

China's nuclear ambitions 'insane' warns expert



Veteran physicist says Beijing is ignoring safety in its rush to develop nuclear energy

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China's plans for a rapid expansion of nuclear power plants are "insane", a leading scientist is warning.

Physicist He Zuoxiu says that Beijing is not investing enough in safety controls as it seeks to become the world's leading producer of nuclear energy. He says that plans to build plants inland are particularly dangerous, because an accident could contaminate rivers that hundreds of millions of people rely on for water, as well as damaging groundwater supplies to vast swathes of important farmlands.

The controversy comes as China ends a moratorium on new generators imposed after the Fukushima disaster in March 2011. It is determined to surpass Japan's nuclear-generating capacity by 2020 and become the world's biggest user of nuclear power a decade later.

Beijing also wants to expand nuclear generation as part of a wider effort to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and cut dependence on imported oil and gas.

Speaking to [The Guardian](#), He said: "There are currently two voices on nuclear energy in China. One prioritises safety while the other prioritises development".

The scientist warned of risks including "corruption, poor management abilities and decision-making capabilities". He added: "They want to build 58 (gigawatts of nuclear generating capacity) by 2020 and eventually 120 to 200. This is insane."

Chinese government officials argue that nuclear technology has improved significantly since the Chernobyl and Three Mile Island accidents, but He is unimpressed. "To be honest, as I'm already 88, it won't affect me much whether or not nuclear plants are safe. But I am concerned about the welfare of our children."