

`Fast breeder reactor projects put on fast track'

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`Fast breeder reactor projects put on fast track'

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INDIANS are now the world masters of the Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor technology – the country has 12 PHWR units running. With the technology learnt from the Fast Breeder Test Reactor project – an R&D project – the nuclear establishment is putting up a 500 MW prototype fast breeder reactor at Kalpakkam. The `first pour of concrete', which is a milestone in a nuclear project's implementation, is expected to happen shortly.

Mastering PHWR and FBR are two key issues under India's nuclear rubric. The first denotes the learning of producing plutonium indigenously and the second indicates learning of how to use it. The prototype FBR at Kalpakkam will then show the world that India can produce, use its own nuclear fuel. Now the country's ambition is to double the installed nuclear power capacity in four years and reach 11,000 MW by the end of the 11th Plan.

The man at the helm of affairs today is Dr Anil Kakodkar, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission. He spoke to Business Line about how the future looks. Excerpts from the interview:

How are talks with Russian on the next VVER projects progressing?

See, It is like this. We have all along taken the attitude that India's energy requirements are large. We must enhance the contribution of nuclear power. Considering that nuclear power will help offset emissions, our setting up nuclear power projects will also be good for the whole world. In that context, if we are able to add to nuclear power capacity with external inputs – money, equipment, technology, fuel – to that extent we are able to move towards the objective faster. As part of our policy, we have no problems in putting up any project with external inputs under IAEA safeguards.

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I think there is also a lot of goodwill for India. Countries such as Russia and France are willing to collaborate, but they are all members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. They have their commitments to the group. They want the condition of full-scope safeguards to be met, (which means all the nuclear projects of India should be put under IAEA safeguards, not just those built with external assistance).

So, if we get external assistance, we are happy. If it does not come... no problem. We still have our programme.

But doesn't the Kudankulam project pave the way for other projects with Russian collaboration?

The two projects of Kudankulam came on the basis of an agreement which predated this scenario. So, it was only a fu