

AREVA NUCLEAR PLANT

Alfa, Beta, Gama...

Sebastian Rodrigues

October 4, 2010 evening. It was a fishermen's gathering *machchimar melava* in Sakhri Nata, a small town on Konkan coast that forms an urban centre in Ratnagiri taluka in India's Maharashtra State. Indian democracy here is radiated with French company Areva locating their nuclear power plant with Indian government providing it with red carpet welcome. The surrounding is mostly of fishermen who fish in Arabian sea via mechanized trawlers and other small non-mechanized boats. Thirty years ago these two varieties of fishermen clashed with each other. Today they are clashing with world's biggest nuclear power plant that is supposed to generate 10,000 mega watts of electricity.

National Environmental Engineering Institute (NEERI) prepared the report on this project but its scientists and technicians found no trace of fishermen's villages—Madban and other surrounding villages to suit the location of Nuclear Plant in thickly populated area. Scientists of NEERI are principal colluders in this deadly episode unfolding around 200 kms away from Goa's northern border. In other words NEERI indulged in scientifically unethical practices to prepare a doctored report. And in order to make the reality as per the report government agencies have mounted tremendous pressure on the fishermen to leave fishing trade. It has banned Nepali labour from entering trawler citing that they are a threat to national security. As if Nuclear power plant on the banks of Arabian Sea is any less of national security issue. It has censorship and complete immunity from investigations from anyone including the Parliament.

And now of course with Nuclear Liability Bill being passed in the Indian parliament Nuclear Industry dominated by USA and Europe has a field day. It is totally free to carry on the orgy of violence and deception, to remain as invisible as Alfa, Beta, and Gama rays. So fisheries are being pushed to fold up and let the control of Arabian Sea under the nuclear baron's buttons. 5,500 crore litres of water from Arabian Sea will be used daily and after heating it will be released back into the Sea thereby threatening marine ecology adversely. This correspondent learned all this in the introduction at the public meeting at Sakhri Nata by Vaishali Patil who is active in various protests movements including 'no' mining in 'Western Ghats'. Vaishali is keenly followed up by the Indian Intelligence agencies and in Sakhri Nata special sleuth from IB was there as an extended eye of the big brother. With Kaiga power nuclear plant just 22 kilometres away from Goa's southern border in Karnataka already a reality Goa is now a nuclear sandwich state with alarming consequences.

Pravin Dhawankar shared his experience of facing police violence while in struggle. He is involved locally to mobilize people against Nuclear power plant. He questioned if India is free after witnessing police mauling of protesting citizens in Jaitapur. Police moved in Madban village, kicked every village house and even arrested a few people. Pravin himself was arrested while he was sick and subjected to police harassment some time ago. He was sure about what is needed to be done : time to come out on the streets.

Madban Sarpanch Bicaji Vagdhare disclosed that Colonial Law –Land Acquisition Act 1894 has been imposed by the State to take over the land for nuclear power plant.

Nirajat from the organization called *Lakayat* gave lots of technical information to the public. The nuclear capacity is 100 times that of Hiroshima atom bombs. It would generate 300 tonnes nuclear waste per year for 24 years. This will amount to total waste of 12,000 tonnes. This waste will remain radioactive for the period of 3,000 years as per the doctored government studies but actual nuclear life of the waste will be 1 lakh lakh (10,00,00,00,000) years.

President of *National Fishermen's Forum* Mathany Saldanha called for the political fight and asked the fishermen to join the national protest on 29th October 2010.

Former Member of Indian Parliament Major Sudhir Sawant launched scathing criticism of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for wooing American multi-national USA corporations. He said that it is the foreign corporate houses who are responsible for setting up Nuclear Power plants in India. He said this is a conspiracy to blackmail India.

Justice Kolshe Patil, a retired High court Judge called for peaceful protests and asked people to launch house to house campaign to create awareness. He said that Gandhi and Indian constitution provides enough resources for successful movement against the corporate in peaceful manner. He directed his salvos against the police repression and asked people to combine efforts to fight police out the Jaitapur: 'Once police leave, nuclear plant will leave'. He called for fearlessness in a fight till the end.

Thomas Kochery, a veteran in fishermen's struggle in India who survived heart attack four times last year was again at his committed best and laid out the agitation roadmap for future tracing its roots into the past struggles. He observed that Government of India is incapable of handling Chernobyl type of nuclear accident. This is evident from the fact that Government of India has done nothing after the Bhopal gas tragedy. He mentioned that all the nuclear power plants are planned to be located on the coast because companies want to dump all the radio active waste in the sea. 'They want to kill all the fish. They want to communicate radio activity to all the human beings. 30-40 kilometres radius distance will be affected with the radioactive waste. All future generations, pregnant women will be affected with radio active rays. People have to oppose because of heavy generation of Carbon dioxide CO₂. India has no plans to reduce CO₂? He further urged people to oppose new CRZ notification. By opposing CRZ people will be able to effectively oppose all the projects on the coast. Fishing communities are betrayed by the Government of India. They protests against deep sea fishing policy. One crore fishermen had stood against this. If they rise up on the entire coast, all the political parties will come forward to support this.

Nuclear eclipse of Indian democracy will hopefully go away with passage of time. It demands tremendous efforts in defense of life, livelihood, Western Ghats and Arabian Sea.
□□□