

Abu Dhabi to pursue nuclear power, undeterred by Japan

- Monday, 28 March 2011 4:37 PM



Abu Dhabi will build a nuclear power plant even after an earthquake and tsunami in Japan damaged generators there and released radioactive material, the head of the Gulf emirate's utility said today.

"It's a technology we should bring to the region," Abdullah Saif al-Nuaimi, director general of Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Authority said. Newer technology than that used in Japan's damaged plants would make Abu Dhabi's reactors safer, he said.

A civilian nuclear power plant in Abu Dhabi would be the first in an Arab Gulf state. The capital of the UAE plans to have a reactor operating in 2017, al-Nuaimi said.

Power demand in Abu Dhabi is rising about 10 percent a year, and nuclear energy is needed to help the emirate make up for a lack of natural gas to burn in new generators, he said.

"With a shortage of gas here, we need to find other ways to produce power," al-Nuaimi said. Expanding renewable energy sources won't be able to keep pace with the increase in demand, meaning technologies like nuclear power are needed, he said.

Abu Dhabi government-owned Emirates Nuclear Energy Corp is running the sheikhdom's reactor program. Adwea, as the authority is known, generates and distributes power.

The sheikhdom aims to generate about seven percent of its power from renewable energy by 2020. That would require 1,500 megawatts from projects such as wind and solar plants, Bruce Smith, a business adviser with Adwea, said yesterday.

Abu Dhabi plans to build another conventional power plant before the construction of the nuclear generators is completed, al-Nuaimi said. Adwea is still deciding on the size and location of the plant, he said.