

Penang says 'no' to nuke plants
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The Penang government will not allow Putrajaya to build nuclear plants in the island state, said Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng.

"I wish to reiterate that as long as Pakatan Rakyat rules Penang, the state government will not support or allow any nuclear plants to be built in Penang to keep Penangites safe from nuclear contamination," said Lim in a statement today.

NONEHe was responding to announcements by Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Peter Chin that two nuclear plants will be ready by 2021 and 2022 respectively.

Lim said that there was no rationale in constructing the 1,000 megawatt nuclear plants when Malaysia already has a high energy reserve margin of over 40 percent.

He adds that there are also "huge" hidden costs involved in the development and maintenance of nuclear power plants.

"These include spiking cost of sourcing raw uranium, costs of risky decommissioning, storage and handling of radioactive leakages. Vast amount of resources will have to be diverted towards the maintenance of nuclear power plants.

"Above all the problems of shutting down a reactor is, how and where to dispose of the radioactive waste? Does Malaysia have the capacity and ability in dealing with these high risk issues? There is no proper way of handling radioactive nuclear waste," he said.

Poor maintenance culture

Additionally, Lim said that Malaysia's track record of maintaining infrastructure was also questionable thereby increasing the risk of a nuclear disaster.

collapsed half of roof of the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium in Kuala Terengganu"With our poor maintenance mentality, even a stadium (right) or a classroom can collapse; what assurances then can be given in relation to safety and the environment following the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear plant accident in Ukraine, that claimed 56 lives and resulted in 4,000 cancer deaths?" asked Lim.

Lim pointed out that the federal government's nuclear ambitions were also considered retrogressive on a global scale as some countries are already looking for ways to avoid the use of nuclear power.

Citing Germany as an example, he said the country had already initiated new policies to phase out the use of nuclear energy as far back as 2000 because of concerns over the safety of decommissioning nuclear power plants.

Given the circumstances, Lim urged the federal government to seriously rethink the need to construct nuclear power plants.

No public consultation?

In another development, Klang MP Charles Santiago (below) said that Chin's announcement yesterday showed that the federal government had backtracked on its promise to consult the public and conduct a "comprehensive study" on the matter.

mtuc syabas pc 091007 charles santiago "The minister promised the public and Parliament that there will be adequate and meaningful consultations with all stakeholders before a decision is made on going nuclear.

"The prime minister in his 1Malaysia blog promised a 'comprehensive study' before going ahead on building nuclear power plants.

"In fact, the premier said that 'all options for electricity generation, from biomass to wind, will be explored' before making a decision on building nuclear power plant in the country," said Santiago in a statement today.

He laments that the "comprehensive study", if any, has not been made public.

"Clearly, the government does not even take the recommendation of the New Economic Model 1 seriously. The document calls for greater empowerment and participation of ordinary Malaysians in government decision making," he said.

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