



Leaders' beeline

Dr Mahathir (left) with Asean leaders after a photo session during the 22th Asean Plus Three Summit at the IMPACT Exhibition and Convention Centre in Nonthaburi, Thailand. Also present were Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (right) and China's Premier Li Keqiang (third, right). — Bernama

Australia hopes for lifting of Lynas' curb

BANGKOK: The Australian government has expressed hope that Malaysia will drop the restrictions imposed on Lynas Corporation and has also indicated more investments will be made by the Australian firm.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who met his counterpart Scott Morrison for a bilateral meeting yesterday, said the Aussie leader took considerable time to talk about Lynas.

"They are hoping that we will drop the restrictions and of course we will decide in three months.

"Of course, Lynas wishes to invest more in Malaysia and these are big investments running into billions,"

he told the media after the meeting held on the sidelines of the 35th Asean Summit.

In August, the Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) renewed the Australian rare earth company's operations for another six months.

Lynas must also comply with three conditions including coming up with a plan to build a "Cracking and Leaching" facility abroad to transfer the process away from its current plant in Gebeng, Kuantan.

Another condition is for the company to identify a specific location to build a Permanent Disposal Facility (PDF) and obtain written permission from the state government

involved in order to use the location.

Lynas has been embroiled in controversy for several years, with environmentalists and Pakatan Harapan politicians protesting against the plant on health grounds and calling for its closure.

Critics were particularly concerned about the potential adverse health effects that the radioactive waste could have on local communities.

Asked on how the government would convince members of its own coalition that Lynas' radioactive waste posed no danger to the public, Dr Mahathir said it was easy to

make a decision to close down companies like Lynas without full knowledge of the situation and consequences.

"Now that we are in the driver's seat, we find that if you do certain things there are reactions, and the reactions can be very costly. So, we have to rethink these things.

"In the case of Lynas it is not as dangerous as it is made out to be so we have to think again of the consequences. One of the consequences would be direct foreign direct investment will be retarded because investors will feel we don't keep to our words. We have to be careful about that," he said.

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