

Is Nuclear Energy Solution For Pakistan's Energy Crisis?

Pakistan has been facing its severe energy crisis since the beginning of this millennium. Many steps have been taken since to surmount this grave problem, but they have proved to be not enough until now. The problem has been getting critical, affecting not only daily lives but also costing heavily in terms of economic losses.

Pakistan has recently got positive response from China to co-operate with the private sector to set up civil nuclear energy set ups. Our life long neighbour is kind enough to share civil nuclear technology with us to enhance the energy production and overcome the power shortage in the country.

But is nuclear energy the answer to our serious energy issue? There have been some recent developments in this regard. A few new nuclear power plants are in line to be added to the national grid soon. The existing set ups fulfil only three percent of our energy requirements currently. This figure is too less to raise our hopes and look forward to much improvement. There is still a long way to go in terms of planning and then implementing the strategies.

The concern is that the drawbacks of nuclear energy weigh just as much as its benefits. Here is a quick peek at the apprehensions.

The Cost

Pakistan's is a struggling economy and it cannot come up with the funds required for huge and expensive set ups like nuclear power plants. The political instability is another reason that withholds the governments to plan or install such massive projects. The currents set ups have been a burden on our fragile economy and still are not contributing much to the mainstream energy production. In fact, the input has been negligible when compared to other resources producing energy and this input is especially insignificant when judged against what it costs.

In this scenario, nuclear energy is an expensive alternative and quite unaffordable for an economy like ours. Not only the construction, but the maintenance cost also makes this suggestion unfeasible.

The Mess

On the contrary to the common notion that nuclear energy is clean; it is not. It does not produce any of the dangerous greenhouse gases, but it does generate nuclear waste. The disposal of nuclear waste has been a grave issue in the recent years. The disposal is not just hazardous and threatening but also pricey; not to mention that it carries a continuous risk of radiation leakage.

The jeopardy

Chernobyl in 1986 and then Fukushima in Japan are the latest example of nuclear catastrophes, with several others in between. In almost all cases, the problem has been played down. The cleaning and rehabilitation process has yielded a cost of billions of dollars and has become messier and expensive with every passing day. The death toll was upsetting and the number of people exposed to radiations was alarming; not to mention the long term dangers that citizens and environment are exposed to.

All these issues have been a reason that the world is shunning away from this phenomenon; then why should we even consider it as an option? This debate is ongoing, but it directs us to consider other options as well.