

**Gov't to mull nuclear energy amid rising oil prices**  
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Malaysia may consider nuclear power generation to meet its long-term energy needs amid surging global oil prices, Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak said.  
MCPX

Najib said the government would look at alternative energy sources, including nuclear power, to help the nation reduce its reliance on oil, which has hit nearly 140 dollars a barrel on global markets.

The government hiked fuel prices this month by 41 percent, saying the deeply unpopular move was needed as subsidies would have ballooned to 17 billion dollars this year.

"The prospect of Malaysia opting for nuclear technology cannot be discounted, only that we will look at other alternatives first," he was quoted as saying by state news agency Bernama late on Saturday.

He said the cost of setting up nuclear power plants would be high, while a power company official said infrastructure development would take years.

"Using nuclear as a substitute to fuel however depends on the government's decision as the transition to nuclear energy will incur high costs to develop the infrastructures and facilities," Razak said.

State power company Tenaga Nasional (TNB) said it was prepared to use nuclear energy as a replacement if it was directed to do so, Bernama reported.

"TNB will take about 15 years to develop the infrastructures to use nuclear energy and to find suitable sites," company vice-president Ab'llah Mohd Salleh said.

Last year, the government said it would build Southeast Asia's first nuclear monitoring laboratory to allow scientists to check the safety of atomic energy programmes in the region.

The 26-million-dollar facility to be built in central Pahang state will start operations in 2009, officials said.