

## FULL TEXT

### **Title: France will comply with N-liability rules: French Nuclear chief Bernard Bigot**

**By Pallava Bagla**

*In the first international reaction on India's latest nuclear liability rules, the chief of the French nuclear program Dr **Bernard Bigot** has said 'there is no question France will comply with Indian rules'. India is hoping to buy initially two 1650 MW EPR reactors then going up to six reactors to be installed at Jaitapur in Maharashtra speaking to **Pallava Bagla**, he said EPR is a very safe proven and tested reactor. France is a world leader generating almost 80% of its electricity by splitting atoms.*

**Q) France had expressed apprehensions on the unlimited liability that was placed on nuclear suppliers by the Indian Parliament, but now in the new rules it has been capped to five years. Is France happy with the nuclear liability rules?**

A) It is a very important step that India has been presented these liability rules. It is clear that the main responsibility now is clearly designed in such a way that the operators who are responsible for any damage as far as the public is concerned. The operator could have recourse towards the supplier. What is important for us is that now we know there is rules and it will be just a question for France and all the suppliers not only the French one but also the Indian one or any other foreigner to implement this rule and it is not a question to be happy or not, it is a question to implement the rule in such a way that the public could feel confident that every damage could be taken into account.

**Q) Is France now willing to sell EPR reactors and how soon can the multi-billion Euro contract be inked?**

A) Yes France agreed to answer positively the wish for India to build a nuclear power plant of the European Pressurized Reactor (EPR) design we are really happy to work within this framework which has been signed between the French and Indian government in September 2008 to supply this technologies and as long as the contract is to be signed it is on the shoulder of the contracting party which mean Areva and Alstom from the French side and Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) on the Indian one. As far as I understand the discussion could go on now that the nuclear liability are clearly set with a rule in front of the Parliament. No there is no way to have objection, it is I would say full freedom and responsibility of Indian Parliament and government to make decision and there is no question about it we will comply with the Indian rules, it is clear.

**Q) Why is France selling an 'untested and unproven' EPR reactor model to India?**

A) I don't really believe it is an untested and unproven EPR reactor as maybe you know EPR is indeed something as a daughter as a son of all the 58 reactors which has been built in France. There is no big change as far nuclear design is concerned. The main improvement is on the safety component which mean to multiply the cooling system to improve and reinforce the containment envelope from the outside and so nobody should say it an unproven and untested reactor it has been proven and tested for more than 25 years and many of this type of reactors are developed in world what is better and you know it is a return of experience of all this reactor which has been built in France in the past and in the safety and in the improved safety no big change as far as nuclear reactor. We have in France for example reactors which deliver one 1550 megawatt. So EPR reactors which delivering 1650 megawatt which is not a big deal, just optimization I would say. So I am not agreeing at all that it an

unproven technology, it is exactly the reverse many of these reactors have been built and are operating in a safe and efficient way in France

**Q) The EPR has no passive cooling system so in theory it can't withstand a Fukushima type of disaster, is France willing to incorporate a passive cooling system as one additional safety train on the EPR if India demands?**

A) In a way it depends on what you call passive safety system. In any case the operator have to manage in case of an extreme event you know it is like driving a car even if you have a lot of improvement on safety you need still to be very well aware of what happens in extreme case in order to make good driving. So what we have set in the EPR is to help as much as it is possible the operator to deal with the cooling requirement if there is extreme situation is why we multiply the cooling system, we also have this core catcher to arrest any radioactive release. In Fukushima it was not a question of passive or non-passive. It was a question of operators; they have to deal with something which was really unexpected so I don't think on the EPR it is worthwhile to set up what we call a passive cooling system. We don't really feel that you may consider that when you deal with such a big reactor it could be fully passive okay. You need always a human understanding of the specific event and the operator has to work properly in order to deal with the situation.

**Q) If the reactor is so safe why can't you take on unlimited liability?**

A) The problem is not the following as you say it is not the supplier who has to take limited liability; it is the Indian rules which are in front of the Parliament now are clearly setting of the responsibility on the shoulders of the operators. So it is a standard worldwide that the operator has to stand unlimited responsibility. We don't know of any supplier who is able to have unlimited responsibility because it depends strongly on the operator's behaviour the way the maintenance is made. If there is a fault from the supplier the operator could demand again some recourse to the supplier but it is not the supplier which is bearing the full responsibility.

**Q) Your company Areva is already squabbling with the Finnish buyer TVO dragging them for an international arbitration over the making of the EPR in Finland. What is the status of that negotiation and why should India buy a hot potato?**

A) It is a very specific vision of the situation. As maybe you know Areva and Siemens jointly agreed with buyers in in Finland the TVO Company to provide what we call a turnkey contract to deliver electricity. This turnkey contract was based on joint behaviour of the two parts and for example as maybe you know when you are contracting on a reactors maybe you need sub contract with a two parties for every piece of the reactor quality control and for good delivery and it was expected it will last for two months for the contractor for the T.V. O. to make an answer between Areva and Siemens and indeed on the average it took 11 months in such a way there is dispute in some way between the two contractors. So that takes time to resolve this dispute. I know the negotiation is going on and maybe some arbitration from the external arbitration body will be coming soon in next month. According to me it is mainly a dispute on the contract and not on the technologies and so I don't believe it is a hot potatoes.