

No fresh commitments from India on N-tests

Says US

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United States has paid some heed to India's strong rejection of a proposal capping future nuclear tests with Washington clarifying that it will not insist on any new commitments in this regard.

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher has said that India has voluntarily imposed a moratorium on carrying out nuclear tests and the United States expects that position to hold and continue.

Responding to questions from reporters on the issue on Thursday, Boucher said, "We all know India has a moratorium on nuclear testing. And it has made a public commitment based on its own decision to continue that moratorium. I think that is very important to us and others who look forward to cooper-

ating with India in the area of civilian nuclear power."

Boucher said, "It was India's decision just as major nuclear powers themselves have decided not to test. It is on the basis of India's decision that we have undertaken this civil nuclear cooperation."

He dismissed speculation that his recent remarks had created a controversy. "Some people misread my remarks and distorted questions and on that basis created a mini storm in a mini tea-cup."

Boucher said, "I think it is important to remember that this is going to be a civilian nuclear deal which entails India's cooperation on the civilian side. It in no way promotes, supports, or encourages further developments on the military side."

He also explained that "it has long been the position of the United States that we think all parties in the region need to think about strategic stability. We welcome the discussions that the Indians and Pakistanis have had on that subject. We have had our own discussion with all parties on the question of regional strategic stability in the region and we think that it is worth pursuing."

The Assistant Secretary also said that the bilateral agreement between India and the US, now under discussion, "is a really very straight forward process and it is going to be something we have to negotiate. We have to discuss and of course we are not going to discuss through the press or public or based on pieces of paper that has been leaked."

"We look forward to negotiations with the Indian government

directly," he added.

He also exuded confidence that Congress would approve the India-US civilian nuclear energy legislation and that it would be done soon.

He based his optimism on the fact that Congressmen and Senators are well aware of the benefits of the deal, benefits for energy and environment, benefits to non-proliferation and especially after briefings from the administration.



Teachers, students, officers and employees of drama & dramatics department of Jahangirnagar University take out a colourful procession on the campus yesterday to mark the first reunion of the department.

PHOTO: STAR