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NUCLEAR ENERGY IN MALAYSIA: ISSUES THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED

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NUCLEAR ENERGY IN MALAYSIA: ISSUES THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED

Nuclear energy has been identified as another energy resource that will be included in our electricity generation mix. Association of Water and Energy Research Malaysia (AWER) believes there should be greater stakeholder engagement as developing nuclear energy is not a simple issue. A total of RM 76,627,219 was allocated for Malaysia Nuclear Energy between year 2011 and 2015. What were the results for these allocations? Where are the reports associated to the 'studies'?

1. ISSUES SURROUNDING USAGE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED

Since 2012, AWER has raised 7 core issues surrounding usage of nuclear energy numerous times but has not received any satisfactory answers till date. Now, let's look at the 7 core issues that must be addressed by Federal Government before embark on nuclear power plant project:

Issue 1: Short Term, Midterm And Long Term Energy Mix Policy Must Be Clearly Defined And Published For Public Knowledge

Uranium, plutonium and thorium are non-renewable energy resource and also will deplete one day. Therefore, nuclear may not be the actual solution. Using nuclear may assist Malaysia in short term energy mix management only. Lack of Energy Efficiency initiatives also reflects poor demand side management in our electricity sector.

Issue 2: Location Of Nuclear Power Plant Must Be Disclosed From The Beginning Of Planning

This includes all of the possible locations. This will allow proper public discussions on issues related to nuclear power plant. Public's acceptance of usage of nuclear for energy must be done with full transparency and not "make-up" consultancies.

Issue 3: Radioactive Leakages, Emergency Response And Reporting Procedures Must Be Made Clear To Public

Boiler tube leakages in coal power plants left few states without electricity in May 2014. In fact, our electricity generation sector's regulatory framework is a total failure. On the other hand, nuclear 'experts' always claim that nuclear is safe but why it leaks? Therefore, reports on leakage incidents must be made transparent and clear to public. The Fukushima incident in 2011 has deteriorated the confidence in nuclear technology tremendously and revealed the dark side of 'transparency' in nuclear incidents reporting. What policy does Malaysia have to manage such leakage incidents?

Issue 4: Decommissioning Cost Of Nuclear Power Plant Is Another Forgotten Cost That Is Left To Be Managed By Future Generation

Stricter laws and regulations pertaining disposal of nuclear waste and related materials will cause a sharp increase in decommissioning cost of a nuclear power plant in near future. Unfortunately, government agencies are claiming that usage of nuclear for energy is economical with no proves provided. Now, who is going to bear the decommissioning cost?

Issue 5: Capable Human Capital To Manage A Nuclear Energy Facility Is Vital

Many reports have also indicated that the leakages or nuclear incidents are very much linked to human errors. What would be Malaysia's plan to develop such expertise? Nuclear science graduates alone would not be enough to manage the nuclear power plant.

Issue 6: Nuclear Waste (Spent Fuel) Disposal Is The Mother Of All Issues Related To Nuclear

Nuclear waste from the power plants must be safely deposited into waste storage facility. Therefore, the cost and safety of the waste storage facility are main environmental concern. What are the projected cost and its impact to tariff? What about leakages from storage facilities due to natural disaster?

Issue 7: Cheap Electricity From Nuclear Energy, Is It A Reality?

How could Malaysia achieve low electricity tariff via nuclear energy where so many issues need to be taken care of? Furthermore, with increasing pressure on environmental protection from nuclear wastes, cost of generating electricity from nuclear is set to rise.

2. NATIONAL ENERGY SECURITY SURVEY BY AWER

Association of Water and Energy Research Malaysia (AWER) has carried out National Energy Security Survey (NESS) to establish a baseline data on energy related issues. The sampling frame used for the survey is from the National Household Sampling Frame (NHSF) which is made up of Enumeration Blocks (EBs) created for the 2010 National Population and Housing Census. The sampling was developed by Department of Statistics Malaysia.

We asked respondents if they will support the move by the government to build a Nuclear Power Plant close to their residential area and found that 90.52% of Malaysians object such move. Selangor recorded the highest objection at 97.70% followed by Kuala Lumpur (97.04%) and Pulau Pinang (96.38%). Highest support for nuclear power plant construction comes from Sarawak at 17.43% followed by Sabah (15.79%) and Labuan (14.80%). Table 1 shows the state based breakdown of responses.

TABLE 1: Malaysians' Response on Government's Move to Build a Nuclear Power Plant Close to Their Residential Area

State	Support	Object
Johor	11.18%	88.82%
Kuala Lumpur	2.96%	97.04%
Kedah	12.17%	87.83%
Kelantan	9.54%	90.46%
Labuan	14.80%	85.20%
Melaka	6.91%	93.09%
Negeri Sembilan	5.59%	94.41%
Pulau Pinang	3.62%	96.38%
Pahang	13.49%	86.51%
Perak	7.89%	92.11%
Perlis	12.83%	87.17%
Putrajaya	4.28%	95.72%
Sabah	15.79%	84.21%
Sarawak	17.43%	82.57%
Selangor	2.30%	97.70%
Terengganu	10.86%	89.14%
National	**9.48%**	**90.52%**

When the respondents were asked if government provide sufficient information about the proposal to construct nuclear power plant, 91.47% of Malaysians feel that the information is not sufficient. Selangor recorded the highest response that the information is not sufficient at 98.68% followed by Kuala Lumpur (97.70%) and Pulau Pinang (96.38%).

Based on these assessments and the issues outlined by AWER, the Federal Government needs to carry out transparent implementation of nuclear energy development in Malaysia. The extremely low level of confidence in nuclear power plant project is directly proportionate to the secrecy of how nuclear energy development is being carried out in Malaysia. AWER urges the Federal Government to address the 7 core issues before proceed with a plant up of nuclear power plant in Malaysia.

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