

Stop supplies if India tests: NSG gets a note from Indian critics

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In opposing the nuclear deal, how's this for ideological flexibility? The Left says the nuclear deal ties down India and undermines its sovereignty to US imperialism. US non-proliferation experts argue the exact opposite, that the deal allows India to build bombs and get access to nuclear power. As the deal moves forward, there is a break in the Left ranks with a set of opponents arguing both: that the deal allows India to make bombs and forces it to give in to US imperialism.

As New Delhi looks to wrap up negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency this month, these activists, experts and expert activists have appealed to the Nuclear Suppliers Group not to give unconditional exemption to India and, instead, force it to sign the CTBT. And that fuel supplies should be stopped if India carries out a test.

Among the signatories are activist Medha Patkar, journalist Praful Bidwai, JNU professor Kamal Mitra Chenoy, Bangalore physicist M V Ramana, Delhi University professor Achin Vanaik and a group of Indian NGOs. They have signed a petition which demands that supplies should be stopped to India in case it carries out a test.

The appeal to the NSG titled "Fix the Proposal for Renewed Cooperation with India," has been sponsored by the Arms Control Association, which recently nominated CPM General Secretary Prakash Karat as among the top contenders for the Arms Control Person of the Year. The list includes Sri Lanka's Jayantha Dhanapala, a US Secretary General aspirant, and linguist Noam Chomsky.

Incidentally, Patkar and Sandeep Pandey, another activist who has supported the petition, backed the Left in the nuclear deal stand-off with the UPA government and asked for a Constitutional amendment to make a referendum mandatory before signing international treaties.

Their latest appeal lays down the following key demands to NSG members:

- "Actively oppose any arrangement that would give India any special safeguards exemptions or would in any way be inconsistent with the principle of permanent safeguards over all nuclear materials and facilities."
- "If the NSG members agree by consensus to exempt India from the full-scope safeguards standard, they should in the very least clarify that all nuclear trade by NSG member states shall immediately cease if India resumes nuclear testing for any reason."

- “(NSG countries) should under no circumstances endorse an NSG rule that would allow the transfer of (reprocessing) technology to India.”
- “Before India is granted a waiver from the NSG’s full-scope safeguards standard, it should, like 177 other states that have signed the CTBT, make a legally-binding commitment to permanently end nuclear testing. India’s verbal commitment to support negotiations of a global verifiable fissile material cut off treaty is a hollow gesture.”
- “If NSG supplier states should agree to supply fuel to India, they should do so in a manner that is commensurate with ordinary reactor operating requirements.”