

Nuke plant - where's the 'comprehensive study'?
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Klang MP Charles Santiago has questioned why the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) has announced a nuclear power plant as one of its projects when there has been no debate or a genuine public consultation on the issue.

Santiago (*right*) also noted that despite the ETP's plans to make Malaysia the world's number two solar power manufacturer, it is instead pursuing the nuclear power option.

"This leads me to ask whether there are vested interests behind the nuclear power plant project," said the MP in a statement today.

"Despite public opposition and the presence of cheaper, safer, and more efficient energy alternatives, the nuclear option keeps returning again and again," he said.

Santiago expressed deep concern over the proposal that is one of the 131 entry-point projects (EPP) of the ETP.

He points out that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had earlier stated on his 1Malaysia blog with respect to nuclear power that, "Before embarking on such an important decision we must conduct a comprehensive study on it."

"Following public outcry over the nuclear proposal," he added, "We will consult experts and we will consult the rakyat, as there must be public engagement."

"(But) until now, there has not been any meaningful debate or a genuine public consultation process by the government," said Santiago .

Gov't stand inconsistent

The DAP parliamentarian asked where was the "comprehensive study" that backed the government's decision to push through the plan.

"If one has not been conducted, then what is the nuclear power plant doing in the ETP as an entry-point project?" asked Santiago.

He also notes that Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Peter Chin's statement in July 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".

"How can these statements be consistent with the plan to launch the finalised ETP on Oct 26 when the sole ETP '**open day**' last Tuesday only made cursory attempts at public feedback?"

"Public relations efforts organised by the Malaysian Nuclear Agency do not constitute a balanced effort to educate the public on the risks and alleged benefits of nuclear power," said the MP.

He further criticised Chin for his "bias" and "unqualified support" in favour of nuclear energy

without studying the alternatives, and ignoring public safety.

While Najib had once stated "all options for electricity generation, from biomass to wind, will be explored", Santiago points out that none of these industries were invited to participate in the ETP 'lab', that he laments only saw the participation of nuclear agencies.

"And yet, the ETP plans to make Malaysia the world's number two solar power manufacturer, displacing Germany.

"But (at the same time) there are no plans for making solar power a significant contributor to our national grid. If we are to be a leading contender in clean solar energy, why is the riskier, more hazardous nuclear option being pursued?" he asked.

TNB raring to power up

The nuclear power project was raised during the ETP open day on Sept 21 that the Performance Management and Delivery Unit organised to sell Najib's "transformation programme" to the public.

The representatives at the booth were unable to provide much detail except that the plant would be "somewhere we don't know yet" by 2021, but were certain that it was absolutely on the cards.

Tenaga Nasional Bhd's (TNB) president and chief executive officer Che Khalib Mohamad Noh stated the next day that "we are ready" and, "We already have our own team, about seven to eight people, looking at nuclear."

Santiago however continued to press the PM to "unveil the 'comprehensive study', with a view to having a public discussion and securing a national mandate" before going ahead with the plans under the ETP.

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