

## Launch of Homi Bhabha birth centenary celebrations\*

The Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh launched the celebrations to commemorate the birth centenary of Homi Jehangir Bhabha (30 October 1909–24 January 1966) the founder and prime architect of the Indian atomic energy programme, on the latter's birthday.

In his address the Prime Minister announced the celebrations of the far-sighted vision and scientific and intellectual legacy of Homi Bhabha over the next one year. The vision of Bhabha was shared and supported by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Manmohan Singh thanked Anil Kakodkar, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and all other scientists, engineers and officials of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) for their good work.

Bhabha's atomic energy programme took shape in 1944, when he wrote a letter to Sir Dorabji Tata Trust proposing to establish an institute devoted to fundamental research. His dreams materialized in the shape of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in December 1945. The Prime Minister stressed on the fact that the three-stage nuclear programme, based on a closed nuclear fuel cycle, was first outlined by Bhabha in a conference on the Development of Atomic Energy for Peaceful Purposes held as early as in 1954 in New Delhi. It was based on self-reliance and sought to exploit our plentiful thorium reserves and our industrial capability. Bhabha sought to achieve a balance between indigenous development and international cooperation.

Talking about the foreign energy firms to manufacture nuclear equipment in India, Manmohan Singh mentioned that our industry has the capability to emerge as an important player in the global market for nuclear equipment. Many innovations developed by our scientists may not have any parallels in other countries. Therefore,

we can make an intellectual contribution to the global scientific community.

The Prime Minister stated about the vision of Bhabha on nuclear power. For the full industrialization of the underdeveloped countries and for the continuation of our civilization and its further development, atomic energy is not merely an aid; it is an absolute necessity. The acquisition of knowledge by man of how to release and use atomic energy must be recognized as the third epoch of human history. He reiterated the full support of the Government of India in this important national endeavour.

The Prime Minister congratulated four distinguished scientists who were honoured with Lifetime Achievement awards; Govind Swarup for radio astronomy, S. R. Paranjape for fast reactor development, S. L. Kati for pressurized heavy water reactor (PHWR) development and H. S. Kamath for plutonium fuel.

On the request of S. Banerjee, Director, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Manmohan Singh inaugurated several BARC facilities through video-conference link from Delhi: (a) Nuclear desalination: Multi-stage flash evaporation plant, Kalpakkam. (b) Barge-mounted desalination plant. (c) A new Training School Complex, Anushakti Nagar, Mumbai. (d) A critical facility for advanced heavy water reactors, Trombay. (e) A new hot cell facility, Trombay. (f) Electron Beam Centre, Kharghar, Navi Mumbai.

The Minister of State for Science and Technology in the Prime Minister's Office, Prithviraj Chauhan and T. K. A. Nair, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister were also present during the launching. Kakodkar proposed the vote of thanks to the Prime Minister and the other dignitaries present.

Earlier during the day, Banerjee welcomed the large gathering of the DAE family. He mentioned about the outstanding achievements made at this Centre during the last year. For instance, the critical facility – a low-power research reactor of 100 W nominal power constructed in BARC attained its first criticality. In the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Annual Gen-

eral Conference, India organized a side vent on the theme 'Extending the global reach of nuclear energy through thorium'. And as a part of Research and Development (R&D) for the PHWR programme, construction of the BARC containment model (BARCOM) of 540 MWe PHWR containment has been completed at Tarapur.

Addressing scientists, engineers and other members of the DAE, Kakodkar mentioned that India now stands at the threshold of a new era. This is the era in which we wish to accelerate deployment of nuclear power and also push the frontiers of nuclear power technology with an eye on the future. Kakodkar mentioned that the 'three-stage' vision imparted by Bhabha will continue to guide us in this process. He also added that we are now partners in major projects like International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor, Jules Hotowitz (JH) Reactor and others. Such collaborations enable us to access major international facilities for research and at the same time bring in technological benefits for our laboratories and industries.

In the second session, prizes were given away by Kakodkar to the winners of the 20th DAE All India Essay Contest in Nuclear Science and Technology, which was started by the DAE in 1989. The DAE Excellence in Science, Engineering & Technology Awards for the year 2007 were presented by Kakodkar to D. K. Aswal, Madangopal Krishnan, A. B. Mukherjee, Vivek Sanadhya, all from BARC, and V. Venkatraman, Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Kalpakkam.

In addition, Scientific and Technical Excellence Awards, Group Achievement Awards to various Group Leaders, Young Scientist and Engineer Awards, Young Technologist Award, Meritorious Service Awards and Special Contribution Awards were distributed by Kakodkar.

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\*A report on the launch of the birth centenary celebrations of Homi Jehangir Bhabha by the Prime Minister through a video conference from New Delhi on 30 October 2008, addressing a gathering of scientists and engineers from BARC and DAE.