

**'Too late' for Lynas panel, activists say**  
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**By Yow Hong Chieh**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 — The new parliamentary select committee on the Lynas issue is “too little, too late”, said activists who have already mounted legal action against the Australian miner’s rare earth plant.

Stop Lynas Coalition chairman Andansura Rabu said this was because the refinery in Gebeng, Kuantan was already close to completion and had secured an approval for a temporary operating licence (TOL) from the authorities.

He said he was also sceptical of what the panel could achieve with its three-month mandate, given that Putrajaya had put off its formation until now despite months of fierce public opposition.

He added that he was also doubtful of the government’s sincerity in addressing the myriad concerns of anti-Lynas critics, saying that a separate parliamentary select committee on electoral reform has “not done its job”.

“The focus should be on how to close it (the plant),” he told The Malaysian Insider over the phone.

“They are trying to soften the impact of the plant ahead of the general election. They want to get back the support of the people.”

Andansura added that he will proceed with the application for judicial review against the Atomic Energy Licensing Board’s (AELB) decision to approve the TOL for Lynas Corp’s Malaysian operation, which he filed with nine other Pahang residents at the High Court here last month.

Save Malaysia, Stop Lynas (SMSL) co-ordinator Tan Bun Teet — who has filed an appeal with the science, technology and innovation minister — said the select committee appeared to be a “show” put on by Putrajaya to make it seem like the government was listening to the public’s views.

He said he did not know if the panel had the power to cancel the Lynas project as its terms were still unclear but warned against “yet another review” like the one conducted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

“Their intention is suspect because right now we are still waiting to attend the appeals hearing with the minister.

“So why do we need a parliamentary select committee? Will it override the minister’s powers?” he said, noting that the minister has clear authority to revoke the TOL.

He added that Putrajaya should reveal what the terms of the select committee are and what they hoped to achieve by its formation.

The parliamentary select committee on the Lynas issue, announced yesterday, will be headed by Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Khaled Nordin.

The select committee, which has been tasked with delivering its findings within three months, will comprise four Barisan Nasional (BN) parliamentarians, three opposition MPs and one independent lawmaker.

Anti-Lynas activists have downplayed Putrajaya's decision, saying the special panel was meaningless if it meant Lynas Corp could continue work on its plant in Gebeng, some 25km from Kuantan.

They also said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak should bite the bullet and cancel the project instead of letting the issue drag on until after elections, which must be called by April next year.

Thousands of anti-Lynas protestors attended an opposition-backed rally by Himpunan Hijau last month, in the largest protest yet against the rare earth plant that is expected to fire up later this year.

They allege that Lynas has not given enough assurances on how it will handle the low-level radioactive waste that will be produced at the refinery.

Lynas maintains that waste from the Gebeng plant will not be hazardous and can be easily recycled for commercial applications.

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