

Guan Eng: Lynas Corp boss wants to meet me
The Malaysian Insider
March 6 , 2012
By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal

KUALA LUMPUR, March 6 — Lim Guan Eng said today Lynas Corp CEO Nick Curtis has made a formal request to meet him when the Penang chief minister visits Australia this March 23.

Lim (picture) told reporters that Curtis had emailed his staff yesterday, saying that he would like to “brief and provide an update” on the Lynas Plant Materials Plant in Gebeng, Pahang.

“I am going there on an official visit as head of the Penang government, and will also be giving a talk to students of the University of Melbourne on March 23.

“I am not going to decide without any prior consultation with stakeholders like the anti-Lynas groups, Himpunan Hijau,” he said.

“But my personal preference is not to meet him (Curtis) but for him to come to Malaysia and meet with the anti-Lynas NGOs,” Lim added.

The Bagan MP pointed out that as Penang CM he was not a direct “stakeholder” in the construction of the rare earth refinery in Gebeng, Kuantan.

“I am the chief minister of Penang, not Pahang. He (Curtis) should meet the groups in Kuantan instead,” Lim stressed.

Pahang DAP organising secretary Lee Chin Chen, who was also present, said Himpunan Hijau would meet tonight to discuss the matter.

“We will discuss it tonight and come up with a decision,” said Lee, who is also a Himpunan Hijau committee member.

Thousands of anti-Lynas protestors attended an opposition-backed mass rally organised by Himpunan Hijau last weekend in the single largest protest yet against the rare earth refinery that is expected to fire up operations later this year.

Critics of the Lynas refinery want the government to halt its construction and direct the Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) to reverse a decision to grant Lynas a temporary operating licence (TOL), which will let it embark on a two-year trial run.

They allege that the Australian miner 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.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai told the Sin Chew Daily last week that Lynas will have to send the waste back to Australia even though the Western Australian government

has said it will not take back the residue from the ore mined from Mount Weld in the state.

But anti-Lynas groups have charged that Malaysia risks breaching international laws if it ships Lynas Corp's rare earth waste out of the country.

The company has maintained that waste from its planned rare earth refinery in Gebeng will not be hazardous, and that the radioactive residue can be recycled for "commercial applications".

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