

**April 4, 1973**

**Bombay consulate cable 705 to Department of  
State, 'India's Nuclear Position'**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

The possibility that India had made a decision to test surfaced in a message from the U.S. consulate in Bombay (Mumbai) signed off by Consul David M. Bane. The latter reported that Oak Ridge Laboratory scientist John J. Pinajian, then serving as the Atomic Energy Commission's scientific representative in India, had pointed out several "indications"—notably his lack of access to key individuals and facilities in India's atomic establishment--suggesting that India "may well have decided" to test a nuclear device. While stating that Pinajian's evaluation was "subjective and impressionistic," Consul Bane agreed that the atomic energy establishment did not want this American poking around because he might find out too much. Bane further observed that a nuclear test "in the not too distant future" could meet India's political goals and help attain "greater recognition major power status."

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ACTION NEA-12

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PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAF-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01  
PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 NSF-04 ACDA-19 IO-12 GAC-01  
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4/4/73

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R 040730Z APR 73  
FM AMCONSUL BOMBAY  
TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3739  
AMCONSUL MADRAS  
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOMBAY 0705  
RG-00: 11652 GDS  
TAGS: TGENKQ IN  
SUBJECT: INDIA'S NUCLEAR POSITION

1. SUMMARY: AEC SCIREP POINTS OUT INDICATIONS GOI COULD VERY WELL BE WORKING ON NUCLEAR DEVICE TO DEMONSTRATE PEACEFUL APPLICATIONS IN NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE AND INDICATION ALSO THAT GOI IS LAYING GROUNDWORK TO MARKET LARGELY INDIGENOUS POWER REACTORS.

2. AEC REP BOMBAY DR. PINAJIAN (SINCE MID NOVEMBER 1972) HAS AT MY REQUEST GIVEN ME HIS INFORMAL AND PERSONAL EVALUATION OF INDIA'S NUCLEAR POSITION BASED ON SUBJECTIVE OBSERVATIONS AT VARIOUS LEVELS IN INDIA, BROAD EXTRAPOLATIONS BASED ON TECHNICAL PAPERS PRESENTED AT INDIAN SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS AS WELL AS IMPRESSION GATHERED FROM PUBLIC AND PERSONAL COMMENTS MADE BY MEMBER ATOMIC ENERGY COMMUNITY. REQUEST HIS COMMENTS, WHICH PERSONAL TO ME, BE CLOSELY HELD.

3. IT IS OPINION AL THAT INDIA'S DEPT OF ATOMIC ENERGY IS LAYING GROUNDWORK FOR SALE OF LARGELY INGENOUS ATOMIC REACTORS (200 MWE) AND B) THAT GOI MAY WELL HAVE DECIDED TO

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DEMONSTRATE ITS

NUCLEAR CAPABILITY BY EXPLOITING PEACEFUL APPLICATION M A NUCLEAR DEVICE. IN HIS JUDGEMENT THIS WOULD BE FULLY WITHIN CAPABILITIES OF GOI TO ACCOMPLISH IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND INDICATIONS AVAILABLE IT COULD SUGGEST THAT GOI MAY BE CURRENTLY WORKING TO THIS END.

4. FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THE BASES THAT HE CITES AS HAVING GIVEN RISE TO HIS IMPRESSION.

A. DESPITE HIS EXCELLENT CREDENTIALS AND CONTACTS HERE DATING FROM OAK RIDGE, HIS PROPOSALS TO CARRY ON EXPERIMENTAL WORK AT BHABHA ATOMIC RESEARCH CENTRE (BARC) AT TROMBAY AND TATA INSTITUTE OF FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH (TIFR) HAVE BEEN REBUFFED BY GOI DIRECTORS (DR RAMANNA AT TROMBAY AND PROF MENON AT TIFR.) THIS DESPITE FACT THAT IN AGREEMENT SIGNED BY DR. SARABHAT, THEN CHAIRMAN AEC, AND USAEC COMMISSIONER RAMEY, DR PINAJIAN WAS BEING MADE AVAILABLE AS AN EXPERT IN AREA OF PRODUCTION OF HIGH PURITY RADIONUCLIDES. PRESENT AEC CHAIRMAN SETHNA INITIALLY SUGGESTED THAT PINAJIAN GO TO WORK AT BARC IMMEDIATELY. RAMANNA, HOWEVER AFTER AVOIDING PINAJIAN UNTIL SETHNA INTERVENED AND PERSONALLY REQUESTED APPOINTMENT FINALLY TOLD HIM THAT IT WOULD BE IMPRACTICAL FOR HIM TO WORK WITH ISOTOPES DIVISION SINCE IT WOULD "REQUIRE PERMISSION FROM THE CENTRE". RAMANNA ENDED BY SUGGESTING PINAJIAN SHOULD REALLY WORK AT TIFR. PINAJIAN HAS BEEN TRYING TO SEE MENON WHO HEAD TIFR SINCE ARRIVAL ON BOMBAY AND WITHOUT SUCCESS. MOREOVER PROF THOSAR OF MENON'S STAFF REQUESTED LAST NOVEMBER THAT HE BE GIVEN "PERMISSION TO INITIATE A PROGRAM OF INVESTIGATION WITH DR. PINAJIAN, A RECOGNIZED EXPERT IN CERTAIN AREAS OF INTERNAL CONVERSION SPECTROSCOPY". MONTHS HAVE PASSED AND NEITHER THOSAR NOR PINAJIAN HAS HEARD ANYTHING FURTHER ON THIS DESPITE PRODDING. CONSIDER FOREGOING SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE BARC AND TIFR WOULD BE PRINCIPAL ORGANIZATION INVOLVED IN ANY MOVE TOWARD DEVELOPMENT OF A NUCLEAR DEVICE. ADDITIONALLY PINAJIAN HAS HAD INCREASING DIFFICULTY IN SEEING SETHNA (HAS NOT SEEN SINCE FEB ALTHOUGH HAS REQUESTED APPOINTMENT ON NUMBER OF OCCASIONS.)

B. DESPITE CHAIRMAN SETHNA'S STATEMENT THAT TROMBAY "WIDE OPEN AND WE HAVE NO SECRETS" PINAJIAN CONTACTS WITH PERSONNEL WORKING THERE (AND HE HAS A NUMBER OF

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EXCELLENT CONTACTS WHO VALUE HIS ADVICE DO NOT BEAR THIS OUT. HIS CONTACTS SUGGEST THAT OUTSIDERS WORKING AT TROMBAY ARE NOT FREE TO ROAM AROUND. IN FACT FRIENDLY SOURCES ARE UNABLE TO TELL HIM WHO IS WORKING ON A PARTICULAR PROJECT AND WHAT IS BEING DONE.

C. PINAJIAN SATISFIED FROM ALL INDICATIONS AVAILABLE TO HIM INDIANS ARE DOING EXTENSIVE WORK IN FIELD OF PLUTONIUM. HE RECOGNIZES OF COURSE STRONG BASE FOR PLUTONIUM WORK IS ALSO NECESSARY FOR UTILIZATION OF PLUTONIUM IN DAE BREEDER REACTOR PROGRAM.

D. DAE HAS PLUTONIUM PROCESSING PLANT AT TROMBAY ANOTHER PLANT AT TARAPUR (SAFEGUARDS APPLY HERE TO REACTORS ONLY) AND ADDITIONAL PLANTS AT MADRAS. THE CIRCUS REACTORS AT TROMBAY HAVE BEEN OPERATING SEVERAL YEARS WITH NO CONTROL OVER DISPOSITION PLUTONIUM PRODUCTION FROM REACTOR. HZLHOTES, AS WELL, TARAPUR SENDING USED US FUEL ELEMENTS TO US RATHER THAN TREAT TARAPUR TROMBAY OR HYFURABAD WHICH COULD SUGGEST RELUCTANCE TO SEE SAFEGUARDS APPLIED.

THIS ALSO SUGGESTED TO PINAJIAN BY JP  
DR, MWDKONDAL  
PROJECT DIRECTOR NUCLEAR FUEL COMPLEX  
HYDERABAD.

5. COMMENT: FORGOING SUBJECTIVE AND IMPRESSIONISTIC AND MUST BE TREATED AS SUCH. I CAN VERIFY THAT KEY MEN IN INDIA'S ATOMIC ENERGY HIERARCHY ARE APPARENTLY RELUCTANT TO ALLOW PINAJIAN TO BECOME INVOLVED IN ANY ACCESS TO THESE INSTITUTIONS. IN MY VIEW THEIR RELUCTANCE DERIVES FROM THEIR CONCERN THAT PINAJIAN KNOWLEDGEABLE AND COULD FIND OUT MORE THAN THEY MIGHT LIKE THAT HE SHOULD. THEY PROBABLY FEAR THAT WE MAY BE USING HIM TO OBSERVE THEIR ACTIVITIES IN NUCLEAR FIELD.

6. AS AURA OF INDO-PAK VICTORY AND 1970/72 ELECTORAL SUCCESSES DIM AND AS PUBLIC DISENCHANTMENT WITH PM AND GOI MOUNT REFLECTING INCREASED ECONOMIC DISTRESS IT OCCURS TO US IN BOMBAY THAT IN ADDITION USUAL SCAPEGOATS, "DEMONSTRATION" OF A NUCLEAR DEVICE FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES IN NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE

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COULD GIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL SHOT IN ARM TO SAGGING PM AND CONGRESS  
IMAGE AS WELL SUPPORT INDIA'S DESIRE ATTAIN GREATER RECOGNITION  
MAJOR POWER STATUS.  
BANE

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