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'M'sia may have no choice but to adopt nuclear energy in long term'

■ BY HAYATUN RAZAK
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

KLANG: Malaysia may have no choice but to adopt nuclear energy in the long term as it accelerates its energy transition, although any shift cannot be immediate, Deputy Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Mohammad Yusof Apdal said.

He said the government is studying nuclear energy as part of its efforts to diversify Malaysia's energy sources and reduce reliance on existing sources, but stressed that any transition must be gradual due to technical requirements and public perception.

"We cannot move from gas or diesel to nuclear suddenly. We must also recognise that our society is not like more advanced countries where people understand that nuclear power is not inherently negative. But ultimately, we have no choice, we

need to use it for the good of the country," Mohammad Yusof told reporters at the launch of Malaysia's dedicated plant-based beverage innovation hub, a collaboration between Pure Mylk and Tetra Pak yesterday.

He said nuclear power is often seen as dangerous, but it has multiple applications, including as a more efficient, reliable and long-term energy source for the future. "That is why we need to educate the public. We cannot adopt nuclear energy immediately. Public acceptance is crucial."

The approach, he said, will be nationwide depending on state readiness as immediate implementation could have implications if the public is not comfortable or does not understand the shift. He added that more advanced countries also implement such transitions gradually.

Currently, Mohammad Yusof said,

Malaysia is still dependent on existing energy sources and must explore alternative methods. "Gas remains cheaper and more sustainable in Sabah, while reliance on diesel would lead to significantly higher costs and ultimately burden consumers."

Malaysia's power mix remains heavily reliant on fossil fuels, with coal and natural gas accounting for the bulk of electricity generation.

Coal contributes about 42-44% of generation, followed by gas at around 33-36%, while low-carbon sources account for only about 20-22%. Overall, fossil fuels make up about 80% of Malaysia's electricity supply.

Nuclear energy has been studied in Malaysia for over a decade as part of long-term energy planning, but has not been implemented due to concerns over safety, radioactive waste management and high development costs.

Renewed interest has emerged amid rising electricity demand and

exposure to global fuel price volatility.

Separately, Malaysian plant-based innovator Pure Mylk has partnered with Tetra Pak to develop and scale plant-based functional beverages locally, leveraging advanced processing, packaging and R&D capabilities.

Mohammad Yusof said the centre marks a step towards transforming Malaysia's food and beverage landscape into a more sustainable, resilient and innovation-driven ecosystem, particularly as global challenges in food security and climate change intensify.

"The initiative aligns with the National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2021-2030 and supports the government's target for the biotechnology sector to contribute 5% to GDP by 2030 under the National Biotechnology Policy 2.0."

The deputy minister said the centre provides integrated research

and development and pilot production capabilities, enabling food and beverage brands to develop, test and commercialise plant-based products more efficiently and accelerate time to market.

"It also leverages advanced aseptic packaging technology that allows products to be stored for up to 12 months without refrigeration, while incorporating recyclable, paper-based materials and energy-efficient systems to reduce environmental impact."

The collaboration demonstrates how private sector innovation can complement government policies in building a more sustainable, climate-resilient food ecosystem, while positioning Malaysia as a leading bioeconomy hub in the region, Mohammad Yusof said.

Malaysia's plant-based beverage market is projected to expand from US\$18.5 billion (RM74 billion) in 2025 to US\$39.7 billion by 2031.