

## CHAPTER IV : MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

### 4.1 Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization, Nagpur

#### **Under utilization of Infrastructure created for Fireworks Research and Development Centre (FRDC) at Sivakasi.**

The Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization (PESO), a subordinate office under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry is headed by the Chief Controller of Explosives (CCE). It is entrusted with the administration of Explosives Act, 1884, Petroleum Act, 1934, Inflammable Substances Act, 1952 and various rules made there under.

PESO, considering the Supreme Court directions on development of environment friendly firecrackers to reduce pollution level and hazard caused by firecrackers, conceived (2003) a project on establishment of Fire Works Research and Development Centre (FRDC) at Sivakasi, the hub of fire works manufacturing activities. No specific time frame for the project completion was fixed.

The objectives of FRDC designed to address the requirements of Indian Fire works Industry included development of environment friendly fire works, mechanization of hazardous manufacturing processes, development and standardization of products, safety of personnel involved, study of nature of chemical composition and contrivance, quality control and quality assurance, Technical Resource Development, testing of raw materials, etc.

The Civil and Electrical works were completed by the end of 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2007) at a cost of ₹ 3.48 crore. The project was extended to 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan for procurement of lab equipments, library books and instruments. The total expenditure incurred on the project worked out to ₹ 6.49 crore as of 2011-12.

While the project activities of FRDC, Sivakasi were being executed, PESO had to undertake necessary research activities for evaluation of fire works on the basis of chemical composition and come out with its chemical formula for each type or category of fireworks (Supreme Court judgement of 15 July 2005). PESO was also required to specify the proportion/composition as well as the permissible weight of every chemical used in manufacturing fire crackers and to divide the fire crackers into two categories—sound emitting and colour/light emitting fire crackers.

The Core Committee constituted (2005) under the chairmanship of the Joint Chief Controller of Explosives, to examine the related issues in depth spelt out the objectives of FRDC and recommended a staff strength of 53 technical and 40 ministerial posts for FRDC. A proposal for creating posts of technical/administrative/supporting staff aggregating to 80 numbers was submitted by CCE to DIPP in February 2006. Further, in order to initiate the research and implementation activities at the earliest a rapid implementation module was also proposed by CCE in June 2006 for creation of minimum required workforce of 12 posts.

FRDC was inaugurated in July 2011. However, the proposals for creation of workforce for the unit had not been cleared so far (December 2012) for reasons not on record. On the directions of the Joint Secretary, DIPP, (Mar 2010) the existing manpower of PESO was mobilized to initiate the bare minimum functions of FRDC i.e. One Controller of Explosives had been posted as Officer in Charge of FRDC, and at staff level- one Senior and Junior Assistant had been transferred from DTS, Ghondkiary, Nagpur and one steno from the Office of the Controller of Explosives, Vellore. Security and maintenance of FRDC are outsourced to CPWD and minimum day to day activities were carried out through casual workers. Thus, though FRDC was properly equipped for functioning, it was functioning with 3 technical staff drafted from PESO, who were not equipped with the expertise to conduct research work as directed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

Accidents in Sivakasi continue to happen and reported in media during 2009 to 2012.

The Ministry replied (May 2013) that the FRDC Complex was being used to conduct seminars, training, testing, examinations and enquiries. The reply was not acceptable as the steps taken by the Ministry to utilize the FRDC Complex do not address the primary objectives for which ₹ 6.49 crore was spent.