

# The Developing Nations Must Go Nuclear

by Mohd Peter Davis

*The author is a biochemist and visiting scientist at the Institute of Advanced Technology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, the agriculture-based university near Kuala Lumpur.*

Faced with dwindling oil and gas reserves, Malaysia will be exploring nuclear energy to ensure long-term energy security for the nation. This was announced in the Budget Speech for 2009 by Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Aug. 29. The modest but important statement reopens, for the first time since the 1970s, the possibility of nuclear power plants in Malaysia. A further statement by the Minister of Energy on Sept. 19, made appropriately before youth at the Mara Junior Science College, announced a joint paper with the Minister of Science, recommending that the Cabinet make preparations to generate electricity by nuclear energy within 15 years. High fuel prices leave the government no choice. This paper on nuclear energy as an alternative source of power for the country will be placed before a Cabinet meeting by the end of 2008.

Deputy Science Minister Fadillah Yusof said on Oct. 20 that it was important for the public to know that nuclear power was safe, environmentally friendly, and more affordable in the long run; he added that the government would expect some form of resistance once the project took off.

## A Nuclear Renaissance

Malaysia is now part of the greatly welcomed worldwide nuclear renaissance, as developing countries, including Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members Indonesia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, and the Philippines, make concrete plans to build many nuclear plants.

Despite 40 years of unrelenting anti-nuclear, anti-technology campaigning led by Greenpeace and the

World Wide Fund for Nature, the world is going back, not to nature, but to science and to the sanity of Atoms for Peace. This visionary world program inspired my generation of youth in the 1950s and 1960s to take up science and technology and do something worthwhile and noble with their lives. New nuclear power plants were demonstrating the potential to generate enormous quantities of cheap electricity and fresh desalinated water from sea water. Instead of nuclear bombs to wipe out humanity, we could study how to build nuplexes (nuclear-powered agricultural and manufacturing cities), create the Green Revolution for food production, and even green the deserts for human habitation, thereby liberating Third World countries with science and technology from unnecessary poverty and hunger.

## Malthusian Lies

Alas, it did not happen. Science and technology in the first two post-war decades were getting too good with breakthroughs, such as doubling world food production and conquering tropical diseases with the remarkably cheap mosquito insecticide DDT, which was saving millions of lives from malaria and yellow fever. This scientific progress and development upset a small but very powerful international group of environmentalists, who continue the 200-year-old lie of Thomas Malthus that there are too many people on Earth, gobbling up the imagined irreplaceable resources. Influential best-selling books of the 1960s and 1970s, such as *Silent Spring*, *The Population Bomb*, *Limits to Growth*, and *Spaceship Earth*, fed fear and pessimism worldwide, reversing the post-war scientific and cultural optimism. Rather than seeing the human mind, with its discoveries and inventions, as the source of all wealth for the 1,000-fold increase in the human population since the Stone Age, these Malthusians posing as green environmentalists continue to advocate globalization, meaning basically an end to sovereign nations and a great reduction in population, now 6.7 billion, to under 2 billion. It seems the Malthusians love nature but hate mankind, and want to reduce population by famine and disease on a scale never before seen in history.

Instead of recognizing nuclear power as mankind's latest energy technology to sustain a growing world population by sensibly replacing non-renewable lower-energy-density sources (historically wood for fire, then charcoal and coal, and now oil and gas) the Malthusians

falsely claim that nuclear power is too dangerous and offer as alternatives puny candle power such as solar power, wind power, and biofuels. This is not to deny that important scientific progress has been made in these alternative energy sources. However, the useful range of low-energy-flux alternative energy is in remote locations with low population densities, such as rural areas, islands, yachts, camping, and outer space, which make it impractical and uneconomical to install power plants and electricity grids or to transport fuel over long distances. The intermittent source of power from solar or wind, dependent as it is on sunlight hours and wind speed, is completely unacceptable for urban populations living in the industrialized and computer age, but can be tolerated in remote locations since it is a welcomed alternative to no energy at all.

### Today's 'Green' Hoaxes

The alternative energy sources are hopelessly incapable, now or in the future, of providing 6.7 billion people with electricity and hydrogen to replace non-renewable fossil fuels, or supplying desalinated water for households and agriculture, as underground water left over from previous Ice Ages becomes depleted at an alarming rate. The ASEAN nations for example, home to 10% of the world's population, currently need 18 times more electricity generation to achieve the level of Australian per-capita electricity consumption and thereby provide a good, but by no means extravagant, standard of living for the whole population.

It is from this scientific and moral standpoint that we need to denounce an article appearing in *The Jakarta Post*, "Nuclear power is a false solution to climate change" (July 15). Dr. Benjamin K. Sovacool, a research fellow at the Centre on Asia and Globalisation at the National University of Singapore, makes the claim that nuclear power plants and mining and enriching uranium will generate excessive carbon dioxide, contributing to climate warming. This is another hoax and fear campaign by the Malthusians to prevent the world going nuclear, and was invented to replace their discredited claim that nuclear energy is dangerous. Twenty years after the Chernobyl nuclear accident, caused by a cavalier disregard for internationally accepted safety procedures, nuclear has proven to be the safest energy technology ever invented, causing 11 times fewer immediate deaths than the gas industry, per quantity electricity produced, 43 times fewer than

the coal industry, and 110 times fewer than hydroelectric dams.

Now, global warming caused by man-made carbon dioxide has become the new fairy tale. A growing body of scientists worldwide has revolted against this scientific fraud, and 31,000 have signed an anti-global warming petition, giving their professional position and scientific qualifications ([www.oism.org/pproject](http://www.oism.org/pproject)).

There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gasses is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere. Moreover, there is substantial scientific evidence that increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide produce many beneficial effects upon natural plant and animal environments.

Indeed, carbon dioxide has never been an environmental poison in the 4-billion-year history of the Earth's biosphere. Three centuries of science have conclusively proved that carbon dioxide is the gas of life, which, with the aid of sunlight and the chlorophyll of plants, gets fixed by photosynthesis into organic molecules to fuel the food chain.

The rainforest regions of ASEAN have ten times the rate of photosynthesis than temperate regions which do not enjoy our warm and humid, high-carbon-dioxide greenhouse climate. A Malaysian livestock entrepreneur has now discovered how to exploit this wonderfully productive and natural global warming, with grass plantations that can be harvested ten times per year for three years. The cut grass, mixed with concentrates, is fed to the world's best breeds of cattle and sheep in disease-free, climate-controlled housing. This Deep Tropical agricultural breakthrough produces three times more animals per hectare of land than to the best New Zealand grazing farms, and can spread rapidly throughout the humid tropics, allowing these countries to become self-sufficient in milk, beef, and lamb.

As nuclear-desalinated water becomes plentiful over the next 10 to 50 years in drier tropical countries, even deserts, we can fulfill the vision of Atoms for Peace. With nuclear plants producing electricity and desalinated water, a second Green Revolution could raise the food supply of the 80% of the world's population in developing countries, to the quality diet enjoyed in the developed countries.

*mohd\_peter@hotmail.com*