

**PSC set up to review Lynas project**  
**MalaysiaKini.com**  
**March 20, 2012**  
**By S Pathmawathy**

The government has tabled a motion to set up a parliamentary select committee (PSC) to look into health and safety concerns surrounding the disputed rare earths refinery in Gebeng, Kuantan.

The RM2.5 billion Lynas Advanced Materials Plant is expected to be operational by the end of the third quarter of the year.

NONEMinister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz (left) said the PSC will also study the safety standards of the project.

This is because critics of the project are particularly concerned about disposal of radioactive waste from the plant and potential contamination of the environment.

Nazri had earlier announced that the committee will be chaired by Higher Education Minister Khaled Nordin. Eight parliamentarians - four BN MPs, three Pakatan Rakyat MPs and one Independent - will sit on the PSC.

It has three months to review public feedback on the project and to submit recommendations to the Dewan Rakyat for debate.

Lynas, an Australian mineral exploration and chemical processing company, has maintained that the waste from the plant being constructed in Gebeng, 25km from Kuantan, would not be hazardous and could be recycled for commercial use.

During the debate the motion, seven MPs from both side of the divide were given opportunities to raise their concerns.

While Pakatan Rakyat parliamentarians unanimously objected to the PSC which they dubbed a move to rubber-stamp the project, BN MPs urged the government to obtain more expert opinions to douse fears on purported hazardous waste from the refinery.

NONEFuziah Salleh (PKR-Kuantan) (left), who has been in the forefront of the issues, insisted that the PSC must be given the mandate to decide on the future of the refinery.

She added that while the committee has been given three months to conduct its duty, the government should ensure that all work on the refinery be suspended; no rare earth ores are imported; and all agencies and regulators involved in the project must stop issuing statements on the plant's safety until the recommendation are submitted to Parliament.

"If the government is really sincere about examining the safety of the Lynas plant, the mandate of the decisions on the fate and future of the project must be given to this committee to recommend," said Fuziah.

"Anything less from what is demanded will be considered just a shadow-play and farce gearing up for the elections," she said.

Gather expert feedback, suggests Khairy

Khairy Jamaluddin (BN-Rembau) suggested that the PSC also gather expert feedback on the controversial project.

“Even before the PSC has been formed there has been prejudice cast on it that it has no powers,” he said, hitting out at the opposition for politicising matters concerning safety over the rare earth ores.

Shahrir Samad (BN-Johor Baru) added that the committee’s sittings should be broadcast live, to maximise exposure.

NONEKuala Selangor PAS MP Dzulkefly Ahmad (left) then interjected that if the government was sincere, the public should have been informed about the plan to build the plant prior to approving the project.

Dzulkefly was then interjected by Tangga Batu BN MP Idris Haron, who posed an interesting analogy.

“When Henry Ford invented the automobile, people did not ask him whether it will cause accidents,” said Idris.

Fuziah and Dzulkefly told reporters at the Parliament lobby later that the PSC will be a waste of time if the committee is powerless in deciding whether the project should continue.

The PKR and PAS MPs also threatened to boycott the panel, for which three spots for the opposition had been allocated, if their demands are not met.

DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, in a statement yesterday, said the party will abstain from the participating in the committee, calling it a sham.

Nazri will respond to the the questions and concerns raised by the MPs at 2.30pm during the winding-up session.



