

Gov't urged to divulge Lynas waste dumpsite

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Environmental activists today demanded that Prime Minister Najib Razak reveal the site where radioactive waste from Lynas' RM700 million rare-earth processing plant in Gebeng, Kuantan will be disposed.

This follows the premier's comment yesterday that Lynas' waste will be stored at an isolated location away from the plant, while stating that the exact location was still being "looked at".

Stop Lynas Coalition and Save Malaysia Stop Lynas joint press conference big "Where are we going to dump the waste? In Temerloh, Pekan, Maran or the National Park?" queried Stop Lynas Coalition chairperson (SLC) Andansura Rabu and Stop Lynas Save Malaysia chairperson Tan Bun Teet in a joint statement today.

"Even if the government can satisfactorily find a permanent disposal site, what about the 500 tonnes of contaminated run-off from the plant that will be drained into the Balok River and into the South China Sea everyday?"

"What about the 100,000 cubic metre of waste gas every hour that will be polluting our air?"

Insisting that the facility, dubbed the Lynas Advanced Material Plant (Lamp), will be detrimental to Malaysia, they want the government to mothball it or be punished at the upcoming polls.

"SLC and SMSL are giving the government an ultimatum - either Najib and his administration stop Lamp from operating in Malaysia or we will embark on a nationwide campaign to vote this government out."

'Confused gov't reaction'

The two anti-Lynas organisations pointed out the irony where Canberra is expected to rake in RM57.6 million from the Lynas mines in Western Australia, while Malaysia has instead granted the company a 12-year tax break.

Meanwhile, the Himpunan Hijau Steering Committee said that the plan to dump massive amount of radioactive waste far away from habitated area is "totally senseless and unacceptable".

"Our prime minister must realise that the thousands of acres of land used for permanent disposal of toxic/radioactive wastes will deprive our children and our children's children for generations to come from getting near it for billions of years," said committee chairperson Wong Tack.

"This permanent radioactive polluting site will subject our whole nation to the risks of widespread contamination and pollution.

"Our prime minister must also know that the issue is not only limited to the management of the radioactive waste disposal. Every step of the processing of raw materials - from cracking to leaching and purification to separation to product finishing - is highly hazardous and can cause severe irreversible harm to the environment and the well-being of the people."

An anti Lynas activist displays a placard during a Green Gathering 2.0 in Kuantan The Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) had last month approved a temporary operation licence for Lamp, sparking a 15,000-strong rally in Kuantan last Sunday in protest of the move.

The rally has since elicited confused reaction from the Malaysian government, with Health Minister Liow Tiong Lai saying that the waste would be sent back to Australia despite Canberra's refusal to accept it.

Activists are concerned that Lamp's waste storage - which contains radioactive thorium and uranium - may leak, triggering another Asian Rare Earth disaster in Bukit Merah where its population suffers an unnaturally high number of leukemia cases.

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