

UK lends 'unconditional' support for India's NSG bid

Delhi Raises Issue Of North Korea-Pak N-Proliferation Link

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New Delhi: The UK has reiterated unconditional support for India's NSG membership bid saying New Delhi had done enough to merit an entry into the elite group responsible for international nuclear commerce. After a dialogue between the MEA and UK's foreign & commonwealth office, diplomatic sources here said UK saw India as a key member and protector of the international rules-based order.

India is hoping for a renewed push to its NSG bid despite opposition from China, emboldened as it has been by the US emphasis on securing an early membership for India at the recent 2+2 dialogue. India's elevation last month to the US' tier-1 of licence exception for export of sensitive defence and high-end technologies was seen as being seen as a reaffirmation of US support to its bid. "India has the right credentials for NSG membership and we believe it should be a member. Only the Chinese can explain what objections they have to India's membership," said a diplomatic source after the meeting.



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During the talks on proliferation and international security, India also raised the issue of proliferation linkages between Pakistan and North Korea. However, while admitting that the AQ Khan network which facilitated those linkages was one of the worst events to have taken place, the UK said there was no reason to worry about Pakistan's behaviour on the issue.

"... At the moment, we don't believe Pakistan is being difficult as far as international attempts to address the issue of North Korea nuclear programme issue are concerned," said the source.

While calling for dialogue and diplomacy to ensure stability in the Korean peninsula, India has re-

peatedly expressed hope that the resolution of the issue will take into account and address its concerns about "proliferation linkages extending to India's neighbourhood".

The source said though that on both North Korea and Iran, the UK and India shared a "commonality of approach". In the talks though, the UK expressed disappointment over India's decision in June this year to vote against a UK-backed proposal for 'Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use'.

"We were disappointed to see India among the 24 Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons member-countries, along with Russia, who voted against it but we hope India will review its position," said the source. Eighty-two OPCW countries had voted in favour of the UK draft decision which allows the chemical weapon watchdog to fix blame for attacks using chemical substances. India had reiterated its position that it was against the use of chemical weapons "anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstances".