

## **Russia to supply uranium to Indian plants**

*The trouble is that the statement "US opposes deal" is not a considered decision but a check off by a minor bureaucrat in DOE in Washington ... practitioners of inefficiency and ill-considered policy.*

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Russia has agreed to supply India with uranium for two of its nuclear reactors but Washington opposes the deal going ahead before New Delhi honors its obligations under the landmark agreement it recently signed with the US.

Russia is a member of the 45-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) that controls trade in atomic fuel, which has long been denied to India after it conducted nuclear tests and refused to join the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

An Indian official said Russia had informed the NSG of its decision to supply fuel for the reactors at Tarapur in western Maharashtra state.

"To India's request, Russia has agreed to supply a limited amount of uranium fuel for the safeguarded units 1 and 2 of the Tarapur Atomic Power Station," Indian foreign ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna said in New Delhi.

"This supply of fuel will enable the plant to continue to operate in safety and provide much needed electricity to the western power grid of the country," Mr Sarna said.

He said that a shortage of fuel at the Tarapur facilities would have affected their operations under reliable and safe conditions.

New Delhi this month signed a historic nuclear deal with the United States under which sanctions on the transfer of nuclear technology to India will be lifted.

In return, India has agreed to separate its military and civilian nuclear facilities, and place the civilian ones under international safeguards. The deal still has to be ratified by the US Congress and the NSG.

### **US opposes move**

However there is strong opposition from Washington to Russia supplying uranium at this stage.

In Washington, deputy US State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said that the United States was well aware of India's need for nuclear fuel but that it first had to fulfill its obligations under the agreement it signed.

"We recognise that they have need for fuel, and we think that deals to supply that fuel should move forward on the basis of the joint initiative, on the basis of steps that India will take but has not yet taken," Mr Ereli said.

Critics of the Russia deal say the move could spur other countries, including China, to make similar proposals to other countries outside the framework of international treaties.

New Delhi has agreed to the lifting of sanctions on the transfer of nuclear technology to India in return for separating its military and civilian nuclear facilities and placing the civilian ones under international safeguards.

The deal still has to be ratified by the US Congress and the 45-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), of which Russia is a member.