



23 AUG, 2025

Secure our energy future with nuclear power

The Star, Malaysia



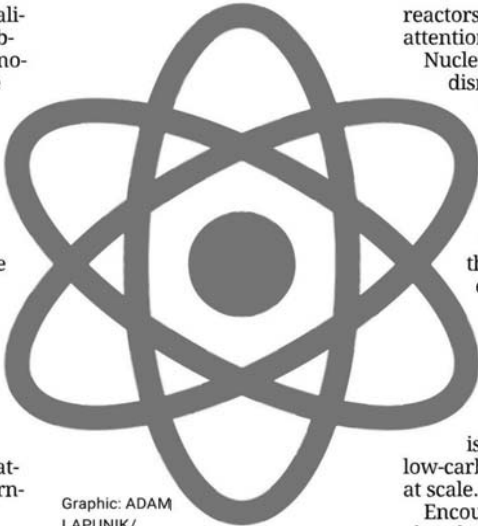
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MALAYSIA faces a difficult reality. Our energy demand is climbing year after year. As our economy grows, so does the appetite for power. It is no longer just homes and factories drawing electricity. The dawn of artificial intelligence (AI) and its rapid expansion have accelerated the growth of power-consuming AI data centres.

At the same time, the climate clock is ticking. Malaysia has pledged to cut carbon emissions by 45% by 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. These are ambitious targets, and rightly so, because the cost of inaction is already visible. Floods, heatwaves, and shifting weather patterns are no longer distant warnings but lived realities for Malaysians today.

So the challenge is clear. How do we keep powering growth while reducing emissions?

Renewables will and must remain a big part of the energy mix. Solar, hydro, and biomass are expanding, but they all come with limits. Solar depends on unpredictable weather, hydro requires massive investments



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and can disrupt ecosystems, biomass competes with food and land. We cannot bet our entire future on sources that, while promising, cannot yet fully replace fossil fuels.

This is where nuclear energy in the form of small modular

reactors (SMRs) deserves serious attention.

Nuclear energy has long been dismissed in Malaysia as too expensive or too risky. But SMRs are changing that age old argument. They are designed to be safer, quicker to build, and cheaper than the old mega-reactors of the past. They are flexible enough to plug into different parts of the grid, and their land footprint is far smaller. Most importantly, they provide steady, near zero carbon electricity. This is something no other

low-carbon source can guarantee at scale.

Encouragingly, Malaysia has already begun taking steps to transition to nuclear energy. The 13th Malaysia Plan (2026-2030) outlines nuclear energy as part of the nation's long-term energy mix by 2031.

On the international front, Malaysia has strengthened cooperation with the United States to commence negotiation on the 123 Agreement, a legally binding

framework for significant peaceful nuclear cooperation between the United States and another country. This would give Malaysia access to nuclear technology, expertise, and US nuclear safety frameworks.

The opportunity is clear. Nuclear power could help Malaysia secure its energy future, meet its climate commitments, and fuel industries of tomorrow. But more than that, it could give us a strategic edge.

History shows that countries mastering the energy technology of their age rise in influence. If we act early, Malaysia could position itself as a regional leader in clean and reliable energy, rather than a follower scrambling to catch up.

The question is not whether Malaysia can afford to adopt nuclear power. The real question is whether we can afford to be left behind. Hence, Malaysia should keep up its momentum on nuclear energy without turning back.

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