

# Jaitapur is Core Meltdown of Indo-US Nuclear Deal



The cacophonous victory of falsehood over the bitter and silent truth doesn't last long. Castles built

on sand crumble in a strong wind. As powerless protesters from the sleepy hamlet of Jaitapur in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri district choose darkness over doom from the nuclear power plant, the truth about a nation betrayed is haunting the country with the dangers of a deal that was sold as the most powerful panacea for all the ills that plague poor Bharat. While those who sold the mesmerising mirage of a brighter countryside are simply keeping quiet over the rising protest against setting up the massive 9,900 MW nuclear energy plant, the radioactive waves triggered by Fukushima nuclear disaster are demolishing every iota of faith in the virtues of nuclear energy. Looking at the ferocity and determination of the local residents, it is evident that they are now determined to call the bluff. They just don't want energy that would splash venom on the future. They prefer poverty to poisoned prosperity.

But trust our avaricious politicians. They are quick to put the blame on adversarial politics behind the Jaitapur agitation. Quite expectedly, Minister of State for Environment Jairam Ramesh, better known for his turns and about-turns, was the first to blame the rudderless Shiv Sena for fomenting trouble. Unable to comprehend the public outrage against the fear of the unknown, Ramesh arrogantly thundered, "It (Jaitapur) stays. We need nuclear power as an alternative source of energy. I haven't called for re-think." How could he? Only a month ago he was singing a different tune when he said, "If additional safeguards have to be built in, we will certainly look into it." But he had to beat a hasty retreat when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stepped in and defended India's nuclear energy policy while on a tour to nuke-hit Japan. Singh had repeated his resolve to pursue nuclear energy projects with added vigour.

The belated popular anger against India's civil nuclear energy programme stems from the realisation that Western countries are hawking their plants to India for reviving their own sink-

ing economies. The Jaitapur plant will cost over Rs 100,000 crore and a huge amount of agricultural land will have to be taken over. It is being built in collaboration with a French company, Areva. Foreign companies made their triumphant business entry into India when the UPA leadership bulldozed the nation and Parliament into conceding a one-sided Civil Nuclear Energy Agreement

market for the most expensive power to be generated by foreign-built reactors. Nuclear energy will cost the consumer twice of what he now forks up for his power needs. The people's outrage against nuclear power has been fuelled by the rising suspicion about their security, particularly after the Japanese tragedy. Those who are opposed to India's N-policy argue that even the Americans

haven't been encouraging the setting up of new nuclear energy plants in their country. According to published reports, of the 253 nuclear power plants commissioned to be built in the US since 1953, over 48 per cent were cancelled and 11 per cent prematurely shut down. In real terms, only one-fourth of those ordered or just about half those completed are still operating. Even other members of the exclusive Nuclear Power Club are discarding and discouraging nuclear plants, but are very aggressively lobbying for their nuclear power companies to open markets in countries like India. Taking advantage of India's acute power shortage, they and their mighty lobbyists succeeded in forcing the American agenda on us. None has ever raised the question as to why India is not able to lift

40 million tonnes of coal lying in stock at its coal mines to be supplied to thermal power plants. Those who are in charge of the infrastructure development have never pushed the railways to provide additional number of rakes to take the coal. Why has the Planning Commission not encouraged public undertakings like the National Thermal Power Corporation to add and build new thermal power plants? It is only now that private operators are setting up new power plants.

The megaphones sponsored by the establishment and the multi-national corporations have begun to blow loudly to suppress the movement against nuclear plants. Since \$100 billion is at stake, those who stand to lose the market and the money will unleash the worst-ever propaganda to seduce the protesters of Jaitapur. For them making money is the mission, no matter if it endangers life in the process, not only of the current generation but also of those yet to come. But the people are also prepared to die now rather than wait and die later.

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with the US. In fact, a powerful coalition of the corporate-politician-bureaucracy nexus and foreign lobbyists maimed and massacred every dissenting and contrarian voice against the deal. The passage of the Bill was touted as a paradigm shift in India's economic diplomacy and the end of our nuclear apartheid. All those who promoted and fought for the Indo-US Nuclear agreement were handsomely rewarded with sinecures—both in India and abroad. Ironically, the target of people's anger on Jaitapur is Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan, who was at the forefront of pushing the N-Deal when he was a minister in the PMO. He is now not as aggressive as he used to be in the company of nuclear netas in Delhi. Chavan is feeling the heat and so are other Congress leaders who are now speaking in whispers about the political fallout of India's disastrous nuclear energy policy.

Not only has the agreement crippled India's defence-related nuclear programme, it has allowed the country to become a