

NOTE

‘No’ to Uranium Mining Saraswati Kavula writes :

Government of India is desperate to open new uranium mines because the ailing American nuclear industry is pinning too much hope on the ‘Indo-US nuclear deal’ for revival. As a result Andhra’s Nalgonda and Tummalapalle is gaining currency for more than one reason, thanks to Movement Against Uranium Projects. But the quality of ore in Andhra Pradesh is very poor i.e. only 0.045 percent which means hardly one ton of usable uranium from 3000 tons ore processed every day. The only thing that will be left after 300 days of operation per year and 30 years of mining and processing, is a mind boggling, 2 Crores and Seventy lakh (27 million) tons of Radioactive Wastes in just one mine which will contaminate the only water source for six districts of the state including twin cities, in terms of irrigation and drinking. While in Tummalapalle the quality of ore is even lower.

Nuclear Power generated in India with total installed capacity of about 4,000 MW, has only been about 2.8% of the total energy used in India. This is less than the present electricity being generated by Wind Mills alone. Together Solar and Wind power today generate about 14% of the total energy used in India.

Even with the projection of 50,000 MW (as envisaged by Dr Abdul Kalam) for the year 2030, it will only be 12.5% of the total projected energy use of India for year 2030 which is 4, 00, 000 MW. As per one estimate, the entire accessible uranium in India is just enough to produce 10,000 MW!

“If the current level of nuclear energy production is maintained, it is estimated that all (currently and future) accessible uranium would be dug up in next 50 years. The present share of nuclear energy in the total global energy consumption is just 2.7%, with 442 nuclear power plants worldwide. China has been forecasting the construction of numerous nuclear power plants over the last 25 years but so far, it has only built eleven out of which three are very small.”

And if production does increase then these deposits of Uranium may not even last up to 50 years.

Therefore, even globally, Nuclear Energy is not a viable option. Also, it is well known that UCIL and other Nuclear establishments working under the DAE in India are not following any environmental and people safety precautions. They have no disaster preparedness plan, which should be in public domain. So far they have not seemed to share information with regard to radiological hazards with the public living in the surrounding areas (which is mandatory). The incidents and accidents taking place in all these installations are always brushed aside as “DAE’s policy is to deny such incidents”.

Vested interests are there to destroy India’s fragile environment and bankrupt the economy further. Unless there develops a movement at the grassroots level, at the initial phase of uranium mining, Indians many witness a Chernobyl type catastrophe anytime soon. □□□