

## Nuclear Power: The missing safety audits or fads of Dr. Gopalakrishnan;

By Sudhinder Thakur

It is not uncommon for retired officials, particularly amongst those who believe that they deserved to be treated better, to turn resort to criticism to all actions of the organization they served. Nuclear Power: the missing safety audit by Dr. Gopalakrishnan April 26, 2011 DNA is one such example.

The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board always had all the powers, including power to stop functioning of any nuclear installation in the country, to enforce safety. The decision of AERB has never been challenged and there is no appellate authority. In spite of being armed with enormous powers, Dr. Gopalakrishnan says that he was appalled at the dangerous lack of safety in nuclear installation as soon as he took over as Chairman, AERB in 1993 and it took him almost his entire tenure at AERB to come out with a report on 130 safety issues which he submitted just prior to demitting the office. The fact that Chairman AERB, took three years to even submit a report on these issues indicates the safety significance of the issues.

But safety issue is a safety issue regardless of the significance as nuclear safety is a moving target. The issues concerned all DAE installations including BARC, UCIL IREL and not only for nuclear power reactors. The AERB reports, in public domain, reveal and I quote:

*Number of Taskforces were formed in all the facilities to devise and implement action plans for resolution of the issues which were classified into four categories.*

*Category-1: Hardware Related Issues requiring replacement of defective components.*

*Category 2: Ageing related issues needing elaborate studies to assess the healthiness of various components as well as possible replacement of components which have been showing signs of deterioration.*

*Category-3: Issues involving analytical studies or computer based calculations on certain systems to assure that the earlier designs are safe.*

*Category-4: Upgradation Related Issues- Plants that have been built to earlier safety standards require an upgradation.*

and finally

*With substantial efforts put in by the concerned facilities, these safety issues could be satisfactorily resolved in the next few years.* unquote

AERB says that the issues are resolved and ex chairman continues to believe that that the issues are pending without even going through what is in public domain. Before requiring greater transparency, one needs to do some crystal gazing at the least.

(Sudhinder Thakur is ex Executive Director, NPCIL)