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STATEMENT AND DISCUSSION ON RECENT NUCLEAR TESTS IN POKHRAN

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE): Sir, I rise to inform the House of momentous developments that have taken place while we were in recess. On 11 May, India successfully carried out three underground nuclear tests. Two more underground tests on 13 May completed the planned series of tests. I would like this House to join me in paying fulsome tribute to our scientists, engineers and defence personnel whose singular achievements have given us a renewed sense of national pride and self-confidence. Sir, in addition to the statement I make, I have also taken the opportunity to submit to the House a paper entitled "Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy."

In 1947, when India emerged as a free country to take its rightful place in the comity of nations, the nuclear age had already dawned. Our leaders then took the crucial decision to opt for self-reliance, and freedom of thought and action. We rejected the Cold War paradigm and chose the more difficult path of non-alignment. Our leaders also realised that a nuclear-weapon-free-world would enhance not only India's security but also the security of all nations. That is why disarmament was and continues to be a major plank in our foreign policy.

During the 50's, India took the lead in calling for an end to all nuclear weapon testing. Addressing the Lok Sabha on 2 April, 1954, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, to

whose memory we paid homage yesterday stated "nuclear, chemical and biological energy and power should not be used to forge weapons of mass destruction". He called for negotiations for prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons and in the interim, a standstill agreement to halt nuclear testing. This call was not heeded.

In 1965, along with a small group of non-aligned countries, India put forward the idea of an international non-proliferation agreement under which the nuclear weapon states would agree to give up their arsenals provided other countries refrained from developing or acquiring such weapons. This balance of rights and obligations was not accepted. In the 60's our security concerns deepened. The country sought security guarantees but the countries we turned to were unable to extend to us the expected assurances. As a result, we made it clear that we would not be able to sign the NPT.

The Lok Sabha debated the issue on 5 April, 1968. Prime Minister late Smt. Indira Gandhi assured the House that "we shall be guided entirely by our self-enlightenment and the considerations of national security." This was a turning point and this House strengthened the decision of the then Government by reflecting a national consensus.

Our decision not to sign the NPT was in keeping with our basic objectives. In 1974, we demonstrated our nuclear capability. Successive Governments thereafter have taken all necessary steps in keeping with that resolve and national will, to safeguard India's nuclear option. This was the primary reason behind the 1996 decision for not signing the CTBT, a decision that also enjoyed consensus of this House.

The decades of the 80's and 90's had meanwhile witnessed the gradual deterioration of our security environment as a result of nuclear and missile proliferation. In our neighbourhood, nuclear weapons had increased and more sophisticated delivery systems inducted. In addition,

India has also been the victim of externally aided and abetted terrorism, militancy and clandestine war.

At a global level, we see no evidence on the part of the nuclear weapon states to take decisive and irreversible steps in moving towards a nuclear-weapon-free-world. Instead, we have seen that the NPT has been extended indefinitely and unconditionally, perpetuating the existence of nuclear weapons in the hands of the five countries.

Under such circumstances, the Government was faced with a difficult decision. The touchstone that has guided us in making the correct choice clear was national security. These tests are a continuation of the policies set into motion that put this country on the path of self-reliance and independence of thought and action.

India is now a nuclear weapon state. This is a reality that cannot be denied. It is not a conferment that we seek, nor is it a status for others to grant. It is an endowment to the nation by our scientists and engineers. It is India's due, the right of one-sixth of human-kind. Our strengthened capability adds to our sense of responsibility. We do not intend to use these weapons for aggression or for mounting threats against any country, these are weapons of self-defence, to ensure that India is not subjected to nuclear threats or coercion. We do not intend to engage in an arms race.

We had taken a number of initiatives in the past. We regret that these proposals did not receive a positive response from other nuclear weapon states. In fact, had their response been positive, we need not have gone in for our current testing programme. We have been and will continue to be in the forefront of the calls for opening negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, so that this challenge can be dealt with in the same manner that we have dealt with the scourge of two other weapons of mass destruction—through the biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Traditionally, India has been an outward looking country. Our strong commitment to multilateralism is reflected in our active participation in organisations like the United Nations. This engagement will continue. The policies of economic liberalisation introduced in recent years have increased our regional and global linkages and my Government intends to deepen and strengthen these ties.

Our nuclear policy has been marked by restraint and openness. We have not violated any international agreements either in 1974 or now, in 1998. The restraint exercised for 24 years, after having demonstrated our capability in 1974, is in itself a unique example. Restraint, however, has to arise from strength. It cannot be based upon indecision or doubt. The series of tests recently undertaken by India have led to the removal of doubts. The action involved was balanced in that it was the minimum necessary to maintain what is an irreducible component of our national security calculus.

Subsequently, Government has already announced that India will now observe a voluntary moratorium and refrain from conducting underground nuclear test explosions. We have also indicated willingness to move towards a de-jure formalisation of this declaration.

The House is no doubt aware of the different reactions that have emanated from the people of India and from different parts of the world. The overwhelming support of our citizens is our source of strength. It tells us not only that this decision was right but also that our country wants a focussed leadership, which attends to their security needs. This, I pledge to do as a sacred duty. We have also been greatly heartened by the outpouring of support from Indians abroad. They have, with one voice, spoken in favour of our action. To the people of India, and to Indians abroad, I convey my profound gratitude. We look to the people of India and Indians abroad for support in the difficult period ahead.

In this, the fiftieth year of our independence, we stand at a defining moment in our history. The rationale for the Government's decision is based on the same policy tenets that have guided us for five decades. These policies have been sustained successfully because of an underlying national consensus. It is vital to maintain the consensus as we approach the next millennium. In my statement today and in the paper placed before the House, I have elaborated on the rationale behind the Government's decision and outlined our approach for the future. The present decision and future actions will continue to reflect a commitment to sensibilities and obligations of an ancient civilisation a sense of responsibility and restraint, but a restraint born of the assurance of action, not of doubts or apprehension. Avoiding triumphalism, let us work together towards our shared objective in ensuring that as we move towards a new millenium, India will take its rightful place in the international community.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This statement has been taken as a Motion. Now, Shri Pranab Mukherjee.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I thank the Prime Minister for making the statement which he made yesterday in the Lok Sabha. Of course, it was not possible to make it in our House yesterday. I share the Prime Minister's views while extending our congratulations to our scientists, engineers and defence personnel, who have proved beyond doubt, unmistakably our technical and scientific competence.

There is no doubt that they had injected a sense of pride; they had strengthened our self-confidence. Sir, I would like to start my observations from the last paragraph of the Prime Minister's Statement. In the fourth line of paragraph 16, the Prime Minister says: "It is vital to maintain the consensus as we approach the next millennium". This is not for the first time that the Prime

Minister is talking of building up a consensus. In the last week of March when he formed the Government, in the national agenda for Governance, the sub-heading of paragraph 35 of that Statement says: "a new norm for Governance by consensus" and there he emphasised the need for building up a consensus. He even went to the extent of suggesting that a country like India's size and population cannot be governed by number alone. My question to him is, do you seriously believe in building up a consensus and a consensus on an issue like this?

Mr. Chairman, in the same statement in paragraph 26, the Prime Minister is talking of national security in the last line, he has mentioned and I quote, "Towards that end we will re-evaluate the nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons." These three words, "to induct nuclear weapons," are very significant words. These are just not words. It is because the phrase which we have used consistently from May 1974 till the publication of this document is, "We shall keep our nuclear options open". You have changed that position by saying 'we shall induct nuclear weapons'. Did you consult, Mr. Prime Minister the Principal Opposition Party of this country which is an important element in building up consensus? Did you consult anybody else excepting those gentlemen and ladies who signed this national agenda for governance? You were not going to divulge any State secret. Nowhere have you mentioned that you are going to manufacture bombs. You considered it a necessity while preparing this document to involve your coalition colleagues; all of them whose signatures appear here. You did not think it necessary at all to involve the Principal Opposition Party who ruled this country for 45 years to make a very fundamental change in our nuclear policy of "keeping our options open", substituted by closing the options and decisively saying that we will induct nuclear weapons. Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is my first point. If we go through the statement, from paragraph 1 to paragraph 16,

of the Prime Minister and Papers Laid on the Table of the House, on the evolution of India's nuclear policy, we will find that three essential elements are emerging out of these observations made by the Prime Minister.

One important element is our security concern. The Prime Minister has mentioned about the security concern in several paragraphs.

The second point which emerges out of observations made in this statement is that perhaps the Prime Minister of India got a little frustrated because of the failure of nuclear-weapon states to respond to India's demand of accommodating its view-point on extending indefinitely the Non-Proliferation Treaty or accepting our suggestions in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. What he mentions here in para 13 is, "The restraint exercised for 24 years, after having demonstrated our capability in 1974, is in itself unique example". He has said that this in itself is a unique example. Then what prompted you to go away from that unique position? What happened after 24 years that prompted you to go in for these underground tests? Is it merely the security concern? Let him be very honest. We expect transparency and honesty from the Prime Minister in this respect. I may agree or I may not agree with you. But your party is committed to manufacture nuclear bombs. From day one you have been talking about it, even from the days of *Jan Sangh*. If you had come out openly and said, "Well, my party has a limited mandate. But whatever the mandate may be, I have won the Vote of Confidence, I am going to manufacture bombs", one could have appreciated it, one could have understood it. You are entitled to say so. But in the whole statement what you have pointed out is that you are taking to the logical conclusion what began in 1974. I am afraid it is not so. Our commitment to disarmament was not just a lip service. Our commitment to disarmament was much more fundamental. When the bomb was dropped at Hiroshima in 1945, the observa-

tion made by Mahatma Gandhi was that it was "the most diabolical use of scientific talent towards wanton destruction of men, women and children". The 'Stand-still' formula provided by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that you have mentioned in your statement, the principle which India advocated for guiding the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1965, the proposal which India put forward in 1983 for banning the fissile materials and the concrete Action Plan which Mr. Rajiv Gandhi provided in the Third Disarmament Conference of the United Nations in 1988, reflects our firm commitment disarmament. It is not lip service and you have to yourself mentioned this in your statement and rightly so. I appreciate that our concept of disarmament is closely linked with our security concerns because we did believe that India can be more secure if we could achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. Even if we know that in a wider time-frame nuclear weapon states are agreeing to eliminate the nuclear weapons, we will feel more safe. It is not just from a moral posture that we accepted disarmament as an important ingredient of our foreign policy. It is closely linked with our security concept and the security concept of the rest of the world because we know our limitations.

We know our limitations that from 1945 till date, I am excluding our five tests, 2047 nuclear tests have taken place. One thousand thirty two are accounted for by the United States of America alone, more than 50 per cent; followed by Russia 715; followed by France 210; followed by China and United Kingdom 45 each. Therefore, we know that we cannot be equated with them. You yourself have mentioned that you have no intention of joining the arms race. Therefore, we must clearly specify what our objective is and what we want to achieve. Where do we go from Pokhran? Whatever has happened, has happened. But, from there, where would you like to go? You have mentioned in your statement that no doubt, India is a nuclear-weapon State now. It does not require any con-

ferment from anybody. It does not require any recognition from anyone. Well, accepted. You are going to have the *de jure* formalisation. How? In what manner are you going to have the *de jure* formalisation? What are you going to do? Therefore, to my mind, Mr. Chairman, Sir, certain issues require to be clearly spelt out. Surely, I am not going to ask for the details of security, threat perceptions or security concerns of the Government, but there must be a credible package. If I hear from a Minister that a neighbouring country is enemy number one, I am really distressed because what we find, even in reply to a question today, Mr. Prime Minister, you yourself have admitted that the same country is eager to build up a close relationship with us — I am talking of China. I am really disturbed over it because it took 36 years to build the relationship, not one year, not two years. You yourself as Foreign Minister in 1978 made your own contributions because that was the year we started official trade with China which had been suspended in 1959. Being suspended in 1959. After 19 years the official trade began with China in 1978. It was formalised through a trade agreement in 1984. There was a path-breaking visit of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi in 1988 and thereafter we signed an agreement with China for maintaining peace and tranquillity on the border areas in 1993. There have been three important achievements as a result of the signing of this agreement. One important achievement is, we have opened the border trade between these two countries—one is at Lipulet in Uttar Pradesh and another at the point of Ship Kila in Himachal. From 1992-93, our border trades are going on regularly which was suspended in 1959. Both sides agreed. You are fully aware of it that along the actual line of control, our armed forces are situated in such a way that at any point of time there could be a confrontation—which the technicians call—I don't understand the significance of it; of "eye ball position". As a result of signing of this agreement it was

decided that we will withdraw our forces both sides without compromising, without prejudice to the stated positions of both these countries in regard to the border dispute. We did not compromise. None of us compromised. I am stating that without prejudice to the stated positions of the respective countries both sides will withdraw forces into the deeper of the respective countries so that the tension could be avoided. It was followed during the visit of President Jiang Zemin between 28th November and 1st of December, 1996. We signed the agreement for confidence-building measures wherein we agreed, both states agreed, that there would be a reduction of forces. I do not know whether it is true; my knowledge from the newspaper reports is that our Defence Minister has said that he would not reduce the forces. I think both as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Mr. Vajpayee should put his foot down that when an international agreement is signed, it simply cannot be ignored in a cavalier manner, as it has sometimes been treated. It took time to build our relationship. If it takes times to build our relationship, should we have the luxury of spoiling it? Who does not know that China is supplying M-11 Missiles to Pakistan? Who does not know that Pakistan is getting some sophisticated military warheads from China? Everybody knows it. It has been discussed on the floor of this House. But no new information has come, no new element has come which has increased the threat perception. Therefore, these issues are to be looked into. Is it not a fact that America went out of the way by amending Pressler Amendment through the Brown Amendment in order to provide the most sophisticated weapons to Pakistan? If the information is correct—if it is not correct I have nothing to say—according to the assessment of some Minister, a particular country is enemy number one. I do not think we can have this type of categorisation in the international situation today. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, my most respectful

submission to the Prime Minister would be, please let us not look at it from a narrow myopic partisan point of view. I fully appreciate, particularly in this paper, the evolution of India's nuclear policy whereby we have built up what we wanted to achieve as one of the major objectives. I do believe that many in this House and outside will share with us that our commitment to disarmament is firm and we shall have to do that. May I take this opportunity of suggesting to you, Mr. Prime Minister, as to why we cannot utilise our new strength as you have declared that India is a nuclear weapons state now? In 1988 the position was a little different. In 1988 we were categorised as a threshold state. Three states were there; India, Pakistan and Israel. You are aware of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's offer to nuclear states. He offered to the nuclear states, "Gentlemen, I am prepared not to graduate myself from the threshold level to nuclear weapons state. But would you agree, would you give us some sort of an agreement that over a period of time you will eliminate your nuclear weapons?" We have very well that NPT was a flawed treaty which created two categories of states—nuclear-weapons have states and nuclear weapons have not states. Having this knowledge we actively participated and made our contribution which has again been mentioned in your statement to create the chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention. We have contributed, India's contribution in these areas is much more. So we actively engaged ourselves in CTBT. In the negotiations for Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty we actively engaged ourselves. In the statement you have not mentioned it except two phrases which you have used two times that disarmament still continues to be an important ingredient in your foreign policy.

In another part of the statement you have said, now you would like to have a *de jure* formalisation. I would like to have some clarification while replying to the debate as to what you mean by "Still

disarmament is going to be an important ingredient in the foreign policy". The point which I was trying to drive here is, can we afford to say, now I am a nuclear weapon State, come on, let us try to remove the deficiencies of the C.T.B.T.? Why did we not sign it? We did not make any unreasonable demand. It was debated in this House. We demanded that there should be some indication by which we will be able to really have nuclear disarmament. We know that it is not comprehensive. It is only preventing the horizontal proliferation. It is not going to stop tests in the laboratories or computer simulation. We knew it. But, even then, we were prepared to go with it and India was one of the co-sponsors of the Convention and we actively engaged ourselves till 28th June, 1996. In this connection, it also requires some sort of clarification. How are you going to deal with Article 14 of the C.T.B.T.? Have you decided to sign the C.T.B.T.? If you have decided to sign the C.T.B.T.; As I have heard, I do not know then please say so. We have read in a newspaper, *The Statesmen*, dated 18th May, 1998, "While briefing the press people after the G-8 Summit, the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, reported to the press that Mr. Vajpayee, committed to initiate a dialogue on the C.T.B.T. and now we are awaiting for the deliverance." Since it appeared in the newspaper, surely, we would be interested to know as to what talks transpired between you and the British Prime Minister. Did you make any commitment to him for signing the C.T.B.T. on the dotted line? Yes. We will have some advantages. All of us know that. I need not elaborate on it after the explosion. But, is that enough? Is that adequate? You yourself have mentioned in your statement, Mr. Prime Minister, that India should engage itself actively in multi-lateralism. Therefore, we are not only addressing ourselves; we have a constituency larger than this, larger than this Parliament and larger than this country, because we have a commitment towards the people outside our country. This country declared in the

7th Non-Aligned Summit, the then Prime Minister, while summing up the 7th Non-Aligned Summit at Ethiopia, has declared that we are living in a strange world where millions of dollars are spent by manufacturing lethal weapons on the one side and on the other out of every three children two die of starvation in some part of the world at that point of time in Ethiopia. Therefore, we always have human concern and human consideration. Of course, our own security, our own national interest should have the paramount importance. There is nobody who will say that you should not have it and as the Government of the day, you are the custodian and you alone can tell us, nobody else, as to the data, what the magnitude is and what the gravity of the situation is. And I can assure you, Mr. Prime Minister, that we will go by you on your own assessment of the situation. But surely, we would expect that the Government should speak in one voice. Surely, it would not be a case to utilise the situation to take advantage in a very narrow, myopic, way. Can we call it a Hindu Home? Is there any rationale in constructing a temple there? Is there any logic in carrying the sand? Do we believe in ritualism? Do we wanted to have some sort of symbolism? Yes. You have our thanks. You have gone to the place of explosion. You have gone to the extent that you will give more liberty, more opportunity to our scientists, to our technologists, to work more freely. That is a nation-wide recognition. When you talk, you talk on behalf of the nation. You talk on behalf of the nine hundred million people. You have recognised the talent, competence and capability of scientists. But, does it require having some sort of ritualism? That creates a doubt in the minds of the people.

Another clarification I would like to seek from you, Mr. Prime Minister, is with regard to paragraph 13, where you say, "I wanted to go away from the restraints. It cannot be based on indecision or doubt." What is the indecision? What is the doubt? Who was indecisive?

Who has doubts on the confidence of the scientists and their talents? The whole text of the statement—I may be totally wrong because my English is not very good—appears to be a little bit of an innuendo. Otherwise, it is a perfect statement, like a statesman's statement, though, in many other areas it does not sound genuine. What do you want to say? What do you mean by saying, "Not only this decision was right, but also our country wants a focussed leadership which attends to the security needs"? Do you mean others were insensitive to the security needs, others were not aware of it? Has the Prime Minister been the only focussed leader? Therefore, Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to submit, through you, to the Government and, particularly, to the Members of the ruling party that we should not try to belittle what has been achieved. But, at the same time we must be fully aware of its implications. So far as economic implications are concerned, I am not going into it. My colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, will go into the details of it. I am really worried of on one aspect, that is, the transfer of "dual-use technology", because we suffered on this in the past. We suffered on the restricted import of "dual-use technology". Nowadays, with these sophistications, the critical technologies can be used for peaceful purposes, like industrialisation; and the same technology can be used for military purposes also. There are three important organisations which are controlling the transfer of technology. These four important organisations are: *Ad hoc* Export Control Regime; Missile Technology Control Regime; Export Control and Industrial Equipments and Small Arms.

So far as item 2 is concerned, perhaps we can say that Export Control and Missile Technology Control Regime may not affect us very much. And I am not divulging any State secret because it appeared in a journal, where I read a comparison between our missiles and Pakistan's missiles, and somebody tried to create an alarm. There is no reason for alarm. I can share my information with

my colleagues. Many of you might have also read it. Our three missiles, Prithvi-I had a range of 150 Kms., on which they can carry 1000 Kg. warheads, Prithvi-II had a range of 250 Kms. Agni had a range of 2500 Kms. with 1000 Kg. warheads. Against these, Pakistan's Haft-I had a range of 50 Kms., Haft-II had a range of 200 Kms., M-11 had a range of 300 kms. with a single warhead, Haft-III had a range of 600 Kms.; and even now, the much talked about, Ghouri had a range of 1500 Kms.

I am not going to compare it because I do not want to, I hate to have a competition on defence expenditure between these two countries. From out of whatever little bit of resources are available to us, without compromising our security needs, without compromising on the needs of our defence personnel, I will be too happy if you spend more money on defence research and development, but, at the same time we must be a little prudent. Sometimes we keep maintaining our antiques. Yes, for antique purposes it is very good. You see in the Republic Day Parade, your Camel Regiment is moving, your Elephant Regiment is moving. What purpose it will serve in modern warfare now-a-days, nobody knows. But, yes, for antique purposes, if you want to keep it for decorative purposes, it is Okay. But these things are gone. If you are seriously concerned from the security point of view, you must provide a credible package to the country to the extent possible. Nobody responsible enough would ask, demand, that you should tell everything to us. It is for the Government of the day to decide. It is for the Government of the day to share the perceptions and we are prepared to go with you, but it must be credible. Unfortunately, it did not appear to be credible. Your statement, nobody doubted it. I am very candid about it. Nobody is doubting your bonafides. Everybody appreciates that. Even this statement is a correct statement. But, simply, Mr. prime Minister, you cannot give a certificate to many of your colleagues. And, therefore, the doubt comes

whether there is a real security threat, whether you have discovered a security threat or you have invented a security threat? Whether the whole exercise is for a narrow partisan achievement or to meet genuine security requirements. That is why we have said in our response, in various forums we have given it, we have pointed out, yes, nothing could be compromised so far as security is concerned and whatever National Government consider necessary, we go about it. But for God's sake, please give us a credible package and carry the whole nation with you on this issue. If you want to carry the whole nation with you, the nation will be prepared. It is for you, Mr. Prime Minister, and all your colleagues to decide what path you will choose. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN (Kerala): Honourable Chairman, Sir, I would like to express my thanks to the honourable Prime Minister for having made the statement. Sir, regarding what he had stated, I do disagree with some of the points that he has raised. Firstly, what he has stated is, there were certain threat perceptions. In our security conditions, there were certain new developments which have made the security dangerous. But, Sir, if you look at the developments that have taken place during the last several years, especially, during the period from March, 19, to this date, one cannot say that some new developments have taken place, or certain very serious new threats to our country. It is true that our relations with our friends, some countries in our neighbourhood were very much strained. But, at the same time one after another the Governments were taking very concerted measures, to improve the situation, as regards the relations between China and India, the same way regarding the relations between Pakistan and India. The Prime Minister himself had agreed. In his letter to Mr. Clinton, the President of the USA, which he wrote on 11th May, he himself had said that during the last ten years, the relations between China and India were improving. He himself had said that. Similarly, in regard to Pakistan.

Even though we had not made much of a progress, attempts were made to improve the relations and some results were there.

Therefore, the statement that the security environment has deteriorated very much does not conform to the realities. In his letter to the American President, the Prime Minister had said that China possessing nuclear weapons and the assistance it was giving to Pakistan was the main reason for resorting to this step. At the same time, the Prime Minister has forgotten that in the Indian Ocean, in Diego Garcia, America has piled up enough of atomic weapons. They have a military base there. He did not consider it as a threat; I do not know why.

In many cases, the USA has been taking a hostile position towards us. Even in this case—whether it is right on our part to have conducted the nuclear tests in a matter to be decided between ourselves—they protested against the nuclear tests and declared sanctions against us. How can the USA do so when they were the first to make atomic bombs in the world? They were the first to use atom bombs in Nagasaki and Hiroshima. They have conducted 1032 tests. I do not want to go into the details. But I cannot understand how the Prime Minister has closed his eyes to the American military presence in Diego Garcia, in the Indian Ocean. Is it not a threat? Why have you closed your eyes to it?

Another thing is, the Prime Minister has been talking of consensus. In regard to these tests, which was a very vital decision, he has been saying that it is a continuation of the same policy which was being pursued during the last fifty years. Sir, it is not. With these tests, there is a departure from the policy.

Of course, way back in 1974, we conducted a nuclear test. After the 1974 test, the then Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, had categorically and assertively stated that we would not resort to making of nuclear weapons. We said that we would use our nuclear capability for

peaceful purposes. This has been said repeatedly. Even though we were trying to increase our nuclear capability, even though we were making advances in the field of nuclear science, we were of the opinion that nuclear arms should not be produced. We were for complete disarmament and a 'nuclear-weapon-free world'. This was the policy being pursued by us all along.

All along, we have been saying that we will keep the nuclear option open; But now, this option has been exercised. Has there been a consensus on this? Did the Prime Minister, when taking such a vital decision, consult the other political parties? He did not. Immediately after the tests, he wrote to Mr. Clinton, but he did not immediately write to, or contact, the leaders of the different political parties in India. Is this the way consensus is being sought to be built? Definitely not. Then, another thing is that it has been mentioned in the National Agenda that a Security Council would be appointed to go into details into the aspects of the security environment and to make necessary recommendations. Two months have passed since the Government was formed. Why has the Government failed to form such a Council to discuss the whole thing elaborately and to take a decision? I cannot understand that also.

Now, where do we go from here? The Prime Minister has already stated that India is an atomic-weapon State. All right. But where do we go from here? Are we going to build atomic bombs or hydrogen bombs. If you resort to that, what will be the situation? We are knowingly or unknowingly entering into a nuclear arms race in this sub-continent. Can we afford to do that? My personal opinion is that at this stage our country cannot afford to do it. As you know, everybody agrees at present that our country is facing a very difficult economic situation. I will not go into the details. Forty per cent of our people are below the poverty-line. A large number of people are suffering from illiteracy. Several other problems are there. Unemployment

is there. When millions of such issues are there, can we give priority to building of atomic weapons? Or shall we give priority to attend to the problems facing the people here in India? I am of the opinion that attending to those problems is the first thing to be done to ensure our security. What is the first requirement for security of any country? Political stability and economic strength. In the matter of economic strength we are far below in the ranking of the countries of the world. We are at the rank of 128 or so. Our people are facing so many problems. Our peasants are committing suicides on a large scale in several areas. What should be the priority in such a situation? Are we giving priority to solving the problems which our people are facing? Or are we giving priority to making armaments? This is a vital question to be decided.

Another thing is that after the tests several people are talking in terms of creating a war psychosis. I do not want to name the persons. Very responsible persons belonging to the Government and persons belonging to the political party which is leading the Govt. are making statements which create an impression that we want to enter into an armament race and that we want to create a war psychosis. I do not want to go into the details. Will it be good for us? Will it help us to solve our problems and to make our country strong, of which we will be proud? Definitely no.

Another thing is that immediately after these tests, within hours and days, several things have happened. The Government of India has already entered into eighteen odd agreements for exploration of oil fields. We have already entered into agreements for fast track projects with three multinational companies. I do not want to go into the details of those agreements. In the name of facing sanctions and while working up the patriotic feelings of the people, they are entering into agreements with multinational companies on very adverse terms to the country. Is this permissible? Of course, American sanctions will have to be fought. In that

case all of us will have to stand together. There is not doubt about it. But, at the same time, taking this opportunity to take this liberalisation to that extent even of surrendering the interests of our country will be very detrimental to the interests of the country.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will you please conclude now? It is getting 1 o' clock.

SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Yes, I am going to conclude Sir. I don't want to take more time.

The main thing that we will have to consider is that from here where shall we go? Of course, we have proved our capability to produce atomic weapons. It will be better not to enter into an arms race in this sub-continent. In that case it will be very detrimental to the interests of the country. Therefore, my hope is that the hon. Prime Minister shall take initiative to bring about a national consensus on these issues. With these words I conclude.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is now 1 o'clock. We adjourn for lunch. Dr. Raja Ramanana will speak, when we reassemble after lunch.

The House stands adjourned till 2 p.m.

The House then adjourned for Lunch at one minute past one of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at four minutes past two of the clock, Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

PAPER LAID ON THE TABLE—Contd.

Status Paper on Indian Railways

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI NITISH KUMAR): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy (in English and Hindi) of the "Status Paper on Indian Railways".

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-153/98]