

From New Delhi by Susan B. Maitra

U.S. strongarming raises protest

An Indian official tries to cut through the lies and distortions about a possible India-Iran nuclear research reactor deal.

The Bush administration's veiled threat to impose technological apartheid against India if the latter goes through with its "proposed sale" of a 10 MW nuclear research reactor to Iran has been received with silence by New Delhi. But from Bombay, Indian Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Dr. P.K. Iyengar ridiculed the American power play.

"Perhaps the western countries do not want us to get into high-technology exports," Iyengar told the *Hindustan Times* of Nov. 19, adding that the Americans had already supplied Iran a 5 MW reactor which is still working. "Perhaps only the white man has the right to supply nuclear reactors. We should confine ourselves to selling garments and leather and iron ore to them," the Atomic Energy Commission chairman stated caustically.

Though news leaks claim negotiations between India and Iran are at an advanced stage and that a deal may be announced in December, both India and Iran have officially denied the report. But it is no secret that leaders in both nations are up in arms over the superpower muscling attempt. On Nov. 17, Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani condemned the U.S. for "forcing" other countries not to cooperate with Teheran on nuclear projects, noting the U.S. had threatened both India and China. "America has frankly and boldly announced that the Islamic Republic of Iran has no right to use nuclear technology even for non-military goals."

The report of a proposed sale of an Indian research reactor to Iran—a

reactor "which could make weapons-grade plutonium"—first appeared in the London *Independent*. A day later, the *Washington Post*, citing the *Independent*, puffed the story in the United States. Both papers are regular conduits for the Zionist lobby, which exerts a determining influence in the Bush administration. The news report followed Indian Foreign Minister Madhavsinh Solanki's trip to Teheran, and the signing of five memoranda of understanding between India and Iran while he was there.

The reaction of the U.S. government to the report was swift and predictable. India's ambassador, Abid Hussain, was called into the State Department for a warning on Washington's "deep concern" from Asia hand Edward Djerejian. The Indian envoy was also informed that the matter had been taken up with the U.S. ambassador in New Delhi and Teresita Schaffer, the deputy assistant secretary of state, during her recent visit to New Delhi.

As one news agency reported, U.S. officials have made it clear that if India goes through with the research reactor sale, it could torpedo the transfer of American technology to India.

Meanwhile, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher announced that the U.S. was "urging" all nuclear supplier countries to avoid any form of nuclear cooperation with Iran—even under safeguards—because there is no adequate evidence that Iran is committed to the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy. When the Indian Abroad News Ser-

vice reporter pointed out that Iran is a signatory to the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Boucher dismissed it, charging that Iran "cannot be trusted."

In Teheran the campaign to vilify Iran as a clandestine nuclear weapons builder looks a lot like the ploy used earlier to drum up the anti-Iraq hysteria that made the Anglo-American military attack on that country possible. Within days, the Zionist-linked German magazine, *Der Spiegel*, without citing any specific details, accused Iran, Syria, and Libya of trying "to arm themselves in chemical, biological, and atomic areas with war technology made in Germany."

In his interview, Indian Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Iyengar punctured the bubble of lies and distortions floated by the media. If and when a deal to supply a 10 MW reactor is finalized, Iyengar said, the IAEA would be notified, in accordance with established international norms. He added that the Indian offer to Iran is "exactly like the nuclear reactors set up by Argentina in Algeria and Peru and the recent offer it has made to Turkey."

As far as Iran's alleged bomb-making is concerned, Dr. Iyengar pointed to the well-known fact that the plutonium generated during operation of a nuclear reactor, which can be used as fissile material for starting off a chain reaction in a plutonium bomb, has to first be separated out from the waste fuel. This is a process which requires, besides a lot of expertise that Iran does not have, a reprocessing facility. Such a facility cannot be built without the world knowing about it.

Thus to say that India's sale of a nuclear research reactor would provide Iran the capability to make nuclear weapons has no technical credibility; it is a deliberate falsification of fact.