

"It is you who can make it happen, more than us" seems to be the main message conveyed by the three eminent speakers to the audience at a seminar on Indo-US nuclear energy deal organized at the University of Maryland. The event, jointly organized by Develop Empower Synergize India or DESI, a student organization on campus, and the US-India Business Council (USIBC) witnessed the three panelists speak in strong support of the recent nuclear energy cooperation deal. The speakers included Dr Walter Andersen, Associate Director of South Asia studies at Johns Hopkins University, Vikram Misri, Counselor Political Affairs from the Indian Embassy, and Ron Somers, President of USIBC.



**(L to R) Dr Walter Anderson, Vikram Misri, Ron Somers and Nissim Reuben**

Each of the speakers approached the issue from varied angles, and presented complementary and seldom overlapping arguments. Misri gave a brief description of the history of India's nuclear program, thereby dispelling the myth that India is getting the nuclear technology from the United States. He emphasized that safety and other regulatory issues that come with nuclear energy have been prevalent in and adhered to by India for several years. India has been developing its own nuclear program, including the fast breeder reactors powered by thorium, the completion of which could satisfy its power needs for a long time to come. With a booming economy, and with the limitations of conventional energy resources, nuclear energy will become an obvious choice for a country in great demand for power.

Andersen approached the issue from the strategic angle, and emphasized that India is now considered a strategically important power on its own. More specifically, India is no longer

viewed by the United States in hyphenation with Pakistan. However, Anderson stressed "that neither is this deal a military alliance with India, nor is it to be seen as encouraging India into fighting China, even though multiple power poles in the area would be good for the region"

Somers spoke about the visionaries who shaped the Indo - US relationship. He opined that the December 13, 2001 parliament attack in India played a strong role in underscoring the fact that both the Nations face common enemies. This has led to more initiatives to strengthen the growing relationship between the two responsible democracies. He made a strong case on the business opportunities awaiting India and United States, if the deal is approved.

The panel discussion saw several questions, and an interesting discussion involving all the three panelists, the moderator Nissim Reuben, as well as the audience. Chidanand Rajghatta of the Times of India opined that issues such as non - proliferation have been the main focus of media and in the process issues such as economic opportunities including potential jobs the deal can create in the United States have been downplayed.



**Section of the audience as they actively participate in the discussion**

The seminar made a strong case for the deal and stressed on the role the audience could play in getting the nuclear deal approved by the United States legislature. The audience was encouraged to write to their Congressional representatives, in support of the deal by visiting [www.usindiafriendship.net/congress1/nuclearagreement.htm](http://www.usindiafriendship.net/congress1/nuclearagreement.htm). Kunal Kothari, DESI President, gave the vote of thanks. Free dinner awaited the participants as they walked out of an informative and invigorating seminar.