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2 janvier 2017

India : Jaitapur to witness anti-nuclear plant protest again

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January 02, 2017 00:12 IST Jan Hakka Seva Samiti, which has been opposing proposed N-plant, says news reports indicate govt. is going ahead with project

MUMBAI : Following reports of the Indian government asking French and American nuclear companies interested in building atomic plants in the country to furnish details of functional reactors designed by them, **the group opposing a nuclear power plant at Jaitapur has announced a one-day protest on January 25.**

French company EDF proposes to build six European Pressurised Reactors (EPR) of 1,600 MW each in Jaitapur. The project was earlier with another French company, Areva, in whose reactor business EDF has now acquired a 51 per cent share.

Senior officials with the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) were anonymously quoted in several news reports seeking to know how the technology works. The Indian government now wants to see the reference nuclear plant built using similar technology, which is functional.

Interestingly, despite the environmental clearance given to the project six years ago and completion of the land acquisition process, no nuclear plant was set up at Jaitapur as the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) and the French company are yet to sign certain techno-commercial agreements.

"What the government is doing now is ridiculous. If the DAE wants to inspect functional EPR, they should have placed this demand before giving environmental clearance. This only proves how badly the whole project was designed," said Satyajit Chavan, president, Jan Hakka Seva Samiti, an umbrella organisation for groups fighting the project.

Mr. Chavan said the government's stand clearly shows that it intends to go ahead with the project. "We have been consistently opposing the project for more than eight years now. Though we have stayed away from politics, this year we will try to create political pressure as the Zilla Parishad and

Panchayat Samiti polls are scheduled for February.”

The Samiti will be targeting various organisations and particularly the youth for their participation in the protest. Besides the nuclear power project, the government has also begun surveying land for an oil refinery in the vicinity. “Why do projects which lead to pollution come to Konkan ? Power projects, refineries, mines are set to destroy the natural wealth of this area. The January 25 protest will be the beginning of opposition to such projects,” Mr. Chavan said.

Despite claims to the contrary, the French company is yet to set up a functional power plant with EPR. Two nuclear power plants at Flamville in England and Taishan in China are presently under construction, and may be used as a reference project by the Indian government.