

**Tirunelveli:** Having started commercial generation, the first unit of the Kudankulam nuclear power project (KKNPP) will not be stopped except for refuelling purposes, said site director, Mr R.S. Sundar. Speaking to mediapersons at Anuvijay Township, the KKNPP officers residential quarters, 16 km from the power plant, on Wednesday, he said the 1,000 MWe first reactor that commenced commercial production from zero hour Wednesday, was functioning well with its maximum generation capacity of 1,000 MWe. “As the plant was given clearance for commercial production after a series of successful tests, it will not be stopped except for refuelling,” said Mr Sundar.

It has been said after continuous operation for 10 months, the plant will be shut down maximum for one-and-a-half months for annual maintenance. “During this suspension period, one-third of the fuel rods will be replaced,” explained the site director, who added that the spent fuel rods replaced from the reactor core will be safely stored in the borated water pool near the primary containment. “The spent fuel can be stored safely to a maximum of seven years,” he informed.

The 335 crore units generated by the first unit in a cumulative 5,266 running hours of the turbine generator has been distributed to the states at a cost of Rs1.22 per unit since the unit attained first criticality on July 2013. This infirm fetched NPCIL Rs350 crore as revenue. However, as the plant began commercial production, the unit cost will be Rs 4 for the beneficiary states, said Mr Sundar. The exact project cost for the first two reactors increased beyond Rs17,000 crore, he explained.

While performing to its maximum capacity, the first unit will produce 2.4 crore units per day, which is capable of fulfilling the energy consumption of 3,600 villages, according to Mr Sundar, who said the power produced at KKNPP will be evacuated through four feeders through the 400 KV power sub-station at Abishegapatty, near Tirunelveli.