

August 2, 1973

Rajya Sabha Q&A on Underground Nuclear Tests

Citation:

"Rajya Sabha Q&A on Underground Nuclear Tests", August 2, 1973, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (ISDA), Rajya Sabha Q&A Documents. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/119737>

Summary:

Transcript of questions and answers between members of the Rajya Sabha and members of the Ministry of Atomic Energy on the feasibility and effects of an underground nuclear tests.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

RAJYA SABHA

Thursday the 2nd August 1973/the 11th
Shavana 1895 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock
MR CHAIRMAN in the Chair

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Under Ground Nuclear Explosions

- *238 SHRI KRISHAN KANT †
SHRI A G KULKARNI
SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR
SHRI KOTA PUNNAIAH
SHRI KALI MUKHERJEE
SHRI J S TILAK
DR Z A AHMAD

Will the Minister of ATOMIC ENERGY be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question No 664 given in Rajya Sabha on 23rd November, 1972 and state whether the Atomic Energy Commission has since completed its study of the conditions under which underground nuclear explosion for peaceful purposes could be of economic benefit to the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS WHO WILL ALSO ASSIST THE PRIME MINISTER IN PARLIAMENTARY WORK RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENTS OF ATOMIC ENERGY, ELECTRONICS AND SPACE (SHRI K C PANT) No. 1

SHRI KRISHAN KANT May I know, Sir, whether they have even started the study for conditions of underground nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes? My feeling is that they have not even started? Have they allotted any money? Have they constituted any team? Who are the members of the team? Have they tried to study underground explosions in foreign countries and the data given?

SHRI K C PANT Sir we are keeping abreast of developments in foreign countries My hon ble friend also is very knowledgeable in this particular field No com-

mercial utilisation of underground nuclear explosions has yet been found possible by any country in the world But he can rest assured that we are keeping abreast of all these developments

SHRI KRISHAN KANT Commercial exploitation comes later First is the underground explosion May I know whether they are collecting some data and facts? Do they agree with the opinions given by the Stockholm Institute of Peace Research that before conducting underground test ou must have some experience of the overground tests? If they agree what is the present stage of the technical knowledge that the Department of Atomic Energy has at present? My feeling is that they have resiled from the earlier decision and nothing is being done May I know whether they have got a team? Who are the members of the team? What is the allocation for the study of the whole project?

SHRI K C PANT The main question which has been asked here is the question of underground nuclear explosion for peaceful purposes The matter has come up in the House earlier also and we have tried to explain Sir that the possibility is there it has been done in other countries Our scientists have in fact witnessed some underground explosions in the USA in the series of experiments But we, at our stage of development have to identify the broad applications which would be viable from our point of view The economics has to be considered and the technology is in part conditioned by the allotment application It is not as though every technology is applicable to every kind of application Therefore these things are interlinked to the effort to find out areas where this application can be done usefully These are the efforts which are now continuing

SHRI KRISHAN KANT Sir he did not reply my question I want to know whether you are serious whether you have constituted a team Who are the members of the team? Whether any allocation has been done or not? How can they find out the economics first?

SHRI K C PANT I really do not know of any particular allocation I can-

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Krishan Kant

not say at the moment. I had called the officers this morning about this question and asked them what studies they were making and they told me that this year they were studying it, and it is necessary for them to identify the areas of application before they can proceed further. That does not mean that they are developing in other directions also. They are studying other aspects of the matter which are relevant to the use of nuclear energy for underground explosions. But the technology, as I said, is partly conditioned by the allotment application, the ultimate use to which it is put. And, therefore, the two questions are interlinked.

SHRI KALI MUKHERJEE: In view of the threatening development of the international situation arising out of a supposed pact between the USA and the USSR, the foremost super-powers, in their stockpiling of highly destructive atomic weapons and to have the world divided amongst themselves, yesterday's announcement of the Warsaw Pact countries in Moscow in which the leaders declared to supplement political *detente* by military *detente* in the developing countries, and the recent bursting of hydrogen bombs as a protest against this by France and China against the combination of super-powers, will the Government of India rethink the entire position and develop nuclear energy and power for the defence of the nation, lest the future generations in history should list us as traitors to our nation?

SHRI K. C. PANT: Sir, we are committed to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and future generations may well thank us for that.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: Even at the cost of national security?

MR CHAIRMAN: Dr. Mahavir, you do not want to put a question?

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: Sir, is it not a fact that the programme of development and exploitation of nuclear energy which we drew up 25 years ago has been consistently watered down all these years? Starting from an aim of 8,000 MW of energy, we came down to 5,000 MW in 1965 and 2,700 MW three years later. Now

1,270 MW is the aim that we seem to be having before us. The achievement of even this appears to be in doubt because of the fact that the existing power stations are not working well. There are troubles in Tarapur and other places, and the aim of 1,700 MW, which was to be completed by the end of the Fifth Plan, also does not seem to be within our capacity of realisation because no construction of new atomic power projects has been started during the Fourth Plan. I would like to know whose failure it is. Is it the failure of the Government at the administrative level or is it the failure of our scientists? And is it a fact that the Prime Minister's visit to Canada seeking further extension of Canadian help in this field drew a blank and the country remains helpless even after 25 years of our work in this field and in spite of repeated assurances given by the Government that we are well ahead in the nuclear research field? I would like to know whose failure it is and what the country has before it in the matter of development of nuclear energy.

SHRI K. C. PANT: Sir, my friend talks of failure. Actually our scientists in this field have given us success and there is appreciation, not only in this country but abroad, for their efforts in the last so many years. He referred to the nuclear power programme. It is true that there has been slippage in that programme and that has come up in the House separately. The reasons have been stated here, and the main reason is perhaps due to the teething troubles that are perhaps inevitable when something new like this is taken up and the industry has to give the equipment, etc., which is required and which is made in the country for the first time. There has been some slippage; there is no doubt about it. But it is not correct to say that the nuclear power programme has not been given the support and the encouragement which it deserves. It has been given the support. And apart from the power plants in Rajasthan, in Madras also power plants are now coming up. The next one will be at Narora in the western region. And there is a projection of a nuclear power development programme which, subject to resources availability, will go ahead fast. So, there is no question of our relegating this programme to an inferior position. It is a programme to which we attach

the highest importance not only in the immediate sense but in the larger sense of ultimately developing leader reactors and having a source of power for a century to come. It will be extremely important even 10 or 20 years later.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: I asked one or two specific points. One was, whether it is a fact that we started with an aim of 8,000 MWs in 1954 and after continuous scaling down, we have come to 1,270 MWs now. And then I asked, whether in the profile of 1970-80, with an aim of 1,700 MWs energy to be erected, during the Fourth Plan nothing has been done about that, and the Fifth Plan aims at 800 MWs, but no erection of new projects has started now. I would like to know where the cause of failure lies.

SHRI K C PANI: I have already answered this question, and I will be very happy to do so again.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: When you permit a question, it is not open to the Minister not to answer it. And when the objection is raised that the answer is not specific...

MR CHAIRMAN: When you are asking for the details, it is open to the Minister.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: The details are there to illustrate. The total programme of production of nuclear energy has been scaled down. Is it a fact or not? Who is responsible for it? This is a straight question. Let him not talk of the details of the figure. Is it a fact or not that we have been scaling down our target all these years? I would like to know whether it is a failure of the Government or the scientists or the administration.

SHRI K C PANT: We are not scaling down anything for which the resources are available. It is a question of resources, it is a question of competing for resources. And even now, even in this Fifth Plan while we are holding discussions with the Planning Commission, it is a question of resources. So, all these points have to be kept in mind. He ask-

ed an overall question and I gave him an overall reply.

MR CHAIRMAN: Yes, yes.

SHRI K C PANT: I explained clearly that we attach importance, and I said that it is one of the big success stories of the country.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: Success!

SHRI KALYAN ROY: It is surprising that a Congress Member, Mr. Kali Mukherjee, was standing up and saying that the Soviet Union has come to a secret pact with America to divide the world. This is exactly what Mao is saying; and, one Congress Member is saying the same thing. I do not know the reaction of the Prime Minister to this.

MR CHAIRMAN: Are you putting the question?

SHRI KALYAN ROY: My question is this. What is the Government's reaction to the hydrogen bomb explosion in the Pacific by the French Government and, whether there is any machinery to measure the fallout from the explosion, in India?

SHRI K C PANT: Right from the beginning India has raised its voice against all overground nuclear explosions which are likely to endanger the lives of the people in any part of the world. It has been our consistent stand.

Grant of Industrial Licences

*239 **SHRI SUNDAR MANI PATEL:**
SHRI LOKANATH MISRA:
SHRI M. K. MOHTA:
SHRI DEBANANDA AMAT:†
SHRI K. C. PANDE
SHRI SHYAMLAL GUPTA:

Will the Minister of **INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY** be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have constituted a new central machinery for issuing industrial licences and

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Debananda Amat.