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Russia Agrees To Extend START Treaty

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Why in News

Recently, Russia approved the extension of the New START treaty . It is the last remaining nuclear Russia-USA arms control treaty which is about to expire in February 2021.

Key Points

- **About the Approval:**

- Both houses of Russian Parliament (Kremlin) approved the **extension of the New START treaty for five years**. It was done after a recent telephonic conversation between the **newly elected USA President** and the Russian President.
- At the **World Economic Forum**'s virtual meeting, the President of Russia hailed the decision to extend the treaty as “**a step in the right direction,**” but also warned about the rising global rivalries and threats of new conflicts.
- The pact's extension **doesn't require congressional approval in the USA**, but Russian lawmakers must ratify the move and its President has to sign the relevant Bill into law.

- **The New START Treaty:**
 - **Objective:**

It is a treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on measures for the further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms.

 - The term ‘strategic offensive arms’ applies to nuclear warheads **deployed by Strategic Nuclear Delivery Vehicles (‘SNDVs’)**.
 - **SNDVs are Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (‘ICBMs’)** with a range exceeding 5,500 kilometres, strategic bombers, warships (including strategic submarines) and cruise missiles, including air and sea-launched cruise missiles.
 - **Enforcement:**

It came into force on 5th February, 2011.
 - **Replaced START I Treaty (1991):**
 - New START has replaced the 1991 START I treaty, which expired in December 2009, and superseded the 2002 **Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT)**, which terminated when New START entered into force.
 - **The START Framework of 1991** (at the end of the Cold War) limited both sides to 1,600 strategic delivery vehicles and 6,000 warheads.
 - The **May 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT)**, also known as the **Moscow Treaty**, committed the United States and Russia to reduce their deployed strategic nuclear forces to 1,700-2,200 warheads apiece.
 - **Limiting Strategic Nuclear Arsenals:** It continues the bipartisan process of verifiably reducing the USA and Russian **strategic nuclear arsenals** by limiting both sides to 700 strategic launchers and 1,550 operational warheads.
 - **Renewal:** It was to lapse in February 2021, but after receiving renewal approval from USA and Russia, will be extended for a five-year period.

Way Forward

- This step by Russia is a welcome move after suspension of the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Treaty** (INF Treaty) in 2019 and withdrawal of USA and Russia from **Open Skies Treaty** recently.
- An extension of the New START Treaty would mark a rare bright spot in the fraught USA-Russian relationship. This opportunity could be used by both the countries for conducting comprehensive bilateral negotiations on future control over nuclear missile weapons.

Source:TH