

Independence Day Address (15-08-2024)

D.K.Shukla

Chairman, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board

My dear colleagues,

On the accession of 78th Independence Day, I extend my wishes to all my colleagues of AERB located at Headquarters, Safety Research Institute-Kalpakkam, Regional Regulatory Centres, SOTs and On Job Trainees posted at various sites, auxiliary and support staff, security personnel, canteen staff and one and all who are directly or indirectly connected with functioning of AERB. The freedom has been achieved by the valor and sacrifice of innumerable freedom fighters, some famous and many anonymous. I salute and pay my tribute to all those martyrs and extend my greetings to all the soldiers engaged in protecting India's water, land and sky borders.

As per the tradition, we assemble every year on this solemn occasion to celebrate the achievements of the previous year and pledge our commitments to the future programmes. Achievements are well known, so, my address would concentrate on future work.

The theme for this year's I-Day celebration is Viksit Bharat. Aligned with the government's vision, this year's theme emphasizes India's journey towards becoming a developed nation by 2047, marking the centenary of independence.

One of the key indicator for Vikas (i.e Development) is the Human Development Index which in turn is largely governed by per capita energy consumption. Hence, achieving long term energy security is one of the high priority goal of the Government. Atomic Energy has been recognised as one of the crucial element in country's energy mix. In the last few years, there has been a great thrust to make nuclear energy a substantial component of India's power generation portfolio. This strategic shift is evident through various government pronouncements such as public-private partnership, joint ventures, Bharat small reactors and BSMRs, etc.

Friends, we celebrated Ruby Jubilee of AERB last year commemorating four decades of its glorious journey. AERB decided to observe journey for transformative 41st year as 'SANKRANTI KAAL'. This kall (period) is being observed by conducting round the year activities of introspection, retrospection through intensive staff interactions (i.e. process of "MANTHAN") for transitioning to future readiness state. This "Manthan" process assumes significance in view of challenges posed by the national plans to expand the nuclear power programme in a big way by deploying mix of existing and emerging technologies through joint ventures and public- private partnerships. A lot has already been done through "Manthan" process. Further Manthan continues and would culminate in formulating well documented

“way forward” which would form part of the book to be released on the eve of AERB formation day this year.

Let me throw some light on the key focus areas, which are central for “Manthan” towards AERB’s transition to future readiness state:

1. Setting goals and aligning employees with them is the major factor for achieving organizational excellence. For this reason, AERB has adopted participative process for setting goals on a sliding time scale from which annual targets are carved out.
2. Next focus area is to go beyond enhanced employee engagement by focussing on involvement of staff in decision making.
3. To revamp AERB decision making structure and organization structure in the light of the fact that “the one right organization” concept is no more valid. With the principle of “decentralization”, the “team” is considered as one right organization.
4. To revamp functioning of AERB with greater emphasis on in-house review, optimising number of safety committees and redefining their roles, optimizing regulatory interventions and review levels following graded approach.

Write ups on “overall functioning of AERB” and “background of Executive Committee and AERB organization Structure” covering the above four points have gone through the “Manthan” process. A compiled final outcome has been circulated for charting out implementation plan by the concerned divisions. Revision of Integrated Management System (IMS) has already been taken up in AERB with participation of all employees and outcome of the “Manthan” process will be appropriately factored while developing various levels of IMS. One of the major changes proposed in IMS is identifying and addressing the management functions and processes, which were not explicitly addressed earlier.

5. During silver jubilee celebration of Safety Research Institute (SRI), Kalpakkam this year, “Manthan” was conducted to draw the road-map for revamping Safety Research Strategy & directions for functioning of SRI.

AERB has constituted an Apex Level Advisory Committee for Safety Research (AC-SR), drawing experts from various research institutes to advise it on matters concerning safety research and mode of conducting research. With review inputs from AC-SR, strategy would be finalised.

6. Artificial Intelligence is going to be used in very big way in coming days. AERB needs to gear up to keep itself abreast with this technology to be ready to quickly prepare for its regulation in future. Use of AI in regulatory activities also needs to be explored. Already, the idea has been floated within AERB to brain storm on these areas. I strongly believe that AERB work should not be centred around tools but tools should be centred around AERB’s work.

Work on AERB's social media policy has progressed well. Further, a structured strategy is being evolved for engaging with various types of stakeholders in an open and transparent manner, consistent with their expectations. The objectives of such engagements may vary from providing information, spreading awareness towards increasing radiation literacy to more involved interactions such as consultation and feedback collection.

7. Roadmap for expansion of Regional Regulatory Centres (RRC) is also being worked out. Once centralised record and information system is commissioned, secured access to this will be provided towards progressively expanding the work scope of RRCs in a phased manner. Besides this, effective utilisation of resident Site Observer Teams is also a focus area.
8. Emphasis is being put on development of a holistic HR Policy and Plan. Different types of competencies/skill sets are required to perform diverse regulatory activities. Human Resource Development Programme is being modelled with the following consideration: (a) 'basic' level of competence to all its staff for carrying out regular activities. (b) 'specialised' level of competence for specific staff based on knowledge, skills and aptitude. (c) rotation of officers between RRCs, SOTs, and also within HQs for varied exposure and identifying potential future leaders (d) for requirements beyond the specialisation available in AERB, arrangements for getting support from TSOs, academic institutions. Progressively, steps will be initiated to acquire competency in such areas within AERB itself so that dependence on external support gets minimised to the extent possible.

An interactive Manthan session was held to obtain feedback on integration of Technical excellence Team work with HR plan.

9. The Regulatory Documents of AERB are backbone for its regulatory activities. Due to concurrent development of regulations with technology, AERB's regulations non-consciously became technology centric as well as entity centric. In view of the evolving landscape of nuclear sector, AERB has already started introspecting and had held series of "Manthan" discussions to evolve a strategy and approach for development/revision of regulations to make them, to the extent possible, technology neutral, entity independent, non-prescriptive and still well aligned with legal framework. Further, structured programmes are being chalked out to obtain feedback of relevant stakeholders to improve upon the regulations.

AERB has already identified the complexities in the legal framework in licensing of nuclear and radiation facilities and also the way to address them. The matter is being further examined by professional legal experts. AERB has also decided to take up the

revision of documents in specific batches to achieve consistency and coherency. Significant progress in this direction has already been achieved for the first batch which includes regulatory documents concerning consenting process, site evaluation and emergency preparedness and response.

Dear Colleagues, I am eagerly looking forward to your views on all these focus areas so as to prepare AERB for the future.

Friends, AERB marches towards completing 41 years this November, a critical age for an organisation. Bubbling with energy, steered by the maturity, AERB is ready to soar a new heights of excellence. On this auspicious day let us renew our commitment to the AERB's growth and honour. With these thoughts I conclude and once again wish one and all a very happy Independence Day.

Jai Hind