

Rejoinder to the article 'Stop Kudankulam fuelling, lives are at stake' in DNA Newspaper dated September 24, 2012.

The article 'Stop Kudankulam fuelling, lives are at stake' which appeared in DNA on September 24, 2012 makes some points, regarding recent decisions of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), which need to be corrected.

The article makes the case that the recommendations of the High Level Committee of AERB to review the safety of Indian Nuclear Power Plants in light of Fukushima, were meant to be implemented in Kudankulam Unit-1 before fuel loading, and that AERB has reversed its original stand. It may be pertinent to note that the High Level Committee of AERB in its report has highlighted the fact that the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant has several advanced design features to tackle even those accidents which are not envisaged in its design. The Elevation of the plant location has adequate margin against any flooding due to Tsunami or any other cause. Unlike the affected plants at Fukushima, the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant is equipped with unique and state-of-the-art features, which can keep the plant under safe conditions without the requirement of power and additional external water supply for a prolonged duration. Still, as a matter of abundant caution, recommendations had been made for further improvements. Of the seventeen recommendations, seven had been already complied with. The remaining ten relate to either providing additional back-up for power and water or requiring detailed computational analysis. AERB or any of its committees had never made any statement that these recommendations will have to be implemented prior to issue of any further clearance.

Similar approach for time bound implementation of safety upgrades is being followed for other operating as well as newly built/commissioned reactors, not only in India but also worldwide. This is borne out by the deliberations of recently concluded meeting of International Convention on Nuclear Safety in Vienna in which India also presented its status as participant. Therefore the article alleging that AERB has reversed its stand, contrary to the spirit of the recommendations of High Level Committee, is not factually correct.

AERB has been independently exercising its decision-making power without any interference. It has never been under any kind of pressure from the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) or any other corner to issue hurried clearances as indicated in the article. AERB adequately addresses all safety and regulatory requirements prior to issue of any

clearance. In case of any violations, AERB has taken strict enforcement measures against the units of DAE such as suspension of activities or withdrawal of licenses, as required.

AERB is the National Regulatory Body of India which has evolved a robust regulatory framework for the regulation of nuclear installations. The effectiveness of the regulation can be gauged by the safety record of the Indian Nuclear Power Plants and Facilities, which is at par with International benchmarks. AERB reiterates that safety aspects of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant have been thoroughly reviewed and only then the clearance for fuel loading was issued.