Time to reactivate nuclear energy

January 5 2015

The energy sector has been one of the strategic infrastructural areas for Mexico, not only as a revenue generator for the nation but as a lever of industrial development. However, Mexico has a deficit in generating technologies and human talent in this area, making it an issue addressed by various academic specialists.

Lorenzo Martínez Gómez, researcher at the Institute of Physics of the Autonomous Nacional University of Mexico (UNAM), noted that the

employment outlook is quite spacious for the energy sector, and should be a point exploited by generators of human resources.

By participating at the table discussion "The training of human resources to meet the energy transition", held at the Polytechnic University of San Luis Potosí (UPSLP), Martínez Gómez said the government's job figures represent an opportunity for students, not only in areas of hydrocarbons, but new technologies to develop alternative energy.

In that sense, the university expert noted that given the situation presented by energy reform, it is convenient to develop a serious initiative regarding the revival of nuclear engineering in Mexico.

"In Mexico, support for this type of energy generation has not permeated society and government; on the contrary, accidents at nuclear plants have been oversized, when in fact it is a real alternative to mitigate the ravages of climate change related to fossil fuel combustion," said the also winner of the Science and Technology Award granted by the Organization of American States (OAS).

In this regard, Martínez Gómez noted that even adding up all the accidents at conventional nuclear power plants, such as the one at Laguna Verde (in the state of Veracruz, in west coast of Mexico) does not compare to all the damage caused by power generation from fossil sources. However, society is more afraid of a nuclear disaster.

According to the expert, energies that emit carbon dioxide (CO_2) are one of the most pressing problems currently facing the planet. In contrast, nuclear plants have the advantage of generating very little of these components, while producing large amounts of energy.

In fact, UNAM specialist says that currently, besides obtaining nuclear energy from fission of enriched uranium, nuclear reactors that use other

more abundant uranium in nature have been developed, which produce more energy and recycle this element, so it is a good time to focus on these alternatives as sources of energy.

Martínez Gómez, who has participated in more than 100 IT projects for energy companies such as Repsol and Pemex, took the opportunity to call on young entrepreneurs to create proposals and companies related to energy alternatives.

"While Mexico is still a major source of oil, there is great interest and potential in the field of renewable energy, which includes wind, solar and geothermal. Society must seize the moment and present initiatives with technological developments around these energy alternatives," said UNAM researcher and winner of the National Prize for Arts and Sciences in the area of Technology and Design 2012.

Provided by Investigación y Desarrollo