

DEFEND INDIA'S INTERESTS:

DON'T PROCEED WITH THE NUCLEAR DEAL

The CPI(M) and the Left parties have strongly opposed the Indo-US nuclear deal and asked the UPA Government not to proceed further. The Prime Minister has stated that George Bush is the greatest friend of India and he has helped India in this deal. In his own country George Bush is regarded as the most unpopular President and has the lowest public ratings. So how come a man who is not friendly to his own people has suddenly become India's best friend? The truth is quite the opposite.

This deal has little to do with the interests of India or the Indian people.

It is not a stand-alone agreement like a train compartment standing separately on a platform, but part of a wider strategic alliance to make India the outpost of American interests in Asia.

Other agreements with the US have also been reached by the Government on defence, on agriculture, on industry, which will have wide reaching negative implications on the lives of the Indian people. Already the foreign policy of the Government is under pressure because of the strategic alliance with America

The Common Minimum Programme

When the CPI(M) and the Left parties supported the UPA Government we made it clear that the support was on the basis of a common minimum programme. Nowhere does the Common Minimum Programme mention a strategic alliance with America in fact one of the important points in the programme was that of "an independent foreign policy." Now the UPA Government wants the Left to support it to implement the BJP Government's pro-American policy. This is a clear departure from the Common Minimum Programme and is unacceptable.

Parliamentary Majority

India is the largest democracy in the world. Yet as far as the nuclear deal is concerned the view of an Indian Member of Parliament on a matter concerning India has less value than the vote of an American MP on the same issue. The majority of Indian parliament is against the deal but the Government refuses to accept this. On the other hand, the two Houses of the American Parliament have not only discussed the agreement but have also passed a new law called the Hyde Act to bind every US President in the US Governments relations with

India. Thus by refusing to accept the majority view of the Indian parliament, the Government of India sends a message which is harmful for Indian democracy.

The Hyde Act

For the first time in Independent India's history the Government of India has signed a deal which is subordinate to the law of another country, that is the Hyde Act. In September 2006, the Prime Minister in response to the concerns expressed by the Left gave nine categorical assurances about the guarantees on the deal. But in December 2006 the US Parliament passed a new law governing its relations with India called the Hyde Act which is final and binding. Thus the Prime Minister's assurances have been bulldozed by the American law.

Like a teacher reports whether a student has failed or passed, India's foreign policy will be assessed every year by the American President and an annual report card will be given to the American Parliament whether India has passed the test of behaving as a good friend to their interests. If India for example opposes the war in Iraq or opposes America's threats to Iran or anywhere else in the world, it will get a black mark Can any sovereign country with a minimum of self respect ever accept such a condition?

The American law also specifies certain conditions for the nuclear deal itself which are against India's interests.

- America will not give India the technology it needs
- America will not guarantee permanent fuel supplies
- America can terminate the agreement whenever it wants and for whatever reason it wants
- America will take back all its reactors and fuel if it terminates the agreement
- America will ensure that other countries also do not supply fuel to India just like it did earlier

Energy Needs

It is claimed by the Prime Minister that the deal will help bring electricity to every Indian household! If one third of India's villages are still in darkness it is because of the utter failure of Governments to spend money on the power sector and to go in for privatization of the power sector. Prices of electricity have been soaring and one of the reason for farmers debts leading to suicides are the high rates of electricity. Nuclear power will cost much much more. Today electricity produced by coal costs 2.50 per unit at the plant end. Nuclear power with imported reactors will cost more than double the amount between 5.10 and 5.50

rupees per unit at the plant end which will be much higher by the time it reaches the consumer. Can a farmer or a middle class employee afford to pay such high prices? Who will gain? The nuclear reactor industry in America is in deep crisis. Very few countries are buying their plants. In America itself not a single nuclear plant has been set up since 1996! The Government says it has no money to expand the power sector. But it is prepared to pay lakhs of crores of rupees to the American nuclear industry to get their plants installed in India for electricity that ordinary people can never afford! Clearly the benefit from nuclear commerce will be the US companies. Everyone in India remembers the notorious Enron deal. The price of electricity this US company demanded was Rs. 7 or more per unit. The Maharashtra Electricity Board which was running with a profit till then became bankrupt because of Enron. It will be much worse with nuclear energy. At present nuclear energy meets only 3 per cent of India's needs, which is met largely by coal based or hydro plants. In the next twenty years even according to Government calculations of how much electricity will be generated if this deal comes through, it will still be only 7 per cent of India's needs. Is it in the national interest to spend so much for so little?

Alternative sources

While India should certainly develop its nuclear sector as one of the many sources to meet its energy requirements, it is equally important to ensure access to sources of oil and gas. More investment is required to explore India's own potential oil and gas reserves. At the same time countries in West and Central Asia are the major centres for oil and gas. It is essential for India to strengthen its traditional ties with these countries so as to have access to their oil and gas supplies but this is precisely what the US does not want.

America bombs Iraq, threatens Iran and wants us to support it.

Is this in the national interest?

Impact on Foreign Policy

Because of the nuclear deal American pressure on India was clearly seen in the shameful way that India changed its stand and voted with America against Iran in the IAEA, not once but twice unlike other third world countries of the non-aligned movement. Now if India spends lakhs of crores of rupees getting the reactors from America and becoming dependent on America for its nuclear fuel needs it will be much more vulnerable to US pressure and blackmail.

New Military Ally of the US

India is also being drawn into a military alliance with the US through a defence agreement which was signed in June 2005. This agreement means:

- The agreement for the first time accepts joint operations with India and US in third countries. Till now any Indian operations were under the UN.
- There will be regular joint exercises of the two armies, navies and air forces so that they can operate and work together.
- It ensures the purchase of US weapons and co-production in India to help the US armament industry which is set to make billions of dollars after this agreement.
- The new Logistics and Service Agreement which is being currently negotiated means Indian naval and air bases used by American armed ships and planes can come to India for refuelling and maintenance. Thus for example, US planes which bombed Iraq and killed thousands of innocents can under this agreement expect India's cooperation to refuel on India's soil and go right back to bombing.

From joint exercises with the US it has been extended to joint exercises with US allies. Thus we are becoming a close military ally of the US like Japan and Australia. That is why there will be war games in the Bay of Bengal between the navies of these countries and India. The CPI(M) and the Left parties strongly oppose this military alliance with America.

Sacrificing Farmers Interests

The Prime Minister had signed an agreement in 2005 with America that will harm farmers interests. Once the nuclear deal is through America will push for the implementation of that agreement.

Under it a joint committee has already been set up which from the American side has representatives of the global looters Monsanto and Walmart.

These companies want to take over crucial markets like the seeds market and also agribusinesses in India.

Walmart is well known the world over for its rapacious trade practices which have destroyed crores and crores of small retail traders all over the world. In

India over 5 crore families are dependant on retail trade. We have been opposing the entry of FDI in retail trade. But the Government has signed an agreement which has permitted a representative of the biggest destroyer of retail trade to come into India as a member of the board.

Monsanto a company which has made billions of dollars by snatching away the rights of farmers to seeds, has controlled the world market for highly expensive pesticides, wants the same rights in India.

This agreement will help the domination of multinational companies over Indian agriculture through patent and other rights on farm inputs as well as controlling the sale of products through the control of trade in agricultural commodities.

America has waged a war against Indian farmers in WTO and all international fora. For example cheap American cotton heavily subsidised by the American Government allowed into India has badly hit India's cotton farmers and is one reason for suicides of farmers.

There will be more suicides if this agreement is implemented.

Pushing anti people globalisation policies

A joint forum of representatives of Indian and US corporates has been set up with a mandate to "develop a strategic economic partnership" between the two countries. What is the partnership for? Certainly not to help the 77 per cent of India's working people who earn less than 20 rupees a day!

The forum has already come out with a first set of 30 recommendations of which 21 are demands of US industry to open up the Indian market. They want

- FDI in retail trade
- FDI in insurance
- FDI in education sector
- Opening up of financial sector

Shamefully, this forum has been given legal recognition by the Government of India

Once the nuclear deal is through, American companies will put pressure on Indian Government for their demands.

For the workers and employees of this country who have fought against inhuman neo-liberalism, the pushing through of the deal will lead to much harder times.

Stop Operationalisation of the deal

It is for all these reasons that the CPI(M) and the Left parties have demanded a halt to the next steps to operationalise the deal. The deal is more than just one nuclear deal. It is part of pushing through the US agenda in all fields of concern to our people, whether it is the sovereignty of India, the interests of common people, farmers, of workers and employees.

Because of our firm opposition to the deal there is a scurrilous campaign against the CPI(M) and the left. We know the US has powerful friends who are experts at spreading lies. The people of this country have a glorious tradition of defending the independence of the country and the rights of its common people. This time also on the 60th year of India's independence we have to unite to demand of this Government—**Do Not Go Forward With A Deal Against Our Interests, Implement The Common Minimum Programme, Heed The Majority In Parliament.**