

- fuel, would help acquire valuable experience in fabrication and performance testing of large-sized subsystems and components for operation with sodium⁴. Simultaneously, efforts need to be mounted for development of techniques for dry reprocessing of metallic fuel and for remote refabrication of the recycled plutonium. As India may be alone in undertaking such efforts, a fifty-year time frame for perfecting the technology is not unrealistic.
7. Sodium-cooled fast reactors produce better quality steam at higher temperatures (~500°C) compared to water reactors, yielding a higher thermodynamic efficiency (~40%) and reducing waste heat rejection to the environment. System pressures are low leading to lower amounts of stored energy in the coolant. Boiling point of sodium being high (about 900°C), heat removal from the fuel is possible over a wider range of temperatures, which considerably lowers the probability of fuel melt-down. These are noteworthy safety features.
 8. There is also recognition among Indian analysts that the choice of fast reactor systems with metal fuel along with adoption of dry reprocessing method for recycling of fuel, yield

- other important advantages⁵. These systems obviate separation of plutonium in pure form, thus allaying fears of parties obsessed by prospects of plutonium falling in wrong hands. Further, the dry reprocessing technique considerably mitigates the issues concerning radioactive wastes, as it generates waste in smaller quantities and in forms much better suited for long-term storage.
9. It is also important to bear in mind the difficulties associated with large-scale mining of coal in the country. It is believed that doubling of the coal output in the eighties from about 100 million tonnes to 200 million tonnes was possible because of resort to the simpler surface mining operations. As we turn to mining from depths, the operations grow more challenging. Moreover, too great a reliance on fossil fuels brings in the question of carbon dioxide releases and raises apprehensions about global warming. In sum, it is clear that India cannot afford to ignore the potential of nuclear energy, but will have to choose thermal reactors for the immediate term with fast reactors for the longer term, and move quickly towards implementation of the plans.

1. This amounts to a six-fold increase from the present capacity with a doubling time of about 20 years, which appears conservative. However, this same projection would seem optimistic if one reckons on the basis of the largest additions achieved so far in any one year, of around five Gigawatts, which if sustained leads to a total of only about 350 GWe in fifty years.
2. In comparison, PHWR programme based on indigenous uranium (about 70,000 tonnes) could permit a peak capacity about 15 Gigawatts.
3. Paranjpe, S. R., in Seminar on Indian Fast Reactor Program organized by FOPSAK, Kalpakkam, 1992.
4. The capacity build up based on oxide fuel systems is comparatively slow according to the authors, barely rising to 30 GWe or so in fifty years (Figure 5 of the paper) as doubling time for oxide fueled breeders is quite long.
5. Saha, B., Sundararajan, A. R. and Krishnan, L. V., *Prog. Nucl. Eng.*, 1995, 29, 125-132.

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Author's travails

I submitted a manuscript to this journal sometime ago. It is more than 8 months since then. There was no response to a couple of enquiries by email. I have now received the referee's report which simply says that it is not suitable for *Current Science* because it deals with an ambiguous area.

This raises some important questions:

1. Why does one submit a paper to *Current Science* if it takes more than 8 months to communicate referee's report? I can understand that sometimes certain referees could have genuine difficulty. The editors then should have alternatives, particularly for a Letters submission. Anything more than 6 weeks would be bad. It is, moreover the responsibility of the editorial office to keep the author informed of the status, or in the least to respond to his enquiries.
2. I would expect that the editors should themselves deliberate on the referee's report which expresses only opinion about the paper being of general interest or interesting enough. For instance, in this case the referee seems to have missed the whole point of the paper. Even if by using something which is not unambiguous, if one obtains something of understanding and insight, it deserves attention and publication.
3. I would seriously ask for tightening up the processing system. Once earlier too, a paper took 4 months, and a couple of enquiries to get the decision. The only difference at that time was that the report was late but positive. Of course, this is my experience which may not be representative: may be accidentally I seem to fall into the preferred bin of statistics!

Since the whole charm of the paper is lost by the inordinate delay, I would urge the journal to set its house in order.

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Editor's Note

While every effort is being made to process manuscripts quickly, instances like this are a reminder that editorial housecleaning must be a constant process. We can only apologize. In addition to editorial penitence, we might like to urge reviewers and editorial board members to help us speed the decision-making process. Authors may also help by suggesting names of referees to allow us to expand our pool of referees.