

# West-Based NGOs Stall India's Nuclear Program; But, at Whose Behest?

by Ramtanu Maitra

After sleeping through a six-month siege of the Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant worksite by protestors, India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh woke up on Feb. 24 to tell the U.S.-based *Science* magazine in an interview: "The atomic energy program has got into problems because these NGOs [non-governmental organizations], mostly I think based in the United States, don't appreciate the need for our country to increase the energy supply."

What the Indian premier was referring to is the foreign NGOs' opposition to the commissioning of the almost-completed 1,000 MW power plant, KNPP-I, which should have been connected to the grid months ago. The siege began in August 2011, and, as a result, construction work has been halted on two large nuclear power plants—KNPP-I and KNPP-II. KNPP-II is another 1,000 MW plant, which is scheduled to go on-line this year. The ongoing siege, even if it is lifted forthwith, will certainly delay the commissioning process.

There is no question that lack of assertiveness by New Delhi is a major reason that this NGO-directed siege continues, but the silent support lent by J. Jayalalithaa, the chief minister of the state of Tamil Nadu where the plant is located, has provided a boost to the protestors. Reelected in May 2011, Jayalalithaa did nothing and, in fact, had issued a statement that endorsed the suspension of operations at Koodankulam "until people's concerns had been allayed."

On March 17, India's

Shipping Minister G.K. Vasan issued an appeal to the chief minister demanding the state deal with the protestors with an "iron hand," and help New Delhi commission the much-awaited project. On March 19, Jayalalithaa said that work to make the plant operational should resume immediately. She cited a report submitted last month by an expert committee appointed by the state, which gave the project the green light. The Tamil Nadu government announced allocation of 5 billion rupees (Rs) to the locals, who are mostly members of a large fishing community, to set up, among other things, cold storage for the fish catch, to construct housing and roads, and to fund repair of mechanized fishing boats.

## The Anti-Russia Movement

Following Prime Minister Singh's allegations, the U.S. Chargé d' Affaires in India, A. Peter Burleigh, told



IAEA/Petr Pavlicek

*India's Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant is the target of an anti-nuclear campaign run by foreign NGOs, who are determined to shut down the Russian-built reactors, and deprive the Indian people of the electric power they so desperately need.*

FIGURE 1

**Site of the Koodankulam nuclear plant, in Tamil Nadu (shaded area), India**



the local media that the U.S. will have to find out the “facts” before commenting on Singh’s remarks. Those “facts” remain to be found out.

On the other hand, Russia’s Ambassador to India, Alexander M. Kadakin, upon hearing the Prime Minister’s statement, issued a public comment saying, “We have been suspecting this all along. I was open to even saying this because it was very strange that six months after the Fukushima tragedy, all of a sudden, those protestors raised their voices. They were sleeping for six months, and all of a sudden they raise their voices against the most secure and the world’s best [nuclear power] station.”

Both these Koodankulam reactors are Russian reactors (VVER-1000 model). Two more Russian-supplied reactors (VVER-1200) are scheduled to be installed at the same site. Under an inter-government agreement signed in December 2008, Russia is to supply to India four additional third-generation VVER-1200 reactors for the same site, and has arranged to supply India with a dozen more reactors each of 1,000 MW, or larger, power capacity.

Meanwhile, the delay in commissioning the KNPP-I

has seriously affected the local economy. According to S.A. Bharadwaj, the technical director of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL), a state-owned builder of the plant, the delay has raised the overall cost of the project by Rs10 billion (about \$425 million). But, that is only the direct cost. Considering the fact that Tamil Nadu is 5,000 MW short of its energy requirements, the cost of not getting the reactor on-line has had a much broader effect on the commerce and industry of that state. If KNPP-I had gone on-line on time, it would have generated a significant amount of wealth by now, and would have provided employment to thousands.

Indian Home Minister P. Chidambaram has informed the public that New Delhi has cancelled the operating licenses of four Tamil Nadu-based NGOs allegedly involved in the agitation against the nuclear power project, and the Ministry has put a large number of NGOs under its watch. A German protestor has been deported. Meanwhile, India’s nuclear program has been virtually put on hold, while most of the country continues to incur power shortages, and thousands of villages continue with no power at all.

Both these plants had been under construction for more than four years, and the locals never made any complaints, but months after the earthquake/tsunami in Japan that debilitated a number of reactors in Fukushima, organized protestors moved into Tamil Nadu, backed by the foreign-funded NGOs, harping on the ostensible lack of safety of the plant.

Burleigh’s reaction to Manmohan Singh’s statement was not altogether surprising. At the site and around it, anti-Russia posters appeared soon after the siege began. Back in November, Indian analyst Radha Rajan gave a detailed report in an article on why the siege had occurred and who had organized it. Her report opens a can of worms that had long been eating into the vitals of India.

Rajan pointed out then that the Minister of State in the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), V. Narayanaswamy, the point-person coordinating talks among all parties—state government, central government, and the villages around Koodankulam—had said at a public meeting in Chennai, that those foreign anti-nuclear intruder-activists, stirring up trouble at the nuclear site, were all from America, Finland, France, Australia and Germany, among other places. What Narayanaswamy did not say—wittingly, or unwittingly,



*The radical environmentalist group Greenpeace is one of many Western NGOs which are organizing the campaign to close the Koodankulam plant. This photo appears with a Greenpeace-sponsored petition on the Internet.*

tingly—was that the protestors were all from countries of the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) member-nations.

What does that imply? Rajan, in her article, “Koodankulam stalled again: Sinister geopolitics,” dated Nov. 29, 2011, made that amply clear.

She said: “Cutting through the maze of information and disinformation, the real issues surrounding the Koodankulam nuclear power project are:

- “America’s desperation to halt the project for geopolitical reasons;
- “India is in a partnership with Russia to develop the Koodankulam site (several placards at the protest gathering were anti-Russia, and not anti-nuclear power);
- “If not stopped now Koodankulam may emerge as one of India’s largest nuclear plants with the capacity to generate 9,200 MW or 9.2 GW of power;
- “India has already closed the fuel cycle at Kalpak-kam [a major nuclear power research and development center—ed.] and in the near future, may yet render the NSG mafia irrelevant to national requirement for reactors and reactor fuel;
- “If India tides over the current deficit of overall national power requirement through short-term and interim arrangements by taking the less travelled light water, enriched uranium road, while simultaneously

pursuing its indigenous nuclear program via the heavy water, plutonium and thorium, fast-breeder path, the NSG may become almost certainly irrelevant to India’s nuclear program, civilian or military;

- “Therefore, lure India into the Indo-US nuclear deal to cut ice with the NSG mafia, lure India away from her purely indigenous, wholly self-reliant nuclear program with the promise of short-term benefits of uninterrupted supply of enriched uranium; promises which can and will be broken going by President Obama’s letter to the US Congress seeking approval for the Indo-US Nuclear deal where the American President stated that American assurances of fuel supply to India are not legally binding (meaning when, not if, America reneges on its contract to supply India with reactor fuel, India will have no case or avenues for redress);

- “The idea behind leading India down the proverbial garden path to make this prohibitively expensive detour is to delay progress on the fast breeder reactor (FBR) front;

- “Will buy America and other members of the NSG time to create and instigate a violent anti-nuclear front in the local villages around Koodankulam; the PIL [Public Interest Litigation—ed.] filed by the anti-nuclear mafia in the Supreme Court calling for a total halt to India’s civil nuclear program, which will also halt all work on the fast-breeder front, thus perfectly serves the American agenda;

- “Senior officials from Koodankulam (Station Director, Site Director and Chief Engineer) indicated as much during the course of a press meet in Chennai last month [that is, October 2011—ed.] when they made a passing reference to significant dislocation (perhaps permanently) of Russian and Ukrainian scientists, engineers and other personnel working on the site leading to cost overruns and further delay in commissioning of the reactors.”

Rajan points out another reason why the United States would like to scuttle the Russia-supplied nuclear power plants in India: “Currently, America is nowhere in the picture—either as builder of reactors or as fuel supplier from the enriched uranium NSG cartel. The last minute, stage-managed protests at Koodankulam are therefore only last-ditch attempts by the Bretton Woods Bandits to coerce the Indian government to give them a share in the Indian nuclear pie on their terms.

“America wants India to amend/dilute/bend/circumvent/ the Civilian Liability for Nuclear Damage Act 2010; altering a comma or a full-stop in effect nullifies the Act and Dr. Manmohan Singh stated as much to US President Obama in Bali in November 2011 when they met on the sidelines of the India-ASEAN and East Asia Summits.

“The Prime Minister made clear to the American President that any changes to the Act will have to be done within the defined parameters of the Act as passed by Parliament, and that the government had no power to amend it without parliament sanction.”

India’s Civilian Liability for Nuclear Damage Act 2010 has remained intact. In the event of an accident involving nuclear reactors, because of faulty design, faulty technology, or any other cause, the Indian Parliament sagaciously refused to cap the extent of liability that will be borne by foreign companies selling nuclear reactors and associated technology to India, Rajan pointed out.

### **The Russian Reaction**

In addition to the Russian ambassador, who had made clear from day one that the objective of the protestors was to prevent strengthening of the Russia-Indian nuclear cooperation, there are others in Russia who have made the same point. For instance, Vanetsov Georgy in his article, “Kudankulam: Price of delay,” in *Voice of Russia* on March 12, 2012, said: “I would like to point out that given the absence of significant deposits of oil and gas in India, in the near future there are no alternatives to nuclear energy in that country. Moreover, India is one of those countries that are beginning a massive development of nuclear energy production and that possess a significant technological, scientific and human potential in this area. That is why those considerations that the local population in Kudankulam has are primarily the result of inadequate work of nuclear energy representatives with the local population who let the people be misled.

“But is this the only cause? The market size of the nuclear energy generation in India is estimated at 150 billion USD. Almost all countries with nuclear technology participate in the competition over this market. An acute fight is taking place. Only Russia has achieved concrete results: two units have been built and are ready for launch at the Kudankulam nuclear power plant. Could that be the reason why the West has transferred 7 million USD to the NGOs that were the loudest in pro-

testing the nuclear energy generation?”

With the cat out of the bag, Washington went into its familiar damage-control mode. Burleigh issued a statement saying: “The government of [the] U.S. has certainly no objection with regard to nuclear programs. [The] U.S. is also involved in potential participation in the civilian nuclear program. The Indo-U.S. relationship is growing in every sense at all levels. [Our] relationship has been cordial. We want American companies to be here.”

### **NGOs: Foot-Soldiers of Colonial Forces**

On Sept. 20, 2011, R. Christopher Rajkumar, Executive Secretary, Commission on Justice, Peace and Creation, National Council of Churches in India, issued a call: “It is a very crucial time. Therefore, I kindly request you to please go there [Koodankulam] and register your solidarity with your colleagues. Secondly, please take a printout of the attached letter and send it to the Chief Minister and Prime Minister today yourself. Let us not waste a minute in this regard.” Subsequently, Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, in its November 2011 report, “India: On the protest movement against Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant,” issued a collage of articles, including Rajkumar’s appeal, urging New Delhi to cancel the plant.

What Rajkumar represents has little to do with religion. The National Council of Churches (NCC), with its international ties, has long been an instrument of the British liberal-leftist faction in the West. Over the years, under the pretext of being a religious organization, it has pushed its human rights, environment-protection, and rights of indigenous people campaigns for the colonial forces in order to stop development activities. The NCC is virulently anti-science and anti-development.

At the same time, it must be noted that in India, as in many other developing countries where the colonial forces had their regimes, some missionaries, associated with regular churches, have worked with the NCC and various Western NGOs. Once the British Raj got its grip on India in the 18th Century, some Christian missionaries were deployed by the Empire as tools in pursuit of a silent conquest. After the Raj left, its legacy continued under new handlers, and its assets were subsequently handed over to other Western powers that wanted India to remain underdeveloped and vulnerable to constant instability.

During the Cold War days, India’s proximity to the

Soviet Union—the “godless Communists”—was a convenient excuse for these forces to subvert its security. India’s northeast, bordering China, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, already Christianized under the British Raj, became victim to anti-India movements, funded and morally supported from outside, particularly Britain.

In the post-Cold War days, some of these missionaries began receiving funds from foreign NGOs and got involved in creating “mass movements” on the NGOs’ behalf, opposing development projects, particularly dams in northeast India. Now, these NGOs, active in the West and procuring part of their funding from their respective governments, are financially supporting their Indian collaborators to carry out actions, such as the one at Koodankulam, under the pretext of protection of human rights, environmentalism, and the rights of indigenous people.

The evidence of such anti-development activities has been known to New Delhi for decades, but India, for a long time under “soft” leadership, was unwilling to call a spade a spade, lest it would antagonize the West, the so-called engine of growth and prosperity. New Delhi keeps most of the NGOs’ activities hidden from public eyes, while jeopardizing the nation’s security.

However, there were occasions when some of the government’s findings were made public. For instance, minutes of a meeting held on Sept. 29, 1999, under the chairmanship of the then-Joint Secretary, Northeast (NE), is one such occasion. It said that the authorities had received reports which “indicated continued Western interest in the North-Eastern region of the country and possibility of proliferating activities of Dutch NGOs/individuals in the region. The Joint Secretary suggested that it is possible that this is conjecture but facts available give credence of the conjecture.”

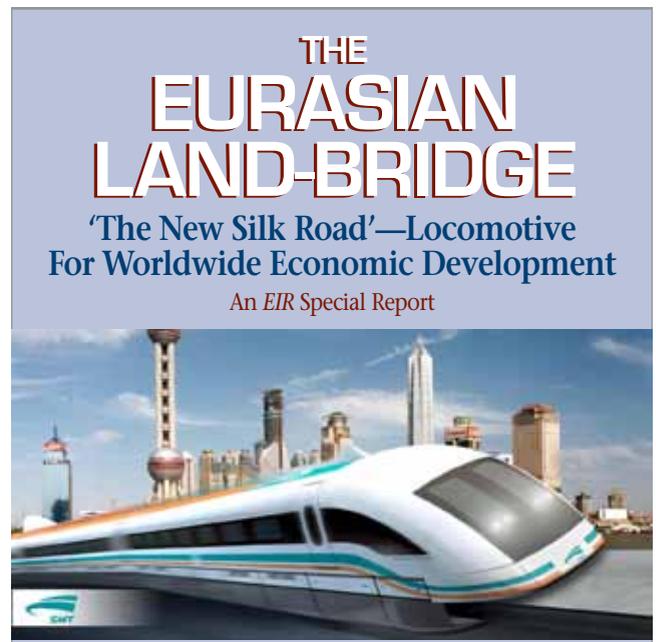
The Joint Secretary then outlined the following possibilities:

- The U.S.A. may be promoting non-American NGOs to camouflage its own interests.
- Dutch activities have increased in the region in the post-Cold War period. Dutch missionaries have been found to be active in Tripura (a northeastern Indian state bordering Bangladesh, near Myanmar) without having any permission from the Government of India. Dutch NGOs, NCIP (Netherlands Council on Indigenous People) is giving support to various insurgent groups of the NE region on international forums.

• Many, if not most, Dutch NGOs are directly funded by their government. It is possible that funds flowing from the Dutch government finally trickle down to insurgent groups in the northeast region. It was found that when NCIP contacted the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)<sup>1</sup> factions in 1993, the Dutch government provided \$25,000 to this NGO. This linkage of flow of funds (Government-NGO-militants) has to be ascertained further.

• It has been found that leaders of the NSCN(I/M) faction meet the Dutch officials before and after each time they meet Government of India representatives. It may be possible that the factions brief them about the outcome of meetings. NSCN(I/M) leaders have been immunized from any restriction from entering the Netherlands on fake passports. It is not possible that the Dutch Government is totally unaware of the terrorist movement that the NSCN(I/M) is leading.

1. The NSCN consists of two major terrorist groups—NSCN-I/M and NSCN-K—in India’s northeastern state of Nagaland seeking a Naga nation independent from India. These groups began working closely with the British immediately after the Raj left the scene.



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