

NEWS WRAP

AGD

WITH THE SIGNING OF THE Indo-US Nuclear Agreement (2008), India was proudly claiming that it was the only country in the world, which had not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and yet was able to engage in civil nuclear trade, with other willing countries. The 46-nation decision (June 2011) to nullify the clean waiver to India, taken by the Nuclear Suppliers Group meeting at Noordwijk (Netherlands), strengthens the guidelines on the transfer of sensitive enrichment and reprocessing technologies. The earlier US 123 Agreement binds India to the status of a non-nuclear weapons country, and surrender its rights to reprocess spent fuel, even under the International Atomic Energy Agency. Now there is a threat to uninterrupted Nuclear fuel supply to India's imported reactors, and building of stockpiles of nuclear fuel.

Under new provisions in the US-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Non-proliferation Enhancement Act passed by the US Congress and Senate, the US President should write to the Senate stating that he would influence NSG countries to apply the same restrictions as the USA would in the transfer of enrichment and reprocessing technologies to India. If India tested a nuclear device, the US President has to ensure that no country came to the rescue of India. India's government remains adamant on achieving 40,000 MW nuclear capacity by 2020.

NAYACHAR FOR FISHERIES

The fully state government owned 'char' (river islet)—Nayachar—(East Midnapur district) in West Bengal, was handed over to the state fisheries department, over thirty years ago. More than 300 ponds are leased out to local fishermen and small Haldia-based ferry entrepreneurs. Several fishing co-operatives are functioning. Some few hundred squatter families earn a meagre living as labourers, on the island. Nayachar gets submerged during heavy rains, and after a few decades may get submerged completely because of rising sea-level. Only promotion of fisheries could be sustainable, and not a chemical hub. As located near the confluence of the Haldi river and the Bay of Bengal, Nayachar is within the offshore zone. Made up of unconsolidated alluvial sediments, the small and flat island stood at a height of just 3 metres above the mean sea level, in the early 1930s. Presently unconsolidated alluvial sediments are present down to 30 metres below mean seal level. For any major industry, even if there is a substantial land raising and consolidation by importing huge quantities of material, there could be collapse or implosion in the foreseeable future. Toxic wastes will wreck havoc on the off shore marine life and planktons. Nayachar is at the extremity of eroded Himalayan sediments, forming a thick alluvial basin. Near Nayachar, islands like Lohachchara, Suparibhaga, Kapasgodi and Bedford are submerged.

TALKS WITH TALIBAN

Peace talks with the Taliban underline US President Barack Obama's strategy for gradually ending civil war in Afghanistan. These talks have hardly begun. There are no indications that the Taliban wants to negotiate. Nobody knows who represents the organization. Afghan leaders are not open to Taliban involvement in the political process, and the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai has distanced himself from the talks. Ties to the Taliban, makes Pakistan vital to the negotiations but there have been recent strains between Pakistan and USA, over the US drone assaults on terrorist suspects inside Pakistan. In areas like the eastern provinces of Kunar and Nanjarhar, where NATO has recently withdrawn combat troops, rocket attacks between Pakistan and Afghanistan continue. □□□