

YECHURY ON INDO-US NUCLEAR DEAL IN RAJYA SABHA

'Do Not Proceed Any Further'

The following are excerpts of the speech delivered by CPI(M) leader in Rajya Sabha Sitaram Yechury while initiating the short duration discussion on Indo-US nuclear deal in Rajya Sabha on December 4, 2007

I WOULD only like to recapitulate very briefly that in the first debate that we have had here, the prime minister was kind enough to accept the nine assurances that we sought from him and, at that stage, I remember I had stated that we would be willing to accept those as the sense of the House. At that time, the Hyde Act was not passed by the US Congress. Subsequently, when the Hyde Act was passed, we had another debate in December and in the conclusion of that debate the prime minister had categorically assured that (a) they would come back to the House before the 123 agreement was finalised or frozen, and (b) none of the assurances that were made would be violated and the government would stand by all the assurances that had been given. But, unfortunately, the assurances the prime minister had given, at least on three counts, we think, have been violated in the 123 agreement text. I would come to that subsequently. But, since they have been violated, I would only urge upon the government not to proceed on this deal not only because of our opposition or the opposition from the other sections of this House but also because it is in violation of the prime minister's own assurances to the House, which I hold as the most sacrosanct and I do not think that those can be violated. Therefore, we urge the government not to proceed further on this deal.

Before I come to the content of why I am making this assertion that the government should not proceed, I would also touch upon the fact that much has already been said and stated that our opposition to this deal stems from our ideological perception of being anti-American. I would like to set the record straight. It is not that we are anti-American. In fact, on the contrary, we are not anti-American people; but, I think, we are pro-American people because 61 per cent of the American people, in the latest opinion poll, have said that they do not endorse the Bush Administration's policies in the USA. So, we are with the American people and not with the Administration and we are anti-American imperialism and not anti-American or anti-American people.

Also, I would like to clarify that much is also made out that our opposition stems from an extra-territorial loyalty. I have gone on record in this House, it is there in the proceedings, that we take our decisions and our positions purely and entirely on the basis of what we perceive as India's national interest. And it is on that basis we are saying that this deal is not in the interest of India. I would come to the details of why I am saying so a little later. But, this is not on any so-called extra-territorial loyalty. We have stated very clearly that even if China were to endorse this deal, we would still continue to oppose this deal because we think this is not in India's interest and, therefore, I want to make this clear again before I come down to the actual details of why we are opposing this deal.

First, let us take up the pretext. What we have been told is that this deal is absolutely essential for India's energy security. If I may say so, on the last occasion, I had read out to this House the Planning Commission's assessment on our energy scenario and this was also read out subsequently by various other participants. So, I do not want to repeat that.

But on the point of India's energy security, we have to bear in mind the following. India's current power generation is 127 Giga Watt. At the current rate of the GDP growth, this needs to grow to 337 GW by 2016-17. There is no doubt that if this is not achieved, India's pace of development would be arrested. The moot question, however, is whether nuclear energy expansion is the only or the best option that we have today. In 2006, 3.9 GW of nuclear power was generated, that is, 3 per cent of our total power generation. In the most optimistic scenario, the Planning Commission estimates that this could grow at best to 20 GW by 2016, or just over 6 per cent of our production at that point of time. So, all this is happening for that 6 per cent and for this 6 per cent should we today sacrifice and mortgage our, sovereignty, and in that sense be vulnerable to pressures from US imperialism. Further, given the abundance of coal reserves in India, the Planning Commission estimates that thermal energy would dominate power generation in India. As far as hydro electricity is concerned, given the potential of nearly 150 GW, we have today only installed capacity of 33 GW. A huge untapped potential exists in hydro electricity. Now we have discovered large quantities of gas in the country and that option is also available apart from solar and wind options. So, has there been a cost benefit analysis done by any agency of the government on how and why we are preferring this nuclear option? Why I am saying this is also because of the cost of it. It is often said that this 123 does not relate to the *aam aadmi* or it does not relate actually to the future of India, of the Indian people. Just consider the following. The estimates show us that the nuclear power being used for energy production is the most expensive of all options. The prime minister himself has publicly said that we are targeting, say, 40,000 MW to be produced by nuclear energy by 2020 and 2025. Out of this 40,000 MW let us presume 10,000 MW would come from our own domestic reactors, that leaves 30,000 MW that needs to be generated from nuclear energy and if this 30,000 MW is generated through imported nuclear reactors, the cost estimation for every MW will be 11 crores of rupees, that is, for this 30,000 we will be spending 3,30,000 crores of rupees. The same 30,000 MW if we produce through thermal energy it will be 4 crores per MW and the same if we produce through hydro-electricity or through gas, it will be 3 crores per MW. So, the cost differential is something of the tune of two lakh crores plus. Now if this two lakh crores plus was used in the field of education, we can build new 2.5 lakh Navodaya Vidyalayas in our country. 100 students can on scholarship be educated up to Class XII, that is, the cost differential can educate 2.5 crore Indian boys and girls and give them quality education which we are foregoing because of using this most costly option. Out of the same amount of money, if you spend on health, you can create 20,000, hundred-bed hospitals, quality hospitals in this country and meet the health needs of our population. The question is why are we going for this expensive option at the expense of keeping our children illiterate, at the expense of not treating those people who require health attention? Why are we going in for such an expensive option? This is something for which there is no clear answer so far. I think in terms of cost benefit analysis this is the most expensive option we have and as a result if this most expensive option we are denying the *aam aadmi* whatever we could have given to him because whenever we say some issues of people's welfare must be taken up, there is always this argument that there is a resource constraint. If there is a resource constraint, why are we using our scarce resources to satisfy, let us say, the orders to multinational corporations in one country, which has not installed a new nuclear power reactor in the last two decades?

The USA does not install them but it wants to sell their nuclear reactors to us. So, we end up buying their nuclear reactors and generating profit for them while, in our own country we deprive our own children from going to school and getting quality education or our own elderly senior citizens from getting quality health attention. Now, this is something not permissible if we want a real modern prosperous India. So, from that point of view, I think, this is a very big folly that we will be entering into, and, I think, there

must be a re-think done by the government on this score. The other pretext also, they say, is that if we enter the deal, then, we will be breaking the nuclear apartheid that is there on India or that we will be sitting on the nuclear high table of the world. I will come to that later, because all these are illusions. This is an illusory claim. If you go through the text and sub-text of the 123, then, you will see that this is an illusory claim. Therefore, the pretext for going into this deal, in my opinion, is very faulty and in fact, it is something that cannot substantiate the need for us to enter into such a deal.

If that is the case, then what is the context in which we have to see this deal? The deal, is not only to be seen in terms of nuclear commerce or the nuclear benefit that is generally being propagated. We have the Under Secretary of State of the United States of America who has gone on record to state that there are at least four related benefits to this agreement as well. The first concerns non-proliferation. I am quoting, "For 30 years, India has been on the outside of that system, of non-proliferation. With this agreement, India will open up its system to international inspection and it puts the majority of its civilian reactors under IAEA safeguards. This deal now brings India back into the non-proliferation mainstream in a way it was not before." If this is the US claim, and this is what they want to bring us into, the non-proliferation regime through the backdoor, then, all the principled positions that the government of India has taken all along, which we have supported, that we will not sign the NPT because it is a discriminatory treaty, all that, falls flat. So, we think that there is a larger design that is involved in this deal.

The next benefit that he talks about and I quote, "The agreement also sends an important message to nuclear outlaw regimes such as Iran" and that is the fact that we have already mentioned a number of times that the Hyde Act refers to Iran and our foreign policy positions which have to be in congruence with what the US position will be.

The third related benefit he talks about is the fact of military cooperation and of military sales. As much as they are interested in 123, in no unambiguous terms he talks of great military commerce with India and their target is 126 and not 123. And 126 is the number of combat aircraft, the military aircraft, that we are going to buy and they are hoping through this deal that they will cement India into a closer military cooperation. This, again, being the case, what we are now entering into, in my opinion, is a deal which actually takes India closer to the US positions on global issues as well as on regional strategic concerns; and what is being done is to drag India into or suck India into the vortex of being a subordinate ally of United States of America; and it is this subordinate ally status which we think is not in India's interest at the present moment. Why it is so, I will come to later. But the fact remains that this is something which we cannot afford to do now. I will, if time permits, also utter to certain very derogatory things that have been said about us and about our former prime ministers by the US Under Secretary of State. I am quoting. "The benefits of these historic agreements are very real for the United States. For the first time in three decades, India will submit its entire nuclear programme for international inspections etc." Secondly, he says that, "If India were to conduct a nuclear test, the United States would have the right under US laws to seek the return of all nuclear fuel and technology shipped by US firms."

That apart, the important point having a bearing on our foreign policy issue is here, "This Agreement will also send a powerful message to nuclear outlaws like Iran. If you play by the rules as India has, you will be rewarded..." -- Please underline the word 'rewarded' -- "...If you do not, you will face sanctions and isolation." So, this is the clear message that the US's official spokesman is saying that India is being rewarded for being, as they said, 'playing by the rules.' And, who defines the rules -- the United States of

America. You play by their rules, you will be rewarded. If you do not play by their rules, you will not be rewarded like Iran. That is why we have these apprehensions. In the present context, if you look at the pressures that are put on India, unfortunately, we think that these pressures are already at work. When the Hyde Act talks of Indian foreign policy being congruent with that of the United States of America, where it refers to, on three occasions to Iran, they expect India to toe that line. We have seen in the past on our votes in the IAEA. I am not going into that. We had discussed that earlier.

But, now, what do we see? The trilateral meeting between Iran, Pakistan and India on the Iranian Gas Pipeline Project which we say is very necessary for us, for our energy augmentation, the same argument that is given for this nuclear deal, and it is a cheaper option, but, then, you have not attended that meeting. You had not gone there. Why? The answer needs to be given. Is it under US pressure? The UN has imposed some sanctions on Iran. But, the US has extended and gone ahead and imposed certain unilateral sanctions on Iran beyond the UN sanctions. We are not obliged to accept the US sanctions. But, yet, last week, your SBI denies the lines of credit to Iranian firms which want to import goods from India to Iran and you are not even allowing these exports to take place, because you have not permitted them. Why? Again, under US pressure! There is an Indian corporate house which has a multibillion dollar joint venture to be set up in Iran and they have now withdrawn from that. Why? It is under American pressure. If they do that, then their joint venture in the USA will suffer. So, all these are clear indications that we are already succumbing to these pressures when we need not succumb to these US pressures at all or US sanctions on Iran. But, we are doing this. And, this is sending a very, very serious ominous signal to what will be the future of our country's foreign policy.

In this context, I would also like to state that there is a domestic context, since I am talking of the context, also which we cannot, today, ignore. All of us are being told that this nuclear deal that has happened is not certainly a flash in the pan, but is a part of overall growing relationship between India and the United States of America. I agree with that point, and we also recognise that the architecture for the present strategic alliance was laid under the NDA rule in their six years. Though military cooperation with the USA began under the Narasimha Rao government, but it was only after 1998 that a lot of this architecture of a strategic alliance with the USA had actually started.

I was listening, with great respect, to the intervention of leader of the opposition this morning when he had expected the ministers who travelled abroad to come and explain to the House what happened in those visits. But, he has had these rounds of discussions personally with Strobe Talbot which we were informed by that gentleman and nobody else here. But, anyway, that is a different story. I am not going into that. But, what I am really concerned is that we were the first ones to have, in 2000, welcomed the US National Defence Programme. In fact, the former prime minister articulated that India should be treated as US's natural ally. And, after 9/11, we had written and offered our cooperation in the US war against terrorism or global war against terrorism and, to the extent, when the USA chose Pakistan, instead of India, the then prime minister, which is on record, says that, in fact, bemoaned, 'This is the logic of geography and it was because of this logic that the USA chooses Pakistan, not India.'

In 2002, Bush administration adopted a national security strategy.

This stated, "The US has undertaken a transformation in its bilateral relationship with India, based on a conviction that US' interests require a strong relationship with India." Then, followed the next round of

talks with them, which extended cooperation in space, nuclear, high technology and missile defence fields. So, this background, we understand, is the architecture because of which the deal has come.

Our point of view is the following. We have extended support to the UPA government precisely because, in our understanding, we wanted to keep, what we define as communal forces, away from power. But this support was based on a Common Minimum Programme. In that Common Minimum Programme, we have defined what will be our foreign policy direction; where it stated clearly that India will pursue an independent foreign policy, while strengthening relations with all countries, including the USA. There was no mention of any nuclear agreement in that. There was no mention of any strategic alliance in the Common Minimum Programme. Therefore, our support is based on the Common Minimum Programme. Our support to the UPA is based on the fact that we do not want the communal forces to be in power. But we cannot allow the UPA government to proceed to complete the agenda that was begun by the NDA government, and that runs completely contrary to the basis of our support. Therefore, our appeal is that do not get into this situation, on an issue that is not there in the agreed Common Minimum Programme. And, if it is not there in the Common Minimum Programme, we say that we are opposing this precisely also on that count and do not enlarge the agenda which has not been agreed upon. Therefore, do not take India on a course where we will end up being a subordinate ally of the United States of America.

The text of the Agreement shows that the Agreement is very clearly anchored within the Hyde Act. And, this is not that I am saying so; this is the US Secretary of State who says it very clearly, I quote, "We had to make sure that everything in this US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, the 123 Agreement, was completely consistent with the Hyde Act and well within the bounds of Hyde Act itself." This is their own statement. I had discussed the Hyde Act and its implications in the last debate. We had discussed about how various extraneous issues, through which the USA is imposing conditions on us. We have also discussed the fact that the US president has, on occasions, stated that many things stated in the Hyde Act were not mandatory for him to follow. But, then, remember every US president has a right to decide on this. If, once this president goes and another president comes in and says, "Yes, I abide by what is being said in the Hyde Act", all those provisions can be invoked against India. Let us not be under any illusion that the present president is a great friend of India; therefore, being a great friend of India he has said that these are not applicable, or he is not mandated to follow these provisions, which would be an illusion. But, then, in a lighter vein and with due respect, please remember that all those who had considered George Bush as a good friend -- the prime minister of Britain, the prime minister of Australia, the prime minister of Japan, the government in Italy -- many of them have met a fate that we don't want our prime minister, or, this government to meet. We are supporting this government; we want to support this government. But, I do not want this fate to befall this government. Therefore, I ask this government to seriously reconsider this deal and not proceed ahead.

For me and my Party the agenda that is most important is that this nuclear deal should not be implemented. My agenda is not the government, whether it should stay or not. I want the government to stay. I want this nuclear deal not to happen and that is the stated position of our Party.

I only want to say why this 123 Agreement is rooted in the Hyde Act. Article 2.1 of the 123 Agreement states, "Each party shall implement this Agreement in accordance with its respective applicable treaties, national laws, regulations, and licence requirements concerning the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes."

Now the question is, the respective national law for the United States America is the Hyde Act. Now, you cannot, therefore, be under the illusion that once the 123 Agreement has come, the 123 has superseded the Hyde Act. The US itself is very clearly saying that 123 Agreement is within the Hyde Act, and it is anchored in the Hyde Act. Having done so, it would be a very, very dangerous illusion to think that these provisions of the Hyde Act are not applicable to us.

But, having said that, in the 123 Agreement itself there are three assurances which the prime minister gave to this House, which I accepted, and we all accepted, but, which, I do not think, are met.

The first one concerns the uninterrupted fuel supplies. The 123 Agreement talks of uninterrupted fuel supplies till the life of the reactors. But, once the 123 Agreement is terminated, which can be done under the Hyde Act by any US president who may come in the future, once that is done, the Hyde Act is very clear, it says that the moment 123 Agreement is terminated, supplies will stop. Not only will supplies stop, but the United States of America will work with all its allies to ensure nobody else supplies to us. And, that is also written in black and white. So, why are we going into an agreement where we buy those reactors at a huge cost. We have them with us, but we don't get the fuel. They threaten to take back those reactors also; bodily lift them and take them back. How is it that we are entering into an agreement which violates the prime minister's own assurance that we will have uninterrupted fuel supplies.

The second assurance that the prime minister gave is that we will have full nuclear civilian cooperation. It is very clearly stated in section 5 of the 123 Agreement that certain dual use technologies are barred from being transferred to India; whether it is on reprocessing, enrichment or heavy water. Okay, heavy water, we say that we are ourselves capable. We have enough of it here. We are, in fact, exporting heavy water. But, in any case, why should we be under any restrictive clauses saying that they will not be transferred to us unless this agreement is further amended? And the full nuclear cooperation clause, which the prime minister assured us here, even that is not going to be fulfilled according to this text.

The third assurance is this. The prime minister said that everything should be done on the basis of reciprocity. This is the word used by the prime minister. You are going to the IAEA for talks now. You are going into talks for saying that you will put your nuclear reactors under safeguards in perpetuity. But, we have just seen, the 123 Agreement can be terminated upon the will and whim of the US president. If that is the case, if that can be terminated, why should India be subjected to a perpetual safeguards by the International Atomic Energy Agency? If 123 is terminated, then, this also ought to be terminated. That reciprocity must be valued, and must be upheld, and, therefore, even this is violated.

So, on the question of uninterrupted fuel supplies, on the question of full civilian nuclear cooperation, and on the question of reciprocity, on these three counts the three assurances that the prime minister had given, this deal does not allow India to even uphold these assurances.

You have seen the pre-text, you have seen the context, and you have seen the text. On all these three, this deal does not stand. One of the most important issues is: does it benefit our country or not?

The question, normally, being asked is: Why did we 'allow' the government to go to IAEA? I don't like to use this word; it is not that the government should be allowed or disallowed. But, why is it that we

agreed, let us say, to the government proceeding to the IAEA when we first said that it should not be operationalised, that is, 'do not proceed to IAEA.' It is a very simple point which I want to answer, because a lot of people have expressed their surprise. Earlier, going to the IAEA for safeguards discussion and an agreement with the IAEA meant that post-IAEA, the nuclear deal was on an autopilot. After that it would go to the NSG where we are not members. Then it would go to the US Congress, and it will return to us only after everything was completed, for the final approval of the union cabinet. That is why, we said, "Do not proceed to the IAEA; otherwise, after that, there is no way we can control it." Now, we are happy and we gracefully accept the fact that the government has agreed that they will go to the IAEA, they will negotiate and see if these three assurances that the prime minister has given, which, today, are blatantly violated, can be extracted and without even putting their initials on anything, they will come back to the country, and, then, on the basis of that, further steps will be taken. So, that is the change that has happened, where the government has now agreed that it will come back before even putting the initials, and, therefore, we agreed and cooperated saying, 'Yes, please proceed ahead'. But the point at issue is, we still continue to remain firm; we would want this deal not to go through, in the interest of India, and for the various reasons that I have elaborated earlier.

There is also another important reason, the last one, which I would like to touch upon, that is, the question of our indigenous nuclear science development. All of us know, India is a country, which has one of the largest known deposits of thorium. All of us know that our scientists are battling against all odds and served the country so brilliantly in the past, are continuing to do their research in, actually, moving towards using thorium as a fuel for our nuclear energy. Now, we want to reach the stage of using thorium for nuclear energy purposes. Now, all of us know, particularly, those who have done science that in the transition, from using uranium towards using thorium, there is another intermediate stage that comes where plutonium is also used to a certain extent. Now, when you have a Uranium-Plutonium cycle, which will lead up to thorium cycle, the moment plutonium comes into the picture, plutonium is an input that also goes into nuclear weapons. There are international safeguards you have submitted yourselves to; the moment you reach the stage of plutonium, anybody can raise his finger and say, 'Plutonium is generated, you are transferring this to use for your nuclear weapons; and, therefore, the safeguards will apply.' You subject yourselves to international inspections, including US inspections. I suspect and we firmly believe that there is an international effort to try and ensure that India does not reach that stage where we can use thorium as nuclear fuel. If we reach that stage of using thorium as nuclear fuel, then, no country in the world can bulldoze or browbeat us; we are completely independent. So, it is in our interest to reach that stage, and, therefore, it is in our interest not to accept any conditions, not to accept any conditions which will not allow us to reach that stage.

Therefore, we are not against nuclear energy, we are not against nuclear power. Two generations down the line, our coal will be exhausted, your bio-fuels will be exhausted, nuclear energy may be the only option, and, maybe, the only clean option. But, the point at issue is, nuclear energy now, at what cost? At what cost economically, what cost to our country's sovereignty, what cost of other pressures that we are going to expose ourselves to, the sort of vulnerability that we are going to expose ourselves to. We all are seeing what are the activities that US imperialism is conducting in the world today. I don't want to repeat it; we have done that in the past. All of us, today, have also seen how the hegemonic tendency of US imperialism is expressing itself in browbeating all other countries into submission into following them. And, what are they attempting to do? To put it in a nutshell, the world, after the bi-polarity of the cold war period, is moving towards multi-polarity in international relations. It is this movement towards

multi-polarity that is being subverted and sabotaged by US imperialism, which wants to convert this world into a unipolar world under its tutelage. India cannot be party to this effort. India cannot be party to an effort where unipolarity is going to be imposed under US imperialism's hegemony. That is why, I would like to urge upon the government to seriously reconsider the path that they are following. Hold talks with the IAEA, come back and let us reconsider this. The prime minister has himself stated in this house in the past that before they take any further step, they would come back to the parliament. This is a very healthy trend and we hope that this tradition will be maintained. Though it didn't happen before the 123 Agreement was initialised, nevertheless, subsequently, government agreed to continue with this discussion. I hope that will be done and they would not take any hasty measures to rush into this deed.

I would like to end with this quote of Woodrow Wilson. It says, "I would rather lose a cause that will some day win than win a cause that will some day lose". And this is a cause that will lose, We cannot allow this agreement to go through, primarily, in the interests of our country, the future of our country, the future of our younger generation. Fifty-four per cent of India is below the age of 25 years. Give them education; don't spend money on profits for multi-national corporations. Give them health; don't spend money on profits for multi-national corporations. Produce the same electricity using your coal, your water, your gas, your heat and sun and your winds, and then, generate the jobs in India for all of us. And it is on the shoulders of this 54 per cent youth under the age of 25 that a new India will be built. It is for that new India that you must build your youngsters today. Invest in your youth; do not invest on profits for multi-national corporations.

With that appeal, I would once again urge upon this government to give a serious rethink to this entire deal and to stop it now, before it is too late and we become victims of blandishment, which our country cannot and will not ever want to be.

Finally, I wanted to quote something to you. There was a very unsavoury comment by the US Under Secretary of State saying that so long as Nehru was the prime minister and India's autarkic Nehruvian policy of Non-Alignment was there, this great vision of an Indo-US strategic alliance could not have ever unfolded. Now that Nehru is not there, now that Non-Alignment of the past is not there, now that all that is not there, is the Congress Party giving up its own legacies? It is the US Under Secretary of State saying this. I do not want them to give up that legacy, because I think that was a joint inherited legacy of our nation in terms of foreign policy. We have all held a consensual opinion on our foreign policy and, therefore, let us together build a resurgent India by investing in our youth. This is our appeal, and we want, therefore, through you, the government to reconsider this and not proceed on this deal any further.