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‘No Nuclear-Free Taiwan For at Least 50 Years,’ Lawmakers Told

Lawmakers have been told that plans to eventually halt the operation of nuclear power plants in Taiwan could not become a reality until 2061 at the earliest.

The chairman of Taiwan's Atomic Energy Council (AEC), Ouyang Min-Shen, told the science and technology committee of the Taiwanese Legislature that this was the earliest date that the fourth nuclear power plant project – currently under construction – could be decommissioned.

Mr Ouyang was answering a question from Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lawmaker Mark Chen, who asked: “Since turning Taiwan into a nuclear-free country is a national policy, I wonder when it will be nuclear free?”

Mr Chen was referring to a new ‘Environmental Basic Law’, passed by the Legislative Yuan (parliament) last month, which requires the government to turn Taiwan into “a homeland free of nuclear energy, and give priority to environmental protection in formulating policies for economic, social and technological development”.

Under the law, city and county authorities throughout Taiwan must also devise measures to control emissions of carbon dioxide. The law also requires the government to set up an “environmental evaluation system” to prevent or reduce the impact of development policies and projects on the environment.

Mr Ouyang said policies aimed at bringing forward the decommissioning of nuclear power plants, as well as for the promotion of energy conservation, were under review, but he added: “I roughly estimate that Taiwan won’t become nuclear free until 2061.” Addressing concerns that Taiwan had no experience in decommissioning nuclear plants, he said the AEC had learned from the experience of countries such as the US, which had already successfully decommissioned several nuclear plants.

Responding to criticism from other lawmakers for the Taiwan Power Company's (Taipower) failure to date in identifying a suitable site for a final repository for low-level radioactive waste, Mr Ouyang said laws were being drawn up that “would soon provide a legal basis” for the government to select a repository site [see News No. 178, 21st May].

Source: Government Information Office, Taiwan

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