

Indo-US nuclear deal

The article by Rao¹ on the Indo-US nuclear deal is well written, and succinctly brings out the major features of this deal. I hope the readers of *Current Science* will bestow their attention on this article, to understand the problems arising out of such an agreement in the scientific and political spheres, and for future developments in the energy sector. I may recall, as an author of the appeal we made in August 2006 to the Parliamentarians (part of which is reproduced in Rao's article), that we had pointed out to the Government what should be the basis of our negotiations in these matters, and expressed our fears on what was being enacted to amend the American Atomic Energy Act, to make cooperation with India feasible. At the time the Hyde Act was passed and made into law by President George Bush, the Government of India should have declared its reservations to the provisions of the Act. Instead, we were told to wait for the 123 Agreement. Now that the text of the agreement has been released, and it is clear that it just re-emphasizes the Hyde Act, we are told

that the 'text is frozen' and nothing can be changed or renegotiated! This is clearly unscientific. The controversies have unfortunately become political, because of which we may lose the ability to rationally analyse the consequences of accepting such a deal. If we, as scientists, have the confidence in our abilities, and want to keep the options open for future generations of scientists, we should not agree to such restraints. The international nuclear power industry has suffered stagnation because of the availability and accessibility of rich ores of uranium to the weapon powers. Few countries have the option of enriching uranium and thus making a value-added product. Just like the oil prices have soared, the price of enriched uranium as nuclear fuel will also go up because of the monopoly of a few countries. Importing reactors is not a magical solution that will suddenly solve our energy problems. The only viable solution is to deepen and accelerate our indigenous nuclear power programme. Science tells us that new discoveries of uranium sources can occur in this coun-

try, and we need to emphasize intense exploration of uranium resources. This needs support for earth sciences research, which has been lagging behind for the last 50 years. Any deal that threatens to slow the pace of R&D in nuclear technology, through the requirement of getting IAEA clearance for the design and construction of new facilities like reprocessing plants, will adversely affect our thorium utilization programme as well as our strategic programme. It is doubtful if an India-specific safeguards agreement will work out in our favour. If it is agreed that we are a responsible strategic partner why should there be clauses that sound suspicious on our programme? We never yielded to NPT for the last 50 years.

1. Rao, K. R., *Curr. Sci.*, 2007, **93**, 606–612.

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Publishing in *SCI* journals: Why double standards?

I fully agree with Sharma's¹ view that we must encourage scientists and researchers to publish their work in journals of high impact factor (IF). In fact, research papers in *Science Citation Indexed (SCI)* journals have been made a criterion by the CSIR for grant of SRF/RA/SRA. This is being implemented and CSIR has even made it mandatory for scientists working in its laboratories. When it comes to granting fellowships (SRF/RA) to students, one asks for *SCI* papers; but when it comes to Career Advancement promotions (so-called CAS of UGC) for teachers, particularly from the post of Reader to that of Professor, it is blatantly ignored. Why do we follow double standards? Teachers publish only 3 or 5 papers (required for promotion according to UGC norms) in some journal without any peer-reviewing. Thereafter, they are promoted. The irony of the situation is

that such professors then sit in interviews and ask students for research papers in international refereed/peer-reviewed journals with high IF. Why can we not have similar conditions made mandatory for teachers? What do we want to convey to young research minds? Why cannot we learn from China where incentives are given to researchers/scientists/teachers who publish their works in *SCI* journals? Further, it is pertinent to note that almost every issue of all high IF/*SCI* journals carry a number of papers from Chinese researchers. Why are we, in India, not supporting such a scheme? It is rather disappointing that we Indians who talk about an enormous higher education system with a large number of universities/institutes, stand nowhere in comparison with such countries, when it comes to papers in *SCI*/IF journals. Another problem with our scientific system is that we have

plenty of schemes for young scientists (Fast Track/Women Scientist scheme of DST, etc.) and for senior scientists (JC Bose or Ramanujan Fellowships by DST and similar ones by DBT), but what about middle-level scientists or researchers? It is high time that top-level educationists/policymakers/analysts who plan higher education think of giving due incentives/encouragement to young/middle-career researchers with *SCI*/IF papers so that we can compete with the rest of the world.

1. Sharma, O. P., *Curr. Sci.*, 2007, **92**, 269.

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