

Ontario's collapsing auto industry has hit Oshawa and Durham region hard. The provincial government's plan to build two nuclear reactors at Darlington is expected to provide a much-needed employment boost to the region.

An even more significant boost to Ontario and Canada may transpire as a result of a recent Conservative government decision which reverses decades of self-destructive Liberal policy. David Emerson recently signaled Canadian support for a proposed Indo-US nuclear pact which will result in a tidal wave of opportunities for Canadian firms and resource providers. This includes the nuclear complex in Durham region.

The turbo-charged economy of India will need hundreds of thousands of megawatts of power, and the government plans to build 30 nuclear reactors over the next two decades. This translates to over one hundred billion dollars of investment.

For the last few decades, nuclear trade with India has been restricted, for unusual and irrational reasons. India will not sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which restricts nuclear weapons to five nations (including Communist China). China, despite having a dubious record on human rights and nuclear proliferation, enjoys privileges under the NPT that democratic India does not.

The NPT was adopted in 1968, and the reasoning was to restrict nuclear weapons to the five who had already deployed them. India did not test nuclear weapons until 1974, too late to be included among NPT-certified nuclear weapon states.

The problem with Canada arose when India was alleged to have conducted the 1974 test with the help of Canadian reactors purchased earlier. When Canada sold reactors to India, the NPT did not exist, and the contract did not specify that the reactors could not be used for military purposes.

Regardless, Canada terminated nuclear cooperation with India, and relations went into deep freeze with India's next round of nuclear tests in 1998. The Liberal Chretien government went to the extent of withdrawing our High Commissioner from New Delhi.

Democratic India has been attacked five times by nuclear-armed neighbors, Communist China and Pakistan, and thus maintains a nuclear arsenal with an avowed 'no first-use' policy. This is designed to provide a second-strike capability in the event of nuclear attack.

President Bush and David Emerson both pointed out recently that India, in contrast to China, has been a responsible democratic and nuclear power, maintaining human rights and refraining from exporting nuclear know-how.

This also separates the nation from Iran, which is currently under pressure from the US regarding its nuclear program. Dictatorships which violate human rights and threaten Israel with extinction simply cannot be treated the same way as responsible democracies.

Thus, the rules for North Korea, Iran, and Pakistan must be different from those that apply to India. So, in fact, should international regulations for Communist China, which often resembles the former three in terms of human rights and aggression.

A compromise was thus hammered out, which would place fourteen of India's reactors under international inspections (up from six today), which would prohibit them from manufacturing nuclear weapons. Eight would remain as un-inspected military reactors.

Uranium and parts can be supplied to the existing civilian reactors, as well as the estimated thirty new reactors to be built over the near future in India. This would maintain a clean separation with military programs.

This represents a tremendous opportunity for the entire world. India's massive and growing economy will contribute less to greenhouse gas emissions if it is powered by non-polluting nuclear reactors instead of coal-fired plants.

Canada stands uniquely positioned to benefit from trade with India's booming nuclear industry. Saskatchewan has large reserves of uranium, needed by current reactors, and plentiful thorium to power the next generation.

Ontario's CANDUs are more similar to Indian heavy water reactors than all other types, and the immense opportunities exist in spares, consulting contracts, and upgrades. Even if we don't actually sell new reactors, our industry can participate in the hundred-billion dollar Indian nuclear bonanza.

Ajit Someshwar, Convenor of the Canada-India Foundation, stated that the move by the Harper government to support the Indo-US nuclear deal helps remove decades of bureaucratic hostility which has impeded Canadian involvement in Indian economic opportunities.

We need this badly. Our economy is excessively reliant on the stumbling American behemoth, and diversification of trade to oppressive and unreliable dictatorships like Communist China is hardly an answer.

Engaging the world's largest democracy, which is also the fastest growing in the world, is just the ticket to solve Ontario's economic woes.

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