

# 'In Defence of the Unfinished Agenda'

There is unrest but India has an uncommon level of political stability. Because all political parties, barring the far left, despite their periodic squabbles and bickerings, are not against disturbing the status quo in any form. Indian politics today is dominated by an emergency of short-term over long-term. Government policies are out and out anti-people and they all spring from a framework of borrowed ideas that is broken and bankrupt. So the hot debate over Indo-US nuclear deal is subsiding as recent bomb blasts in Gujarat serve the purpose of diversion well. And suddenly America is no longer popular as an enemy even in the left camp. It's not a question of permanent policy. It's a question of shifting policy to gain maximum political mileage. Anti-deal stance, rather anti-American stance, of the official left is vanishing in the thin air.

The Singhs and Gandhis, however, derive comfort from the fact that the deal effectively grants India the privileges of nuclear weapons states though India developed nuclear weapons and tested them outside the NPT regime. They are talking actions without consequences. That cannot be. The Congress Party is hoping, somewhat against hope, to sell India's ambitious plan to generate nuclear power in vote market. And the left is unlikely to take another nuclear shock. They never gave any serious thought to anti-nuclear movement. Nor will they oppose any move to install more nuclear power plants in the future because of their limitless love for West-designed development strategy. Escapism doesn't pay, nor does hypocrisy.

Nuclear power would essentially displace coal, the most abundant domestic fuel. That nuclear power is environment-friendly is a hoax. In reality expanding nuclear makes climate change worse for a very simple reason. Nuclear is incredibly expensive. The costs have just stood up or end lately. 'Wall Street Journal recently reported that they're about two to four times the cost that the industry was, talking about just a year ago'.

Nuclear power cannot deliver the climate or the security benefits claimed for it. Also it is unrelated to oil and, abundance of nuclear power, the possibility of which seems remote, cannot have any impact on the ever rising prices of oil. Electricity and oil have nothing to do with each other. Even in America less than two percent of their electricity is made from oil. And it's declining further. The advocates of nuclear power are actually creating an illusion.

Environmental and health hazards apart, nuclear power is grossly uneconomic, which means the nuclear revival that the Singhs and their supporters often talk about is not really happening, even in America. It's a very carefully fabricated myth. And the left in India is no less hypnotised by this myth. Nuclear power is a grand day-dream.

The global scenario for nuclear power is more dismal than ever before. In 2006 nuclear worldwide added a little bit of capacity more than all of it from upgrading old plants, because the new ones they built were smaller than the retirements of old plants. In the same year micropower for the first time produced more electricity worldwide than nuclear did. In the advanced industrial countries micropower makes anywhere from a sixth to over half of all the

electricity elsewhere. The retirement of India's old plants is imminent. In this situation the gospel of adding more nuclear watts to the national grid by importing costly American reactors sounds ludicrous. The left has no time to think over absurdity of nuclear power, let alone the question of subservience to America. Unless a powerful anti-nuclear movement is developed at this stage, poor Indians will have to face a catastrophe not in the distant future.

China is often cited by the Congress Party as a model to imitate, hopefully to silence the left. True, China has the world's most ambitious nuclear programme. But by the end of 2006 China had seven times that much capacity in distributed renewables, and they were growing it seven times faster. Also, in 2007 the US or Spain or China added more wind capacity than the world added nuclear capacity. Surprisingly, last year American corporations invested \$71 billion in renewable energy in that country while nuclear sector had no investment at all.

As new issues are coming up because general election is not far away the unfinished political discourse over the deal remains unfinished. □