

## **Our PM didn't ask Mahathir to drop Lynas conditions - Australian High Commission**

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Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison did not ask then Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad to drop the conditions imposed on rare earth company Lynas in August 2019, said Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia Andrew Goledzinowski.

“Several media outlets have recently repeated claims that Morrison (photo, above) asked Mahathir to drop licence conditions imposed on Lynas in August 2019.

“These claims are false. The Australian government did not request the Malaysian government to remove or change the conditions in the six-month licence Lynas was granted on Aug 15, 2019,” Goledzinowski said in a statement today.

He was referring to reports on former deputy defence minister Liew Chin Tong’s new book, which revealed that Mahathir wanted to sack then energy, science,

technology, environment and climate change minister Yeo Bee Yin after her ministry announced new and significant conditions for Lynas' operating licence.

Among others, the conditions required Lynas to shift its cracking and leaching facility back to Australia within four years.

In 2019, two months after he allegedly wanted to sack Yeo, Mahathir met with Morrison at the 35th Asean Summit in Bangkok and later said Morrison spent a good amount of time asking for the conditions imposed on Lynas to be dropped.

Goledzinowski said the Australian government actually welcomed the decision by the Malaysian government to grant Lynas a six-month licence in August 2019 and a three-year licence in February 2020.

Also in August 2019, he said he published an op-ed praising the Malaysian government's pro-science decision for signalling that Malaysia is a safe destination for serious investment in advanced manufacturing.

He added that, at the time, Lynas also announced it expected to satisfy the new conditions in its licence.

The conditions, which were ultimately retained, fell short of a full closure of

Lynas' facility in Gebeng, Kuantan.

“The regulation of industry in Malaysia is a matter for the Malaysian government. All Australia has ever asked is that these decisions are based on the scientific evidence, in various Malaysian government and international studies, which shows Lynas is intrinsically low-risk and well-managed,” Goledzinowski said.

It is appropriate for a free and democratic society like Malaysia to have a robust public debate, including in the media, on an issue like Lynas, he said.

“But participants in this debate, including the media, should get their facts right,” he added.

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