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India's poor nuclear safety

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Byline: Sajjad Shaukat - , [Email:sajjad_logic@yahoo.com](mailto:sajjad_logic@yahoo.com)

Body

The tragic nuclear incident at Chemboy¹ in 1986 had clearly verified that even without using an atomic bomb, this very technology can eliminate hundreds of people through radiation exposure, leaving behind thousands of persons, affected with fatal diseases which also travel from generation to generation. After that major incident, big nuclear powers and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) emphasised the atomic countries for the need of a tight mechanism in order to avoid any catastrophe.

Although responsible nuclear states have adopted strict measures at their nuclear plants so as to save the lives of their employees and the nearby population, yet India's record of poor nuclear safety has surprised the international community in the era of ongoing nuclear age. In this regard, in the end of November, this year, more than 90 Indian workers suffered radiation due to contamination of drinking water at the Kaiga Atomic Power Station in Karnataka.

In fact, this latest incident took place on the 25th of November, but it was on the 28th that the media got the story when many suffered persons were hospitalised, and it became impossible for New Delhi to conceal the tragedy. Instead of admitting their faults and to improve the security of their atomic plants, both Indian scientists and high officials hastened to cover the incident in one way or the other.

In this respect, some Indian scientists remarked that the affected employees did not use to "go into the actual reactor area, but work around it", while Director of the Kaiga station, AM Gupta said that these workers had "no exposure to the reactor directly, it was surprising to see them with higher level of radiation."

On the other hand, gravity of situation could be judged from the fact that Indian rulers immediately sent instructions to its officials and scientists to avoid giving any details to the media. In this context, The Nuclear Power Corporation, which runs Kaiga plant, did not reply to the media queries over the nuclear accident.

Deputy Commissioner of Uttara Kannada, N S Channappa Gowda, while concealing the facts pointed out that no casualties or injuries were reported. Notably, Indian Atomic Energy Chairman, Anil Kodkar called the mishap at Kaiga an act of sabotage.

The Time of India and some other sources suggest that there "was no official word from the usually secretive nuclear establishment...the employees were in hospital because they experienced a higher level of radiation after drinking water. However, tests confirmed radioactivity in the urine samples." Meanwhile, India's poor nuclear safety can be noted from the statement of Minister of state, Prithviraj Chavan who clarified that there were no video cameras there to catch who did the mischief, further saying that in future "the government would install cameras in all such areas."

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Surprisingly, this statement made it clear that Indian other atomic plants are also without cameras. Although Indian officials and scientists tried to hide the fatal leakage at the Kaiga plant through many contradictory statements, yet an internal probe by Nuclear Power Corporation indicated possibility of mischief by an insider who had deliberately added some heavy water containing tritium to the drinking water cooler. So it is a most alarming that anyone can cause any mischief at Indian any nuclear facility. This raises more questions regarding the poor safety of Indian all nuclear plants.

Nevertheless, Indian nuclear power installations have not been practising the right safety methods along with rigid security measures. The incident at Kaiga Atomic Power Station is not the first one, Indian past record shows various kinds of security lapses in relation to various nuclear plants and the related sensitive materials. On July 27, 1991, a similar event took place at the heavy water plant run by the Department of Atomic Energy at Rawatbhata in Rajasthan. Nuclear radiation had affected and injured many labourers there.

Coupled with other events of nuclear theft, smuggling and killing have become a regular feature of Indian atomic plants and facilities. In July 1998, India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) seized eight Kg. of nuclear material from three engineers in Chennai. It was reported that the uranium was stolen from an atomic research center.

The case still remains pending. On November 7, 2000, IAEA disclosed that Indian police had seized 57 pounds of uranium and arrested two men for illicit trafficking of radioactive material. IAEA had said that Indian civil nuclear facilities were vulnerable to thefts. On January 26, 2003, CNN pointed out that Indian company, NEC Engineers Private Ltd. shipped 10 consignments to Iraq, containing highly sensitive equipments entailing titanium vessels and centrifugal pumps.

In 2004, when the issue of international nuclear black market came to surface, Pakistani nuclear scientist, Dr. A.Q. Khan was only blamed by America and Europe for proliferation activities by neglecting the western nationals and especially those of India.

While in February, same year, India's Ambassador to Libya, Dinkar Srivastava revealed that New Delhi was investigating that retired Indian scientists could possibly be engaged in "high technology programs" for financial gains during employment in the Libyan government.

In December 2005, United States imposed sanctions on two Indian firms for selling missile goods and chemical arms material to Iran in violation of India's commitment to prevent proliferation.

In the same year, Indian scientists, Dr. Surendar and Y. S. R Prasad had been blacklisted by Washington due to their involvement in nuclear theft. In December 2006, a container packed with radioactive material had been stolen from an Indian fortified research atomic facility near Mumbai. Some months ago, death of India's nuclear scientist, Lokanathan Mahalingam raised new apprehension about the safety of Indian atomic assets.

He was missed from the scenario and after a couple of days; his dead body was recovered from the Kali River. Indian police concocted a story that Mahalingam had committed suicide by jumping into the river. It is a big joke to hide some real facts behind his death because wisdom proves that if an educated person decides to commit suicide, he will definitely adopt a soft way to eliminate his life.

Notably, Dr. Haleema Saadia disclosed that death of the scientist is a conspiracy-as soon as his dead body was found, within no time; the police had announced that Mahalingam had committed suicide. Besides, in the recent past, solid evidence has surprised the world regarding the existence of Hindu terrorism which also shows future dangers of Indian proliferation owing to its poor safety.

In this respect, Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of the Maharashtra arrested a serving Lt. Col. Srikant Purohit along with some officials who confessed that they were involved in training of the Hindu terrorists, supplying them the military-grade explosive RDX, used in bombings of various Indian cities including Malegaon.

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The investigation further indicated the confession of Lt. Col. Purohit for the bombing of Samjhota express, while proving close links of the Indian army officials with prominent politicians of BJP, VHP, RSS and Bajrang Dal, who have been pressurizing New Delhi to release the arrested persons.

Nevertheless, the enquiry still remains pending. Meanwhile, assassination of Indian Anti-Terrorism Squad Chief Hemant Karkare in Mumbai during terror attacks also endorsed these links.

All these developments prove security lapses in connection with Indian weapons and especially nuclear facilities. In this context, most dangerous aspect is that Hindu fundamentalists, trained by Indian military experts or secret agency RAW could even prepare and obtain Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs).

Thus they could jeopardise the global peace by using these fatal weapons inside America and Europe so that these developed nations could also point finger at Pakistan because of their 'stereotypes' against the Muslims and Islamabad in wake of war on terror.

Nonetheless, it is regrettable that despite India's poor record of nuclear safety, and violation of various international agreements, and its refusal to sign Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), CTBT and Additional Protocol with the IAEA, the United States which signed a nuclear deal with New Delhi last year has been praising India as a responsible atomic actor.

So the right hour has come that the international community must take notice of the dangers posed by India's poor nuclear safety.

ZCC

Indian nuke safety & IAEA

By: Lt Col Zaheerul Hassan (R)

_: Times of India reported on November 30, 2009 about radiation contamination at the Kaiga nuclear plant in Karnataka. The locals residing in surrounding area suffered with heavy damages in the shape of casualties of inhabitants and livestock worth costing in corers. Indian Prime Minister (PM) Manmohan Singh has denied any radiation leakage and said there was "nothing to worry about". He further added that he has been briefed that it is a small matter of contamination and is not linked to any leak.

In this regard global nuke experts really got astonished over Indian PM statement in which he tried to tone down the most serious crisis of India i.e. Safety and security of Indian Nuke Plants . Should we consider that Manmohan Singh statement is a mater of poor knowledge or extremists Hindu lobby present in the government deliberately reluctant to share confidential nature of information to their Sikh PM. Indian Intelligence Agencies did not even timely confirm to their PM about the involvement of minorities' killer "Lt Col Prohit" and elimination of their loving son "**LTTE** Chief Prabharkan". In this regard, Sikh community had kept on stressing to Indian government to punish the real culprits and publish the investigations report in connection with the brutality against Sikhs in 1984.

The poor Sikh community does not know that their PM probably cannot even review the sensitive nature of information about nuke and investigation reports on communal violence. Indian intelligence agencies again embraced their rulers on the issue of Ajmal Kassab too.

The agencies did not inform ruling authorities that actual culprits of Mumbai attack have been killed in the encounter. According to Indian media, arrested main accused in a dramatic retracted from his earlier statement and claimed he was forcibly made to confess. Thus, we can only say that Indian PM should show some assertiveness to control her intelligence agencies and nuke programme.

Coming back to the title I would like to disclose that Kaiga accident is not the first one which cropped up on November 30 this year. In this connection, 300 cases of similar nature have already been accounted for in their record. kaiga plant incident is not a simple case of leakage. The Initial investigation disclosed that it was possibly an

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act of mischief and security breach too. Prithviraj Chavan, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, also confirmed in New Delhi while talking to the press that it was a breach of some security measures.

In fact, poor security arrangements have been noticed on various Indian nuke plants. One can be astonished to know that there are certain important places where security cameras are not even installed.

The employees working on the nuke plants have been found in stealing and selling Uranium in the local market. According to Hindustan Times, Navi Mumbai Crime Branch arrested three people - Panvel-based gemologist Prem Singh Savitri (40), Vashi-based transporter Srinivas Puryar and Ghatkopar resident Tulsidas Bhanushali a dealer in gunny bags - for illegal possession of 5 kg of depleted uranium. As per police Savitri was a former constable. The police are trying to ascertain from where how Savitri had stolen the Uranium. Earlier too, John Khongmin, son of an Atomic Mineral Division (AMD) employee and one of those accused of stealing uranium "yellowcake" with seals of the AMD but Government of India failed to take actions for the safety and security of the nuke plants .

IAEA is also well aware of poor security measures of Indian nuke plants. These arrangements are deploring day by day. As we know that few years ago, a similar malicious act was also observed in Tarapur atomic power sub-station where the culprits were dismissed after investigations by the Department of Atomic Energy. In December 1952 US sold Tarapur reactors suffered with the accident and area up to Tarapur Railway Station got contaminated with nuclear radiation.

Many engineers got exposed to radiation and died. The Bhopal disaster was also known as the Union Carbide disaster. It took place at a Union Carbide pesticide plant in the Indian city of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh on December 3, 1984. The plant released methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas and other toxins, resulting in the exposure of over 500,000 people. The government of Madhya Pradesh has confirmed a total of 3787 deaths related to the gas release.

The death toll went to 6000 just after couple days of the accident. The lingering effects of the poison are still going on the people and plants. **Females** are still giving birth to disabled children. 8000 to 10,000 more individuals died within days and 25,000 have since died from gas-related diseases.

On June 13, 2009 Indian famous nuke scientist Lokanathan Mahalingam found dead from Kali River. The scientist was working on Kaiga Atomic Power Station since last eight years. Reportedly, he was in possession of highly sensitive information and might be doubted for Indian nuke proliferation. Mahalingam was involved in training apprentices on a replica of the actual reactor.

It would not be wrong if we say that Indian authorities are least pushed about the safety of their public. The concerned authorities never bothered on the proper disposal of nuke waste .The rulers are busy in point scoring on the opposition while concluding more and more nuclear pacts with other countries on the cost of the health of general public.

For example according to "Times of India "report of October, 2009: The Gujarat Pollution Control Board has admitted that the 18,503 metric tonne US toxic ship, Platinum II, parked in Bhavnagar waters for dismantling at Alang contains more than 20 MT of Poly Chlorinated Bi-Phenyls or PCBs, aggravating the dilemma that the Centre has faced since the toxic ship reached Indian waters. The report further disclosed that the presence of the ship is volatile of the Basel Convention which bars signatory countries like India from accepting such toxic wastes from countries which have not signed off on the international pact.

Poor Gujarat government did not able to ask US toxic ship to turn back or stay out of Indian water since central government has recently concluded Civil Nuclear Deal 123 with USA. Gujarat government tried to hide the actual facts from the people while saying that ship could break up on the high waters.

Most probably Indian public do not aware of the fact that how much precarious these toxic agents to human and animal lives. Indian people should know that USA has used orange colour toxic agent in Vietnam War. These were

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first developed by the U.S. Army as an instrument of chemical warfare at Fort Detrick, Maryland. These agents were proven to be very deadly to the plants and life when tested for production on mass scale.

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara suggested further testing be done on jungle vegetation during the Vietnam War. Once the programme was called to a halt in 1971, herbicides had destroyed an estimated 4.5 million acres of countryside. Now the same ship has been sent to India for dismantling without realizing that how much dangerous would be for the sea life. Indian public must think that why such type of dismantling could not be done in American Sea.

In this connection the public and Indian leadership should know the conclusion of Vietnam veteran Mr. Paul Reutershan. He concluded that his terminal cancer could be traced to his extensive exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. Similarly accidents of keiga and Tarapur plants have left very dreadful signs over the inhabitants of effected area. Contaminated drinking water, leakage of radiation in Keiga and Tarapur nuke plants caused irrecoverable losses to the lives and stocks.

According to the Indian media the accidents also caused genetic damage to the people. In this regards female engineers are suffering a lot since local males are in the opinion that marriages with them might face problems in giving birth to their next generation. There is one school of thought in India that girls have all the eggs, at the time of the birth and any exposure to radiation can damage the egg and the genetic defects can be passed on to the future generations.

Earlier too on November 11, 2006, Director of Uttaranchal Space Application Centre, Dr Anil Kumar Tiwari, was also shot dead by an unidentified person near his residence. About six weeks ago, another NPC non-technical employee Ravi Mule was found dead in the township.

The panic in the staff working at the plants is on its climax. Agencies use to pick up the scientist and other employees on the name of safety and security. The smuggling and cases of the uranium thefts are on the top. Low paid nuke staffs and inhabitants of surrounding area of nuke plants are also worried about their health and future. IAEA should look into the problems facing to the employees and also carry out in detail inspection of Indian nuke plants. It would be more appropriate that if time being the plants be closed till making of proper security arrangements on nuke plants.

World community, USA and Russian nuke experts should suggest to their governments to reconsider nuke deals with New Delhi since the later failed to ensure proper nuke safety and security arrangements.

It is further added that UNO should ensure that all ships which remained in use of transportation of chemical and biological agents or carrying any related material should not be sent for dismantling to any other country. India should also return back US Toxic Ship present in high water of Gujrat (Indian start) sea.

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