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I REFER to the report "Malaysia eyes nuclear power use by 2030" (*The Star*, Dec 1).

It is good to note from Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Mah Siew Keong's statement that the Government has not yet made a decision on the proposed use of nuclear power for Malaysia as feasibility studies were still being conducted. It is also comforting to note that the decision will take into account the findings of the Malaysian Nuclear Power Corporation (MNPC) and will include the views of the *rakyat*.

However, it is a bit disconcerting to hear about the nuclear power plant (NPP) project, which was an Entry Point Project (EPP-11) under the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP), and that "the plans for nuclear power were under the 11th Malaysia Plan (11MP) to generate public awareness on the nation's future energy needs."

Quoting the estimated cost of RM23.1bil for 2,000 MW of generating capacity from the ETP's estimates is rather disingenuous as that estimate was made in 2010. This was in fact mentioned at an evening talk at the Institution of Engineers Malaysia on July 29, 2015, which referred to the possible need for NPPs for Malaysia's power needs post-2020.

The unfortunate Fukushima Daiichi disaster of March 11, 2011 appeared to have put a stop to the then global pursuit to develop new NPPs. In fact, some countries decided to review their own NPP plans while others decided to decommission their existing plants.

Dr Rajendra Pachauri of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), on his visit to Malaysia after the Fukushima incident, had expressed surprise that Malaysia planned to go for nuclear power before exploiting energy efficiency (EE) and renewable energy (RE).

Moreover, NPPs currently under construction have faced long delays (in the order of two years or more), leading to increased Interest During Construction (IDC) and substantial cost escalation. Escalation in costs has also been due to substantial inflation over the last half decade coupled with the need to incorporate additional safety features in new NPPs following the Fukushima incident. As such, the original estimates would be invalid now.

It appears that Malaysia had no option but "to lie low" in view of the general public concerns over any repeat of the Fukushima incident. Nevertheless, the MNPC continued to discharge its other related functions to prepare the nation for possible future development of NPPs. Similarly, Tenaga Nasional and the Malaysia Nuclear Agency (MNA) continued their own efforts for capacity building to develop an adequate pool of NPP experts and to ensure the development of the desired institutional and legislative framework.

These initiatives were appropriate under the circumstances but many concerns remain to be addressed. Among them are:

1. There is no real validation of the nation's future energy needs warranting the development of the NPPs. The Energy Commission's (Suruhanjaya Tenaga) Industry Outlook for 2015 does not really justify the need for NPP, as it appears to have understated the potential power demand moderation from EE and RE.

2. The Government has apparently deliberately ignored the implementation of the National EE Master Plan (NEEMP) which was peer-reviewed and endorsed by an Apec (Asia Pacific Economic Council) panel of experts on December 2010. The NEEMP was "watered down" by the Energy, Green Technology and Water Ministry (KeTTHA) to a National EE Action Plan (NEEAP) in 2014 and 2015, and it has yet to be formally adopted and implemented.

3. In the meantime, the 11th Malaysia Plan indicates that the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) will conduct a Demand Side Management (DSM) study during the period, apparently superseding the NEEAP/NEEMP.

4. It appears that there have not been appropriate and adequate public awareness initiatives, or public engagement and public response surveys, on the subject to date. If the views of the rakyat are to be considered then the conduct of these activities is critical before any decision is taken to develop any NPP. Otherwise, it would appear to be attempts to brainwash the public.

I believe it would be desirable for the Government to be more transparent in its plans to ensure adequate power supply for national economic development and for the NPPs, if at all needed. The *rakyat* have a right to know more details of government plans to develop NPPs and its role in the integrated power demand and supply plans for the nation.

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