Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal

In this article, you can read all about the civil nuclear agreement that was signed between India and the United States in July 2007. This is an important event in the history of relations between India and the US and hence, is an important topic in International Relations for the UPSC civil services exam.

Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal Background

- The Indo-US nuclear agreement was initiated in July 2005, when the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited the US.
- On 18th July, 2005, Singh and the then US President George Bush, in a joint statement, announced their agreement to enter into a civil nuclear deal.
- This was about 30 years after the US had imposed sanctions on India since her first nuclear weapons testing in 1974.
- This was a landmark occasion also because this was the first time that India was being recognised as a nuclear weapons state.
- This visit by Singh also saw the completion of the Next Steps in Strategic Partnerships (NSSP), which sought to augment cooperation in civilian nuclear activities, civilian space programmes, high-technology trade, and missile defence. The NSSP had been announced in January 2004.
- At the core of the agreement lay the focus on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- The agreement accorded to India the same status as signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), although India was not one.
- Even though the American administration had imposed sanctions on India after the 1998 nuclear tests, these tests had little or no impact on India because of its large domestic sector and the size of the Indian economy. In 2001, the Bush government decided to do away with all sanctions on India.
- The deal with the US was to end the isolation of India on the civil nuclear front.

India and the NPT

- NPT signatories have a recognized right of access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy and an obligation to cooperate on civilian nuclear technology.
- Also, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) has come to an agreement on guidelines for nuclear exports that include fuel and reactors.
- These guidelines ensure that nuclear energy usage is not diverted from peaceful to destructive uses/weapon programmes.
- India has nor signed the NPT arguing that the treaty creates an exclusive club of nuclear states by restricting the legal possession of nuclear weapons to those countries that
tested them before 1967. And, that it does not address the problem of nuclear proliferation.

- The NSG is also a US-led consortium that controls the export of nuclear equipment, materials and technology.
- India, having left out of the global nuclear order, was free to develop its own indigenous systems and technology, and has also found success, in the form of fast breeder reactors and thorium breeder reactors.
- Thus, India has developed its own nuclear weapons technology.
- However, India’s uranium reserves are not enough to meet its power generation requirements. Here, the NSG’s uranium import restrictions affected India’s power generation capabilities.

**Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal Features**

1. The Agreement is between two States possessing advanced nuclear technology, both parties having the same benefits and advantages.
2. The Deal will enable full civil nuclear energy cooperation between both countries.
3. The Deal covers nuclear reactors and aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle like reprocessing and encroachment.
4. The Agreement provides for the development of a nuclear fuel strategic reserve to hedge against any break in the supply over the lifetime of India’s reactors.
5. The Agreement provides for transfer of nuclear material, nuclear trade, equipment, components, and related technologies and for cooperation in nuclear fuel cycle activities.
6. The Agreement provides for the application of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards to transfer material and equipment.

**Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal Timeline**

1. After Manmohan Singh’s visit and joint statement with Bush in 2005 regarding the civil nuclear deal, in 2006, Bush visited India and made a similar joint statement with the Indian PM.
2. In July 2006, the US House of Representatives passed the Hyde Act, which stated that Washington will cooperate with New Delhi on nuclear issues and exempt it from signing the NPT.
3. There were protests in India, particularly from the Left parties demanding threadbare discussion on the deal from the government.
4. In December 2006, Bush signed into law legislation on Indian atomic energy.
5. The negotiations between India and the US were concluded in July 2007.
6. In August 2007, both governments released the 123 Agreement.
7. In July 2008, the draft of the India-specific safeguards accord with the IAEA were circulated to the Board of Governors for their approval.
8. In August 2008, these safeguards were adopted by the IAEA unanimously.
9. On 8th October 2008, President Bush signed the legislation that made the Indo-US civil nuclear agreement into law.

10. On June 8, 2016, the Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCI) and Westinghouse, a private enterprise in energy-related ventures, agreed to conclude contractual arrangements for 6 reactors by June 2017.