WELCOME: Chin with Dr Khairuddin behind him shaking hands with Unimas staff upon arrival at the function.

Nuke power next best energy option: Chin

By **Jacob Achoi**

SAMARAHAN: The country sees nuclear energy as the next best option to meet the ever increasing demand for power supply.

In disclosing this yesterday, Minister of Energy, Green Technology and Water Datuk Peter Chin said it would not be too soon but imminent nevertheless.

"If we look at our depleting resources, we need to look at nuclear as one of the energy sources of the future that is cheap and reliable.

"But we are not talking about using nuclear energy now, maybe about 15 or 20 years later when our energy needs are so huge as our industries increase, particularly in 2020 when the country is supposed to become developed," Chin told a press conference yesterday.

Earlier Chin launched the 'Green Week 2009' organised by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) Faculty of Engineering at the campus here.

Among those present was Unimas vice-chancellor Prof Dr Khairuddin Ab Hamid.

> If we look at our depleting resources, we need to look at nuclear as one of the energy sources of the future that is cheap and reliable.
>
> Datuk Peter Chin, Minister of Energy, Green Technology and Water

Chin pointed out that the country must prepare from now to meet the increasing demand for electricity in the future, adding that nuclear energy would become the preference.

He said the country had to be both practical and pragmatic to get ready the source of energy for future needs.

Chin also said that the government was really pushing for the use of green technology and had thus rolled out green technology plan for the coming Malaysian Plan.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak would launch the plan next month, he said, adding that his ministry had had many brainstorming sessions and was strategising what needed to be done pertaining to green technology.

"Evidently green technology is a wider subject, and we in the ministry are working on the priority that need to be looked at," he stressed.

He said green technology was not new but was given focus by the government particularly because of climatic change.

According to him, Malaysia started fostering green technology development with the introduction of renewable energy as the fifth fuel in the National Energy Policy way back in 2000.

He said countries like Germany, Japan and United States used green technology widely, both for energy source and business.

Earlier, Chin said the energy demand in the country was expected to increase at an average of 6.3 per cent per annum during the current Ninth Malaysia Plan.

The economic growth was forecast at six per cent a year.

He noted that as an export-based economy, the industrial sector consumed up to 43.2 per cent of the final commercial energy demand in 2007, while the transport sector consumed 35.5 per cent.

"Malaysia is indeed lucky as we are still a net energy exporter, but we need to be mindful that our energy reserves are depleting rapidly," he said.

He reminded that there was an urgent need to use energy judiciously and to prudently explore the energy reserves, to prevent the country from depending on imported energy.

Chin commended Unimas for holding the green technology seminar to create awareness on it at a time when the government was seriously embarking on the technology.

Mini-hydro planned for remote villages

SAMARAHAN: The government is seriously looking into mini-hydro to provide cheap and environment-friendly power supply to rural and remote areas in the state.

Minister of Energy, Green Technology and Water Datuk Peter Chin said there were still many longhouses in rural areas still not connected with 24-hour electricity supply.

Describing these longhouses as "energy starved islands", Chin said it was almost impossible to provide them with the grid system due to the very high cost, particularly when a longhouse had only 15 to 20 doors.

As such, alternative ways had to be looked at, he stressed.

He told reporters that Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) already had two pilot projects, one in Kampung Abok Mawang in Sri Aman and one in Simunjan.

Impressed with the projects, Chin said a committee comprising officers from the ministry and Unimas would be formed to seriously dwell on the matter.

"The officers from my ministry will talk to Unimas to find the best ways to implement it (mini-hydro) and after that we will work with the Ministry of Rural Development, the residents and district officers as to where to put the generators for the mini-hydro.

"And if we can have a robust system that can be used with minimum maintenance for 24 hours, I think it will be very important and a much appreciated effort on the part of the government," Chin told a press conference after launching Green Week at Unimas campus here.

He assured that he would try to persuade the federal government for some funds for the worthwhile projects that would benefit the rural people in Sarawak and Sabah and also Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia.

According to Chin, probably about 50,000 rural people are not connected to Rural Electricity Supply (RES).

He stressed that the two projects by Unimas proved that mini-hydro had the potential to be developed and that all that needed to be done was to find a reliable water supply to power the mini-hydro project.

Chin hoped that Public Works Department (JKR), Sesco and Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) could also work together for the project to materialise.

Chin went on to say that it was not economical to use generator sets in rural areas due to the high price of diesel and transportation cost.

"Besides, these generators are expensive to maintain," Chin added.