

Kakodkar : `India will not compromise on right to recycle spent N-fuel'

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India has ruled out any compromise on the right to reprocess spent fuel in the nuclear deal with the US. Speaking to reporters here on Wednesday, the Atomic Energy Commission Chairman, Dr Anil Kakodkar, categorically said, " We are not going to accept any conditions that prevent recycling of spent fuel." Dr Kakodkar was speaking after inaugurating the AEC emergency response team's centre at the Atomic Minerals Directorate here.

He said that nuclear fuel cannot be stored in perpetuity and reprocessing for recovery of both plutonium and uranium would continue to be done. He said, "We have adopted the closed nuclear fuel cycle, which is getting broader and this has received worldwide recognition. It's the correct strategy.

"So, we are not going to accept anything where there is no recycling of plutonium and uranium. It is required even from an environmental point of view and even from the point of view of credible waste management. Recycling of spent fuel is part of Indian policy."

Dr Kakodkar made it clear that the Indian programme would not be affected by the nuclear deal. "The domestic programme will continue irrespective of the nuclear deal. Our interests will be to ensure that the three stage nuclear programme is carried forward. This includes the strategic programme," he said.

Separation plan

The Government had already prepared a separation plan for the first phase, he said. Besides, he said India and the US sides have held discussions on the nuclear deal. The US congress would now be required to amend its laws with regard to nuclear suppliers. Discussions were also underway with the International Atomic Energy Commission for putting in place India specific guidelines in place. This was to ensure that the civil nuclear cooperation with the US could start.

The Government, he said, was awaiting the outcome of all these efforts. However, despite these efforts, the nuclear deal failed to go through. He said, "Don't bother. The Indian civil nuclear programme will go through."

The Emergency response centre in Bangalore is one of the 18 set up in the country to deal with nuclear mishaps in nuclear facilities or during transportation. He said that the team was well prepared. " We have rehearsed and exercised to meet nuclear and radiological emergencies he said. This response teams would function with the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre as the nodal agency.

These teams, Dr Kakodkar said, would have a modular element. This element he said would have a database of geological information, hospitals and paramilitary teams. All these teams would be equipped with the hardware and software for rescue, relief and rehabilitation in the event of emergencies, he added.