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WE'VE LEARNT A BIG LESSON FROM
KUDANKULAM: NPCIL'S PUROHIT



Q&A

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'We have learnt a lesson from Kudankulam'

Undeterred by economic slowdown and opposition from certain sections, Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd's belief remains firm, that nuclear power is safe, reliable and needed. It proposes to launch 16,100 Mw of projects during the 12th Plan. **KAILASH CHANDRA PUROHIT**, who took over this Monday as chairman and managing director, talks to Sanjay Jog on the lessons learnt from handling the opposition to the programme at the Kudankulam site in Tamil Nadu and other priorities. Edited excerpts:

When will unit-I of Kudankulam be commissioned?

Unit-I (1,000 Mw) is in the final stage of commissioning. Trials with dummy fuel are completed. As part of safety and regulatory practices, we want to once again inspect the reactor pressure vessel. We expect fuel to be loaded in the third

week of July. The approach for criticality will start and then go for power production. Roughly four to five weeks for start of production since fuel loading is necessary, considering the time necessary for full man-machine interface. People who will be operating the machines, technologies should have friendship with these.

Unit-II, of equal capacity, is very closely following unit-I, which is about six to seven months. The pre-commissioning work has started. Hopefully, within this financial year, we should be able to commission unit-II.

What is the total loss due to stoppage of work at Kudankulam and the cost of the revival project?

There is a loss of time. There are direct and indirect losses. We have started the work. We had anticipated by June-July everything will be operating but remobilisation of people took more time. But that can still be covered in the commissioning of unit-II. If we save a month or so in the commissioning of unit-II, the revival cost will change.

The prime thing is safety. Man, machine and safety will be the top

priority. The revival cost includes interest during construction (IDC), which keeps adding. As far as units-III and IV are concerned, we are continuously working with our Russian colleagues. Grading and levelling is already completed. We are moving as scheduled.

Has Kudankulam impacted capacity addition? Has it been a major lesson to learn?

Undoubtedly, we have learnt a lesson from Kudankulam. Post Fukushima (the disaster early last year at Japan), we could not appreciate the fear which had gone into the minds and hearts of most people. We should have done more awareness and we have taken a big

lesson out of it, as it is not the capacity addition programme alone but the social uplift which is more important, including the need for people to come forward and understand. We have launched a massive outreach programme, not only at Kudankulam but at all operating projects and those proposed. You will see the change, though this needs time and some healing.

During the 12th Plan, nuclear projects of 16,100 Mw will be launched, comprising 5,600 Mw through eight units of pressurised heavy water reactors of 700 Mw, and 10,500 Mw through eight units of light water reactors of

1,000 Mw or more. A capacity of 4,800 Mw will be added by NPC by the end of 2017. In addition, the first prototype 500 Mw reactor will also be operational by Bhavini, another public sector unit under the department of atomic energy. This will raise the nuclear power capacity in operation to 10,080 Mw from the present 4,780 Mw.

Besides, we are engaged in techno-commercial discussions with Arega for the Jaitapur project in Maharashtra, with GE & Hitachi for Kovvada, Andhra Pradesh, and with Westinghouse for Mithi Virdhi, Gujarat. We have given a relief and rehabilitation package for the Jaitapur project to the Maharashtra government, which is expected to make the necessary announcement.