

YOURSAY | Enact laws to regulate rare earth exploits

Malaysiakini

18 June 2023

Yoursay

YOURSAY | 'Without proper laws, rare earth should not be touched for now.'

Headhunter: It's time we demand a new law against the exploitation of rare earth before the floodgates are opened and another major environmental degradation takes place.

Those cronies, politicians and their network of coterie, will be using the same old dirty tricks about "providing employment for the people" as an excuse to destroy the environment for their own greed.

If the rare earth is worth a lot now, imagine what it will be worth for future generations. Until they can be managed with preserving the environment in mind, there should not be touched now.

Apanama is back: Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, time to regulate this non-radioactive rare earth with new legislation.

A Rare Earth Act 2023 covering both radioactive and non-radioactive rare earth elements is needed. All these should be under the federal government, not the state since the amount of RM809.6 billion is good revenue.

Form a commission as what we have such as water, land and minerals. For example, if a company plans to drill a water bore for mineral water, they need to ask permission from the commission. This is just one example.

You cannot let the state government handle the matter. The state only does the close monitoring and reports back to the commission at the federal level. Licensing, and routine audit/inspection, among others, should be at the federal level.

You may follow how the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA) under the Health Ministry is regulating pharmaceutical and medical devices, among others. This is a good framework to follow.

Rope in the Department of Environment as well for waste treatment. We have agencies in place. Just need a bill and a commission. In this way, we could handle both health and environmental issues.

Do not become like China which has poor regulation in rare earth production/mining. Perhaps, they will improve later. This is still a new field.

Learn from our own history about petroleum. Back in 1974, Petronas was established as a legal entity incorporated under the Malaysian Companies Act and reports to the company's board of directors. The corporation is vested with all oil and gas resources in Malaysia and is entrusted with the responsibility of developing and adding value to these resources.

You see, you can use the same concept on this. No states handle the mining of these elements. By legislation, you can ensure the power is vested at the federal level, maybe under your ministry.

We have experience in petroleum and medicine. Therefore, the concept and framework are there. Just the material is different.

Newday: Nik Nazmi, whenever there is a gold rush mentality, corruption and turning a blind eye to environmental and community health, will happen in Malaysia.

Mining is predominantly a state-based and controlled activity. The various legislations need to be seriously beefed up and the enforcement of the regulations needs to be rigorous. There are mega bucks involved in this and greed will get in the way of good mining standards.

We must be forever observant of those that abuse the process for their own

benefit over the health and well-being of the community.

Anonymous 1092837465: The government should discard the idea that a country can only prosper if it has got natural resources. Just look at Singapore. I'm sure, buried under its country are also vast sources of rare earth metals. But did they mine them to prosper?

No, they developed their human resources instead. In the 1950s, they were economically on par with us. Now, they are economically and technologically way far ahead of us, without dependence on natural resources.

According to the report, "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 current open-pit mining method used, which involves forest clearing".

In-situ leaching as compared to open-pit mining is supposed to be more environmentally friendly, with minimal land clearing and less impact on the environment.

Firstly, less impact as compared to open-pit mining doesn't mean that the impact of in-situ mining is small. Surely, the impact is going to be great but the only thing

is, it's less when compared to that of open-pit mining.

Secondly, let's say the layer of rare earth elements (NR-REE) lies below a forest. The initial natural state of the NR-REE is most likely a solid, insoluble ore of the REE. So initially it's a thick layer of forest soil on top of this layer of NR-REE ore.

Then, using in-situ leaching, an acidic or alkaline solution is pumped through pipes into the ore layer so that the ore reacts with the acid or alkaline solution to produce a solution of NR-REE. Then the NR-REE solution is pumped out to the processing facilities.

New acid or alkaline solution is continuously pumped into the ore layer till most of the REE is extracted in its solution form. So eventually, isn't the solid ore layer going to be replaced by a solution or liquid layer?

Wouldn't soil particles above this ore layer go to sink into the solution? Eventually, wouldn't the whole forest floor sink, destabilising the forest trees?

Falcon: Wow - what utter narrow interpretation and citation! This is modern-day piracy, theft of resources, and destruction of the environment.

Does the federal government have laws in place to address shortcomings and environmental degradation and its impact on community health? When land

matters under the state powers? No?

Have we not learned lessons from Asia Rare Earth, then that notorious Kuantan episode still in limbo and all kinds of twists and turns? Already current issues have seen major gaps and flaws, now we invite more problems.

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