

Nuclear energy: Where was public consultation?
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The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) and Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) are very disturbed to read that the government has already decided on the proposed nuclear energy programme as it is included as one of the 131 entry-point projects (EPP) of the Economic Transformation Programme unveiled to the public on Tuesday at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC).

We recalled that Prime Minister Mohd Najib Abdul Razak had indicated in his '1Malaysia' blog following public outcry against adopting nuclear power plant that he would like to obtain public opinion on the matter.

Until today, we have yet to see any meaningful debate and genuine public consultation process by the government. We want to stress that so-called public forum and debate that were largely organised by the Malaysian Nuclear Agency is not a neutral platform to seek public opinion.

It is to be noted that those events were primarily attended by the agency's staff and government officials from the relevant departments and the discussion panelists were from these agencies.

It has to be pointed out that the Malaysia Nuclear Agency, Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) and even the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water are parties with vested interests and have an open agenda in support of the nuclear power plant as shown by their public statements so far.

For example, the latest statement from TNB's Chief Executive Officer Che Khalib Mohamad Noh, while alluding to the fact that public acceptance is necessary for the proposed project, argued that since developed countries are already adopting nuclear energy, there was no reason why Malaysians could not be open about it.

In July, minister Peter Chin had said that the government will only make a final decision on nuclear energy after studying the findings of the Nuclear Power Infrastructure Development Plan scheduled for completion in 2013.

CAP and SAM would like to know if the government's decision is informed by these findings if they are already available. If so, the Malaysian civil society and public would like to be informed. If not, why is there such a hurry to push ahead with a nuclear power plant?

The writer is president Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) and Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM).