

PAS man denies supporting Lynas plant
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 29 — PAS lawmaker Che Rosli Che Mat has insisted that his comments on primetime television were not in support of a controversial RM700 million rare earth plant that is being opposed by his Pakatan Rakyat (PR) colleagues.

The Hulu Langat MP also told The Malaysian Insider yesterday that he appeared in a TV3 segment that staunchly defended the refinery being built by Australian miner Lynas Corp in his personal capacity as a nuclear scientist and not as a representative of the Islamist party.

"I told the TV3 journalist that I need the permission of my party president but because Karam Singh Walia called me two or three times, I said I would only appear as a scientist," the former lecturer said.

PAS said yesterday that it will demand an explanation from Che Rosli after Hari Raya this week as to why he broke ranks with the party's stand although it clarified that it was not a disciplinary issue.

Although Che Rosli also said that he will accept the party's decision on the matter, he insisted that "I did not act against the party and I do not support Lynas."

The Malaysian Insider understands that the MP will be hauled up to the party headquarters in the second week of September over comments he made regarding the plant that has raised fears of radiation pollution among Kuantan residents.

File photo showing the site of the Lynas Advanced Materials Plant in Gebeng, near Kuantan. In the news segment, Che Rosli had said: "The ones that have raised this issue is PKR... but it is unfair. Is Lynas a nuclear plant? They spin. I was ashamed. I am a PAS member too. So I made the decision as a nuclear scientist to come today. They can say whatever they want.

"These allegations are unscientific and not academic at all. The public does not need to be afraid. They can go themselves and see in the Lynas plant, what will be built and the facilities it will have to protect the safety of its workers and also the general public."

Following Che Rosli's appearance on television, Pahang PAS information chief Suhaimi Md Saad told The Malaysian Insider last week that Che Rosli's actions were unacceptable as the nuclear scientist could have used party channels or even voiced his support for the plant in party organ Harakah.

"We know he supported the plant when we first discussed the issue in 2009. But after consulting other experts, PAS's stand was to oppose the project. But now he has gone into the enemy's camp to attack his own party," Suhaimi had said.

A review of the project led by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) put forward 11 recommendations for Lynas to meet before beginning operations which have been adopted by Putrajaya.

But Lynas has denied reports that the new conditions set by the government will delay the plant by up to two years, insisting that it remains on track to begin operations and complete

phase one of the plant by the end of 2011.

The Australian mining giant has said that its plant — which will extract rare earth metals crucial for high-technology products like smartphones, hybrid cars and wind turbines — will create a RM4 billion multiplier effect annually and 350 jobs for skilled workers.

Although reports say the plant may earn RM8 billion for Lynas, critics have questioned the real economic benefit of the project, pointing to the 12-year tax break Lynas will enjoy due to its pioneer status.

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