

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 628
TO BE ANSWERED ON 29.11.2012

CRITICISM OF AERB BY CAG ON RADIATION SAFETY POLICY

628. SHRI A. ELAVARASAN:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has criticised the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) for not being truly independent, not having a radiation safety policy and being lax in monitoring the proliferation of unregistered medical X-ray facilities in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the move follows criticism of the safety of nuclear plant both in India and abroad;
- (d) whether the CAG report could alert AERB and triggered some action; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES & PENSIONS AND PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY) :

- (a)&(b) Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has issued its report on the performance audit of the activities of Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) wherein certain observations and recommendations pertaining to the independence of AERB, radiation safety policy and regulation of medical X-ray facilities have been made. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has conducted oral examination of officials of both AERB and DAE on 26.10.2012 and the point-wise response against each recommendation in CAG report has been submitted to PAC.
- (c) The performance audit of the activities of AERB by CAG started in June 2010, pre-dating the Fukushima accident in Japan in March 2011 that generated worldwide concerns about the safety of nuclear power plants. The report of the CAG notes compliance with the procedures in respect of regulation of nuclear power plants.
- (d)&(e) Government introduced the Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority Bill, 2011 in Lok Sabha on 7 September 2011 with a view to converting functional independence of AERB to *de jure* independence.

In accordance with the Presidential orders dated 15 November 1983, constituting the AERB, the functions of AERB includes, as per clause 2 (i), development of safety policies in both radiation and industrial safety areas, and further, as per clause 2(vi), evolving major safety policies based on safety criteria, recommended by IAEA and other international bodies, adopted to suit Indian conditions. Accordingly, the safety policies concerning the activities regulated by AERB are enshrined in the high level documents of AERB, namely the Atomic Energy (Radiation Protection) Rules, 2004, the mission statement and the various 'Codes' of AERB. These documents include the policies, principles and/or safety objectives that apply to the relevant activity/field and the specific regulatory requirements that are to be followed for fulfilling the same.

The above principles and objectives form the broader policy of AERB for regulation of nuclear and radiation safety in the country. AERB has so far not felt the need for a single and separate 'Safety Policy' document, as these are well defined in the existing documents as explained above.

Nevertheless AERB has agreed to the suggestion of CAG, to the extent of consolidating the existing policy objectives and higher level principles as brought out in various codes and other document into a separate 'Safety Policy' document.

In order to enhance regulatory control over the large number of medical X-Ray units operating in the country, AERB has been pursuing the establishment of state-level Directorates of Radiation Safety with the State Governments. Additional initiatives taken by AERB recently include rationalisation and simplification of the existing regulations for users in diagnostic X-ray practice by way of amendments of AERB Safety Code; enhancing regulatory control on manufacturers/suppliers of X-ray equipment over the user; development of an easy and approachable interface for the user to facilitate easy registration using a new web based system; and, public awareness programmes.
