

Exodus of scientists from DRDO and ISRO

On 5 May 1997, in reply to a question put to the Minister of Defence in the Lok Sabha, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence, (N. V. N. Somu) revealed that 3 per cent of total strength of scientists/engineers resigned from DRDO in the last three years (131, 173 and 144 in the years 1994, 1995 and 1996 respectively.) He added: 'While scientists/engineers in DRDO have challenging tasks, certain percentage of them have joined multinational companies for better compensation (attractive salary and perks)', and 'suggestions have been made to Fifth Central Pay Commission and Empowered Committee of Secretaries for increase in the entry level pay and

allowances for young scientists/engineers. In addition, improvements are being made in the provision of residential/hostel accommodation, medical facilities, posting in station of choice to the extent possible and enhanced training opportunities abroad.'

On 8 May 1997, in a reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha put to the Prime Minister on the brain drain from ISRO, the Minister of State, Yoginder K. Alagh, said: 'As many as 530 scientists/engineers have left during the last five years and personal reasons have been cited for such resignations. The liberalization of the economy since 1991-92 has provided them new employment opportunities in

our country itself with high remuneration levels. The exact information in respect of persons who have gone abroad, is not available'; adding, 'The resignations of scientists/engineers have so far not had any serious impact on the schedule of the Space Programme. However, occasions did arise when schedule of critical work had to slow down for a while in a few areas owing to a number of scientists/engineers leaving almost at the same time'; and 'Better housing facilities, further opportunities for academic and related activities including further studies, enhancement of interface between scientists and industry are among the steps proposed'.

India accedes to Chemical Weapons Convention – National Authority established to oversee implementation

India is one of the original 130 signatories (State Parties) to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The negotiations on this treaty concluded on 14 January 1993 in Paris. The CWC came into force on 29 April 1997 after ratification by 65 nations. The Government of India has ratified the CWC.

The CWC prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, use, and stockpiling of all chemical weapons by Member-States through a common regime that does not discriminate between the 'have' and 'have-not' nations. The CWC permits development, production, acquisition, transfer and use of toxic chemicals for non-prohibited use including industrial, agricultural, research, medical, pharmaceutical and peaceful purposes. Member-States are also under obligation to regularly and promptly report data on chemicals related to CWC to the International Secretariat through voluntary

declarations, routine on-site inspections, as well as under 'challenge' inspections on demand, and after due-process.

To fulfil its obligations, each State Party has to designate or establish a National Authority to serve as the national focal point for effective liaison with the Organisation for Prohibition of the Chemical Weapons (OPCW) – a creature of the Convention – and with other State Parties to the Convention.

In order to fulfil India's obligations under the Convention, a National Authority has been set-up under the administrative control of the Cabinet Secretariat. The National Authority, besides serving as a national focal point for liaison with OPCW and other State Parties, will also be responsible for the collection of data, fulfilling of declaration obligations, negotiating facility agreements, coordinating OPCW inspections, providing appropriate facilities for training national

inspectors and industry personnel, ensuring protection of confidential business information, checking declarations for consistency, accuracy and completeness, registration of entities engaged in activities related to CWC etc. For carrying out its functions, the National Authority will be suitably empowered by enacting legislation to be introduced by the Government of India.

The National Authority, which started functioning from 5 May 1997, is headed by a Chairman, who will be supported by a suitable Technical Secretariat to look after the various functions. A High Level Steering Committee under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary with Secretary (Chemicals and Petrochemicals), Foreign Secretary, Secretary, Defence Research & Development, Defence Secretary and Chairman, National Authority as its other members, will oversee the functions of the National Authority.