

THE KANYAKUMARI DECLARATION

[Following is a slightly shortened version of a statement issued by the National Convention on 'The Politics of Nuclear Energy and Resistance', June 4-6, 2009 and signed by M Sebastian Varma, Kanyakumari District Fisher Sangram Federation & 112 others]

In the context of the unprecedented threats facing the world due to global warming and the rapid depletion of conventional energy sources, the nuclear establishment is most opportunistically pushing nuclear energy as a climate-friendly energy source. However, all the activities associated with nuclear power generation - the mining and processing of uranium, the building of nuclear power stations involving huge amounts of cement and steel, the long construction process, the decommissioning of plants and the handling of radioactive waste - are highly unsafe and expensive, and cause enormous climate-changing pollution. Nuclear energy is not cheap, safe, clean or sustainable. It also does not offer a solution to the energy problems.

The government of India is aggressively expanding nuclear power generation and enhancing nuclear business with countries such as the United States, Russia, France, Kazakhstan and others without any regard for norms of democratic decision making. The newly-elected UPA government is conveniently choosing to interpret the verdict of the recent elections as a mandate for nuclearization.

A highly populated country like India does have an increasing need for energy. But for that very reason the energy options must be economical, sustainable, safe and environment-friendly. Moreover energy distribution must be made more equitable, just and efficient.

In India, huge resources have already been wasted on nuclear power projects that are expensive, inefficient, hazardous and also potentially catastrophic. The Indian nuclear establishment has expressed interest in amending the Indian Atomic Energy Act, 1962 to facilitate privatization. While private companies will make money, Indian taxpayers and ordinary citizens will bear the cost of dealing with all the liabilities such as nuclear waste, decommissioning, possible accidents, public health issues and other dangerous consequences.

The workings of the nuclear establishment in the country are shrouded in mystery and protected by draconian laws of official secrecy in complete contradiction to constitutional right to information. Legislation as secretive and repressive as the Indian Atomic Energy Act, 1962 should have no place in a democracy.

Nuclear energy establishments such as the Indian Rare Earths (IRE) in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, Kalpakkam, Rawatbhatta and Jadugoda have already created major health problems for local citizens.

India's nuclear programme has been and continues to be vigorously resisted by the people of this country whose struggles in the past have stopped two nuclear power stations – Peringome and Kothamangalam – from coming up. The National Convention on “The Politics of Nuclear Energy and Resistance” declares total support and solidarity to the struggles of people resisting the Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu. It also declares support and solidarity to people in all other parts of the country such

as Jadugoda, Meghalaya, Haripur and Jaitapur who are struggling against uranium mining and nuclear power plants.

In view of the above, immediate compensation and health facilities be provided to people suffering from radiation illnesses such as cancer, genetic disorders, skin diseases, reproductive health problems and other major health effects caused by nuclear establishments, nuclear mining and fuel sites and other allied nuclear industries and activities.

All persons living in the vicinity of nuclear establishments and nuclear fuel sites be declared potentially radiation-affected and that clear-cut mechanisms be evolved for appropriate compensation.

All activities related to the Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant be immediately stopped.

The proposed nuclear power plants at Haripur (West Bengal), Mithi Viridi (Gujarat), Madban (Maha-rashtra), Pitti Sonapur (Orissa) and Kovada (Andhra Pradesh) be immediately scrapped.

The draconian Indian Atomic Energy Act, 1962 be revoked forthwith.

The Right to Information (RTI) Act be amended to apply to all aspects of the nuclear establishment.

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