



ASEAN is banking on “clean” coal in the absence of an alternative

Coal as an energy source in power plants will continue to increase in ASEAN and East Asia in the coming decades in the absence of a viable energy alternative, stoking fears of an upsurge in carbon dioxide emissions and greenhouse gases.

Signals coming from Washington of lessened concern in the US over pollution issues, and President Donald Trump’s withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change, gives developing Asia little option but to continue down the same path.

But many of the ASEAN economies are looking at new technologies that use coal in a cleaner way, such as the ultra-supercritical boiler type—USC—which makes more efficient use of coal, leading to minimal waste of the energy source and curbs carbon dioxide emissions.

The main issue is that most emerging economies in Asia cannot afford these technologies, which are more costly than conventional ones, and require more financial support from developed countries, such as through loans. But popular resistance to the continued reliance on coal for energy is a growing obstacle.

Thailand has replaced its old coal power plants with new ones using USC technologies. Despite this, public opposition to the use of coal has been significant because of bad experiences with polluting coal-powered plants in the past and climate change concerns.

An extensive campaign of information on the new coal-based technologies is imperative, as well as a process of public participation so people, particularly where the power plants are planned, feel their views are respected.

Many governments are also making use of foreign aid to pilot solar and wind alternatives, and Viet Nam has been toying with nuclear energy, but such a shift to sustainable clean power is some way away and the demand for energy to drive economic growth is now.

This has been a [summary of a post](#) on ADBI’s blog, Asia Pathways, by Han Phoumin, an energy economist at the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, Jakarta.

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