**Atomic Safety Measures**

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The director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (Rafael Mariano Grossi) visited Pakistan on February 15 to check the sites and locations employing nuclear technology. During his two-day visit, the DG IAEA held high-level meetings and visited different institutions using technology in health, industry, agriculture, and power generation. The visit provided an opportunity for Pakistan and the IAEA to explore avenues for further strengthening their ongoing cooperation in the area of peaceful nuclear technology applications for the country’s socio-economic development. Our state has been the founding member of the agency since 1957 and enjoys longstanding and mutually beneficial collaboration.

Also, some time ago, a group of UN Disarmament Fellows comprising officers from 24 countries visited Pakistan between October 8 and 10 as part of their International study tour. They received a briefing on the country’s perspective on arms control, nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, and the imperative of unhindered access to dual-use technologies for peaceful socio-economic applications. The representatives belonged to countries including Argentina, Egypt, Algeria, Angola, Antigua, Barbuda, Cambodia, France, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Iran, Hungary, Libya, Poland, Montenegro, Pakistan, Palau, US, Saint Kits & Nevis, Togo, Uzbekistan, Yemen, and Vietnam.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi said that he foresaw a bright future for nuclear power in Pakistan. Speaking at a seminar hosted by the Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS) in Islamabad on Thursday, IAEA Director General Grossi noted the political will in Pakistan and the country’s technical capacity and nuclear safety record as the reasons for his optimism about the prospects for the expansion of nuclear energy. “There is strong political support for new nuclear power plants in Pakistan,” said Grossi. He further observed that the country had a “world-class and impeccable” nuclear safety record. In addition, he said, the state had technical and engineering capacity for new nuclear power plants, including SMRs (Small Modular Reactors), which indicates a promising future for nuclear energy and achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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Similarly, Ahsan Iqbal (Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives) stated in his keynote address that Pakistan had a mutually beneficial relationship with the IAEA that included all areas of nuclear technology. He further added that despite ranking as low as 158th among carbon-emitting countries, Pakistan is amongst the countries most severely affected by climate change. “Pakistan has achieved great milestones in nuclear science and technology for the socio-economic uplift of the country in areas such as cancer diagnosis and treatment, development of disease-free food preservation, and high-yield crop varieties,” he added.

He said that nuclear power provides clean and cheap energy and currently contributes to eight per cent of Pakistan’s energy mix with six operational nuclear power plants. Additionally, Pakistan has an impeccable nuclear safety and security record and plans to develop more power plants. The Minister also said that in energy-deficient and economically strained countries like ours, nuclear power is sustainable, clean, and a green energy source in the overall energy mix, including wind and solar power. Moreover, it is the best solution to the challenge of climate change as well.

On the other hand, a few days back, the chief warned that the world is facing a convergence of challenges “unlike any in our lifetimes” and expressed fear of a wider war as the first anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine approaches. Also, the Secretary-General said experts who surveyed the state of the world in 2023 set the Doomsday Clock at 90 seconds to midnight – the closest ever to “total global catastrophe,” He pointed to the war in Ukraine, “runaway climate catastrophe, rising nuclear threats,” the widening gulf between the world’s haves and have-nots, and the “epic geopolitical divisions” undermining “global solidarity and trust.”

In a wide-ranging address, Guterres urged the General Assembly’s 193 member nations to change their mindset on decision-making from near-term thinking, which he called “irresponsible” and “immoral,” to look”at what will happen to all of us tomorrow” He said this year’s 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should serve as a reminder that the foundation of the inalienable rights of all people is “freedom, justice, and peace.” The world must work harder for peace, Guterres said, not only in Ukraine but in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict “where the two-state solution is growing more distant by the day,” in Afghanistan where the rights of women and girls “are being trampled, and deadly terrorist attacks continue” and in Africa’s Sahel region where security is deteriorating “at an alarming rate.”

Pakistan, an Islamic country, remains in the headlines for its politicians being held in corruption cases and brutal terrorist attacks. In addition, the ongoing economic crisis has made people think only about affording their expenditures and saving as much money as possible. Also, developing countries and strong UN members have blamed Pakistan for not taking care of its nuclear assets, and soon the terrorists will occupy all the power plants and start mass destruction. For that reason, they have kept an eye on all our nuclear programs and checked whether we are safeguarding our territory.

By saying this, I am sad to comment that the public of Pakistan is busy making lines at International chains to get food and arranging concerts and cricket matches such as PSL that do not have any benefits, while representatives of different organizations are taking an interest in our nuclear assets. We must remember that we got this country after a lot of sacrifices. And if we want to protect its integrity and sovereignty, we must put all our efforts into saving its nuclear program from being possessed by terrorists and try our best to support our armed forces so that there should not be any bombing attack and Pakistan again get International coverage. The security of nuclear weapons should be Pakistan’s national responsibility, and the country is performing this duty efficiently by adopting the best available measures to enhance its security domestically and with international cooperation. In addition, the country has a well-established, highly skilled, and trained force for the physical security of its nuclear installations.

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