

M'sia has rare earth elements worth over RM809b - Nik Nazmi

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Malaysia has some 16.1 million tonnes of non-radioactive rare earth elements (NR-REE) worth about RM809.6 billion, Natural Resources, Environment, and Climate Change Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad said.

According to him, a study by the Minerals and Geoscience Department (JMG) has shown that the minerals are mainly located in 10 states, namely Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Sarawak, Selangor, and Terengganu.

Nik Nazmi noted that the data shows Malaysia has the potential of becoming an NR-REE exporter, as long as its extraction is regulated and abides by the standard operating procedures set by the ministry.

"The SOP includes all legislation currently in force such as the Mineral Development Act 1994, the State Mineral Enactment, the Environmental Quality Act 1974, and the Town and Country Planning Act 1976.

"In addition to SOP compliance, any NR-REE mining is also subject to the approval of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report by the Department of Environment and the approval of the Operational Mining Scheme by the JMG," Berita Harian quoted Nik Nazmi as saying.

The minister was responding in a written answer to a question by Che Alias Hamid (PN-Kemaman) who asked for a list of states that have NR-REE and their value, in Parliament recently.

Nik Nazmi stressed that so far, his ministry does not support nor approve any mining activities, including NR-REE being carried out in permanent forest reserves, protected reserves, and environmentally sensitive areas.

Elaborating, Nik Nazmi said his ministry has also identified a more environmentally friendly 'in-situ' leaching method which involves minimal land clearing for mineral extraction from the ground.

This method reportedly has less impact on the environment than the open-pit mining method used currently, which involves forest clearing.

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