

## Pokhran-II

Pokhran-II was the series of five nuclear bomb test explosions that were conducted by India in May 1998 at the Indian Army's Pokhran Test Range. This was the second attempt of India that turned out to be successful after the first test, code-named Smiling Buddha, was conducted in May 1974.

Aspirants can find information on the structure and other important details related to the IAS Exam, in the linked article.

## Origins of Pokhran II

India's nuclear missile program dates back to the closing years of World War II in 1944 when scientist Homi J. Bhabha persuaded the Indian National Congress to set up an institute dedicated to the research of nuclear energy. In this regard, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research was set up.

Following the nuclear test by China in 1964, India also considered speeding up its own program but little headway was made in this regard. It was another nuclear test by China in 1967 and after Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister when India conducted its first nuclear test - the Smiling Buddha - in 1974

Smiling Buddha led to the Nuclear Suppliers Group, along with the major world powers, to impose a technological embargo on India. As its nuclear program was dependent on imported technology, it suffered greatly from these sanctions and the program began to stagnate as a result. The first nuclear tests also prompted Pakistan to conduct its nuclear arms race in order to match steps with India. For the remainder of the Cold War era, India's nuclear program remained in limbo.

The Narasimha Rao government gave a new lease of life for the nuclear program in 1995. But preparation for the tests was detected by CIA spy satellites which invited criticism and threat of sanctions from the International community. This led to the program being put on a temporary pause. Only with the BJP government under Atal Bihari Vajpayee coming to power in 1998 was the decision taken to go ahead with a new round of nuclear tests dubbed as Pokhran II.

## Events of Pokhran II

Unlike Pakistan's nuclear tests which were conducted in granite mountains, India's new test could only be conducted in the open deserts of the Thar, where the sparse population and lack of proximity to the water supply would reduce any collateral damage. But the problem was that the preparations could be picked up by orbiting CIA satellites. Using clever methods of deception and subterfuge to fool the satellites, the Indian Army, as well as the top scientist from the DRDO, clandestinely made preparations for the tests.

The tests were initiated on 11 May 1998, under the assigned code name Operation Shakti, with the detonation of one fusion and two fission bombs. On 13 May 1998, two additional fission devices were detonated, and the Indian government led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee shortly convened a press conference to declare India a full-fledged nuclear state.

## The aftermath of the Pokhran II Tests

The nuclear tests caught the international community by complete surprise, taking into consideration the fact that a new government had just come into power a few months ago. The harshest condemnation came from the United States and Pakistan. The Pakistani government sped up its own nuclear programme, conducting successful tests on 30 May 1998, while blaming India for escalating a nuclear arms race in the subcontinent. The United States condemned the nuclear tests and stated that in no uncertain terms that sanctions would follow. As a result, all aid to India, with the exception of humanitarian aid was terminated. Knowing fully well that such sanctions would be forthcoming, India stood its ground and still refused to sign the CTBT, as it believed that such a treaty was against its national interests.

### Multiple Choice Question

#### Consider the following statements

The Manhattan Project was a research and development undertaking during World War II that produced the first nuclear weapons. Nuclear physicist Robert Oppenheimer was the director of the Los Alamos Laboratory that designed the actual bombs.

The discovery of nuclear fission by German chemists Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassmann in 1938, and its theoretical explanation by Lise Meitner and Otto Frisch, made the development of an atomic bomb a theoretical possibility.

Nuclear proliferation is the spread of nuclear weapons, fissionable material, and weapons-applicable nuclear technology and information to nations not recognized as "Nuclear Weapon States" by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, commonly known as the Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is an international organization that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was established on 29 July 1957. The IAEA is headquartered in Vienna, Austria.

#### Choose the correct answer from the below-given options

A) All the above-given statements are true.

B) None of the above-given statements are true.

C) Only Statements 1, 2, and 3 are true.

D) Only Statements 2, 3, and 4 are true.