

Indian-U.S. nuclear deal in trouble

by UPI

NEW DELHI -- India's ruling coalition scrambled Monday to avert a political crisis even as some allies remained firm on their opposition to an Indian-U.S. nuclear deal. Despite hours of intense negotiations during the weekend, the political deadlock deepened with the Communist members of the coalition insisting the deal would harm India's foreign policy interests. The deal would allow India to get civilian nuclear technology and fuel from the United States, ending India's isolation from other nuclear powers and meeting India's growing power demand. The Communist opposition threatened to reduce the Congress-led coalition led by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to a minority that may force a mid-term election. Broadcast and newspaper reports said Monday the government may offer to set up a committee to soften the Communist stand. Some experts warn a collapse of the deal would badly damage India's international image, strain Indian-U.S. relations and only benefit India's nuclear rivals, China and Pakistan. The Communists don't want India to proceed with the next steps to make the deal operational, including meetings with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the 45-member Nuclear Suppliers Group. Singh has said the deal won't deter India from conducting nuclear tests. Other supporters have said the United States has given many concessions to India in the deal.

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