

Left warns UPA against ties with US

Warning the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) against strategic ties as well as the nuclear deal with the US, the Left parties Saturday asked the government to choose between Washington and their Common Minimum Programme (CMP) for governance.

Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) general secretary Prakash Karat said the time has come for the UPA leadership to decide and tell people whether it would abide by the commitment to the US or to the CMP.

'The government is deviating from the CMP and taking step after step to get into a strategic alliance with the US. This is not acceptable to the Left parties,' he told a public meeting held here Saturday evening.

The massive public meeting was organised on the shores of the Bay of Bengal to mark the culmination of two protest marches, from Kolkatta and Chennai, to oppose the joint naval exercise of India, the US, Australia, Singapore and Japan being held about 500 nautical miles off the Visakhapatnam coast.

Thousands of Left supporters attended the massive rally that culminated in a public meeting at the Beach Road, which was addressed by several leaders, including Karat, his party colleague Sitaram Yechury and Communist Party of India (CPI) general secretary A.B. Bardhan.

'In the CMP adopted by the UPA, there was not a word about strategic alliance with America. If that was put in the CMP, the Left parties would not have supported the government,' Karat said.

'Whatever takes place in future, we will not compromise on the independent foreign policy and national interests,' he said without giving any indication on the Left's strategy in the event of the government going ahead with operationalising the nuclear deal.

Bardhan warned of 'consequences' if the government ignored the Left's concerns that may be expressed in the 15-member UPA-Left committee set up to resolve the differences over the Indo-US nuclear deal.

'If they accept, well and good, and if they don't, consequences will follow,' he said.

'What will happen if the government does not take it (committee) seriously and does not listen is a matter we will discuss among the Left parties later on,' he said.

Karat, in his address at the public meeting, alleged that the nuclear deal was part of US President George W. Bush's agenda to pressure [New Delhi](#) to open its markets to US companies.

'After this agreement, it is not just the nuclear reactors that will come to India but companies like Wal-Mart will enter the retail trade which will spell doom for our small traders,' he said.

He accused the UPA government of pursuing economic policies tailored to suit US interests and dared the government to tell people what would be the cost of power when American nuclear reactors are imported.

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