

December 16, 2015

### Comments on a news report carried by TOI on 15 December 2015

This has reference to the news item “Indian turns blind eye to radioactive waste leaking from J’khand mine: US report” carried by Times of India, Mumbai today (December 15, 2015). The article refers to a report released by a US-based think-tank accusing UCIL-DAE of ‘overlooking the evidences pointing to radiation hazard at Jaduguda Uranium mine’. It is regrettable that the report is yet again an attempt to project a grossly erroneous picture of the operations of Uranium Corporation of India Ltd. (UCIL) at Jaduguda, Jharkhand.

The Report written by Adrian Levy for The Center for Public Integrity is reportedly based on accounts of locals and activists and information derived from claims filed in the court. It seems to reflect perceptions and not necessarily scientific facts. It also selectively cites certain reports, while ignoring the findings and reports of other groups, as for example, of the Expert Committee (EC) constituted as per recommendations by the Honourable Jharkhand High Court. The EC’s finding submitted to the Honourable High Court clearly confirmed that there is no possibility of any adverse health effect at such low levels of radioactivity observed in Jaduguda environment. The EC observed that radioactivity levels on the tailings pond area is almost at the background levels and will not lead to any significant radiation dose to members of the public, in comparison to the radiation dose due to natural background radiation in the region. The EC further observed that the results of several surveys carried out in the region over the past few years have confirmed that the health conditions, number of cases of physical deformity, infertility and congenital anomalies in the surrounding villages are comparable to those in regions with similar socio-economic conditions, and not attributable to radiation.

The report alleges that radiation levels in some places reach 60 times the safe levels, while the fact, as ascertained by routine radiation monitoring programme,

the levels of radiation in public occupancy area is comparable with natural background levels in the region. The report also alleges that activity levels in Subarnarekha river and adjacent wells are 160% higher than the limits prescribed by World Health Organisation (WHO). However, routine radiation monitoring of surface water and groundwater around the site indicated that the radioactivity level is below the guideline values prescribed for drinking water. It is pertinent to point out that since the natural radioactivity level in the environment is very low, measurements require well-qualified manpower and well calibrated instruments, as well as validated quality assurance protocols.

Reports of criticism of UCIL operations have appeared in the past too in print and electronic media alleging adverse radiation effects and attributing to various ailments of the people living in the neighbourhood of uranium mining facilities in Jaduguda region. These reports were speculative, not based on scientific facts. However, in response to media reports, UCIL arranged a few additional health and demographic surveys in the vicinity of the facilities. Some of these surveys were conducted in collaboration with the Government of Bihar and doctors from various organisations like Tata Main Hospital, Jamshedpur and BARC, Mumbai. The team unanimously concluded that the disease pattern seen in the vicinity of UCIL facilities cannot be ascribed to radiation exposure. The studies clearly show that the UCIL operations do not have any discernible impact on the workers, members of the public and the surrounding environment.

Uranium Corporation of India Ltd. (UCIL) is a responsible organization, under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), Government of India and all required safety measures, both radiological and industrial, are adopted in all its operations. UCIL is well aware of its responsibility towards the workers, members of the public and the environment and its functions are subject to rigorous radiological regulatory oversight of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) of India. The annual reports of AERB contain information on the periodic reviews and inspections as well as on events/incidents.

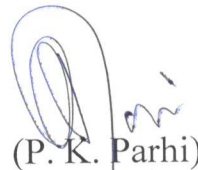
Radiological monitoring at workplace and areas around UCIL facilities has been undertaken right from the inception of the operations. The workplace and environmental monitoring data is periodically reviewed by National and Regional

regulatory bodies like AERB, Directorate General of Mine Safety (DGMS) and State Pollution Control Board. The radiation exposure to members of the public arising due to UCIL operations in the region is only a small fraction of the natural background radiation, and is well below the permissible level stipulated by International and National regulatory guideline.

UCIL has bagged several awards in recognition of its environmental safety related performance: India Today's 'Most Eco-friendly PSU' award in 2014; Turamdih mine won the Silver Award for 'Outstanding Achievement in Environment Management' in 2013, conducted by Greentech Foundation, New Delhi. Also, for excellence in the field of engineering, UCIL won the Engineering Excellence Award 2014 for its innovative environment-based project 'Remote monitoring of noxious gases and automated control of ventilation fans' at UCIL's Turamdih Underground Mine. UCIL is one of the very few mining townships to have been awarded the ISO 14001:2004 EMS certification for management of its Environment Management System for its Narwapahar Colony.

It is hoped that these facts will be able to dispel the erroneous picture presented by the report referred to in the above news item.

For Uranium Corporation of India Limited



(P. K. Parhi)

Web Information Manager (Contents)