

Manmohan's assurance to Kakodkar
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"Nothing will be done behind your back insofar as the nuclear deal is concerned"

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Nuclear deal a legacy issue for me: Manmohan
AEC will be kept in the picture

New Delhi: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday assured the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) that "nothing would be done behind your back" insofar as the India-U.S. nuclear deal was concerned.

AEC Chairman Anil Kakodkar had a discussion with Dr. Singh and senior aides in the Prime Minister's Office on the nuclear deal.

According to informed sources, Dr. Kakodkar was told that he and his AEC colleagues would be kept in the picture during the next stage when the 123 Agreement gets negotiated.

As far as Dr. Singh was concerned, the proof of the pudding is in the eating — in the bilateral agreement to be hammered out between the two administrations, irrespective of the exertions of the U.S. Congress.

According to the sources, Dr. Singh told his senior aides that the nuclear deal was a "legacy issue" for him, and that he would not like to go down as someone whom history can accuse of having compromised India's national interests. "Once the 123 Agreement is finalised, and if on balance the final deal does not meet the test of national interests, we can walk away from it," Dr. Singh said.

Special Envoy on the nuclear deal Shyam Saran has been asked to brief political leaders and members of the strategic community about the law passed by the U.S. Congress. In particular, Mr. Saran will try to address concerns voiced by the critics.

Dr. Singh is reported to have told his aides that these concerns and reservations were part of the democratic architecture, and that the critics and their criticism must be heard with respect.