

PAS man says Lynas plant 'safe' if properly monitored
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SHAH ALAM, Feb 24 — A PAS lawmaker said today Lynas Corp's rare earth plant in Gebeng would not be hazardous to the public if it is properly monitored.

Hulu Langat MP Che Rosli Che Mat courted controversy last year when he refuted fears of radiation pollution should the Lynas plant be constructed.

He had spoken back then in his personal capacity as a scientist, saying that PKR's allegations over the safety of the plant were "unscientific" and "not academic".

"It (the plant) is safe if there is monitoring," Che Rosli (picture) told reporters today when asked to comment on PKR's plans to take part in this weekend's Himpunan Hijau 2.0 anti-Lynas rally in Kuantan.

But Che Rosli said he would not attend the anti-Lynas rally as he had personal matters to attend to.

"It is up to the people of Kuantan to decide," he said before leaving the press conference.

Selangor PAS deputy commissioner Khalid Samad, who was also present, quickly pointed out that Che Rosli's views were personal and did not reflect PAS or Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) stand on the matter.

"For PAS, PKR... it is not safe," said the Shah Alam MP.

PKR confirmed today that its top leaders, led by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, will take part in this weekend's rally.

The party said in a statement it has also instructed PKR members in Pahang and other states to show up to pressure the government into aborting Lynas Corp's rare earth plant in nearby Gebeng, which is expected to fire up later this year. PKR has also switched its retreat in Lumut this weekend to Kuantan to ensure its leadership attends the rally.

The main rally in Kuantan will be held from 9.30am onwards, with simultaneous rallies in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Perak and Sabah.

More than 20,000 people are expected to turn up at the rally to protest against the plant's trial run following the Atomic Energy Licensing Board's (AELB) award of a temporary operating licence (TOL) to Lynas on January 20.

The first Himpunan Hijau gathering, held in October at the Taman Gelora beach, attracted a 2,000-strong crowd.

Deeply concerned over the potential environmental impact of the plant, anti-Lynas groups

have grown in force over the past year since news of the nuclear power plant crisis in Fukushima, Japan hit global headlines.

Last week, 10 Pahang residents filed suit against the AELB and two others alleging that the regulator had issued the TOL for the RM2.5 billion rare earth plant in return for a cut of the firm's income.

The suit, filed at the High Court here last Friday, seeks a court order to cancel AELB's award of the TOL to Lynas.

The Australian miner is looking to break China's chokehold on the supply of rare earth metals needed to manufacture high-tech products such as smartphones, energy-efficient light bulbs and hybrid cars.

Lynas expects to generate some RM8 billion annually from its operations here.

Putrajaya announced on Wednesday it will form an independent monitoring unit to audit the construction of the plant to ensure compliance to standards imposed by regulators.

This follows allegations made in the New York Times that a key contractor for the rare earth plant pulled out over safety concerns.

The unit will be set up and run by four ministries — the International Trade and Industry Ministry, the Science and Technology Ministry, the Energy, Green Technology and Water Ministry, and the Health Ministry.

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