

Gov't powers ahead with two nuclear plants
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Malaysia plans to build two nuclear power plants that will generate 1,000 megawatts each with the first plant ready for operation in 2021 and the second plant, a year later, as part of the overall long-term plan to balance energy supply.

Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Peter Chin said the government would engage an international consultant to evaluate the location and requirement for such plants to be built.

nuclear power plant reactor fusion 040309 02Meanwhile, more awareness and education programmes will be carried out to inform people on such a need.

"Hopefully, by 2013 or 2014, we will be able to finish evaluating this. As for calling of tenders, we hope it will be done by 2016," he told Bernama in an interview.

He said Malaysia was heavily reliant on gas and coal for its electricity supply as it was government policy to reduce reliance on fossil fuel.

Gas accounted for 64 percent of the country's energy generation while the remainder came from coal.

"We must get away from this. (It is) very much imbalance. Most countries have a good balance. We want hydro to assume a prominent role as it is clean but this can only be achieved in Sabah and Sarawak where there is much potential but not in Peninsular Malaysia," he said.

The nuclear plan has been attacked by environmental activists who say the government has not thoroughly considered other forms of energy generation such as solar, hydroelectric and wind power.

But Chin said the potential for renewable sources was limited.

Chin said other sources of energy such as biomass and wind were too minimal while solar was a good potential but the technology was still very expensive.

"Biomass and wind, there is nothing to shout about. Unless and until solar renewable becomes big enough, this type of energy just compliments (what you already have) as you can't generate much due to its high cost," he added.

Balanced approach

Chin also said the government must have a balanced approach when it comes to renewable energy as it would not want tariffs to go up due to higher cost.

NONE"Yes, very good, everyone wants to say that we want renewables but what about cost? Can we force the people to accept high tariffs? We have to look at a balanced way, that's why we can't depend on fossil fuel only," he said.

Chin (left) added nuclear has become a more prominent choice in balancing the energy source due to lower maintenance cost and lower tariffs in the long-run.

"For example, in Abu Dhabi, they are building huge solar energy plants but at the same time balancing it up with a nuclear plant. They are not just concentrating on fossil fuel," he said.

Malaysia began operation of a 1MW Triga research reactor since 1982 and has an international nuclear safeguards agreement in place since 1972.

Recently, Malaysia also tightened export control laws to thwart the possibility of nuclear technology smuggling.

State energy firm Tenaga has said it could construct the first nuclear power plant at a cost of US\$3.1 billion (RM9.7 billion).

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