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Kudankulam plant being maintained in safe mode: Atomic energy board chief

Special Correspondent



Photo: V. Ganesan. S.S. Bajaj, Chairman, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board having a word with A. Muruganathan , National President (Elect), Association of Physicians of India at the annual conference of Society of Nuclear Medicine (India), in Chennai on Thursday.

All measures have been taken to maintain the safe mode of critical systems with skeletal staff at the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in spite of work coming to a halt at the project site following protests, S.S. Bajaj, Chairman, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), said on Thursday.

Interacting with the media on the sidelines of the 43rd annual conference of the Society of Nuclear Medicine (India), Dr. Bajaj said that the AERB was also reviewing safety measures at the

Kudankulam plant and getting status reports on a periodic basis as a large contingent of Russian and Ukrainian engineers working on the project have been denied access to the site for several weeks in the wake of the protests.

The plant, which was given various clearances after applying stringent parameters, had reached an advanced stage of commissioning before work was halted, Dr. Bajaj said.

The AERB was following a “wait and watch” policy and expected the plant to seek the next set of clearances sooner than later for the next stage when the dummy fuel is removed and replaced with active fuel before going critical, he said.

On whether the AERB would have wanted the State government to take be more proactive in resolving the Kudankulam deadlock, Dr. Bajaj said he would rather not comment on something that was neither a technical nor an operational matter.

Earlier, inaugurating the four-day conference, Dr. Bajaj called for expanding the scope of the incident reporting system at nuclear medicine units to include instances of misadministration, or incorrect radiopharmaceutical procedure).

The AERB recently issued a revised safety code on nuclear medicine facilities to include new diagnostic modalities such as PET and treatment modalities such as radio-pharmaceuticals, he said.

The AERB chief pointed out that random inspections of all radiation facilities, including nuclear medicine units, had found that while most of them are functioning well, there is scope for improvement in certain areas.

There were over 170 nuclear medicine centres in the country coming under the regulatory ambit of the AERB.

While most units are located in the metros, the Tier-II and Tier-III cities are also catching up slowly, Dr. Bajaj said.

B.R. Mittal, president, Society of Nuclear Medicine, said nuclear medicine was a rapidly evolving speciality with technology advances opening up new pathways in delivering patient care.

M.S. Ashraf, president, Tamil Nadu Medical Council; A. Muruganathan, national president-elect, Association of Physicians of India (API); E. Prabhu, organising secretary; Ramesh Asopa, secretary; and S.N. Narasingan, secretary, API, participated.