The opposition to the purchase of reactors for the Kovvada Nuclear Power Project from America's Westinghouse is growing with social activist and former IAS officer E.A.S. Sarma asking the Department of Atomic Energy to drop the proposal.

Even as the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd has remitted ₹500 crore towards the rehabilitation of the affected families and the Srikakulam district administration has identified land near Etcherla for construction of rehabilitation colony, the protests over the plant continue.

The NPCIL is of the view that by using generation-III plus reactors with passive cooling system and inbuilt safety mechanism for power shutdown and auto shut-down, there will be zero risk. The reactors it says are quake and tsunami-resistant.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr. Sarma said “when the residents around Mithi Virdi in Gujarat protested against the Westinghouse setting up a similar project, for reasons best known to your government, the company has been permitted to shift its operations to Kovvada. It is a case of Gujarat gaining at the cost of A.P., as nuclear power is not only expensive but also potentially risky.”

Though the Westinghouse team visited the area to reiterate its proposal to supply nuclear reactors, Mr. Sarma said the DAE was aware that the company had plunged into bankruptcy as early as in 2006. Till date, the company had not fully emerged out of the crisis, he pointed out.

‘Fertile land acquired’
Post-Fukushima, safety concerns have assumed great importance worldwide. Still, without disclosing these facts to the public, the DAE had insisted on the A.P. government to forcibly acquire 2,080 acres of lush-green and fertile agricultural land in and around Kovvada, displacing thousands of farmers depriving them of their livelihoods.

“The pittance of compensation given to them could never cover the loss of dignity with which they had pursued agriculture for generations and the human rights violations in the rehabilitation process,” he said.