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## Asean's nuclear ambition – Malaysia, Vietnam, Philippines

The Sun, Malaysia



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AS climate change is causing more severe and devastating impacts to the Earth's environment, atmosphere and its inhabitants, serious considerations are being made by a number of countries including Asean regarding the role of nuclear power which has seen a sharp shift from being previously considered a controversial energy source to one of key energy goals as witnessed at COP28 in Dubai UAE where 22 World Leaders had signed a declaration on the need to triple nuclear capacity by 2050 to reach the Paris Agreement target.

This article will share on the progress and development of selected Asean members of their interest and plans regarding nuclear power.

### A flashback to 2007 and 2021

During Asia Pacific Nuclear Energy 2023 (APNE 2023) summit in Singapore, Shigeru Kimura, special advisor to the president on energy affairs, Economic Research Institute of Asean and East Asia (ERIA),

Indonesia in his presentation on Nuclear Energy in Asean Region outlined that the following countries had considered nuclear energy including Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam and highlighted Asean's attitude for Nuclear Energy for the period 2007 to 2021 in terms of Forecast for Nuclear Power Generation and Forecast for Nuclear Power Share in the perspectives of Business As Usual (BAU) and Alternative Policy Scenario (APS).

Kimura dovetailed that total power of Asean region marked highest at 163TWh in APS of 2011 Outlook and Vietnam's share was 52% and that Indonesia and Philippines, both island countries had considered nuclear power from 2007 to 2021 whilst Vietnam had considered nuclear power generation aggressively but it stopped in 2017.

Kimura shared that after the Fukushima accident on March 11, 2011, these Asean countries looked at restart of nuclear power plants in

Japan and although Japan succeeded to restart partially, however Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam had decided to phase out nuclear power generation.

### The Malaysian experience

Malaysia had indicated interest in exploring nuclear energy during Budget 2009 Speech announced by then Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Aug 29, 2008 aimed at enhancing energy security.

Arising from global financial crisis in 2007/2008 which resulted in the contraction of Malaysia's economy in 2009, the government under its Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) launched in 2010 identified nuclear power as part of energy under OGE sector and had set up a Nuclear Energy Planning and Implementing Organisation (NEPIO) Malaysia Nuclear Power Corporation (MNPC) on Jan 11, 2011, two months prior to the Fukushima nuclear meltdown in March 2011, to plan for Malaysia's introduction of nuclear power.

However when Malaysia experienced a political tsunami which saw a new government elected in 2018, the then prime minister Tun Mahathir Mohamad firmly announce that Malaysia will not go for nuclear power and this was followed by the then energy, science, technology, environment and climate change Minister Yeo Bee Yin who announced Malaysia is cancelling all plans for nuclear power including not building the projected twin unit Nuclear Power Plant and subsequently shut down MNPC in September 2019, marking the termination of Malaysia's nuclear power plans.

### The Vietnamese experience

Dr Hoang Sy Than Director, Planning & Scientific Management Dept, VINATOM shared that a study on first Nuclear Power Programme (NPP) introduction into Vietnam was



Kimura and Sheriffah Noor Khamseah at the Asia Pacific Nuclear Energy 2023 summit.

conducted in 1996 and contracts for Ninh Thuan 1 (NT1) and Ninh Thuan 2 (NT2) Feasibility study was carried out in 2010 and completed in December 2013. However, the National Assembly decided to postpone the NPP Projects in November 2016.

### The Philippines experience

Dr Carlo Arcilla, Director, Philippine Nuclear Research Institute in his presentation on Nuclear Energy in the Philippines: Developments and Challenges had outlined that the factors contributing to Philippines choice for nuclear power include extremely expensive electricity rates (highest in Asia) especially per capita, to enhance energy security as 50% of Philippines electricity comes from coal, with 90% coal imported from Indonesia, depleting Malampaya gas field supplying 20% Philippine energy and nuclear to provide baseload backup for intermittent

renewables.

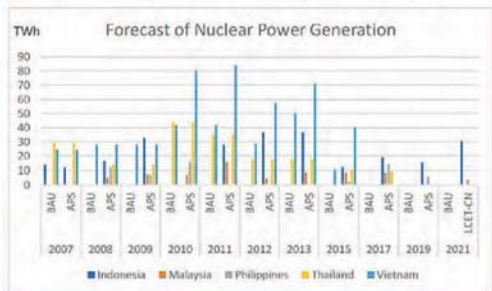
Dr Carlo shared that Executive Order 164 (E.O 164) was signed on Feb 28, 2022 by then President Rodrigo Duterte adopting a National Position for a Nuclear Energy Programme and for other purposes starting with the inclusion of nuclear power in the energy mix and development of nuclear power infrastructure.

The above thus highlights that several Asean member countries had initially shown interest in nuclear power, some waned interest later and with a few reigniting interest in nuclear power.

(Part 2 of the article will spotlight on Singapore's and Thailand's vision and plans for nuclear power.)

*This article is contributed by Sheriffah Noor Khamseah Al-Idid Dato Syed Ahmad Idris, innovation and nuclear advocate.*

## ASEAN's Attitude for Nuclear Energy



Source: EAS Energy Outlook 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021