

Atomic Energy Commission bullish on Kudankulam

Saurav Jha, IBNLive Specials

Dr Srikumar Banerjee, chairman of Atomic Energy Commission of India (AECI), spoke to Saurav Jha, author of The Upside Down Book of Nuclear Power, recently at the former's South Bloc office on a gamut of issues concerning the state of nuclear power development in India.

About Kudanakulam, how confident are you?

I think we have started to make headway at Kudanakulam. The group of experts (GOE) that we have appointed to deal with the issue has already met protestors and has directly started addressing the concerns being raised. The GOE as you know is made up of individuals with specific areas of expertise and is likely to prove effective.



What would you say to reassure people about Kudanakulam and the benefits that might accrue to them directly from the project?

We have operated coastal sites for decades now if you look at Tarapur and Kalpakkam. The latter is in the very state where Kudanakulam is located. So the people of Tirunelveli need not look anywhere else to believe that nuclear power is safe and ultimately beneficial for coastal areas.

DAE can and will do a number of things to help fisherfolk there. And it does not even have to be done via NPCIL. We have sufficient funds to do it on our own. There have been requests to build a jetty there and we are looking at that. We can also aid the creation of cold storage facilities, fish markets, seed villages and other durable infrastructure for fish preservation. In Kaiga, for instance we have a fish hatchery to demonstrate that fish breeding is favourable in the warm water of secondary coolant discharge. All this is on the anvil. Besides, we will certainly supply much needed desalinated water to the region from our desalination facility at the Kudankulam plant. We are recognised the world over for our capabilities in this field.

Coming to other matters at hand, what is the status of Haripur? Has DAE given up on the site?

We haven't received any official intimation from the West Bengal government on the matter yet. I have of course read some statements in the newspapers but that is about it.

DAE has certainly not given up on the site and we feel, given the power situation in Eastern India, it is imperative that nuclear power is pursued in that part of the country. In fact I am planning to make a detailed presentation to the honourable chief minister on not just the importance of bringing nuclear power to West Bengal but also on what the nuclear sector as a whole can do to aid the scientific and economic progress of the state. Of course, this will be done at the appropriate time. In fact, during a recent event at the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, I did speak to her for a brief while about this matter.

What about other states in the region?

Bihar and Orissa are actually quite keen to site reactor parks in their states. But of course issues such as availability of water need to be resolved. Although we have already identified sites in these states and are moving forward with the modalities.