

Guan Eng: Strictly no nuclear plant in Penang
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GEORGETOWN - The Penang State Government opposed Monday to allow any plans to build nuclear plant in the state, saying that there is no economic logic nor necessity for the development.

"I wish to reiterate that as long as PR rules Penang, the Penang State Government would not support or allow any nuclear plants to be built in Penang to keep Penangites safe from nuclear contamination," Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said in a statement.

Lim said the DAP was concerned with the government's decision to build two nuclear power plants, saying that it has not only aroused safety and environmental concerns but also doubts over its economic necessity.

"In Malaysia, with our poor maintenance mentality, even a stadium or a classroom can collapse, what assurances then can be given in relation to safety and environment following the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear plant accident in Ukraine that claimed 56 lives and resulted in 4,000 cancer deaths?" he said.

It was announced by the Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Peter Chin on Sunday that there are plans to build two nuclear power plants that will generate 1,000 megawatts each.

Bernama reported the Minister as saying that the first plant will be ready for operation in 2021 and the second plant a year later, as part of the overall long-term plan to balance energy supply.

Nevertheless, Lim pointed out in his press statement that Malaysia currently enjoys a high energy reserve margin of over 40 percent.

Lim suggested to focus instead on the potential and development of renewable energy, saying that there is no economic logic and necessity to build a nuclear power plant in a yet to be identified location.

Chin reportedly said on Sunday that other sources of energy such as biomass and wind were too minimal while solar was a good potential but the technology was still very expensive.

"Yes, very good, everyone wants to say that we want renewables but what about cost. Can we force the people to accept high tariffs. We have to look at a balanced way, that's why we can't depend on fossil fuel only," Chin was quoted as saying by Bernama.

Chin added nuclear has become a more prominent choice in balancing the energy source due to lower maintenance cost and lower tariffs in the long-run, citing Abu Dhabi's development of energy solar plants and nuclear plant as example.

Lim, also DAP secretary-general, noted Monday the huge hidden costs involved in the development of nuclear power plants, such as the high 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.

"In Germany, the government announced a new policy to phase-out the use of nuclear energy in 2000. Now they are worried about how to shut down the nuclear power plants safely."

Malaysia began operation of a 1 MW Triga research reactor since 1982 and has an international nuclear safeguards agreement in place since 1972.

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