

## IAEA members still unclear about India nuclear inspections

India did not remove all ambiguities about its nuclear inspection agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), agency member states said after a briefing with a senior Indian official Friday.

Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon, India's top foreign affairs bureaucrat, briefed members of the IAEA board and the Nuclear Suppliers Group about the Safeguards Agreement that would allow the agency to monitor Indian civilian nuclear reactors.

Board members say it is likely to be adopted at a meeting Aug 1 but some governments are concerned about potential loopholes in the text, which might allow India to terminate the agreement.

'It's a good agreement, it's a good initiative and it'll work,' Menon said after the meeting that lasted less than one hour.

'They answered some questions, but not very much to our satisfaction,' a European diplomat who attended the meeting said.

Several diplomats told DPA that ambiguities remained about unspecified 'corrective measures' referred to in the text, which India may take if its nuclear fuel supply were interrupted.

Diplomats and non-proliferation advocates think that this clause could allow India to terminate IAEA inspections if the US or other nations stopped supplying it with nuclear material after an Indian nuclear test.

Menon explained that the corrective measures to be taken 'depended on circumstances,' two diplomats said.

The inspection agreement is part of its nuclear deal with the US, under which [New Delhi](#) agreed to separate its nuclear energy sector from the nuclear weapons programme. In return, the US will provide nuclear fuel and technology for civilian power reactors.

Board members were told India would circulate a so-called separation plan in the coming days or weeks, to clarify what will be inspected by the IAEA.

Several IAEA members say that the safeguards agreement gives India too much discretion in deciding what facilities would be monitored and when the IAEA would start doing so.

European Union members on the board have demanded another formal briefing by IAEA officials that will take place on Aug 25, as Friday's meeting was an informal event.

One board member told DPA that although the agreement would go through Aug 1, it was still not clear if it would be adopted unanimously.

After the IAEA Board approves the text, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the 45 nuclear exporting countries that define export control rules, have to make an exemption for India, as it is not a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Only then will the US Congress ratify the nuclear

pact with India.

But first, India's government has to survive a confidence vote in parliament on July 22 over the nuclear deal with the US. Leftist parties say the pact would compromise India's strategic sovereignty.

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