

NAPM opposes the Indo-US Nuclear deal



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NAPM demands immediate closure of the Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School at Vairengte in Mizoram

Amidst protests against price rises of essential items throughout the country, the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has again started harping on the issue of the Indo-US Nuclear Deal. Activists of National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) - the largest network of people's struggles in India - opposed the deal.

"The Deal has been pushed forward in India in an anti-democratic manner without approval of the Parliament - in fact in the teeth of opposition by a large majority of parliamentarians" said Dr Sandeep Pandey, who is a Ramon Magsaysay Awardee (2002) and a convener of NAPM.

"The Deal has the potential of disturbing regional stability and further distorting India's relationships with important neighbours like China, Pakistan and Iran. This cannot also but severely undermine the prospects for both vertical and horizontal non-proliferation and thereby the prospects for global nuclear disarmament" remarked Medha Patkar, a firebrand leader of Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) and also the coordinator of NAPM.

This allurement also has the danger of further propelling India towards becoming a junior military ally of the US and a market to mint profits for its MNCs and also the nuclear industry of other advanced countries -- Russia and France, in particular, said activists.

"Most importantly it will be a set back to the environmentally friendly sustainable ways of meeting our energy requirements. Power from nuclear energy is a failed project in developed countries and the eagerness of the Prime Minister to clinch the Deal fails to generate any enthusiasm among the common people of India. Neither is nuclear energy a solution to global warming as some experts make it out to be. On the contrary the entire nuclear fuel cycle is fraught with danger and

exposes human beings to hazardous radiation. The world is yet to find a safe way for disposal of radioactive waste, a factor which is constraining the growth of nuclear power programmes in the developed countries" added Dr Sandeep Pandey, who did his PhD in control theory also applicable in missile technology from University of California, Berkeley in 1980s.

The Indo-US Nuclear Deal is meant to serve the interests of the global nuclear power industry and is a ploy to keep India away from staking claims to shrinking fossil fuel reserves in proportion to its large population so that these reserves may last for some more time for the rich countries, explained the activists.

The undue importance given to the Indo-US Nuclear Deal as opposed to the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, even though gas is predicted to be the major source of power globally for the next two to three decades, raises questions about the motives of the Indian government.

"We take strong objection to the joint Indo-US military exercises that have been taking place for the last seven years with the aim of building interoperability and we demand immediate closure of the Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School at Vairengte in Mizoram. The increasing militarization of the India State is also being used to crush civil liberties and democratic movements in the country. India must learn a lesson from the history of US military involvement in various parts of the world" demanded Patkar.

"We appreciate the consistent stand taken by the Left Front, a partner in the UPA alliance, in successfully stalling the Indo-US Nuclear Deal up till now and hope that the India specific agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will never be finalized. Even as we note their foresight in foiling the US hegemonic designs in South

Asia, we also expect them to take a principled stand against the nuclear power programme. We believe that the IAEA safeguards must be implemented nationally and internationally on all declared and undeclared nuclear activities, including that of Israel and US. The Government of India must also make its nuclear related activities transparent and accountable to the people, especially those who are directly affected by radiation" added Patkar.

Dr Sandeep Pandey also welcomed the government's decision to ask the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy to draft umbrella legislation for promotion and growth of renewable energy.

Other activists who endorsed the opposition on behalf of NAPM included: Surendra Mohan, Achin Vanaik, Major General SG Vombatkere (retd), J Sri Raman, Thomas Kocherry, Sukla Sen, Mukta Srivastava, Anand Patwardhan, Ajit Jha, Feroze Mithiborwala, Kishore Jagtap, PTM Hussain, Ashish Ranjan Jha, Kamayani, Sanjay MG and Arundhati Dhuru.

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