Pakistan should pursue clean energy instead of relying on coal, report suggests

Cash-strapped Pakistan should pursue clean energy instead of relying on coal, nuclear and hydroelectric power, according to a report released on Wednesday urging the country's policymakers to rethink plans for building more coal-fired plants.

The Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, Ohio, said coal-fired power, one of the central pillars of Pakistan's energy deals with China, is a costlier and dirtier alternative to wind or solar energy, which China is also supplying but to a lesser degree.

Simon Nichols, an energy finance analyst with the institute, told *The Associated Press* that China is dumping its dirtier coal-fired systems on developing nations while leading the world in renewable resource systems that will find a market in developed countries as they move away from fossil fuels.

"There is no such thing as clean coal," said Nichols.

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China is putting Pakistan deeper in debt with planned coal-fired and liquefied natural gas plants, which will soon be outdated, he said.

China is financing major development projects in Pakistan, which is seeking an $8 billion bailout package from the International Monetary Fund as it faces dwindling foreign exchange reserves. In mid-October, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves were $8.1 billion, which hardly covers the cost of two months of imports, according to the Institute.

Pakistan says China's up to $75 billion development project in Pakistan, known as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, is an effort to reconstruct the historic Silk Road linking China to all corners of Asia which will bring new prosperity to the country, where the average citizen lives on just $125 a month.

The sprawling package includes everything from road construction and coal-fired power plants.

"With renewable technology set to get cheaper in the future, a build-out of coal-fired power risks locking Pakistan into decades of outdated technology," the report said.

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