

We are ready for reciprocal steps: Kakodkar

Date:29/09/2005

<http://www.thehindu.com/2005/09/29/stories/2005092904521200.htm>

National

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Hopes nuclear curbs will be removed

CHENNAI: Anil Kakodkar, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, said on Wednesday he expected that "the unique case of India as a responsible country with advanced nuclear technologies developed in a self-reliant manner" and "its impeccable record in terms of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related technologies and adherence to all its international commitments would result in lifting of all restrictions on India."

India was prepared to take reciprocal steps in a phased manner in keeping with the responsibilities and obligations of an advanced nuclear power to achieve full civilian nuclear energy cooperation with international partners. But this was "predicated on our obtaining the same benefits and advantages as other nuclear powers, consistent with our national policy of maintaining the integrity of our three-stage nuclear energy programme, and ensuring full autonomy of our nuclear programme of strategic, and R and D significance," he asserted.

Dr. Kakodkar was speaking at the 49th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at Vienna, Austria. "Since some of these [reciprocal] steps will also include safeguards on facilities of civilian nature, selected by India on a voluntary basis, we will, at the appropriate stage, approach the IAEA in this regard."

An inevitable option

A recent study revealed that India needed to step up electricity generation ten-fold in the next four to five decades. "Nuclear energy is thus an important and inevitable option for India," the AEC Chairman said. India was committed to its three-stage nuclear power programme, consisting of Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) in the first stage, fast breeder reactors in the second and thorium reactors in the third.

Dr. Kakodkar quoted from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's speech at the launch of the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, on October 23, 2004. The Prime Minister said: "India is a responsible nuclear power. India will not be the source of proliferation of sensitive technologies. We will also ensure the safeguarding of those technologies that we already possess..." "We call upon other advanced nuclear powers, and all those who have a stake in the future of nuclear energy, to come together for a constructive dialogue to evolve more effective measures that would stem the tide of

proliferation without unduly restraining the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Constraining those who are responsible amounts, in effect, to rewarding those who are irresponsible. The international community must face up to the implications of this choice. India are willing to shoulder our share of international obligations provided our legitimate interests are met. India has actively embraced globalisation. There is no reason why nuclear energy production should be an exception."

Dr. Kakodkar said he was happy that there were "winds of change" now. He welcomed the statements of the U.S. and France made on this (IAEA) podium and the positive approach of several countries in this regard. "We look forward to a rapid growth in nuclear power generation capacity in India based on full international civilian cooperation" as India continued its efforts for using thorium and hydrogen for electricity generation, he said.

The design of Advanced Heavy Water Reactor (AHWR), an innovative reactor that would use thorium as fuel, was under regulatory review. Its construction would be taken up after the review was completed, he said.