

India: Statement on the Anti-Satellite Missile Test and Prime Minister Declaration

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The Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) takes serious note of the dramatic declaration of the Indian Prime Minister, on March 27, early afternoon, claiming, in a nationally televised address, successful testing of an ASAT missile by way of destroying an Indian military Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite at an altitude of almost 300 kms, over the Bay of Bengal.

Whatever be the actual military significance of the claimed successful test, it definitely makes the current regional and global scenarios even murkier and constitutes an assault on the ongoing global campaign for demilitarisation of the outer space.

Of course, the United States is the original culprit, which would soon enough be joined in by its the main adversary then - the Soviet Union, and, later, China. The ASAT tests carried out by these countries and India go against the very grain of the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 to which all the said four States are parties. The Treaty in no uncertain terms states as follows: "The States Parties to this Treaty... Recognizing the common interests of all [hu]mankind in the progress of the exploration and use of outer space, Have agreed to the following:... (Article III) 'State Parties to the Treaty shall carry on activities in the exploration of space and USE OF OUTER SPACE... IN THE INTEREST OF MAINTAINING INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY and promoting international cooperation and understanding.' (Article IV) 'State Parties to the Treaty undertake not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons... or STATION WEAPONS IN OUTER SPACE IN ANY OTHER MANNER."

The open and boisterous entry of India into the so-called 'Star Wars' club, despite self-imposed abstinence by all the other technologically advanced countries, except three, is a wholly regrettable development, more so because ASAT weapons can in no way PROTECT Indian satellites deployed in outer space. Since ASAT weapons can only DESTROY an adversary's satellites, any use of such weapons would be a provocative act that tantamounts to declaration of war.

Satellites and spacecrafts in outer space can be protected only through mutual agreements by all concerned. In this regard, adoption of the draft treaties on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) and the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT) that are pending before the Conference on Disarmament attains added importance. The only country opposed to the adoption of PAROS and PPWT is the United States.

It may further be noted that the Indian Finance Minister, with the Defence Minister in tow, in a press conference, termed the test firing as India's bid to prepare for "tomorrow's war".

From the standpoint of peace activists, such unwarranted pronouncements from cabinet ministers sound too ominous.

The CNDP, hereby, recommits itself to further strengthening the global campaign for demilitarisation of the outer space as well as complete abolition of nuclear weapons - so very

necessary for continued human survival.

The CNDP also calls upon all other such bodies and peace loving people across the world to take note of this worrying development and redouble their efforts to ensure that the use of outer space is confined entirely for peaceful purposes.

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