Call for debate on disarmament

Staff Reporter
Seminar organised by Pondicherry University

—— Photo : T. Singaravelou

PUDUCHERRY: Experts and academics on Tuesday outlined the need for generating a debate on disarmament and evolving a comprehensive theory of disarmament — 22 years after former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi laid forth the disarmament initiatives in 1988.

This need was reiterated at the inauguration of an international seminar on 'Rajiv Gandhi’s Disarmament Initiatives: Global and South Asian Contexts' organised by the Centre for South Asian Studies, Pondicherry University.

"We are yet to articulate a systematic theory of disarmament. A theory would explain the role of disarmament in the broader framework of international politics," Aaron Karp, professor of arms control, Old Dominion University, U.S., noted.

Referring to Rajiv Gandhi’s goals, he said: "The most immediate need is greater intellectual progress toward a comprehensive theory of disarmament. There is an enormous place for scholars and analysts. With that need clearer than ever, we may be able to press ahead once again on the path he laid out for us."

American and Russian officials were working in Geneva on a new agreement to reduce their nuclear arsenals to the lowest levels since the mid-1950s, he said, adding, "In two months, diplomats from 189 signatory countries will gather in New York to deliberate on the future of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

According to A.S. Upadhyaya, director of Centre for Study of Nepal and Japan, BHU, Varanasi, there has been no serious public debate on disarmament in India since 1988.

"There is a need to enter into a dialogue and generate a debate on disarmament. We need a prescription of 'no first use of nuclear weapons by all.' This is the responsibility of leaders and politicians," she insisted.

Professor Upadhyaya called for an agreement for sharp reduction in nuclear arsenal, limitation on any further production, complete inventory control on weapon-usable fissile and revamp of Gandhi’s initiatives, given the developments over the years.

"India had refrained from developing nuclear weapons until quite recently. It was compelled to develop such weapons, as the only way to assure protection to your own people is to have nuclear weapons as a deterrent,” pointed out former Foreign Secretary A.P. Venkateswaran.
He did not foresee any chance of abolishing nuclear weapons and called for prevention of its use. “It is important that prevention of war occupies more of our time than making wealth,” he said.

Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University J.A.K. Tareen said a South Asia union should be formed, on the same lines of European Union.

“There should be a common South Asia currency and South Asia human rights commission. Stability of South Asia is important,” he said, urging young minds to develop alternative models for peace in the world.

Dean, School of Social Sciences D. Sambandhan; Head, department of politics and international studies B. Mohanan Pillai and director of Centre for South Asian Studies N.K. Jha spoke.