

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ATOMIC ENERGY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1693
ANSWERED ON:04.08.2010
RADIOACTIVE LEAK IN MAYAPURI
Gowda Shri D.B. Chandre

Will the Minister of ATOMIC ENERGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the International Atomic Energy Agency has sought more information on the radioactive waste incident which occurred at Mayapuri area;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board has investigated the matter; and
- (d) if so, the outcome thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY AND EARTH SCIENCES (INDEPENDENT CHARGE), PMO, PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS. (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), about the incident that occurred at Mayapuri in the specified reporting format, assigning a rating of Level 4 in the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES). Events are rated in this scale as per the ascending order of severity from 1 to 7. AERB has also provided information on this incident to the Illicit Trafficking Data Base (ITDB) of the IAEA. In addition, a senior official from AERB presented the incident in a meeting at IAEA. No additional information was sought by IAEA on this matter.

(c) Yes, Sir

(d) The incident was investigated by AERB and Delhi police. Based on the investigations, it was established that the radioactive Co-60 sources recovered from the Mayapuri scrap market in Delhi were part of an old gamma cell belonging to the Chemistry Dept of Delhi University. This cell was procured by the Chemistry Dept of Delhi University in 1969 from Atomic Energy Canada Ltd and was being used by a Chemistry professor till he retired. Since then it remained disused for more than 15 years till it was auctioned by the Delhi University in Feb 2010 and reached the hands of the scrap dealer who purchased it through this auction.

Dismantling of the gamma cell by local workers at the metal scrap shop led to the highly radioactive Co-60 pencil sources coming out of its cage. The extended stay near the sources by the workers unknowingly, caused unwarranted high exposure to 7 persons with radiation induced symptoms of whom one succumbed to radiation sickness.

The unauthorized disposal of the gamma cell by the Delhi University as a scrap was in violation of the Atomic Energy (Safe Disposal of Radioactive Waste) Rules, 1987 and the Atomic Energy (Radiation Protection) Rules, 2004. In view of this, AERB issued a show cause notice to the Delhi University and in the interim, advised the university to suspend forthwith all activities involving the use of radiation sources. The preliminary response submitted by the University needs review by AERB.