

Iran says it has a right to continue developing its nuclear programme

Iranian president criticises accusation of hindering inspections

The president of Iran has claimed that his country was under no moral obligation to stop enriching uranium in response to a possible reprimand by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The IAEA has received a draft resolution which puts pressure on Iran to be more forthcoming about its nuclear programme, which has existed for 20 years but was only made public two years ago.

The draft, authored by Germany, France and the UK, is expected to be adopted by the IAEA within a matter of days. While it reprimands Iran for its nuclear policy, it does not recommend sanctions or other forms of punishment.

Iranian president Mohammad Khatami responded with some ambiguity. "We have no moral commitment anymore to suspend uranium enrichment", he told the Associated Press. "Of course, we don't declare that we want to do something".

However, he rejected any suggestion that Iran would consider withdrawing from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and said that the treaty gives Iran the right to have a nuclear programme for peaceful purposes, such as generating electricity.

"A resolution that denies us of our definite right (to have a non-military nuclear programme will not be valid", he said. "We will not accept it."

He characterised the draft as being "counterproductive for the continuance of co-operation" and suggested that Iran may consider halting some of its business dealings



President Mohammad Khatami says Iran's nuclear programme is legitimate

with Germany, France and Britain.

The draft's main complaint about Iran is that it has not co-operated fully on nuclear inspections. Bill Brill, US Ambassador to the UN in Vienna, told the BBC that Iran's behaviour suggested that it had something to hide.

"People who are trying to produce electricity for light bulbs don't engage in this kind of behaviour", he said.

Iran has claimed that the authors of the draft resolution have acted under pressure from the United States.

Saddam had no links with terror group over the 11-S attacks

A commission investigating the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States said it cannot find any evidence that Iraq gave assistance to al-Qaeda. The commission made its statement before it began its final two-day public session. It contradicts remarks made by the US vice-president earlier this week about Saddam Hussein's "long-established ties" with al-Qaeda. The 11 September attacks killed nearly 3,000 people after hijacked planes were flown by al-Qaeda members into the New York World Trade Centre and the Pentagon.

The statement called Overview of the Enemy was prepared by commission staff and according to the BBC contains "initial findings to present to the public on the nature of the enemy that carried out the 11 September attacks". It paints a picture of a range of missed opportunities which will make the Bush ad-

ministration feel uneasy. It outlines the roots of al-Qaeda and its activities and claims Bin Laden had looked at the possibility of working with Iraq, even though he was opposed to Saddam's secular regime. According to the statement a senior Iraqi intelligence officer had met Bin Laden in 1994 who wanted help with training and weapons. "There have been reports that contacts between Iraq and al-Qaeda also occurred after Bin Laden had returned to Afghanistan, but they do not appear to have resulted in a working relationship. Two senior Bin Laden associates have adamantly denied that any ties existed between al-Qaeda and Iraq. We have no credible evidence that Iraq and al-Qaeda co-operated on attacks against the United States," says the statement according to the BBC.

The statement does say that al-Qaeda remains a threat as it at-

tempts to launch "chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attacks." It also highlights that the terror group was founded in the late 1980's and it relied on a fundraising system rather than through Bin Laden's personal fortune. It states that there is no convincing evidence that any government financially supported al-Qaeda before the 11 September attacks.

The commission heard from further witnesses this week including several of the federal government's top law and intelligence experts. Also expected to testify in public will be top military officials, including General Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which will be his second appearance before the body. In April it spoke in private to President George W Bush and Dick Cheney. A final report on the commission's findings is due out on 28 July.

SURVEY

Women in Spain want to have more children says survey

A study has revealed that about two out of three women in Spain want more children. The survey by the Centre of Sociological Investigations (CIS) showed that due to economic reasons and work commitments they were unable to have more children. The study also revealed that 67% of those quizzed blamed the cost of living as the main reason for not having more children. The study quizzed 1,532 women of various ages between 20 and 45 years during a one month period in December last year and January this year. In an ideal situation 38% of the women who took part in the survey wanted three children, and nearly 13% wanted two, while 11.5% wanted four children. Over half of the women, nearly 58% responded that they would have two children and 15% would prefer to have one child. Only 13% aspired to have three children. The study also showed that women might achieve their goal of having more children if measures were in place to help them such as economic help, an increase in nursery's in places of work and part time work for women. Spain is a country with the lowest birth rate and an average of 1.22 children per family. The survey revealed that 50% of those interviewed were involved with caring for a child while 40% of the women spoke of raising their children together. The survey was carried out between 8 December 2003 and 7 of January 2004.



ZIMBABWE

President's family has Aids

Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe has claimed that members of his family had been affected by the Aids virus. He made the revelation during his country's first conference on the disease claiming it was "one of the greatest challenges facing our nation" but not impossible to beat. However, critics of his government say that the issue is overshadowing the country's economic and social problems. According to figures as much as 3,000 people a week die of Aids-related illnesses. The number of HIV/Aids cases in Zimbabwe rose to about 1.8 million in 2003.

LAW

Muslim school girl ordered to wear uniform

A British judge has ordered a Muslim girl to dress in the uniform of her school. The judgement was made in the High Court to decide if the Muslim school girl could attend her school wearing traditional religious costume covering her head or if she was obliged to wear uniform. The judgement was made after Shabina Begum had not attended her school since September 2002 claiming they were denying her educational and religious rights. But the judge said school uniform was multicultural and this was the reason why he moved in favour of Denbigh School in Luton.



PROBE

Investigation into bomb blast opens

A Spanish parliamentary commission to investigate the Madrid train blast that killed 191 has held its first meeting. It has two months to find out the exact course of events between the 11 March bombings and the general elections three days later. It has the power to call anyone for questioning including the former President of the Spanish Government Jose Maria Aznar. The 16-member commission has been given an extensive mandate in order to satisfy the demands of all of Spain's main political parties. Ten bombs exploded on four trains in the centre of Madrid.