

India rejects linking Iran vote to nuclear deal with U.S.  
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Mulford says his remarks were taken out of context

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Mulford: Fallout will be devastating and deal will die  
India: we will make independent judgment  
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NEW DELHI: India on Wednesday categorically rejected any attempt to link its vote on Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with the future of its civil nuclear deal with the United States.

The comment came hours after the Press Trust of India quoted U.S. Ambassador to India David Mulford as saying if India did not vote against Iran, the fallout on the July 18, 2005 deal would be "devastating" and the initiative would "die."

(In a late night development, Mr. Mulford claimed in a press statement that his comments to the news agency were taken out of context.)

"We have seen the remarks attributed to the U.S. Ambassador concerning a possible vote on the Iran nuclear issue at the IAEA. The position India takes at the IAEA will be based on its independent judgment," the External Affairs Ministry spokesman said. "With regard to negotiations on the proposed [civil nuclear] agreement, India will proceed on the basis of its national interests, as acknowledged by the U.S. Ambassador himself," the spokesman said.

Rejecting the civil-military separation plan presented by India, Mr. Mulford told PTI that it "did not meet the test" and fell short of the "minimum standards required" for the U.S. Congress to approve the deal.

Putting pressure on India to vote according to American requirements, the Ambassador said an "observation" was also conveyed to New Delhi that if it decided not to vote for the resolution, "the effect on members of the U.S. Congress with regard to [Indo-U.S.] civil nuclear initiative will be devastating."

He said: "I think the Congress will simply stop considering the matter. I think the initiative will die in the Congress not because the administration would want it... " This should be part of the calculations "India will have to keep in mind" while taking a decision on the Iran issue at the IAEA governing board meeting on February 2-3.

Referring to the nuclear deal, the envoy said, "It is not just the United States. The NSG [Nuclear Suppliers' Group], which says, wait a minute, if we are going to make this very

special one-time change, unique change for India in the nuclear field and they don't stand up on this issue [Iran], why should we make the change," he said. Mr. Mulford said India had to elaborate its civil-military separation plan and commit itself to it, but did not have to fully implement the plan. Implementation could take years. "The credibility test has to be pretty high to get that kind of support [in Congress and NSG]," he said stressing that if India's plan did not put the "great majority" of the nuclear reactors in its civilian programme, the U.S. Congress would wonder whether New Delhi had a "different agenda."