

DAP to stay out of Lynas PSC
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, March 19 — The DAP will abstain from participating in the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on the Lynas issue, its secretary-general Lim Guan Eng said today, calling the panel a “sham”.

He charged that the PSC, expected to be proposed in Parliament tomorrow, was the Najib administration’s way of legitimising the controversial Lynas Corporation plant, which activists claim would be an environmental hazard.

“DAP will not participate in a sham PSC which serves to deliver a ‘fait accompli’ by endorsing the Lynas plant and forcing public acceptance without any due regard for safety, environmental and health concerns,” Lim (picture) said in a media statement here.

The Cabinet agreed last week for form a bipartisan PSC to look into the Lynas controversy but Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak irked the project’s detractors when he said on Saturday the panel’s purpose was not to decide on the fate of the plant in Gebeng, Kuantan.

Instead, Najib had said the PSC was part of Putrajaya’s engagement process to ensure the public understood the issues at hand.

“It has to do with the process of engagement with the people and for them (the select committee) to look at all aspects of the project, especially the safety factor and any possible threats to health,” he told reporters in Ipoh.

Today, Lim said this implied the panel’s conclusion was already predetermined.

“In other words, this whole exercise is merely to help the project gain acceptance and to help the BN government convince Malaysians that there is no threat from the Lynas rare earth plant and its potentially hazardous radioactive waste,” Lim said.

Given that the PSC is unlikely to decide the fate of the Lynas plant, Lim said it would be a “complete waste of time” for DAP to participate in it.

Lim also urged other Pakatan Rakyat (PR) component parties to join DAP in abstaining from joining the PSC.

“We should not be used as tools in the BN’s bid to fool the people and to justify the setting up of the Lynas rare earth plant,” he said.

Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz said on Saturday that the bipartisan panel would comprise nine members — four BN lawmakers, three PR MPs, one independent and with Umno minister Datuk Seri Khaled Nordin as chairman.

He said the panel would be tasked with getting feedback from stakeholders such as authorities and citizens groups, and deliver its findings within three months.

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.

Critics of the refinery want Putrajaya to direct the nation's nuclear regulator to reverse its decision to approve Lynas's temporary operating licence (TOL), which will let the Australian miner embark on a two-year trial run.

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.

The government has been under pressure from groups to shut down the rare earth project over safety fears, but Putrajaya has stood its ground on the project that was first earmarked for Terengganu.

Lynas maintains that waste from the Gebeng plant — which will be the largest rare earth refinery in the world upon completion — will not be hazardous and can be recycled for commercial applications.

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