

## From New Delhi by Ramtanu Maitra

### India eyes debate in Japan on NPT

*The discriminatory aspects of the non-proliferation treaty are under fire, as the U.S. ups the pressure on India.*

In the wake of Aug. 6, Hiroshima Day in Japan, that city's mayor, Takashi Hiraoka, launched a stinging attack on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which expires in 1995 and whose indefinite extension is now vigorously sought by the nuclear weapons countries, particularly the United States, Russia, and Great Britain.

Hiraoka's missive, addressed to then-Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa on behalf of Japan's 340,000 atom bomb survivors, said: "For all our appreciation of the NPT having served certain purposes of nuclear non-proliferation, we can never allow it—speaking from our position as citizens—to be extended indefinitely. . . . Nuclear weapons states have never been faithful to the commitments to nuclear disarmament ever since the treaty came into force. . . . Nuclear weapons, or at least ideas permissive to the presence of nuclear weapons, must not be carried over to the 21st century."

Hiraoka's anguish reflects a broadening view in Japan against the discriminatory aspects of the NPT. Former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, in an article, has cautioned the United States that consensus for an indefinite extension of the NPT would not be easy. Also noteworthy is an editorial in the prestigious Japanese magazine *Atoms in Japan* in July. Noting the full-court pressure applied against Japan by the United States at the Group of Seven summit in Tokyo, where Miyazawa warned that Japan might have to develop its own nuclear capability if North Korea persisted in developing

nuclear weapons, the article concluded: "Japan has been an active NPT member striving to expand the non-proliferation regime. . . . [However], a message by concerned people in Hiroshima may provide an explanation for the Japanese government's hesitation in agreeing to an unconditional and indefinite extension of the NPT. It gives great expression to what the Japanese people feel about the treaty."

In the West, this may be mistakenly interpreted as Japan's desire to build nuclear weapons. However, it should be recalled that Japan took seven years of soul-searching before joining the treaty. According to some sources, Japan is particularly angry that while Britain and France are permitted to be nuclear powers, Germany and Japan are not.

In India, which has refused to sign the NPT, these developments in Japan are being watched carefully. India long ago crossed the nuclear threshold, but has scrupulously maintained the non-proliferation regime. India is also under heavy pressure from the Clinton administration to give up its non-signatory status, and Washington has mobilized Russia, Britain, and Germany to exert pressure on India to sign the treaty. However, Washington's efforts in late 1991 to induce Japan to tie its aid to India to the latter's signing of the NPT had failed.

The Clinton administration has now made it known that its soon-to-be-announced non-proliferation policy will prohibit production of fissile material, irrespective of the fact that the fissile material is the backbone of the commercial nuclear power pro-

gram. India, which has had a 30-year nuclear program, plans to use plutonium on a large scale as the fissile material, obtained from the spent fuel in Indian nuclear power plants, for loading its fast breeder reactors. The new non-proliferation policy will pitch India squarely against the United States on the nuclear issue. Already, Washington has made it known that it would be difficult for New Delhi to get equipment for its fertilizer manufacturing facilities, since India uses the feedstock from the fertilizer plants to manufacture heavy water, a coolant and moderator for its Candu-type nuclear power plants.

To keep its non-signatory status, India will have to mobilize some international counterpressure. In the context of the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to Beijing on Sept. 5, China has indicated that it does not approve of any outside pressure on India to sign the NPT.

In March, Japan's ambassador for Arms Control and Disarmament, Mitsuro Donowaki, led a delegation to India for talks. Japan indicated that it is fully aware of the inadequacies and anomalies of the NPT. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, China became a major recipient of Moscow's nuclear technology and equipment. Japan noted ruefully that the NPT, while it prevents transfer of nuclear technology from "haves" to "have-nots," helps to add to the "haves'" arsenal, creating major power imbalances in Asia.

But India is also aware that the new Japanese government of Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, a renegade member of the Liberal Democratic Party who came to power campaigning against "corruption," has already indicated its approval for an indefinite extension of the NPT. But Japan's literate voters, India hopes, may think otherwise.