

## Nuclear Suppliers Group unlikely to discuss India next week

The meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in Berlin next Monday is unlikely to take up the issue of amending its guidelines for India as the leadership in [New Delhi](#) has not yet taken the decision to sign the safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In the absence of a safeguards agreement between India and the IAEA, the NSG will not be able to amend the existing guidelines in its 18th plenary session to allow commerce on civilian nuclear energy between its members and a country like India that has not yet signed the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

'The issue of an India-specific amendment to the guidelines in the NSG is unlikely at the plenary session of the group's meeting in Berlin,' said an official of the external affairs ministry in New Delhi, who did not want to be identified.

He, however, maintained that since it was a grouping of 45 countries it was difficult to predict whether any member would raise the proposed amendment to the NSG guidelines. 'Some country may raise the issue and there can also be a discussion on it. But an amendment to the guidelines cannot be brought in unless a safeguards agreement is ready between India and the IAEA.'

The amendment to the NSG guideline is an important part in the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal. The safeguards agreement with the IAEA and the changes in the NSG guidelines will prepare the ground before the 123 agreement can be taken up by the US Congress for its final approval. Once all the three procedures are complete a formal agreement will be signed by India and the US for cooperation in the field of civilian nuclear energy.

India has finalised a safeguards agreement with the IAEA, but has not yet signed it. The Left parties, which are opposed to the Indo-US nuclear deal, had allowed the government to negotiate the treaty text with the IAEA but prevented it from signing it without their approval.

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee tried but failed to convince the Left leaders to allow India to sign the agreement with the IAEA when he met them on May 6. Another meeting between the two sides is due May 28. But the Left parties have made it clear that there is no change in their stand.

Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) general secretary Prakash Karat told IANS Thursday: 'We have told the government not to go ahead with the deal. There is no change in our stand.'

The Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government is unlikely to take the chance of going ahead in finalising India's agreement with the IAEA without the Left's approval. Even if it takes a decision to go ahead with it, it will come only after the UPA-Left meeting.

'If there is a breakthrough and the government manages to convince the Left at the next meeting to allow it to sign the safeguards agreement with the IAEA, there is nothing that stops the NSG from regrouping,' sources in the external affairs ministry said. 'But with each passing day the chances of getting the nuclear deal through is getting remote.'

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