

Pakistan determined to get nuke power: Kasuri

... as they should

Indo-Asian News Service
July 12, 2006

Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri has declared Islamabad is determined to go the nuclear route to meet its energy needs whether or not it gets a deal similar to the India-US nuclear agreement.

"We have the capacity, the infrastructure and the ability to do it, and we'll do it," he said after a lecture at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on Tuesday. "Only it may take a little longer if US does not accept its plea."

But Kasuri was confident that as a long-time friend, the US would buy its argument that as a declared nuclear power with the means of delivery, Pakistan itself would not like to divert sensitive nuclear technology to others as feared.

Pakistan can also make a tremendous contribution to international non-proliferation efforts provided it was regarded as a partner and not as a target, he said seeking imaginative ways to bring Islamabad out of the nuclear 'netherland'.

In Islamabad's view, a package approach would thus have been preferable in addressing the civil nuclear energy needs of both India and Pakistan.

On the proposed sale of F-16s to Pakistan, Kasuri said even if one subscribed to the doctrine of the minimum credible deterrence as Islamabad does, it still needed the planes to revamp its aging fleet.

"And if US will not sell, we'll buy them from elsewhere," he said expressing confidence that the fighter plane deal will go through despite the objections raised by some legislators.

Talking about India-Pakistan relations, Kasuri again harped on the Kashmir issue describing it as the key irritant that needed an "out-of-the-box creative approach".

On his part, President Pervez Musharraf had presented bold and imaginative ideas like demilitarisation, self-governance and joint management to break the logjam. And now it was time for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to take a reciprocal step, he said.

Kasuri said the US too must use its considerable influence in South Asia in encouraging the peace process and facilitating a solution acceptable to the people of Pakistan, India and Kashmir.

Pakistan and the US have convergent interests on a whole range of regional and international issues, he said. These included the fight against terrorism, stemming the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, avoiding a destructive arms race in South Asia and resolving outstanding disputes such as Kashmir.