



The US-Indo Nuclear Deal - A Critical Assessment

Joint Resolution of the HBF, CNDP and PEACE

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Venue: India International Centre, New Delhi

An International Conference on the Indo-US Nuclear Deal was held in New Delhi on August 31 and September 1, 2007. (HBF), Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP), Popular Education and Action Centre (PEACE), this unique event was attended by an overflowing audience at the India International Centre. Participants came from the United States, the European Union, Pakistan, Nepal, and different parts of India and represented varying backgrounds and disciplines.

The conference covered three thematic areas: the strategic and geo-political dimension, the deal's implications for nuclear disarmament in South Asia and the world, and the myths and realities pertaining to nuclear energy.

The keynote address was delivered by the eminent economist Professor Jean Dreze who spoke of the immorality of nuclear weapons and the irrationality of the notion of nuclear deterrence. The deal, he pointed out, goes against various international norms, treaties and United Nations resolutions, and thereby undermines the cause of nuclear disarmament and peace.

Speakers who talked about the security aspects of the deal warned against the harmful consequences of a collusive strategic arrangement between India and the United States, given the ambitious pursuit of global military dominance by the US.

There was unanimity that the deal would aggravate the nuclear arms race in South Asia and the Asian continent as a whole, and would further weaken the already feeble momentum towards regional and global disarmament. The present nuclear momentum poses new and unique dangers in a world greatly changed since the end of the cold war.

Contrary to the claim that the deal will cap India's nuclear arsenal, access to the international uranium market would allow the diversion of domestic uranium towards increased production of weapon-grade plutonium, sufficient for as many as an extra 40 bombs every year, in addition to India's estimated inventory of 100-150 bombs.

There are serious misgivings about the deal in other South Asian countries including Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal. As a result of the deal, Pakistan is also accelerating its fissile material production efforts.

The deal is being promoted in the name of energy security through nuclear power development. However, experience from all over the world, especially the history of the atomic energy department in India, has shown that nuclear power cannot be the route to energy security. It is environmentally unsound, accident-prone, and produces radioactive wastes that remain hazardous for tens of thousands of years.

Nuclear power is expensive and its rapid growth is infeasible. It cannot make a significant contribution, to tackling climate change. It is inappropriate to India's specific energy needs that call for a mix of decentralized sources. Besides there are commercially viable and environmentally sustainable strategies such as increased efficiency and the promotion of renewable energy sources. For all these reasons, the sense of the conference was that the deal is not in India's interests and militates against the causes of nuclear disarmament and peace, as well as a sound energy policy.