

India, Pakistan must jointly produce n-energy: analyst

A leading Pakistani strategic expert has suggested that India and Pakistan should jointly produce nuclear energy as a confidence-building measure and to solve their power crunch.

'India and Pakistan should jointly manage nuclear plants and produce nuclear energy. It will resolve power problems faced by both countries,' Shireen Mazari told IANS in an interview here.

'It's not such a radical idea as it appears to be. I have tried to sound out Pakistani leaders and their reaction has not been negative,' Mazari replied when asked if Pakistan's establishment was ready to accept such a bold proposal given its opposition to the India-US civil nuclear deal.

'I don't see any real obstacles on the way. But for such a thing to happen, both countries should move away from their traditional bureaucratic mindset,' she said.

Mazari, who till a week ago was director-general of the Institute of Strategic Studies, Pakistan's premier think tank, is also an influential columnist and author of 'The 1999 Kargil'. She was in news recently for writing a polemical piece on 'The devastating effects of appeasing India and kowtowing to the US' in The News.

'If psychological barriers can be overcome, the two sides can do a lot together,' she said.

'The India-US nuclear deal will have a military fallout as there will be a lot of unsafeguarded reactors producing fissile material. That's Pakistan's anxiety,' Mazari said.

Pakistan has not only opposed the nuclear deal but sought a similar deal from the US. Washington cold-shouldered Islamabad after making a veiled reference to the nuclear proliferation network run by disgraced Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan.

'India and Pakistan should not have any problems with such an arrangement if they set their mind to it. Maybe external powers will not be happy with it,' Mazari said.

She denied reports of a new civil nuclear deal between Pakistan and China, saying the two countries have been cooperating in this area under international safeguards.

Mazari's views on the India-Pakistan nuclear collaboration are bound to rattle the present dispensation in Pakistan, which sacked her as ISS head allegedly due to her anti-America stand.

'I was asked to leave under American pressure because of my sustained criticism of the US policies,' she said.

'By and large, there is a general consensus in Pakistan on strengthening relations with India. There is no Left and Right in Pakistan as far as seeking better relations with India are concerned,' Mazari said.

She was asked if the rightwing Islamic parties also backed the peace process with India.

Mazari's views may surprise many who are familiar with her writings criticising Pakistan for 'bending

over backwards' to please India and over sidelining issues like Jammu and Kashmir.

The expert also spoke about the death of a Pakistani prisoner in an Indian prison.

'India sending bodies of Pakistani prisoners sends a wrong message. The two sides should strike a deal on prisoners. This is an essential CBM (confidence-building measure),' she said, as Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon held talks with his Pakistani counterpart Salman Bashir met to pursue the bilateral composite dialogue.

She is not sure what direction the new civilian government in Pakistan will take in carrying forward the dialogue on crucial issues like Kashmir, saying these were 'early days' to predict the future course of talks.

Manish Chand (© IANS / India eNews)