

This is what we were looking for: Kakodkar

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Tarapur 3 and 4 will be out of safeguards

CHENNAI: ``This is what we were looking for." This was how Anil Kakodkar, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, on Thursday described India's nuclear separation plan settled during U.S. President, George W. Bush's recent visit to India.

Asked whether the separation plan spelt a win-win situation for India, Dr. Kakodkar said from Mumbai: ``This is a win-win situation for both. It is not a question of winning or losing. This is a good practical step forward."

According to the separation agreement, India will place under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards between 2006 and 2014, 14 out of 22 thermal power reactors in operation or currently under construction in the country. This will include the four safeguarded reactors (Tarapur 1 and 2, and Rajasthan 1 and 2), and Koodankulam 1 and 2 that are under construction in Tamil Nadu.

In addition, eight Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWR) of 220 MWe each, will be offered for safeguards.

Asked to specify the eight reactors that would not come under safeguards, Dr. Kakodkar said: ``Tarapur 3 and 4 will be out [excluded from safeguards]. Madras Atomic Power Station 1 and 2 will be out." When pressed on the remaining four reactors, he responded: ``We will work it out over a period of time."

S.K. Jain, Chairman and Managing Director of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL), said the Tarapur Atomic Power Station-3 reactor would go critical next month. ``We are all set for loading the fuel into Tarapur-3." Tarapur-3 is an indigenous PHWR with a capacity of 540 MWe. It uses natural uranium as fuel, and heavy water as both coolant and moderator.

The natural uranium fuel bundles are fabricated at the Nuclear Fuel Complex, Hyderabad. Mr. Jain added: ``We have completely cleaned and dried the primary heat transport system in preparation for loading the fuel bundles into the reactor. We expect to get the clearance from the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board in the near future to start the loading of fuel bundles. We plan to make the reactor critical in April."

Tarapur-4, which also has a 540 MWe reactor capacity, was commissioned in March 2005.

Mr. Jain said he was "very happy" with the nuclear separation plan settled by India and the U.S. "Our own indigenous PHWR programme will be supplemented by importing Light Water Reactors," he noted.

The Light Water Reactors (LWRs) use enriched uranium as fuel, and light water as both coolant and moderator.

Tarapur-1 and 2, which are LWRs imported from the U.S., have now gone through massive renovation, modernisation, and safety upgradation. They were reconnected to the grid on February 16.

They are of 160 MWe capacity each. "We have done a really wonderful job on these 37-year-old reactors. They have been brought to international levels of safety," Mr. Jain observed.

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