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Saying goodbye to Nuclear Suppliers Group

What is the issue?

It matters little even if India doesn't become a member of Nuclear Suppliers group.

What is Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)?

- The NSG first met in November 1975 in London. Thus it is popularly referred as the “London Club”.
- It was created in response to India's first nuclear test in 1974, codenamed ‘Smiling Buddha’.
- The NSG is a 48-member group. The European Commission and the Chair of the Zangger Committee participate as observers.
- It seeks to regulate global nuclear commerce.
- The NSG Guidelines were published in 1978 by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
- It seeks to prevent nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials, equipment, and technology that can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.
- The aim is to ensure that nuclear transfers for peaceful purposes would not be diverted to manufacture nuclear weapons.
- Another set of guidelines was approved by the NSG in 1992 to govern the transfer of “dual-use” items.
- A supplier should authorise a transfer only when satisfied that the transfer would not contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons.
- Also stringent conditions exist for importing countries to resupply materials to a third country.

Who can become a member of NSG?

- Signatories to the NPT can join the NSG.
- NSG works on the basis of consensus, i.e any decision needs to be ratified by all member countries.

Where does the case for India's membership stand?

- India has been pursuing member countries of NSG to become a member.
- India's entry is being opposed by China, New Zealand, Ireland, Turkey and Austria stating India
 - has not signed Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
 - refuses to open its military nuclear sites to the IAEA
 - has not ruled out the possibility of another nuclear test device in future.
- Following the India-US civil nuclear deal of 2006, the US lobbied hard for an exception for

India, citing the country's impeccable record.

- Russia, France, UK, Germany, Italy, Turkey and several other countries have subsequently supported India's membership bid.
- In 2008 the USA pressed the NSG to drop its long time ban on exporting civilian nuclear technology to India.
- So, NSG worked out "India-specific" conditions under which India would be obliged to open only its civilian nuclear reactors to the IAEA.
- NSG members agreed to grant India a "clean waiver" from its existing rules, in exchange for a commitment to "no nuclear trade with non-NPT countries."

Does NSG membership really matters for India?

- NSG membership is symbolic. India wants a place at the high table, but that's it. In practical terms, it means nothing.
- One-time waiver was facilitated by the US
- However not even a megawatt of nuclear capacity has been added in India by USA.
- India built only two units of the Kudankulam plant with foreign help and fuel, and they have nothing to do with the one-time waiver.
- Talks with other foreign nations happens once in a while but it quickly passes away.
- There seems no hope for the foreign plants
- Apart from issues such as environment and liability such plants have simply priced themselves out of the market.
- Only the 10 pressurised heavy water plants (700 MW each) of Nuclear Power Corporation of India have reasonable likelihood of coming up
- An NSG membership would do nothing for India . So, while bidding goodbye to the NSG, India is also not going to miss it.

Reference

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