

## New Nuclear Plant Inauguration in Developing Countries – “Only Rich Countries Have the Option of Phasing Out Nuclear” – Is This True?

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On May 12, 2011, the Unit 2 Nuclear Power Plant in Chashma, Pakistan began commercial operation. This unit is the first to have begun commercial operation after the Fukushima accident, having connected to the grid on March 14. In China, Unit 2 of the Ling Ao II Nuclear Power Station connected to the grid on May 3, and the operator, China Guangdong Nuclear Power Corporation (CGNPC), states that it will begin commercial operation on June 15.

The common factors in countries that have not changed their nuclear development policies are a tight energy supply-demand balance and an underdeveloped social infrastructure which would be crucial for their high economic and industrial growth. The recent inaugurations of nuclear power units are concentrated in those countries such as China, India, Russia, etc., demanding a rapid accumulation of power capacity from the viewpoint of energy demand increase, economic growth and of sophisticated industries. Many key politicians in those countries comment that the development of nuclear power should be maintained, and the most interesting point is that their common keywords are “meeting the power demand” and “sustainable economic growth.”

I once received a question from a reporter overseas, referring to the shutdown of many reactors in Germany and to the halt in the new reactors licensing procedure in Switzerland, asking why technologically advanced countries have higher safety concerns than developing countries. The reporter even asked me whether the reactors in Germany are less safe than those in China, which is completely wrong from the aspect of engineering. Developing countries need nuclear simply because it can meet the energy demand increase along with economic growth. The safety concerns with regard to nuclear power are as severe in China, India, Pakistan, and Bulgaria, which is moving forward to increase nuclear power with French support, and even Russia, which boasts top-level nuclear technology, as they are in the US, Europe, Japan and South Korea. Even though their serious concerns are at the same level as those in advanced countries, they cannot stop using nuclear because “phasing out from nuclear energy” would directly lead to an economic recession. The most realistic solution for them must be, therefore, to continue developing nuclear power along with their energy demand, paying maximum attention to the safety problems and solving them step by step.

On March 15, soon after Fukushima accident, the Ukrainian prime minister released a quite implicative comment on nuclear phase-out issues, stating, “Only rich countries can afford to discuss the possibility of phasing nuclear out.” This is a candid but impressive expression of reality in

emerging economies unable to avoid the use of nuclear energy. According to the definition above, Germany, that has now shut down more than half of its domestic nuclear units without any lack of electricity, and Switzerland, which finds no difficulty in halting new construction licensing procedures even though some 40% of its electricity is generated from nuclear power, would surely be “rich enough” to have alternative options to nuclear energy.

Then what about Japan? Is it a “rich” country or not?

Two months have passed since the Fukushima accident, however, the recovery process is still underway. No one is yet prepared for discussion on nuclear development policy nor can anyone presume how we should manage the energy balances. In which category would Japan be, in “rich” countries as the third largest economy in the world, or in “countries with nuclear demand due to increasing energy demand?” Everyone in the world is watching Japan for its next announcement after the political event concerning the shutdown of all units in Hamaoka.

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