

Not so very long ago, the British colony of Malaya was stuck at the productive level of Middle Ages, providing the British Empire with tin and rubber for its factories at rock bottom, “free trade” prices. It was part of the grand 1,000-year colonial vision of the British Empire, upon which the Sun never set—and the wages never rose. It meant a meager existence and no future except servitude for the armies of plantation workers and their families.

However, World War II and Franklin Roosevelt’s America greatly weakened and almost finished off the British Empire, and independence movements flourished in the colonies. In 52 years of independence from the British, Malaysia has successfully urbanized its population, industrialized its economy, and inspired other less developed nations to do the same. For 22 years, Dr. Mahathir led the nation as the father of development, famously telling poor countries to look east not west, and to buy British last. He championed the rights of the underdog nations.

Now Malaysia is making serious preparations to go nuclear with the positive announcement of a nuclear policy by its new Prime Minister, Najib Rasak, who set 2025 as the date for Malaysia to add nuclear power to the electrical grid. Najib was inspired by his visit to an exhibition of South Korean nuclear reactors and a nuclear program which allowed its population to leapfrog from a war-destroyed country in the 1950s, to become a high-wage industrial giant.

A Blow to the Greens

Najib’s virtual overnight conversion to nuclear energy was a victory for Malaysia’s nuclear and scientific community that had united to patiently educate the public on nuclear’s necessity and safety. But it was a bitter blow to Malaysia’s green environmental movement, which had

VIEWPOINT Malaysia Is Going Nuclear!



by Mohd Peter Davis

long dominated the newspapers and was rejoicing in President Obama’s love affair with primitive green technology.

Suddenly, the greenies found they had lost the intellectual battle. Their imported anti-nuclear fear campaign, based entirely on tired old anti-

development propaganda about Chernobyl, nuclear waste, and the anti-development beliefs of the World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace, had been effectively exposed in a spirited counter offensive by senior scientists and engineers. The nuclear community finally declared war on this evil greenie nonsense; they wrote pro-nuclear articles for the newspapers and made themselves available for interviews.

This struck a chord with the population that had been hit by 40 percent increases in petrol prices, and it also prepared the ground for the pro-nuclear announcements by the Prime Minister and both the Science and Environment Ministers. Instead of reiterating the usual ideological hype that man is destroying the planet with sinful carbon dioxide and global warming, the Ministers noted the simple reality that Malaysia was already importing the coal for its power stations and would run out of oil and gas within 10 to 20 years. If the electricity supply were disrupted, it would be back



Courtesy of Nuclear Malaysia Agency

Malaysia’s Triga test reactor at the Bangi Headquarters of the Nuclear Malaysia Agency. The 1-megawatt Mark II Triga reactor began operation in 1982.



Courtesy of Nuclear Malaysia Agency

The radioisotope production facility at Malaysia's Triga nuclear research reactor. Malaysia has nuclear engineers and scientists, but will need to train the younger generations to prepare for a nuclear economy.



Courtesy of Nuclear Malaysia Agency

Headquarters of the Nuclear Malaysia Agency at Bangi, Malaysia. Malaysia's nuclear community is campaigning to let the population know that nuclear power is key to their prosperity.

to the well water and gas lamps of the colonial days and early decades of independence.

Scientists, engineers, and professionals—all members of the Malaysian Nuclear Society which was celebrating its 20th anniversary—gave the population a birthday present by ridiculing the green technology that was supposed to replace fossil fuels. Solar panels with rechargeable batteries are great for street lamps and holiday islands, but for factories and modern society? Aren't windmill farms a little bit stupid for Malaysia, known by centuries of sailors as the land of no wind?

Imported Opposition

Clearly, the natives were getting restless, indeed insolent; the local anti-nuclear greenies were out of their depth and needed help. It was time to send Malaysia a sharp rebuke from the well-funded, royal-sponsored green environmental movement. But all they could muster was an opinion piece in the Malaysian *New Straits Times*, which re-warmed an anti-nuclear mantra published a year earlier in the *Jakarta Post*, when Indonesia had the audacity to show enthusiasm for going nuclear.

Both articles came from the same

puffed-up American professional green environmentalist, one Benjamin Sovacool, a young expert in "energy policy" no less, who had moved from the United States closer to the action in South East Asia—the British Empire's safe house at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore.

This green-behind-the-ears environmentalist was telling sovereign Asean nations, with democratically elected governments, why they should definitely not go nuclear. What the young energy policy expert did not mention, of course, was the huge energy deficit in the 10 Asean nations. With nearly 10 percent of the world's population, these nations need 18 times more electricity than currently produced to catch up with the modest per capita electricity production of their near neighbor, Australia.

On this scale, the poorest Asean nation, Cambodia, trapped in the stone age, needs 900 times more electricity production to enjoy a decent standard of living. Since Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, and (heaven forbid) Myanmar are also taking the nuclear road, they too should soon expect the same re-warmed rebuke in their lead-

ing English newspapers from the young American greenie, Dr. Benjamin Sovacool.

A consensus is growing among Malaysia's considerable number of highly trained nuclear scientists, engineers, and professionals, some now retired and many close to retirement, that the time has come to simply ignore the ignorant flat earth green environmentalists. Instead, the nuclear community needs to concentrate on educating the public, including politicians and top public servants. The truth of the matter is that nuclear energy is by far the safest energy technology ever invented by mankind, without which Malaysia's youth (some 50 percent of the population are under 23 years old), will have a future no better than colonial plantation workers.

The anti-nuclear greenies, including Professor Sovacool, should practice what they preach and go back to nature without electricity and learn how to tap rubber and harvest palm oil fruit bunches for a living. The rest of us want to build the future.

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