

'SECOND GREEN REVOLUTION'

Behind the smokescreen of Indo-US nuclear deal what is being ignored by the left and right opposition is the systematic annihilation of Indian agriculture by American multinationals. Self-sufficiency is not on the agenda of the Union Government. Nor is any political party serious about the long-term implication of massive land acquisition for industry, express ways, and all that. Meanwhile, US agri-business is very much in Indian rural areas affecting Indian peasants and traditional farming.

The US and its giant bio-technology corporations which have pushed strongly for unrestricted import of their agricultural products into India are believed to have a hand in India's decision to remove all restrictions on the import of genetically engineered foods into the country.

US President George Bush has emphasized that the initiative is to promote a 'Second Green Revolution' in India which means promoting agriculture biotechnology, especially genetically engineered crops and foods. The first 'green revolution' has already turned brown and the second one might ruin Indian agriculture completely.

On 23 August 2007, the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests issued a notification granting GM foods unrestricted entry into the country by withdrawing all existing regulatory oversight over the import of GE foods. This development allows the import of GE foods without the importing agencies having to acquire any permission from regulatory agencies, as has been the case so far, or even to inform them.

At a time when scientific evidence is growing from laboratory tests that genetically engineered foods can in fact cause serious damage to health, there is a need to upgrade the country's food testing systems and make them more stringent and comprehensive, rather than dismantling them, as the government of India is doing.

Also, it would be dangerous to allow unfettered access to unknown foodstuffs, more so when the country does not even have a liability law that would affix responsibility and claim compensation in the event that something should go wrong and people suffer health damage from the consumption of such GE foods.

Since no restrictions are to be imposed on imported GE food, they therefore need not be labelled. This new notification will in effect deny consumers their right to exercise their free choice in matters relating to the food they eat as well as expose them to the potential danger of such foods.

The unilateral act by the government is in violation of the Consumer Protection Act. Then the persons in authority do not bother about law, they are out to woo American multinationals in every possible way. After allowing *lessiez faire* in industry, they are now opening Indian agriculture bit by bit, inviting a catastrophe, not in the distant future. □□□