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Scientists unveil possible cold fusion breakthrough

** Physicist says study fails to explain how cold fusion takes place in conditions described*

WASHINGTON: Researchers at a United States Navy laboratory have unveiled what they say is "significant" evidence of cold fusion, a potential energy source that has many sceptics in the scientific community.

The scientists on Monday described what they called the first clear visual evidence that low-energy nuclear reaction (LENR), or cold fusion devices could produce neutrons, subatomic particles that scientists said were indicative of nuclear reactions.

"Our finding is very significant," said analytical chemist Pamela Mosier-Boss of the US Navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Centre (SPAWAR) in San Diego, California.

"To our knowledge, this is the first scientific report of the production of highly energetic neutrons from a LENR device," added the study's co-author in a statement.

The study's results had been presented at the annual meeting of the American Chemical Society in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Scientists had been working for years to produce cold fusion reactions, a potentially cheap, limitless and environmentally clean source of energy.

Physicist: Paul Padley, a physicist at Rice University who had reviewed Mosier-Boss's published work, said the study did not provide a plausible explanation of how cold fusion could take place in the conditions described.

"It fails to provide a theoretical rationale to explain how fusion could occur at room temperatures. And in its analysis, the research paper fails to exclude other sources for the production of neutrons," he told the Houston Chronicle. "The whole point of fusion is, you're bringing things of like charge together. As we all know, like things repel, and you have to overcome that repulsion somehow." afp