

## STATEMENT

# Indo-US Nuclear Pact

*[Following is a slightly abridged version of a statement issued by NAPM—National Alliance of People's Movements—an organisation of above 200 people's movements in India]*

The India-US nuclear deal has grave consequences for India's national security and sovereignty, for India's relations with its neighbours, for India's economy, for the health of its people and for the state of its environment. It will directly impact the rights and well-being of the people of India for generations to come.

In July 2005, President George Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced a deal to exempt India from US laws and international rules that for almost three decades have sought to prevent states from using commercial imports of nuclear technology and fuel to aid their nuclear weapons ambitions. These rules were created because India secretly used nuclear materials and technology that it acquired for peaceful purposes to make a nuclear weapon. The deal is of profound importance since it allows for India to import nuclear fuel, reactors and other technologies, and will enable India to expand both its nuclear weapons and nuclear energy programme.

The US Congress took a year and half to discuss and approve the new US policy and change existing US laws to enable nuclear commerce with India. In India, the government simply told parliament that it had made a deal with the United States. Subsequently, the US and India have negotiated a "123 agreement," a treaty that will cover nuclear cooperation between the two countries. But while this agreement will have to be approved by the US Congress, India's parliament will not allowed a vote on it.

The people of India have been denied the right to debate the nuclear deal and the larger changes in foreign policy and other issues that it involves, and to express their opinion through their elected representatives. The nuclear agreement should not be accepted under these circumstances.

The United States sees the nuclear deal with India as part of a process of building a strategic relationship between the two countries. The US seeks to use India as a client state in its new confrontation with a rising China and to achieve other strategic goals, for example putting pressure on Iran. NAPM believes that India should not compromise its national sovereignty or its long standing tradition of an independent non-aligned foreign policy. The India-US strategic partnership and the nuclear deal in particular will escalate the nuclear arms race between Pakistan and India, and upset the India-Pakistan peace process. It will also create serious tensions between India and China, instead of helping improve relations. The deal with the US also threatens India's relations with Iran, which the US considers to be a rogue state. The US in particular is opposed to an Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline that could improve political and economic relations among these three countries and provide relatively cheap, clean energy to India.

The US-India nuclear deal was first announced as part of a larger package of agreements that included a commitment to "deepen the bilateral economic relationship" between the US and India, and create in India an enhanced "investment climate" so that "opportunities for investment will increase." The US

sees India as an increasingly important source of cheap labour and high profits for US corporations.

Privileging business interests means pursuing neo-liberal economic policies which favour the interests of Indian and US corporations. These policies include the creation of Special Economic Zones and other such measures that come at the cost of the poor. These policies have been followed for almost twenty years and have failed. In 2006, India was ranked at number 126 among 177 nations according to the United Nations Human Development Index. NAPM believes India should follow policies that will promote a just and equitable social and economic development aimed at meeting the needs of India's poor and disadvantaged.

The nuclear deal assumes that nuclear energy is an economic and safe way for producing electricity for India. Nuclear energy has failed in India and offers no solution for the future. After 60 years of public funding Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) produces less than 3% of India's electricity. For comparison, in less than a decade and without state support, wind energy now accounts for about 5% of India's electricity capacity.

To escape its failures, the DAE plans to import large nuclear power plants and fuel. The US, France, Russia and Japan hope to profit from this. This pursuit of nuclear energy comes despite the fact that the cost of producing nuclear electricity in India is higher than non-nuclear alternatives and each reactor adds to the risk of a serious nuclear accident and worsens the problem of radioactive nuclear waste. The DAE's budget is ten times more than the budget for development of renewable energy technologies. India must reverse its priorities and invest more in wind, solar, biomass and micro hydel energy resources.

The real energy challenge facing India is to meet the needs of the majority of Indians who still live in its villages. India needs an energy policy that works with the rural poor to develop and provide the small-scale, local, sustainable and affordable energy systems that they need. Renewable energy resources are better suited to fulfil this need. □□□