

## Obama to encourage India, Pakistan to sign CTBT, resolve Kashmir

Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama says if elected he would encourage India and Pakistan to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and resolve the Kashmir problem to reduce nuclear dangers in South Asia.

Accusing President George Bush's policies towards the two neighbours for letting 'grave nuclear risks to grow in South Asia since their 1998 nuclear tests,' he offered these as part of a five point plan to reduce nuclear risks in the region.

'The best way to reduce nuclear risks in South Asia is to reduce incentives to test and deploy new nuclear weapons,' Obama told the journal Arms Control Today when asked how would he work to reduce the risks posed by India's and Pakistan's nuclear arsenals and programmes.

'My two amendments in the Hyde Act sought to accomplish these goals,' he said explaining what have been called 'poison pill' and 'killer amendments' to the enabling US law on the India-US civil nuclear deal.

'Just as I will work with the US Senate to secure ratification of the CTBT at the earliest practical date, I will prioritise diplomatic efforts with India and Pakistan to encourage them to move beyond their moratorium on nuclear testing toward the ratification of the treaty.'

Obama eventually voted for the Hyde Act and now supports the nuclear deal, but one of his rejected amendments considered a deal breaker by [New Delhi](#) opposed giving India the right to build strategic fuel reserves for its imported nuclear reactors.

'The Bush administration's policies toward both India and Pakistan have allowed grave nuclear risks to grow in South Asia since the 1998 nuclear tests,' Obama said in his replies to a presidential questionnaire by Arms Control Today on arms control and non-proliferation issues.

'I will work to reduce the region's nuclear dangers in a number of ways,' he said proposing an expansion of 'the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) from its current focus on stopping illicit nuclear shipments to eradicating nuclear black market networks, like the remnants of the (notorious Pakistani scientist) Abdul Qadeer Khan organization.'

Obama said he would also 'continue my work begun in the Senate to secure all dangerous weapons and materials against terrorist threats worldwide, including in South Asia.'

'I will encourage India and Pakistan to collaborate with IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) experts to maximise security at nuclear power plants and related facilities.

'Finally, I will continue support of ongoing Indian and Pakistani efforts to resolve the Kashmir problem in order to address the political roots of the arms race between India and Pakistan,' Obama said.

Arms Control Today said Wednesday it had asked both major party presidential nominees to answer its questions on arms control and non-proliferation issues. But Republican presidential nominee John McCain did not respond.

*Arun Kumar ( © IANS / India eNews)*