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**Title:** Made a statement on bilateral talks with United States of America.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE): Sir, since the May 11 and 13 tests, the Government has, from time to time, taken the House into confidence and sought views of the hon. Members. This was done through statements and discussions in the House on 27-29 May, 8 June and on 3-4 August. Nevertheless, I wish to re-emphasise some salients of our policy.

I take this opportunity to reiterate that India's commitment to global nuclear disarmament remains undiluted. As hon. Members are no doubt aware, India has consistently maintained that a nuclear-weapon-free-world would enhance not only our security but the security of all nations. That is why numerous initiatives in this direction were taken during the last fifty years; such steps as would encourage decisive and irreversible measures for the attainment of this objective. Regrettably, the international community, particularly countries that have based their security on nuclear weapons or a nuclear umbrella, have been reluctant to embrace this objective. Keeping open our nuclear option, therefore, became a national security imperative three decades ago, an imperative equally valid for India in the post-Cold War period. The option that was exercised in May, 1998 was thus a continuation of a decision taken nearly 25 years earlier; during which period India had demonstrated an exemplary nuclear restraint, given the exceptional security related complexities of our region. I wish to place on record that successive governments continued to safeguard this option, demonstrate our capability and take such steps as were necessary to ensure the viability of the option through weaponisation.

Just as our conventional defense capability has been deployed in order to safeguard the territorial integrity and sovereignty of India against any use or threat of use of force, the adoption of our nuclear deterrent posture has also followed the same logic. We have announced our intention to maintain a minimum nuclear deterrent, but one that is credible. Mindful of our global and enhanced responsibility to address concerns of the international community, and in order to reassure all countries about the defensive nature of our nuclear capability, we have engaged in bilateral discussions with key interlocutors. In international forums, like the United Nations, India is the only country possessing nuclear weapons to raise a call for negotiating a gradual and progressive elimination of all nuclear weapons, within a time-bound framework.

We also have an established tradition of consultation with friendly countries on all important international issues. Successive governments have pursued an open, positive and constructive approach in our foreign relations. This is in keeping with our national ethos. It is within this framework that India had been engaged, even before May, 1998, in a wide-ranging and broad-based dialogue with the United States. This included discussions on disarmament and non-proliferation and on larger strategic issues.

Following the May 11 and 13 nuclear tests, apprehensions were expressed in some quarters. It was, therefore, decided to have more focussed and intensive discussions. Accordingly, Shri Jaswant Singh, the then Deputy-Chairman, Planning Commission was designated as our representative to carry forward this dialogue. Similarly, President Clinton designated Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott, as the US interlocutor.

This dialogue has been conducted on the basis of a set of comprehensive proposals, put forward by India, to the international community, soon after the May tests. As the House would recollect, these proposals comprise: a voluntary moratorium on underground nuclear test explosions; our willingness to move towards a de jure formalisation of this commitment, a decision to join negotiations on a treaty for a ban on future production of fissile material for weapons purposes; and, our determination to make more stringent the existing system of export controls over sensitive materials and technology.

Since the 11 June, 1998 Washington meet, six rounds of discussions between Shri Jaswant Singh and Mr. Talbott have been held. Both teams have worked purposefully to narrow gaps of perception and to establish common ground. These exchanges have been marked by a sense of responsibility, candour and a sincere attempt to understand each other's concerns and points of view. The Government is entirely mindful that the issues involved touch upon matters of vital interest to both countries. In these talks, we have firmly put across our

security concerns and the imperative of maintaining a minimum, credible, nuclear deterrent. I wish to inform the House that the talks are premised on this basis. Also there now exists some understanding of our security concerns and requirements.

The talks have focussed on issues related to disarmament and non-proliferation. It is agreed that regional issues shall be kept distinctly apart. As hon. Members are well aware, India's concerns in these matters go beyond the South Asian region, and involve a wider perspective.

After six rounds, talks have narrowed and are now focussed on the following four issues.

**CTBT:** India remains committed to converting our voluntary moratorium into a de jure obligation. In response to the desire of the international community, as expressed to us in our bilateral and multilateral interactions, that the Treaty should come into effect in September, 1999, in my address to the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September, I reiterated broadly what I had said in Parliament, that: "India is now engaged in discussions with our key interlocutors on a range of issues, including the CTBT. We are prepared to bring these discussions to a successful conclusion, so that the entry into force of the CTBT is not delayed beyond September, 1999. We expect that other countries, as indicated in Article XIV of the CTBT, will adhere to this Treaty without conditions".

That remains our position. For the successful conclusion of the talks, creation of a positive environment by our interlocutors is a necessary ingredient.

The House will be reassured that in the assessment of our scientists, this stand does not come in the way of our taking such steps as may be found necessary in future to safeguard our national security. It also does not constrain us from continuing with our R&D programmes, nor does it jeopardise in any manner the safety and effectiveness of our nuclear deterrent in the years to come.

**FMCT:** We have expressed our willingness to join the FMCT negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva. It is our understanding, as that of many other countries, who have confirmed this to us, that the objective of these negotiations is to arrive at a non-discriminatory treaty, that will end the future production of fissile material for weapons purposes, in accordance with the 1993 consensus resolution of the U.N. General Assembly. We are willing to work for the early conclusion of such a treaty.

It was suggested to us that we might examine announcing a moratorium on fissile material production. We have conveyed that it is not possible to take such steps at this stage. We will, of course, pay serious attention to any negotiated multilateral initiatives in the course of the FMCT negotiations.

**EXPORT CONTROLS:** Discussions in this area have registered progress. An expert-level meeting of officials from both sides was held in New Delhi on 9-10 November. In light of our additional capabilities, as a responsible State possessing nuclear weapons, and as earlier announced, we are taking steps to make more stringent our laws in this regard. We have also conveyed that India should be provided better access to dual-use and high technologies in view of India's impeccable record of effective control over sensitive technologies. The expert-level meeting was categorised as helpful by both, India and the United States, to the prospects of continuing cooperation in this area.

**DEFENCE POSTURE:** As hon. Members are, no doubt, aware, matters relating to defence postures are sovereign functions, not subjects for negotiations. In fact, our talks are based on the fundamental premise that India will define its own requirements, for its nuclear deterrent, on its own assessment of the security environment. The US and other interlocutors, are interested in understanding our positions and our policies better.

We have formally announced a policy of No-First-Use and non-use against non-nuclear weapons States. As hon. Members are aware, a policy of no-first-use with a minimum nuclear deterrent, implies deployment of assets in a manner that ensures survivability and capacity of an adequate response. We are also not going to enter into an arms race with any country.

Ours will be a minimum credible deterrent, which will safeguard India's security -- the security of one-sixth of humanity, now and into the future. The National Security Council, with the assistance of its subsidiary bodies, the establishment of which has been announced, will make important contributions to elaborating these concepts.

We have expressed our reservations about provisions of certain export control regimes that ostensibly seek to promote non-proliferation objectives, but are discriminatory in application. India's missile development programme is an indigenous programme, that was launched almost 15 years ago. This programme is regularly reviewed, taking into account our security environment, particularly missile acquisitions and deployments in our region. We have announced that a new version of the Agni, with an extended range is under development. Flight-testing of such an enhanced range Agni will be conducted fully in accordance with established international practice. While our decision is to maintain the deployment of a deterrent which is both minimum but credible, I would like to re-affirm to this House that the Government will not accept any restraints on the development of India's R&D capabilities. Such activity is an integral of any country's defense preparedness and essential for coping with new threat perceptions that may emerge in the years ahead. This Government remains unequivocally opposed to any suggestions that seek to place India at a technological disadvantage through intrusive or sovereignty violative measures.

At the same time, we will continue to take initiatives in the international forums towards fulfilling the objective of complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. At this year's U.N. General Assembly, we had taken the initiative for, what could be an important first step, through a resolution on 'Reducing Nuclear Danger'. This initiative was intended to urge countries to move back from the nuclear hair-trigger response postures of the Cold War. If such initiatives are multilaterally accepted by other nuclear weapon States, they will, of course, be accordingly reflected in our own positions, too.

In the course of these discussions with the United States and other countries, I have kept in touch with leaders of various political parties. We have issued statements from time to time on pronouncements and declarations by various countries. This corpus of Statements in Parliament and through Official Spokesman conveys our position and is well-known to Hon'le Members. These issues have also been discussed, at considerable length, in meetings of the Standing Committee and the Consultative Committee of Parliament. The viewpoints expressed by hon. Members in these discussions, have provided us valuable guidance in conducting discussions with the United States and other countries.

The dialogue with the United States will be continued at the next meeting scheduled to be held in the second half of January, in New Delhi.

While there is no time-frame for the conclusion of these talks, it is the intention of both countries, that a stable understanding should be reached on the remaining issues at an early date. This would provide a further momentum to bilateral relations, which is desired by both countries.

In addition to the talks between Shri Jaswant Singh and Mr. Strobe Talbott, we have had detailed exchanges with France and Russia. Discussions have also taken place with UK and China at the level of Shri Jaswant Singh and at official level with Germany and Japan as well as with other non-nuclear weapon states. I have been in regular correspondence with President Clinton. Our correspondence has touched not only upon issues under discussion between our Representatives but also on larger aspects of Indo-US relations. It is my view that the future of Indo-US relations is much larger than the four issues under consideration. President Clinton has also expressed to me, his desire for a broad-based relationship with India that befits the two largest democracies of the world. I have fully reciprocated these sentiments. Indeed, our on-going dialogue with the United States is geared towards that end. I am confident this House will want to wish it all success.

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SHRI SHARAD PAWAR (BARAMATI): Sir, after six rounds of talks with the United States, what is the hard assessment of the hon. Prime Minister? Is it leading to a conducive atmosphere for the full implementation of the CTBT after September, 1999? ... (Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Sir, there have been six rounds of talks ... (Interruptions)

संसदीय कार्य मंत्री तथा पर्यटन मंत्री (श्री मदन लाल खुराना): अध्यक्ष जी, इस पर डिस्कशन हो सकता है।

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Acharia, you should not create problems like this.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARYA: We would like to know as to what transpired in these meetings ... (Interruptions)  
The House should not be kept in dark ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: We would have a discussion on CTBT at a later stage.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI RAJESH PILOT (DAUSA): Sir, the Leader of the Opposition has asked a question on CTBT ...  
(Interruptions)

SHRI MURLI DEORA (MUMBAI SOUTH): Sir, there is no ban on asking questions ... (Interruptions)

प्रधान मंत्री (श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी): इस महत्वपूर्ण विषय पर सरकार चर्चा के लिए तैयार है। एक-एक प्रश्न का अलग-अलग उत्तर देना, उससे अच्छा यह है कि एक समवेत चर्चा हो जाए और आप भी अपनी पूरी बात कहें और हमें भी पूरी बात कहने का मौका दें।

MR. SPEAKER: Now, we would take up Papers to be laid on the Table.

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL (HOOGLY): Sir, I have given a notice ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: No. Not now.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : Sir, a very serious situation has arisen; there is a cultural emergency ... (Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARYA: Sir, the Home Minister should make a statement ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please raise this issue after the Papers are laid on the Table.