

Republic Day Address by Chairman, AERB (26-01-2024)

Dear Colleagues present here and also those in RRCs, SRI, our site observers and on the job trainees at various sites, security staff, canteen staff and housekeeping service staff;

Namaskar and heartiest greetings to all of you on the occasion of the 75th Republic Day of India.

Dear friends, after years of tireless efforts and sacrifices by our freedom fighters, India gained independence on August 15, 1947. However, the nation did not have a permanent constitution at that time and functioned under the Government of India Act, 1935. To fill this void, a drafting committee, led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was formed to create a constitution for the new independent nation.

The Constituent Assembly, which had representatives from various regions and communities, took almost 3 years to finalise the Constitution. On January 26, 1950 the Constitution of India was officially adopted, making India a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic. This historic day marked the transition from a constitutional monarch in the British era to a Republic, where the power rested with the people and their elected representatives.

26th January is a special day that shows our strong commitment to justice, liberty and equality. It highlights that the Constitution is the supreme law of the nation guiding how the country is run and safeguarding the rights of its people. This day also puts a spotlight on democratic values, which are the building blocks of our society. It tells us that people have the power to be part of decision-making through their chosen representatives, making our nation a democracy where everyone has a say. India's vast and diverse cultures and traditions make us unique and strong, and the Republic Day celebration becomes a stage to showcase our varied heritage, promoting a feeling of pride and togetherness among citizens, uniting us as one big family.

In the similar way the Integrated Management System (IMS) of an organization guides it to run its affairs. As you all are aware, AERB developed and adopted the Integrated Management System (IMS) for the first time in 2018 and based on experience, is in the process of its second revision to ensure coherence and better clarity. The revised draft chapters are being uploaded progressively on a dedicated intranet portal to seek comments / inputs across AERB. The staff participation in the comments sharing process has been very encouraging and heartening and has enabled the ongoing IMS revision to become a truly participative exercise. However, a word of caution here, remember that good systems, procedures and controls on their own are not enough, it is how well an organisation "lives" its systems, that matters. So, the onus is on all of us to live well our IMS.

Friends, let us take a moment to renew our resolve and commitment to ensure that our work, at AERB, continues to assure the safety of facilities and activities, people and the environment throughout the country and strengthens AERB to evolve as a leading international regulator.

During the past year, AERB has undertaken various measures and emphasized the adoption of already identified strategies/ approaches to ensure that the *hard work is also benefitted through our smarter choices/ approaches*. Towards this I wish to call for enhanced attention to the following while we carry out our duties:

1. AERB has completed 40 years now and over these years, it has evolved into a matured organisation of international repute. While, in the initial years, there had been a great dependency on external experts from other organisations, with sufficient experience and

maturity, staff of AERB have nurtured competency and gained specialised skill sets required for execution of regulatory activities. With this, in recent years, more emphasis has been placed on self-reliant in-house reviews, which are then endorsed / supplemented by reviews by external experts/ committees. It has boosted the self-confidence and objectivity in decision making, while still following participative, inclusive yet non-intrusive process. We need to further increase the component of in-house review.

2. I strongly believe that most valuable asset of AERB is its employees and therefore, it is the foremost duty of the management to develop and sustain an organizational climate and work culture which nurtures their competence, strengthens their commitment to safety.

Leadership and managerial effectiveness at senior level is an important area where individual's competency in transformational and transactional roles determines overall effectiveness of the organization. During the year, various measures were taken to gauge the staff views on the state of organizational climate including an employee survey, discussions with individuals and groups and various measures have been considered to transform the assimilated thoughts into reality. Recent organizational changes have reflection of these.

The organisational climate is shaped by the individuals who hold key positions in the organisation's ladder. The difference in how employees feel about the organisation is in direct correlation to the quality of the superiors whom they report. Consequentially, the key challenge is to ensure that "*right people are at right place*" (to ensure right ownership and accountability) so that the individual as well as the group, both, can thrive and carry out their duties effectively and efficiently. Absence of right ownership and accountability results in lot of outputs (every process gives output corresponding to input) but not "outcome". An employee opinion survey for establishing criteria for selecting leaders have already been conducted.

In order to map the right people at right positions, the right ownership and accountability has to be ascertained through *an assessment process with objectivity at its core*, the leadership for safety and identification of responsible acts of omission needs to be factored in. For this, various measures have been worked out and will be implemented shortly.

3. The professionalism and the technical competence of AERB staff have been recognized within the country as well as globally in various forums. AERB's management processes have catered for the augmentation of the staff competence to keep up with the ever expanding nuclear and radiation facilities and activities, especially the advanced design reactors, use of emerging technologies and newer radiation facilities like accelerators for proton therapy. We should systematically and religiously apply the available strategic guidance for application of graded approach to various processes to have uniformity and consistency in their outcomes besides enhancing effectiveness.
4. Our safety regulations have developed concurrently with the PHWR technology. While this has immensely benefitted us as the first-hand experience of research and development got translated into regulations, there has also been a flip side to it. The regulations have significant influence of technology as well as the regulated entity. However, with the entry

of emerging technologies and multiple new entities in nuclear sector in future, this may no longer hold good. We need to revise our regulations to be technology neutral and non-prescriptive, to the extent possible. Also, we should ensure that all our core regulatory practices are adequately backed by supporting legal provisions. This work has to be prioritized by one and all.

5. With regard to ever-growing number of radiation facilities, it is imperative that AERB further augments its efforts to ensure the safety awareness and basic radiation literacy of owners / licensees and users. In general, consistent with the expectations of the stakeholders and the public, one of the important area in which AERB has to expand its work is in the area of enhancing the radiation safety awareness of the public and public involvement in its activities.
6. AERB is working on implementation and strengthening centralized Record and Information Management System (RIMP) with secured access to RRCs towards progressively expanding the work scope of RRCs. Towards this already, positions of Heads have been created at ERRC and SRRC.
7. Last and not the least, our external appearance depends on our internal functioning. The outer visible image seen or perceived by the public is the direct outcome of our internal regulatory mechanisms. Without a healthy safety culture, regulatory effectiveness cannot be achieved. Realising this fact, AERB has conducted its own safety culture assessment in a professional way, involving outside experts. This has helped in sending the message that AERB acts in accordance with the principles that it advocates for the licensee and it leads by example.

With the above changes, some implemented and some ongoing, I am happy to recall the ruby jubilee celebrations on November 15, 2023, which marked completion of 40 years of AERB's formation and captured the experience of introspection and transformation in the last 4 decades. The event culminated with many stalwarts of nuclear fraternity noting the achievements of AERB as well as its potential to be a world leading safety regulator. The opportunities and challenges identified therein have been comprehensively captured and will be catered through appropriate changes / additions in the respective processes/ structure.

I believe that if we make a conscious effort to systematically work aligned with organisation's policies, strategies and priorities, it will significantly enhance the effectiveness of our processes and develop an organizational climate wherein leadership for safety is an indispensable trait of each staff of AERB.

I once again wish one and all a happy 75th Republic Day.

Jai Hind.