreds of Dujail families, torturing and killing women and children and killing 148 Shiites who were sentenced to death.

At the start of Wednesday's session, defence lawyers accused one of the prosecution's first witnesses, Ali Al Haidari, of perjury.

In testimony in December, Al Haidari said he was arrested at age 14 in the Dujail sweep and was tortured with electrical shocks and beatings. He also said there was no shooting attack on Saddam in Dujail on July 8, 1982—only celebratory shooting to Saddam's visit.

The defence presented a DVD that showed Al Haidari addressing a 2004 ceremony in Dujail and praising the attack on Saddam as an attempt by "sons of Dujail ... to kill the greatest tyrant in modern history."

"He's ... contradicting his testimony," defence lawyer Ziyad Al Najdawi told the court. AGENCIES

17 MAY 2006

Tehran spanner in pipeline works

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury
Paris, May 16

INDIA MAY have big dreams of meeting energy needs through the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, but French experts warn New Delhi might find Tehran a tricky customer to work with.

Pierre Noel, a leading specialist in the energy sector, said Tehran had a long history of not sticking to its commitments or fulfilling its contracts. To illustrate the point, Noel pointed out Iran's recent U-turn on the pricing of the LNG deal with India. And this was not the first time Iran renegotiated contracts, said Noel,

BEHIND THE NEWS

adding that Tehran acted the same way with Turkey and others.

Moreover, Noel said, Iran had been internally debating its energy policy for decades and with no clear chain of command in place, it was an extremely "unreliable" supplier.

Also, given Iran's nuclear impasse, and the hardening of attitudes in the West towards Tehran, no major international consortium is likely to invest the over 7 billion dollars need-

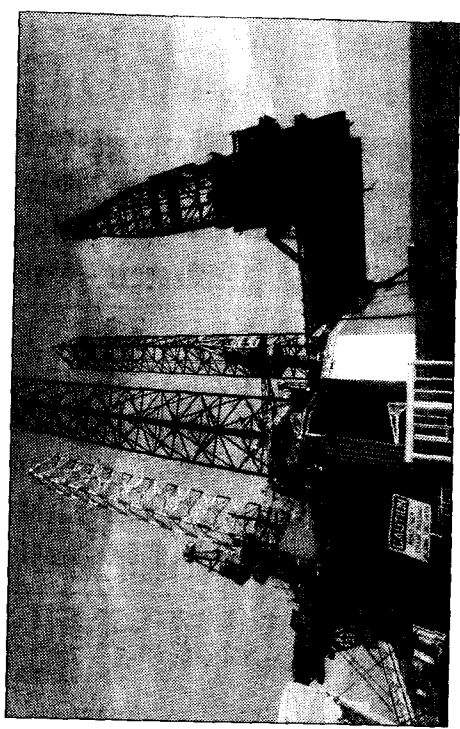
ed to construct the pipeline.

Leading French nuclear policy officials said new evidence, that "cannot be explained" except in the context of completing the nuclear fuel cycle, had been unearthed from Bussehr, site of one of Iran's nuclear power reactors. When foreign ministers of the P-5 nations and Germany meet in London to decide Iran's fate, they may factor in this new information to their debate on whether to offer incentives to Tehran or impose sanctions against it.

If Iran is the problem child No. 1 of the tripartite agreement, Pakistan is not far behind. Pakistan, which is lobbying hard to ensure the Indo-US

civilian nuclear deal does not muster through the US Congress, has a "low-level civil war-like situation" in Baluchistan through which the pipeline is supposed to pass. As a result, the pipeline does not seem to hold out prospects for delivering gas in a hurry.

Officials also said Delhi's pursuit of new energy assets was a correct decision, but its pursuit of assets abroad (as in acquiring oilfields in Sudan or elsewhere) was "okay if it's an industrial policy" to give its quest an international profile. But as a measure of energy security, the acquisitions in Africa and elsewhere "makes no economic sense".



TROUBLED WATERS: Experts say India's acquisition of overseas oil assets make no economic sense as a measure of energy security.

Iran welcomes U.S. offer of talks but rejects condition

Sources close to Supreme Leader yet to express opinion on the issue

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: Iran has welcomed talks with the United States but has objected to Washington's condition that dialogue was possible only if Teheran suspended nuclear enrichment.

"Iran welcomes dialogue under just conditions but [we] won't give up our [nuclear] rights," Iranian state television quoted Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki as saying. "We won't negotiate about the Iranian nation's natural nuclear rights but we are prepared, within a defined, just framework and without any discrimination, to hold dialogue about [our] common concerns," he observed.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Wednesday had declared that Washington would participate in talks after Teheran fully and verifiably suspended its enrichment programme. Later U.S. President George W. Bush said that, "Our message to the Iranians is that one, you won't have a weapon, and two, that you must verifiably suspend any programmes at which point we will come to the negotiating table to work on a way forward."

"No incriminating evidence"

Mr. Mottaki, on his part indicated that Iran was not inclined to suspend uranium enrichment. "There is no evidence proving Iran's diversion [toward nuclear weapons]. Therefore, Iran is interested in continuing this path," he said.

Analysts point out that the final word on the Iranian disposition towards the U.S. statement might not have come so far. They point out that a more complete picture would be available once the head of the Supreme National Security



FOCUS ON IRAN: U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (left), who arrived in Vienna on Thursday for attending the meeting of the U.S., Europe, Russia and China on Iran's nuclear programme, with Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik. - PHOTO: AP

Council, Ali Larijani, who is known to be close to Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader revealed his mind on the subject. Besides, the content of the address by important clerics during Friday prayers would also show how the Iranian religious es-

tablishment was interpreting the U.S. declaration.

Earlier, Kazem Jalali, spokesman for the Foreign Policy and National Security Committee of the Iranian Parliament said that there was a possibility that the U.S. move

might be viewed positively, provided the preconditions that had been imposed were dropped. Responding to the Ms. Rice's statement, China has also voiced its concerns about the conditionality for the talks that had been imposed.

02 JUN 2006

THE HINDU