

**Pro-nuclear policy: DPM must opt for safety first**  
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Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's statement yesterday that Malaysia aims to proceed with its nuclear ambitions is highly irresponsible and downright ignorant of state responsibility to its citizens.

The events of the last five days involving the Fukushima power plant should remind all of the catastrophic risk associated with nuclear power plants. In fact, it is a wake-up call to the reality of nuclear power.

Despite this alarming situation, the deputy prime minister is adamant that the government continues with its plan to build two nuclear power plants in Malaysia.

However, there appears to be an enlightened rethinking on the future of nuclear power plants in countries that have experience in managing them for over 3-4 decades.

Chancellor Angela Merkel indicated that seven nuclear reactors in Germany built before 1980 will be shut during a three-month review of nuclear-plant safety and ordered a rethinking of the country's nuclear strategy.

This is a significant reversal by Chancellor Merkel whose government just months ago vouched for the plants' safety.

In fact, the chancellor indicated that nuclear safety was her highest priority and "everything else must submit to that".

The Swiss government indicated that they are putting on hold all plans for new nuclear energy plants until safety norms can be reviewed.

In fact, the EU energy commissioner Guenther Oettingers indicated that Europe should be thinking of a "foreseeable future, where we can secure our energy needs without nuclear energy".

These views are motivated by an emerging notion that no amount of safety planning and protocols can foresee every accident that might befall a nuclear power plant. Put differently, nuclear plants can never be guaranteed safe.

The questions being raised about the safety of nuclear power plants are absolutely justified.

But we might never know the truth given the lies and deception spewed by nuclear corporate interests working together with respective states in managing popular perception of nuclear power plants.

Chernobyl clean-up expert Iouli Andreev accused corporations and the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of willfully ignoring lessons from the world's worst nuclear accident 25 years ago to protect the industry's expansion.

In fact, he suggests that the cosy relationship of the UN agency and nuclear industries undermined standards.

He notes that greed in the nuclear industry and corporate influence over the UNs IAEA are partially responsible for the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

In July 2000, Tokyo Electric Power Company (Tepco) was accused of faking safety data relating to cracks in the Fukushima Daiichi 1.

There has been a lingering suspicion that safety issues identified at that time were never adequately addressed given the close relationship between Tepco and the state.

WikiLeaks, revealed that Japanese politician Taro Kono, a high-profile member of Japan's lower house, informed US diplomats that the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry - the Japanese government department responsible for nuclear energy - had been "covering up nuclear accidents and obscuring the true costs and problems associated with the nuclear industry".

Malaysia suffers from the same cosy relationship between private corporations and the state and thus should constitute another reason why it is dangerous to build power plants in the country.

It is important to note that Japan embarked on a nuclear strategy because it lacks domestic fossil fuel alternatives.

Malaysia has no such excuse as we have oil, gas, biomass, hydro resources, and abundant sunshine.

Thus, I suggest Muhyiddin rethink his pro-nuclear proposal in the interests of the Malaysian public and not fall prey to corporate lobbying and profits.

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