

# PM: No nuclear power plant

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today dismissed the possibility of Malaysia building a nuclear-powered electricity generating plant, saying that such an option would only be considered after it has exhausted all other means of power generation.

The Prime Minister was replying to questions from newsmen on plans to build the country's first nuclear power generating plant as the fifth form of energy source.

He said it was the Government's intention to stick to the current four-fuel policy for electricity generation. They are hydro power, gas, fuel oil and coal.

Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu had stated two weeks ago that Malaysia hoped to set up its first nuclear power generating plant in 10 years.

He had also stated that it was a significant policy shift because Malaysia's stand all along had been to stick to the four readily-available resources.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after opening the special course for Bumiputera contractors at the Public Works Malaysia Institute (Ikram) in Bangi near here.

Asked whether a nuclear plant could overcome massive disruption of power supply as had happened recently, Dr Mahathir said that a massive blackout would still occur even with such a plant.

He cited his personal experience in New York when he was caught in such a situation twice, first when he arrived in the city and later when he was about to leave.

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He said New York and the north-eastern part of the United States were experiencing total supply disruption on that occasion forcing him to use the stairs to get to the ground floor for meals and then walk up again.

Malaysia experienced a massive power blackout on Sept 29 and the incident was attributed to lightning which damaged the transmission line between Paka and Telok Kahang in Terengganu.

It took several days before supply was fully restored.

Malaysia's current gas reserves are estimated at 67 trillion cubic feet which can last for about 40 years while its oil reserves, estimated at 3.7 billion barrels, should last for another 15 years.

Meanwhile in Butterworth, Samy Vellu said the Ministry would abort its research on nuclear power generation following the Cabinet's decision on Wednesday to reject the Ministry's proposal to consider the nuclear option.

"The Cabinet feels that Western nations with these facilities have yet to overcome problems arising from their operations," he added.

"Nuclear waste disposal and the purchase of nuclear fuels will also pose major problems," he said after visiting the Prai power station this morning.

He defended the initiative to bring the subject to the Cabinet's attention, saying that it did not wish to be blamed in future for not weighing the option.

The Cabinet also feels that Malaysia could depend on other alternatives particularly gas and hydro potentials to meet current and future demands.

"Gas is the main option. We think Malaysia will use gas for the next 100 years or so since we do not foresee difficulties in sourcing our supply," he added.