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India

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, Department of Atomic Energy supplementing Country's COVID infrastructure to fight the pandemic

PIB Delhi, May 07, 2021

Dr Jitendra Singh said that the Department of Atomic Energy also successfully developed reagents for RT-PCR testing, besides powered respirators, Reefer, Portable Plasma sterilization and plasma incineration technology for medical waste. Dr Jitendra Singh was informed by the senior officials that 25 percent of beds numbering about 600 have been reserved for cancer patients infected by COVID in all Tata Memorial Hospitals. Around 5,000 Oxygen Concentrators of 6 LPM are being received by Tata Memorial Centre, TMC as donation from abroad and most of it will be diverted to other Cancer Hospitals of the country.

Dr Jitendra Singh informed that a "Surveillance Study for Covid-19" is presently underway in Collaboration with Tata Memorial Hospital- to determine the genetic susceptibility for the severity of Covid-19. The Minister described this as a unique and one of the rarest studies happening in the world, the results of which will be shared with the global scientific community very soon. Moreover, a Study is also underway to find out about the Oral signs which can predict the severity of Covid-19. Recalling the launch of COVID BEEP in June last year, Dr Jitendra Singh said, the system developed by DAE in collaboration with IIT Hyderabad and ESIC Medical College Hyderabad was India's first indigenous, cost effective, wireless physiological parameters monitoring system for COVID-19 patients. He said, the COVID BEEP is a perfect example of how synergy amongst the reputed institutes of India can offer solutions to most of the challenges faced by the country with minimum cost and thereby make the country Atmanirbhar in true sense.

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1716810>

PM salutes scientists on National Technology Day

PIB Delhi, May 11, 2021

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has praised the scientists and those passionate about technology on National Technology Day. In a series of tweets, the Prime Minister said: "On National Technology Day, we salute the hard work and tenacity of our scientists and those passionate about technology. We remember with pride the 1998 Pokhran Tests, which demonstrated India's scientific and technological prowess.

In any challenging situation, our scientists and innovators have always risen to the occasion and worked to mitigate the challenge. Over the last year, they have worked industriously to fight COVID-19. I appreciate their spirit and remarkable zeal."

pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1717597

Department of Science and Technology sets up centers housing major analytical instruments to increase access to research & testing facilities

PIB Delhi, May 14, 2021

Several centers are being set up by the Department of Science and Technology to house major analytical instruments to provide common services of high-end analytical testing, thus avoiding duplication and reduced dependency on foreign sources. Three such centers set up at IIT Kharagpur, IIT Delhi and BHU Varanasi, are being operated with a transparent, open access policy. These centers initiated under the ‘Sophisticated Analytical & Technical Help Institutes (SATHI)’ scheme of Department of Science and Technology, will address the need for building shared, professionally managed, and strong science and technology infrastructure in the country which is readily accessible to academia, start-ups, manufacturing, industry and R&D labs.

DST is planned to set up five SATHI Centers every year for the next four years. SATHI will address the problems of accessibility, maintenance, redundancy and duplication of expensive equipment in our Institutions, while reaching out to the less endowed organizations in need, e.g., industry, MSMEs, startups and state universities. This will also foster a strong culture of collaboration between institutions and across disciplines to take advantage of developments, innovations and expertise in diverse areas.

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1718670>

China

China’s new nuclear submarine missiles expand range in US: analysts

Minnie Chan

South China Morning Post, May 02, 2021

China’s newly commissioned nuclear-powered submarine is armed with the country’s most powerful submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) capable of hitting the US mainland, according to a military source and analysts. The Type 094A, or Jin-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN), was presented last Friday as part of the celebration to mark the 72nd anniversary of the PLA Navy. It was capable of firing the JL-3, or Julang (Big Wave) SLBM with a range over 10,000km (6,200 miles), a source close to the navy said. “The Type 094A is an upgraded version of the Type 094 that overcame one of the key problems – noise – by improving hydrokinetic and turbulent systems, allowing it to carry the more powerful JL-3,” said the source, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject. “Before the upgrade, the submarine was armed with the inferior JL-2 that could only hit the northeast United States, but now it’s able to cover the whole American continent.”

According to Forbes, before entering striking distance of the continental United States, the Type 094A subs would have to slip past a cordon of US military bases in the Pacific dubbed the first island chain – exposing the subs to detection and attack by American P-8 anti-sub patrol planes, surface warships and other undersea reconnaissance capabilities. Chinese submarines have been dogged by the problem of being too noisy and easy to detect but that has largely been remedied in recent years by Chinese naval engineer Rear Admiral Ma Weiming, who is now taking the lead in

a cutting-edge propulsion technology, according to state media. The JL-3 is able to deliver the same multiple warheads, including nuclear warheads like the JL-2 does, the source added without giving more detail.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3131873/chinas-new-nuclear-submarine-missiles-expand-range-us-analysts>

Admiral Describes Growing Threat from Nuclear-Armed China, Russia

David Vergun
Dod News May 6, 2021

U.S. Strategic Command is responsible for America's nuclear deterrence, using nuclear weapons capable submarines, intercontinental ballistic missiles and strategic bombers. The two-peer nuclear armed nations that have displayed aggressive behaviors are China and Russia. Navy Adm. Charles A. Richard, commander of Stratcom, spoke virtually today about the threat at the Center for Strategic and International Studies Project on Nuclear Issues Capstone Conference. "As a nation, we have not had to consider the implications of engaging in competition through possible crisis or direct armed conflict with a nuclear-capable adversary in nearly three decades," he said. "Now, for the first time in our history, we face two nuclear-capable strategic peer competitors at the same time."

Beijing already has a plausible nuclear employment strategy in the region and is increasingly able to do that at the intercontinental range, he said. The Chinese are deploying large numbers of solid fuel ICBMs, and they also have strategic bombers and submarines. They're well on their way to doubling their nuclear stockpile by the end of the decade, he said. However, one must not simply compare stockpile sizes to address the threat, Richard said. "A nation's stockpile is a very crude measure of its overall strategic capability." There are many other capabilities that must be factored in, he said, such as delivery systems, accuracy, command and control, readiness, posture, doctrine and training.

<https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2597849/admiral-describes-growing-threat-from-nuclear-armed-china-russia/>

What China's rapidly expanding nuclear industry means for the West

Nick Butler
Nikkei Asia, May 9, 2021

Nick Butler is a visiting professor at King's College London and a former senior executive at energy company BP. On Mar. 11, Pakistan inaugurated its most recent and largest civil nuclear power project with the opening of the 1.1-gigawatt plant in Karachi, doubling the capacity of Pakistan's four existing nuclear facilities. A second similar unit is due to come online in the coming months. The event marked a significant step for Pakistan which needs additional capacity from all sources to bolster its existing inadequate power supplies. But even more important was the fact that the plant was built and will be operated by the state-owned China National Nuclear Corp. (CNNC), one of the companies leading Beijing's drive to join the very short list of countries with the capability to build and operate civil nuclear power projects around the world. The development of China's nuclear industry over the last decade has been remarkable. With over 30 new reactors commissioned and another 16 under construction, China is now the main source of growth for nuclear power across the world.

That growth is just the beginning. The objective is to create a closed cycle, self-reliant nuclear

industry within China from the processing of uranium to produce fuel for the reactors through to construction and management of the operating plants. This is being achieved through the adaptation of international technology, in particular from Westinghouse into new Chinese designed reactors. In the process, the Chinese nuclear industry will reduce or eliminate the role of the foreign companies whose capabilities established the first wave of development. The other part of the Chinese strategy is to create an export industry, with the plan focused on a range of countries lacking resources of their own and, in most cases, also lacking the technical skills to develop their own indigenous nuclear skills. The Chinese plants will be low-cost, using techniques such as modular construction to put together reactors which are simpler than many of those being built in the West. The low costs of the export reactors will also be underpinned by Chinese funding through soft loans and generous long-term management contracts.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/What-China-s-rapidly-expanding-nuclear-industry-means-for-the-West>

China-India border tension: PLA's modified rocket launchers filmed on plateau facing India

Liu Zhen

South China Morning Post, May 10, 2021

Digital version of the PLA's truck-mounted PHL-03 long-range multiple rocket launchers deployed to Xinjiang command: CCTV. New design allows the rocket launcher to strike multiple targets simultaneously. The updated version of PHL-03 rocket system has automated computerised fire control systems with China's BeiDou satellite positioning system fitted to the rocket launchers. The updated version of PHL-03 rocket system has automated computerised fire control systems with China's BeiDou satellite positioning system fitted to the rocket launchers. The updated version of PHL-03 rocket system has automated computerised fire control systems with China's BeiDou satellite positioning system fitted to the rocket launchers. China has equipped its border troops facing India with a modified truck-mounted rocket, state media reported. The digital version of the PHL-03 long-range multiple rocket launchers were filmed mass deployed to an artillery battalion of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Xinjiang Military Command, CCTV said at the weekend.

This unit is stationed on the plateau area, at 5,200-metre (17,000-feet) altitude, where the PLA was involved in a deadly clash with Indian troops in June. "This rocket is the main assault equipment of artillery troops, which can be used for speedy deployment and seizing and controlling key regions," the report said. "With its help, the PLA troops will be able to fight in the difficult terrain of plateau, desert and others in all-weather conditions." This self-propelled heavy rocket launcher has 12 tubes of 300mm (12-inch) calibre barrels, with a standard 800kg (1,760-pound) rocket each to cover a large area with concentrated firepower from a distance. It has firing range up to 130km (80 miles), and its eight-wheeled truck has a top speed of 60km/h. The design enables the rocket launcher to be highly mobile and flexible, taking just three minutes to transition from travelling to combat ready, and one minute from standby to emergency mode, CCTV reported.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3132956/china-india-border-tension-plas-modified-rocket-launchers>

Xi extends congratulations on China's first Mars landing

Xinhua, May 15, 2021

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday extended congratulations on the successful landing of China's first probe on Mars. On behalf of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee,

the State Council and the Central Military Commission (CMC), Xi, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the CMC, extended warm congratulations and sincere greetings to all members who have participated in the Mars exploration mission, Tianwen-1, in a congratulatory message. Xi said in the message that the landing marks an important step in China's interstellar exploration and a leap from the exploration of the Earth-Moon system to interplanetary exploration. "The landing left a Chinese mark on Mars for the first time. It is another landmark progress in China's space industry development," said Xi. "Thanks to your courage in face of challenges and pursuit of excellence, China is now among the leading countries in planetary exploration," Xi said in the message. "The country and people will always remember your outstanding achievements." Xi stressed organizing and implementing the roving and scientific exploration on Mars carefully, adhering to the self-reliance in sci-tech development, and pushing forward major space projects including planetary exploration.

He also called for boosting China's strength in space technology and making new and greater contributions to exploring the mysteries of the universe and promoting the noble cause of peace and development of humanity. Vice Premier Han Zheng, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, witnessed the landing at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center. Vice Premier Liu He, also a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, read out the congratulatory message.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-05/15/c_139947396.htm

Pakistan

Pakistan calls for probe into seizure of uranium in India

Dawn, May 9, 2021

Pakistan expressed serious concern over illegal possession of a large quantity of uranium by two unauthorised persons in India and pointed to gaps in state control mechanisms there. "We have noted with serious concern the reports about seizure of more than 7kg natural uranium from unauthorised persons in India," Foreign Office Spokesman Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said. Indian authorities had on Wednesday seized 7.1kg of natural uranium and arrested two persons — Jigar Pandya, 27, and Abu Tahir Afzal Husain Choudhary, 31 — in Nagpur. The seized uranium is worth \$2.9 million.

It is believed that the uranium had been stolen or illegally mined. It was reportedly unprocessed as it had not been refined and converted to "yellow cake". It isn't clear to whom did the two men want to sell it. It is believed that it could have been channelled to the international black market. The very fact that some people stole or illegally mined uranium raises concerns about nuclear safety and security in India. It also indicates the possibility of a nuclear market existing in India that could be connected to international players. "Security of nuclear materials should be the top priority for all countries," Chaudhri said.

"There is a need for thorough investigation of the matter as to how such sizeable quantity of uranium could become available outside any state control and identify the gaps which made this possible," he added. Pakistan did not raise the matter with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, because it has been the government's policy that security of nuclear material is a national responsibility. However, India should report this incident to the IAEA's Incident

and Tracking Data Base mechanism as the uranium could have been trafficked to non-state or state actors or handed over to other rackets. India's nuclear safety and security record is not very impressive. Lax state control, as indicated by the latest seizure of uranium, shows that India still has to go a long way before becoming a responsible nuclear power and be accepted as a member of the Nuclear Supplier Group, a nuclear expert said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1622839>

World's most dangerous fastest-growing nuclear weapons programme

The Nation, May 11, 2021

The former Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee, during his election campaign in February 1998, chauvinistically declared that his government would, "take back that part of Kashmir that is under Pakistan's occupation". Maybe it was just an offensive electoral activity, in which Vajpayee concentrated on manipulating the subject of national security for political gains. But when India declared itself an overt nuclear-armed state, in May 1998, it was evident that India had the offensive aims to openly threaten, deploy and use nuclear weapons against the neighboring countries to achieve its hegemonic interests.

Nowadays, South Asia is categorized by international analysts as one of the unstable regions of the world, where the chances of nuclear brinkmanship are high because of the longstanding rivalry between Pakistan and India. India's vision for regional supremacy, which seeks dominance through coercion and military power, is the main cause of insecurity and volatility in the region. For the last 23 years, Indian politicians, instead of politically engaging its regional rivals, have pursued dangerous delusions of suicidal nuclear warmongering. India's reckless conduct as a so-called prestigious nuclear weapon state is more dangerous than the actual threat of nuclear war.

<https://nation.com.pk/11-May-2021/world-s-most-dangerous-fastest-growing-nuclear-weapons-programme>

USA

US policy not aimed at hostility, but reducing tension with N. Korea: Sullivan

Korea Herald, May 3, 2021

The US policy toward North Korea is not aimed at hostility but reducing tension, the top US security adviser said Sunday, adding the ultimate goal of the policy is to completely denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan added the United States is prepared to engage with North Korea to discuss "practical" steps toward denuclearization.

"Our policy towards North Korea is not aimed at hostility. It's aimed at solutions. It's aimed at ultimately achieving the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," Sullivan said in an interview with ABC News. "And we're prepared to engage in diplomacy towards that ultimate objective

but work on practical measures that can help us make progress along the way towards that goal," he added. The remarks come shortly after North Korea accused US President Joe Biden of making a "big blunder" and threatened the US will find itself in a very difficult situation.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210503000106&ACE_SEARCH=1

Blinken promotes joint efforts to denuclearize N. Korea at G-7 meeting

Korea Herald, May 4, 2021

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for coordinated efforts to denuclearize North Korea on Monday while the top diplomats from the Group of 7 (G7) countries were later scheduled to discuss the North Korea issue. In his bilateral meeting with South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong, the top US diplomat highlighted the importance of regional cooperation in dealing with the North. "Secretary Blinken and Minister Chung stressed their commitment to work together to protect and advance shared security goals, including US-Japan-ROK trilateral cooperation toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," department spokesman Ned Price said of the Blinken-Chung meeting held earlier Monday.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' talks in London. Chung is currently taking part in the G7 meeting as a special guest, along with his counterparts from Australia, India, South Africa and Brunei. In his meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, Blinken again emphasized the need for regional cooperation to denuclearize North Korea. "Secretary Blinken and Minister Motegi shared their concerns about North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs and reaffirmed their commitment to address and resolve these issues through US-Japan-Republic of Korea trilateral cooperation towards denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," Price said in a separate statement. The emphasis on North Korea follows the recent conclusion of the United States' extensive North Korea policy review, which the US earlier said will provide a "new" approach to dealing with the North.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210504000104&ACE_SEARCH=1

U.S. refusing to lift all sanctions on Iran: report

Tehran Times, May 5, 2021

The United States still refusing to lift all the sanctions it has imposed on Iran and this refusal may bring Vienna's nuclear talks to a halt, according to Iran's state TV. The news came amid ongoing nuclear talks between Iran and the P4+1 group of countries in the Austrian capital of Vienna over how to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). During the Vienna talks, Iran has called on the U.S. to lift all the sanctions it has imposed on Iran after signing the JCPOA. However, Press TV said that the U.S. is not considering removing all the sanctions. Citing an informed source on Tuesday, Press TV even said that the United States' continued refusal to terminate all the sanctions it has imposed on Iran will definitely bring the Vienna negotiations on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal to a halt.

The source said Iran is still emphasizing the full implementation of the deal's Article 29 and the termination of all the sanctions related to the nuclear deal and those re-imposed or relabeled during the term of ex-U.S. President Donald Trump.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460609/U-S-refusing-to-lift-all-sanctions-on-Iran-report>

N. Korea continues to build up chemical, biological weapons: US official

Korea Herald, May 5, 2021

North Korea continues to build up its chemical and biological weapons, in addition to its other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) such as nuclear weapons that pose a serious threat to US forces and South Korean allies, a ranking US official said Tuesday. Jennifer Walsh, principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for homeland defense and global security, also said North Korean leader Kim Jong-un may actually use such weapons in case of a conflict on the Korean Peninsula.

"North Korea's continued pursuit of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons jeopardizes international stability and weakens the global nonproliferation regime. These capabilities pose a threat to US forces, allies," said Walsh in a statement submitted to the House Subcommittee on Intelligence and Special Operations. "Given the risk that Kim Jong Un could seek to employ WMD in the course of or to stave off a conflict on the Korean Peninsula, the Joint Force must be ready for any number of WMD-related contingencies that require operating in a CBRN contaminated environment," she added. CBRN stands for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210505000017&ACE_SEARCH=1

N. Korea may give up nukes, but will test US commitment to diplomacy: US experts

Korea Herald, May 5, 2021

North Korea may still be willing to give up its nuclear weapons for the right price, but will likely wait to see how serious and committed the new US administration is to diplomacy, US experts said Tuesday. "I do believe North Korea is committed to complete, verifiable denuclearization, assuming they get the security assurances they want and certainly they need because they're concerned about regime change, and they realize nuclear weapons, indeed, are a deterrent," Joseph DeTrani said in a webinar hosted by the Washington Times Foundation. DeTrani served more than two decades at the Central Intelligence Agency before working as a special US envoy to the six-nation denuclearization negotiations with North Korea.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210505000018&ACE_SEARCH=1

53 Democratic leaders tell Biden to lift Iran sanctions

Tehran Times, May 11, 2021

Fifty-three Democratic Party leaders have sent a letter to U.S. President Joe Biden urging him to rejoin the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. They said Monday that they have “strong support” for an initiative in the Biden administration to return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which former President Donald Trump quit. “Lifting Trump’s bad-faith sanctions - which he explicitly imposed on Iran in order to make a return to the JCPOA next-to-impossible - should not be treated as a concession to Iran, but rather as an effort to restore U.S. credibility and enhance American security,” they wrote, according to The Hill. The U.S. return to the deal, backed by other world’s major power, is yet to materialize in the Biden Democratic administration.

The Democrats argued that Trump’s withdrawal “made America less safe,” saying, “America’s credibility has been severely damaged and its national security damaged.” “The Obama administration did not only prove that diplomacy with Iran works, but it also proved that no other policy tool advances American security more effectively than diplomacy,” they wrote to Biden. “We urge you to continue on this proven path of success.” Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison (D) and Democratic Ohio congressional candidate Nina Turner were among the most notable signatories.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460861/53-Democratic-leaders-tell-Biden-to-lift-Iran-sanctions>

US will address N. Korean human rights and nuclear issues at same time: official

Yonhap

Korea Herald, May 13, 2021

The United States will continue to tackle the North Korean nuclear issue while at the same time pressing for improved human rights conditions, including freedom of religion, in the reclusive state, a senior US official said Wednesday. Daniel Nadel, a senior official from the US Department of State office of international religious freedom, also argued that a push for improved human rights conditions in the North would ensure "better outcomes" by addressing fundamental problems.

"The nuclear issues are real. They are a significant challenge. We intend to address those issues head on, as we have. But there is no trade off between addressing human rights issues or addressing other matters of national security or bilateral concern," he said in a telephonic press conference. "We can do all of these things at once, and in doing so, we both demonstrate the importance of our fundamental principles, but we also make better outcomes, because if we don't address these things in totality, then the possibilities for lasting peace and stability in the region are, in our view, reduced," he added.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210513000143&ACE_SEARCH=1

US alliance with S. Korea key deterrent to N. Korean threats: defense official

Yonhap

Korea Herald, May 13, 2021

A strong alliance between South Korea and the United States is key to deterring threats posed by China and North Korea, a US defense official said Wednesday. Leonor Tomero, deputy assistant secretary of

defense for nuclear and missile defense policy, said North Korea continues to advance its nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capabilities that are designed to strike the US mainland. "North Korea continues its unlawful production of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile capabilities in direct violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions," she said in a written testimony submitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee for a hearing on the day. "North Korea's nuclear capabilities constitute a significant and evolving threat to our allies and its tested ICBMs are designed to strike anywhere within the continental United States," she said.

Tomero noted the North conducted six nuclear tests between 2006 and 2017, along with three ICBM flights tests that demonstrated its ability to reach the US homeland. "North Korea's continued development and deployment of nuclear weapons threatens its neighbors and the United States," she wrote. Tomero said the US was seeking to invest in the alliance to counter threats.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210513000158&ACE_SEARCH=1

Europe

The SPD seeks to reinvent itself

DW, May 05, 2021

This weekend's party conference is to be the official launch of the election campaign and put wind into the SPD's sails. Olaf Scholz is set to be confirmed as the candidate for chancellor. But will the party back him? The SPD's top candidate for chancellor needs to win over the hearts and minds of the party for weeks now, leading Social Democrats have taken left-wing positions on foreign policy and defense issues. They said they wanted to reduce arms spending and payments to NATO, spoke out against the use of armed drones by the Bundeswehr, and demanded that US nuclear weapons located in the west of the country be removed.

None of these demands came from Olaf Scholz, the man who is supposed to lead the party into September's general election, who has been silent. Instead, the 62-year-old, who has served as federal finance minister and vice-chancellor in the coalition with the CDU/CSU since 2018, focuses on what he considers most important: the pandemic and appearing statesman-like. "I am determined to become the next chancellor," he says. "Most citizens know who I am and that I can lead the country. That will boost the Social Democrat cause."

<https://www.dw.com/en/the-spd-seeks-to-reinvent-itself/a-57424276>

German FM calls for full restoration of JCPOA

Tehran Times, May 10, 2021

German Foreign Minister Heiko Mass has called for full restoration of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, saying time is of the essence in the current nuclear negotiations on the deal. The top German diplomat described the Vienna nuclear talks as "tough and laborious" but said they are being pursued in a constructive atmosphere "The negotiations are tough and laborious but all participants are conducting

the talks in a constructive atmosphere,” Maas said on the margins of a meeting with his European Union counterparts in Brussels, according to Reuters.

“However, time is running out. We aim for the full restoration of the Iran nuclear deal as this is the only way to guarantee that Iran will not be able to come into possession of nuclear weapons,” he added. Diplomats from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries as well as the United States are in the Austrian capital of Vienna for a fourth round of talks over how to revive the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Iran has said the Vienna talks are moving in the right direction and negotiators have begun drafting texts for agreement on the JCPOA. “The talks in Vienna have entered the phase of drafting texts in the field of sanctions lifting and nuclear measures,” Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran’s Foreign Ministry, said on Monday.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460802/German-FM-calls-for-full-restoration-of-JCPOA>

Russia

Russia hopes for restoration of JCPOA in ‘initial state’

Tehran Times, May 1, 2021

Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed hope that the 2015 Iran nuclear deal will be restored to its original format. Speaking at a meeting with permanent members of the UN Security Council via videoconference on Friday, the Russian president discussed developments in the Caspian region, which he called “a very important region.” Within this framework, he discussed Iran’s nuclear program as a Caspian Sea country. “Naturally, we understand that one of our neighbors in the Caspian “five” is Iran. There is much going on around its nuclear program. I hope that everything related to the JCPOA will be restored to its initial state and we will be able to build relations with all participants of the Caspian club and implement all our plans, including those in the Caspian region,” Putin said, referring to the Iran nuclear deal by its acronym.

The Russian president said developments in the Caspian Sea are crucially important for Russia. “I mean both in terms of economic activity and interaction with our closest partners and allies. And, of course, we are speaking also about providing security and the interests of Russia in the Caspian region in general,” he pointed out, according to a Kremlin readout. The meeting was attended by Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matviyenko, Deputy Chairman of the Security Council Dmitry Medvedev, Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office Anton Vaino, Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev, Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokolov, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, Federal Security Service Director Alexander Bortnikov, Foreign Intelligence Service Director Sergei Naryshkin and Special Presidential Representative for Environmental Protection, Ecology and Transport Sergei Ivanov.

Putin’s comments came in the midst of nuclear negotiations between Iran and the P4+1 group of countries of which Russia is a member. Diplomats from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries held on

Thursday intensive talks aimed at reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460464/Russia-hopes-for-restoration-of-JCPOA-in-initial-state>

Russia says Vienna talks making progress

Tehran Times, May 4, 2021

The current nuclear talks over Iran's nuclear program in Vienna are moving forward, a senior Russian diplomat said as the third round of the talks were concluded earlier this week. The diplomat, Mikhail Ulyanov, who serves as the Russian envoy to the Vienna talks, said he was surprised that some commentators claimed that the Vienna talks are collapsing. The talks, Ulyanov asserted, are making progress instead.

“Read with surprise comments of some analysts who claim that the Vienna talks on JCPOA are ‘collapsing’. This is wishful thinking of those who are against efforts to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation regime based on NPT. In real life the talks are making progress,” he said on Twitter. Nuclear negotiators from Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal held another meeting earlier this week to discuss the ways to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Ulyanov held a meeting with Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi, who is leading the Iranian negotiating team, hours before the start of the third round of nuclear negotiations. The top Iranian nuclear negotiator said his meeting with Ulyanov was “relatively long.” “During this meeting, the two delegations re-coordinated their positions and stressed the need to maintain the closeness of the positions of the two countries,” Araghchi said in a statement. “The Russian side also reiterated its support for the nuclear deal and the need for the United States to lift sanctions on Iran.”

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460574/Russia-says-Vienna-talks-making-progress>

Prisoner swap not part of Vienna talks, Russia says

Tehran Times, May 5, 2021

Exchanging prisoners between Iran and the United States is not on the agenda of the Vienna nuclear deal talks between Tehran and the P4+1 group of countries, a senior Russian diplomat has said. The comments came against the backdrop of speculations over a potential exchange of prisoners between Iran and the United States amid nuclear deal talks in Vienna.

Earlier on Sunday, the Beirut-based Al-Mayadeen news television reported that the U.S. agreed to release four Iranian nationals accused of bypassing sanctions and unblock \$7 billion of Iranian assets in the U.S in exchange for Iran releasing four American citizens detained in Iran on charges of conducting espionage for the U.S. The Biden administration wanted to avoid paying any sums of frozen Iranian money during the negotiations but the Iranian side insisted on the necessity of releasing part of the Iranian funds, according to Al Mayadeen. Al Mayadeen also reported that similar security negotiations between the Iranian and British sides were underway with the British side discussing with

Iran the release of 400 million pounds of frozen Iranian funds in the UK. But Mikhail Ulyanov, who serves as the Russian envoy to the nuclear deal talks, said the issue of detainees was not on the table in the Vienna talks.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460610/Prisoner-swap-not-part-of-Vienna-talks-Russia-says>

Russia says Iran's deal with IAEA likely to be extended Politics

Tehran Times, May 11, 2021

A top Russian diplomat at the Vienna nuclear talks has said that a February deal between Iran and the UN nuclear watchdog will “most likely” be extended. Russian ambassador to the Vienna-based international organizations Mikhail Ulyanov told Laura Rozen that the deal has a good chance to be extended. “I think the February understandings most likely have a good chance to be extended,” he said, adding, “But, as of the moment, our task is different- we need to reach an agreement on restoration of JCPOA by 21 May.” The Russian diplomat was referring to a February deal between Iran and the IAEA which allowed the latter to continue its monitoring activities in Iran ahead of the implementation of a parliamentary nuclear law obligating the Iranian government to strictly restrict cooperation with the IAEA in case the West failed to lift sanctions.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460827/Russia-says-Iran-s-deal-with-IAEA-likely-to-be-extended>

West Asia

Saudi Arabia sets the stage for tactical outreach to Iran

Tehran Times, May 5, 2021

In a dramatic turnabout, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler has called for better ties with Iran but is this renewed interest in mending ties between Tehran and Riyadh genuine or a tactical shift necessitated by developments in the international arena? Iranian analysts and news media outlets have attempted to provide answers to this question over the past few weeks after a wave of speculations began in the wake of the emergence of several press reports in Western media suggesting that officials from Iran and Saudi Arabia held a direct meeting in Baghdad for the first time in years. At the official level, the Baghdad talks were neither repudiated nor confirmed by Iran and Saudi Arabia, though some Iranian officials hinted that the reports of talks were true.

While the controversy over the Baghdad talks was still going on, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman further inflamed the debate by offering an olive branch to Iran after more than five years of tough rhetoric against the country.

“At the end of the day, Iran is a neighboring country. All we ask for is to have a good and distinguished relationship with Iran. We do not want the situation with Iran to be difficult. On the contrary, we want it to prosper and grow as we have Saudi interests in Iran, and they have Iranian interests in Saudi Arabia, which is to drive prosperity and growth in the region and the entire world,” the Saudi crown prince said in a recent televised interview.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460619/Saudi-Arabia-sets-the-stage-for-tactical-outreach-to-Iran>

Qatar in contact with U.S., Iran to encourage them to have positive dialogue

Tehran Times, May 7, 2021

The Qatari foreign minister said that in separate contacts with the U.S. and Iranian governments, Doha is urging both sides to take an effective approach to advancing negotiations to revive the 2015 nuclear deal. “We have strong and strategic relations with Washington and good relations with Iran, and we do not want tensions to increase, which will have a negative impact on Qatar and the region,” Al-Thani said. He said that there are ongoing contacts with the United States and Iran, and Qatar encourages them to participate in the negotiations effectively.

In recent weeks, talks have been held in Vienna within the Joint Commission of the JCPOA to revive the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) through a return of the legally-binding commitments. The process of lifting sanctions against Iran by the United States and Iran's efforts to restore its nuclear compensatory measures will be examined.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460678/Qatar-in-contact-with-U-S-Iran-to-encourage-them-to-have-positive>

Iran

Iran, P4+1 group of countries hold talks in Vienna

Tehran Times, May 1, 2021

Nuclear negotiators from Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal held another meeting to discuss the latest developments related to the issue of reviving the nuclear deal. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi led the Iranian negotiating team at the talks, which have been moving forward since they started in April. The main objective of the Vienna talks is to reach an agreement on how to revive the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). At the start of the meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission, Araghchi said participants will discuss the outcome of the talks that were held at the level of expert groups. “After this meeting, delegations will return to capitals,” the top Iranian nuclear negotiator said.

Araghchi held a “relatively long” meeting with the Russian envoy to the talks, Mikhail Ulyanov. “During this meeting, the two delegations re-coordinated their positions and stressed the need to maintain the closeness of the positions of the two countries,” Araghchi said in a statement. “The

Russian side also reiterated its support for the nuclear deal and the need for the United States to lift sanctions on Iran.” Ulyanov said the Saturday meeting of the JCPOA parties will “take stock of intermediate results of the Vienna talks on full restoration of the nuclear deal.” He also said that all other JCPOA participants, except for Iran, held an informal meeting with the U.S negotiating delegation in Vienna to discuss the full restoration of the JCPOA. “JCPOA participants held today informal consultations with the #US delegation at the Vienna talks on full restoration of the nuclear deal (without #Iran who is still not ready to meet with US diplomats),” the Russian diplomat said on Twitter hours before Iran and the P4+1 group of countries hold another meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460470/Iran-P4-1-group-of-countries-hold-talks-in-Vienna>

Parliament only approves removal of all sanctions

Tehran Times, May 1, 2021

In a tweet sent out on Saturday, the spokesman for the Energy Committee of the parliament emphasized that in the issue of lifting sanctions, the Islamic Republic of Iran's official position is the removal of all sanctions so that Iran would be able to fully benefit the economic effects of lifting those sanctions. Malek Shariati tweeted, "In lifting the sanctions, Iran's official position is the lifting of all sanctions and the full economic benefit of Iran, not the suspension of some of them, but the United States divides the sanctions into three categories: 1. Removable (cancel + suspend) 2. Indelible (terrorism and human rights) 3. Ambiguous and negotiable (like a non-nuclear central bank). The parliament only approves complete lifting of sanctions."

For the past few weeks, Iran has been in talks with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Actions (JCPOA) parties following the U.S. attempt to return to the JCPOA in Vienna. The parties seek to revive the nuclear deal and to return Iran to its obligations. Iran has explicitly stated that it will return to its obligations only if the sanctions are fully lifted and verified.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460489/Parliament-only-approves-removal-of-all-sanctions>

Iran, P4+1 reach two drafts, says spokesman

Tehran Times, May 4, 2021

In his weekly press briefing on Monday, Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gave updates on the Vienna negotiations. He also welcomed the change of tone in Saudi Arabia yet called for a change of behavior. Khatibzadeh began his press briefing by stating his condolences for the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Ali (PBUH), which marks the 21st day of Ramadan. Responding to various questions about the Vienna negotiations and their current status, he said that the two sides have drafted two texts about sanctions removal and the nuclear issue. They are ironing out the disputes.

"We believe that all the sanctions that Trump has imposed on Iran are related to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and all of them aimed at destroying the JCPOA and

preventing Iran from benefiting from the deal," the spokesman noted. He said that the lifting of financial, banking, oil, and public and sector sanctions is a matter of course, and what is being discussed is a matter of disputes. The diplomat clarified Iran's position on the issue of sanctions, stating that the ministry's position on the subject of sanctions is the establishment's position, which is the lifting of all sanctions imposed on Iran in the post-JCPOA era.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460576/Iran-P4-1-reach-two-drafts-says-spokesman>

The Leader assigns the framework of the negotiations: Rabiei

Tehran Times, May 4, 2021

In his weekly press briefing, Ali Rabiei, spokesman for the Iranian government, stated that the Leader of the Islamic Revolution had assigned the framework for the Vienna negotiations. Responding to a question about sanctions on individuals and entities, the spokesman said that Iran's position in the negotiations has been clear. The position is based on the framework assigned by the Leader. According to Rabiei, the negotiating team is working hard and in utter seriousness to achieve the agenda assigned by Ayatollah Khamenei.

He also noted that the criterion of the obligations for all sides is the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). "According to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the U.S. government is entirely responsible for fulfilling its obligations, and therefore the domestic policy of the United States is not the subject of our attention. There are also disagreements over the lifting of sanctions list, but we have managed to reduce these disagreements, and consultations and talks are ongoing," the spokesman remarked. According to Saeed Khatibzadeh, the spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, the Joint Commission will reconvene on Friday to resume talks about reviving the nuclear deal.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460581/The-Leader-assigns-the-framework-of-the-negotiations-Rabiei>

Sanctions are broken, says president

Tehran Times, May 5, 2021

Speaking to his cabinet on Wednesday, Iranian president Hassan Rouhani said that the sanctions are broken and soon to be lifted. He also stated that the people are witnessing the result of their resistance in Vienna. "As the head of the executive branch, I declare in front of the people that the sanctions have been broken, and if we stand together, the sanctions will be lifted soon," Rouhani said, stressing that the other side has no choice but to return to all of its JCPOA commitments.

He also praised Seyed Abbas Araghchi and his negotiating team, saying, "What our negotiators accomplished in Vienna in terms of sanctions was a major accomplishment, and if the other side completely returns to the rule of law, its obligations, and [UN Security Council] Resolution 2231, I believe things will be resolved soon." The president affirmed that the talks are proceeding in the right framework and direction. He clarified that nearly a year before the historic Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed in 2015, Iran and six world powers were on the verge of reaching a

nuclear deal, but Israel and some reactionary countries in the region advised the U.S. to hold off for a few months.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460620/Sanctions-are-broken-says-president>

Khatibzadeh: Washington's return to JCPOA dependent on U.S. itself

Tehran Times, May 7, 2021

In an interview with MSNBC's Morning Joe on Friday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh stated that progress has been made in the talks, though not sufficient, but good enough to start drafting an understanding between all sides. "We are not moving fast, as there are differences over a few issues," he said. The diplomat noted that the Vienna negotiations is not a place for bargaining and "give and take."

"All the give and take and bargaining was concluded in July 2015," he reminded the United States. Khatibzadeh explained that Iran and P4+1 is in Vienna to discuss how the U.S can get back to full compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and to materialize "compliance for compliance plan." He noted that it is too soon to make any judgments. "I think the return of the United States to the JCPOA depends on the U.S itself," the spokesman remarked. He added that it's high time for Joe Biden to make a political decision, whether to instruct its administration to stick to the failed Donald Trump policy, or distance from that. Responding to a question about what is at stake if all sides fail to reach an agreement, the spokesman said that now it's the time to focus on reviving the JCPOA. He noted that it is too soon to jump to conclusions, thinking that the deal might fail or not. "I think there is an ample hope that we can revive the deal." The diplomat remarked.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460672/Khatibzadeh-Washington-s-return-to-JCPOA-dependent-on-U-S-itself>

Iran to restrict IAEA access by May 24 if no progress made in Vienna talks, MP warns

Tehran Times, May 8, 2021

A senior Iranian lawmaker warned that Iran will further restrict the UN nuclear watchdog's access to its nuclear facilities within few weeks if the West failed to make progress in the Vienna nuclear deal talks. The lawmaker, Mojtaba Zolnouri, who is the head of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said the nuclear talks in Vienna have so far failed to produce a concrete result and they have become "draining."

"We hope that the lock of negotiations will be broken and the path will continue quickly," the lawmaker said. But at the same time, he warned, if this lock is not broken by May 24, Iran will implement a parliamentary nuclear law obligating the Iranian government to rapidly increase nuclear activities and restrict the International Atomic Energy Agency's access to Iranian nuclear facilities. The nuclear law, officially called "Strategic Action to Lift Sanctions and Protect the Nation's Rights," outlines a step-by-step strategy for Iran to increase nuclear activities in case the West failed to honor its obligations under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“If this lock is not broken, according to the strategic law for lifting sanctions, the opportunity for the West to fulfill its obligations will end on May 24, and the Islamic Republic of Iran will take action in accordance with this law,” Zolnouri told Tasnim. He said the first thing Iran will do in case the Vienna talks failed is the non-implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460695/Iran-to-restrict-IAEA-access-by-May-24-if-no-progress-made-in>

Zarif calls on U.S. to end JCPOA lawlessness

Tehran Times, May 9, 2021

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Saturday called on the United States to end its lawlessness by rejoining a 2015 nuclear deal abandoned by former President Donald Trump on May 8, 2018. Zarif recalled how the controversy over the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), started in the first place. The foreign minister called Trump a “buffoon” who reneged on U.S. obligations under the nuclear deal. “As we try to revive JCPOA in Vienna, it's necessary to remember how it all started. 3 years ago today, a disgraced buffoon violated US obligations under JCPOA & UNSCR 2231. Today, @POTUS has to decide whether U.S. continues lawlessness or adheres to law. Onus is on U.S., not Iran,” the chief Iranian diplomat said on Twitter.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460742/Zarif-calls-on-U-S-to-end-JCPOA-lawlessness>

My administration will respect JCPOA, says presidential hopeful

Tehran Times, May 8, 2021

In a press briefing on Saturday, Saeed Mohammad, the former director of the Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters and a presidential hopeful, stated that his future administration will respect the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as it has been ratified by the parliament and the United Nations Security Council. “The JCPOA was an agreement between Iran and the P5+1 that, despite the many problems of the deal, was legally signed between Iran and its member states and was approved by the United Nations Security Council and the Iranian Parliament, which we respect,” he said.

Mohammad stated that the Iranian nation have faced many problems over the last few years because the United States left the deal unilaterally, and now the Islamic Republic has set two conditions for Washington’s return to the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). “The first condition is for the United States must return to the deal and it be observed by other countries; and the second condition is that we must verify these measures. And if the other side commits (to its obligations), we will (also) remain committed to the JCPOA. We are waiting for the results of the Vienna talks, which should take place within the framework drawn by the Leader,” he remarked.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460726/My-administration-will-respect-JCPOA-says-presidential-hopeful>

IAEA: Iran's enriched uranium is up to 63%

Tehran Times, May 13, 2021

The United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) announced on Tuesday that the uranium samples they have received from the Natanz nuclear site was enriched to up to 63%.

According to Reuters, which has obtained the IAEA report, "The agency's analysis of the ES (environmental samples) taken on 22 April 2021 shows an enrichment level of up to 63% U-235, which is consistent with the fluctuations of the enrichment levels (described by Iran)."

Tuesday's report said the Islamic Republic was now feeding the tails from the IR-4 cascade into a cascade of 27 IR-5 and 30 IR-6s centrifuges to refine uranium to up to 5%. Iran announced its plan to enrich uranium to up to 60 percent in April, right after the sabotage act at the Natanz nuclear site by Israel, calling it "a response to the Zionists' nuclear terrorism."

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460864/IAEA-Iran-s-enriched-uranium-is-up-to-63>

IAEA inspected Iran nuclear facilities three times a month: report

May 14, 2021

According to Bloomberg, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has conducted three-snap inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities a month, marking a record. Last year, the global nuclear watchdog conducted three surprise inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities every month. According to the report published by Bloomberg on Friday, one-fifth of the IAEA's 161 surprise inspections worldwide in 2020 were from Iran's nuclear facilities. The report said the number of inspections by the IAEA inspectors in Iran in 2020 is almost close to the record of visits in 2018.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460892/IAEA-inspected-Iran-nuclear-facilities-three-times-a-month-report>

East Asia

North Korea

N. Korea says Biden 'made big blunder,' warns of 'worse crisis beyond control'

Yonhap

Korea Herald, May 2, 2021

North Korea said Sunday that US President Joe Biden made a "big blunder" after he called Pyongyang's nuclear program a serious threat, warning the US will face a "worse and worse crisis beyond control." Kwon Jong-gun, director general of the Department of US Affairs of the North's Foreign Ministry, made the remarks after Biden pledged in his first congressional address last week to work with allies to address "serious threats" from the North and Iran through diplomacy and stern deterrence.

"It is certain that the US chief executive made a big blunder in the light of the present-day viewpoint," Kwon said. "Now that what the keynote of the US new DPRK policy has become clear, we will be compelled to press for corresponding measures, and with time the US will find itself in a very grave situation." DPRK stands for the North's official name, Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The official also said that the US "will face worse and worse crisis beyond control in the near future if it is set to approach the DPRK-US ties, still holding on the outdated policy from Cold War-minded perspective and viewpoint." "Diplomacy" and "stern deterrence," which Biden pledged to use to address threats from the North, are "a spurious signboard for covering up its hostile acts" and "a means for posing nuclear threats" to the North, respectively, the official said.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210502000026&ACE_SEARCH=1

Pyongyang slams Washington, Seoul after US completes NK policy review

Ahn Sung-mi

Korea Herald, May 2, 2021

North Korea lashed out at South Korea and the US, upping the ante as the Biden administration announced the completion of its monthslong policy review on how to deal with a nuclear-armed Pyongyang. The North released three heated statements directed at the allies on Sunday via its state-run Korea Central News Agency. It attacked US President Joe Biden for labeling North Korea a serious threat, calling the remark a "big blunder," while condemning South Korea for failing to stop activists from launching anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the border.

Kwon Jong-gun, director general of the North's Foreign Ministry's Department of US Affairs, said Biden's remark was "intolerable," referring to the president's speech to the US Congress last week in which he said nuclear programs in North Korea and Iran posed threats and pledged to use "diplomacy as well as stern deterrence."

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210502000160&ACE_SEARCH=1

South Korea

Moon's leaflet stance effort to manage NK ties before summit with Biden: experts

Ahn Sung-mi

Korea Herald, May 11, 2021

In a speech marking the start of his final year in office, President Moon Jae-in issued a strongly worded statement, apparently condemning an activist group for sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the inter-Korean border. "It is never desirable to dampen inter-Korean relations by violating inter-Korean agreements and current laws. I stress that the government has no choice but to strictly enforce the laws," Moon said Monday in a televised speech.

While the president did not specifically say which activities violated the agreements or the laws, it was apparent that Moon was targeting Park Sang-hak, a well-known North Korean defector who claimed to have dispatched propaganda leaflets into the North in defiance of a new law that criminalizes such actions. Since last year, the Moon administration has carried out a broad campaign to stop leafleting and also enacted the anti-leaflet law, but the president has barely mentioned the topic in public. The rare mention of it in his 20-minute speech, according to experts, can be seen as an effort to stably manage the Korean Peninsula situation to prevent Pyongyang from engaging in provocation ahead of the crucial summit between the US and Korea, where the future policy direction toward the recalcitrant regime hangs in the balance. “If the Korean government responds to the leaflet-launch issue passively, it could provide a pretext for North Korea to take action that could aggravate inter-Korean relations. And as a result, there is a possibility that the current administration couldn’t do anything to (revive) inter-Korean ties until the term ends,” said Cheong Seong-chang, a senior fellow at the Sejong Institute.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210511000854&ACE_SEARCH=1

S. Korea, New Zealand share concerns over Japan's Fukushima water

Yonhap

Korea Herald, May 11, 2021

Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong and his New Zealand counterpart Nanaia Mahuta held telephone talks on Tuesday and shared concerns about Japan's planned release of contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear plant, the ministry said. Last month, Tokyo approved a plan to dump more than 1 million tons of radioactive water from the wrecked nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean, sparking strong criticism from its local fishing industry and neighboring countries.

During the talks, Chung expressed concerns about the plan, and stressed the importance of the verification by international organizations, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, according to the ministry. Mahuta also mentioned worries about Japan's plan among island nations in the Pacific, vowing to continue consultations with the IAEA, it added.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210511001041&ACE_SEARCH=1

Op-ed

The Zarif tape shows why Biden should abandon reviving the Iran nuclear deal

John R. Bolton

Washington Post, May 3, 2021

John R. Bolton served as national security adviser under President Donald Trump and is the author of “The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir.” A recording of Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif that leaked last week remains unverified, but his apology on Sunday and a key Iranian official’s dismissal provide confidence in its accuracy. Considerable ink has been spilled over whether former secretary of state John F. Kerry at some point leaked classified U.S. information (he

denies it) to Zarif about Israeli strikes in Syria. Far more significant, however, is Zarif's assertion that he learned sensitive Iranian information from Kerry. This from the Iranian diplomat who would be Tehran's chief negotiator as the Biden administration ill-advisedly moves to revive the Obama-era nuclear deal with Iran.

Remarkably, Zarif claims he was unaware of substantial increases in Iranian military activity in Syria that prompted the Israeli strikes in question. According to the Financial Times, after listening to three hours of the seven-hour recording that had been intended for an oral history project, "Kerry told Zarif that Iran Air flights to Syria had increased sixfold, a clear indication they were being used by the military to support Damascus in its conflict with the opponents of the Assad regime." When Zarif asked Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani about the flights, Soleimani blew him off, saying, "if Iran Air is 2 per cent more secure than [another airline], Iran Air must be used even if this inflicts 200 per cent costs on diplomacy."

https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/iran-nuclear-bomb-design-capability/2021/05/14/a47e75cc-b4f8-11eb-ab43-bebdc5a0f65_story.html

Fourth round of talks on reviving Iran nuclear deal to resume in Vienna

Karen DeYoung

Washington Post, May 6, 2021

U.S. negotiators return to Vienna late this week for more talks with Iran over a return to the 2015 nuclear deal, unsure of whether they are on the brink of agreement or headed toward a prolonged, and possibly unsuccessful, slog of extended negotiations. The indirect talks, now entering their fourth round, "have been serious, the mood has been constructive," a senior State Department official said Thursday. "We have to see whether the next round actually moves forward" or Iran continues to make what the official called "unrealistic demands." "We think that it's doable, because it's not rocket science. It's not a new deal," said the official, who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity under rules set by the State Department. "It's reviving one that has been undermined over the last several years." "If Iran makes that political determination that it is not going to ask for more" than U.S. compliance with the deal requires, "and it's not going to do less in terms of its nuclear commitments. then it can be done relatively quickly."

But the two sides, on Iranian insistence talking indirectly through the other signatories to the agreement — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — still disagree on what compliance means, and what it would take to achieve it.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/iran-nuclear-talks-resume/2021/05/06/f1babbee-ae99-11eb-b476-c3b287e52a01_story.html

Stolen records show Iran overcoming key hurdles in 2003 quest for a nuclear bomb, book says

Joby Warrick

Washington Post, May 14, 2021

The nuclear weapon that Iran sought to build in the early 2000s was based on designs that were both innovative and original, according to a new book that warns that Tehran's scientists could produce a bomb quickly if they acquire the necessary fissile material and an order from the country's leaders to do so. Newly examined technical documents stolen from inside Iran in 2018 reveal that the country's top-secret weapons program was preparing for a "cold test" of key components for a nuclear bomb by late 2003, and could have quickly progressed to true nuclear detonations.

Work on an Iranian nuclear weapon was halted in 2003, but by then Iran's scientists had mastered nearly all the technical challenges of bombmaking and needed only a reliable source of fissile fuel — either enriched uranium or plutonium — authors David Albright and Sarah Burkhard write in "Iran's Perilous Pursuit of Nuclear Weapons," scheduled for publication next week. An advance copy of the book was provided to The Washington Post. The release of the book comes amid intense diplomatic maneuvering in Vienna, as U.S. and Iranian officials negotiate reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. Supporters of the agreement say the rekindled accord would put the brakes on Iran's production of enriched uranium, which soared after President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the pact three years ago. Critics note that Iran could quickly amass a bomb's worth of fissile material after the deal's key restrictions start to expire, beginning as early as 2025.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/john-bolton-zarif-tape-iran/2021/05/03/28ddd0f4-ac3b-11eb-b476-c3b287e52a01_story.html

World/Misc

G7 foreign ministers urge N. Korea to return to dialogue

Yonhap

Korea herald, May 6, 2021 -

The top diplomats of the Group of Seven (G7) countries on Wednesday urged North Korea to return to talks on ending its nuclear programs, while also urging Pyongyang to engage in inter-Korean dialogue. The foreign ministers also expressed their support for US efforts to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula diplomatically.

"We call on the DPRK to refrain from provocative actions and to engage in a diplomatic process with the explicit goal of denuclearization. We remain committed to the goal of complete, verifiable and irreversible abandonment of all of the DPRK's unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions," they said in a joint statement, issued at the end of the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' meeting in London. DPRK stands for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the North's official name. "We welcome the readiness of the United States to continue its efforts in that regard and we remain committed to providing support," said the joint communique. The London meeting involved the top diplomats of G7 countries, including US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, as well as those of South Korea, India, Australia and Brunei, who took part by invitation.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210506000128&ACE_SEARCH=1

Think Tanks

How many nuclear weapons does the United Kingdom have in 2021?

Hans M. Kristensen, Matt Korda

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, May 13, 2021

Of all the nuclear weapon states, the United Kingdom has moved the furthest toward establishing a minimum nuclear deterrent. The United Kingdom has a stockpile of approximately 225 nuclear warheads, of which up to 120 are operationally available for deployment on four Vanguard-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs). This estimate is based on publicly available information regarding the size of the British nuclear arsenal, conversations with UK officials, and analysis of the nuclear forces structure. The SSBNs, each of which has 16 missile tubes, constitute the United Kingdom's sole nuclear platform, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) comprise its sole nuclear delivery system. The United Kingdom is the only nuclear weapon state that operates a posture with a single deterrence system

<https://thebulletin.org/premium/2021-05/nuclear-notebook-how-many-nuclear-weapons-does-the-united-kingdom-have-in-2021/>

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Indian Pugwash Society welcomes research articles from students, researchers and faculties on Space, Missile, nuclear technology, WMD proliferation, arms control, disarmament, export controls and other related issues. Articles should be crisply written and should address contemporary debates in the policy arena. Manuscripts submitted for the consideration of the Indian Pugwash Society should be original contributions and should not have been submitted for consideration anywhere else. For further assistance, please contact us at: indianpugwashsociety@gmail.com

The Indian Pugwash Society aims to promote the study, discussion, and knowledge of and to stimulate general interest in, and to diffuse knowledge in regards to problems relating on WMD proliferation, arms control, disarmament, space security, export controls, nuclear technology and other related issues. This newsletter is part of the project "Emerging Nuclear Order in Asia: Implications for India" sanctioned to us by Department of Atomic Energy-Board of Research in Nuclear Sciences (DAE-BRNS).

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