

PM: Decontaminate raw materials first

PUTRAJAYA: Lynas Malaysia or any other rare earth mining company can operate in Malaysia if it can first decontaminate its raw materials before bringing them into the country, said Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad after several ministers traded barbs this week over the plant's operation.

Malaysia, said the Prime Minister, had opened up the rare earth mining business to other companies but they would only be allowed to operate if they comply with the government's conditions.

"We have opened up the business to other people. There are other companies willing to buy or acquire Lynas.

"They have given us a promise that in the future, before sending raw materials to Malaysia, they will clean these up first and decontaminate them with regards to radioactivity.

"This is so that when the raw material comes here, the volume is less and the waste is not dangerous to anybody," Dr Mahathir told reporters after chairing the weekly Cabinet meeting.

Several Pakatan leaders, including Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Fuziah Salleh and Bentong MP Wong Tack had exchanged words with Datuk Seri Mohd Redzuan Yusof after the Entrepreneur Development Minister

said the Lynas plant in Kuantan would not be shut down.

Australian-based Lynas has a processing plant in Pahang but is facing problems getting licence renewals due to concerns over its waste management.

Last year, Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Minister Yeo Bee Yin had said that Lynas should honour its commitment to remove its water leach purification residue from Malaysia before the endorsement of its operating licence, which expires on Sept 2.

On another matter, Dr Mahathir said fresh investigations would be launched into the disappearance of

Pastor Raymond Koh and Amri Che Mat but only after the retirement of Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Mohamad Fuzi Harun on May 4.

"We will open a new investigation. But to do this, we will wait because the accusation is directed at the present IGP. We will wait until there is a change of IGP. We will then set up a group to study if there is substance in the hearsay evidence by Suhakam," he said.

On Wednesday, Suhakam had ruled that the police's Special Branch was responsible for Amri and Koh's disappearance in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

Mohamed Fuzi headed the Special Branch then.