

## **Kudankulam Officials Urge Tamil Nadu Govt To Approve Nuclear Plant**

**Monday, March 12, 2012**

<http://www.asianscientist.com/topnews/kudankulam-officials-urge-tamil-nadu-government-to-approve-nuclear-reactor-plant-2012/>

*AsianScientist (Mar. 12, 2012)* - On the first anniversary of the Fukushima nuclear accident which falls on March 11, the world is ironically witnessing a global nuclear renaissance.

Post Fukushima, China is continuing with the construction of 27 new nuclear reactors with the aim of generating 60 gigawatts of atomic power by 2020.

After the accident, the construction of six new nuclear reactors began across the world.

“This proves that the inevitability of nuclear power has not been challenged,” said N. Nagaich, executive director, corporate planning and corporate communications, Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL), during a media interaction on Friday evening.

He said that some of the nations which had shown interest in joining the world nuclear club are Bangladesh, Vietnam, Turkey, and the UAE.

According to him, over 16 percent of the world's electricity is produced globally by 436 nuclear reactors operating in over 30 countries, and despite the Fukushima accident, the trend towards nuclear power showed no sign of stopping.

At the briefing, S. A. Bhardwaj, director (technical), NPCIL, said that the first unit of the 1,000 MW Russian-aided Kudankulam atomic power station in Tamil Nadu will be commissioned six months after the Tamil Nadu government gives its approval to start it. Eight to nine months after the first unit becomes operational, the second unit will be started.

His remark counters a section of media reports quoting senior officials in the Department of Atomic Energy that the first unit will become operational in a few weeks.

The total cost of the project is about Rs. 14,000 crores, and the nearly six month delay in commissioning the first unit due to protests from the local population has caused a huge loss to the national exchequer.

Bhardwaj said that in the absence of Kudankulam, there were 6,000 million less units of nuclear power.

“Each day there is a Rs. five crore loss and it is a national loss,” Bhardwaj regretted. “Today we crossed 30,000 million units and by the end of the month it will increase to 32,000 million units which will be a record,” he said.

Bhardwaj expressed confidence that the Tamil Nadu government was moving in the right direction and will soon give its clearance for starting the first unit of the Kudankulam nuclear plant. “It can happen any moment,” he stated.

He added that a hot run of the plant was completed between August and September 2011. In a hot run the working of the plant is tested without fuel.

Acknowledging that there was a communication gap between the residents staying near the plant and the nuclear officials, Bhardwaj admitted that NPCIL had started the hot run without informing the residents.

“We took it for granted that people would understand what we were doing. We should have been careful and informed the people. We should have gone from door to door and explained to the public. There was certainly a lack of communication,” he acknowledged.

Currently, only a few nuclear officials have access to the plant to carry out maintenance work.

“A larger number of people have to inspect it and carry out some upkeep work. We have been doing bare maintenance and we have not been able to do external maintenance. We have to call back our contractors and they should be interested in returning to work. Some of them have found other jobs in the last six months. All this is expected to take two months,” Bhardwaj said.

K. C. Purohit, NPCIL director (projects), scoffed at media reports that some of the villages around the atomic plant were located close to it, posing a danger. He said that the plant’s boundary extended to a distance of two kilometers and there were no villages in that zone.

-----

Copyright: Asian Scientist Magazine.

Disclaimer: This article does not necessarily reflect the views of AsianScientist or its staff.