

Anti-Lynas groups claim MB eyeing Sg Lembing as waste dump
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, March 7 — Anti-Lynas groups today alleged that Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob last night suggested dumping Lynas Corp's radioactive waste into the disused mining shafts of Sungai Lembing.

The menteri besar, added the groups in a statement here, had also warned politicians present against taking part in any anti-Lynas activities at the risk of repercussions should Barisan Nasional (BN) retain the state in the coming polls.

The groups said they were "appalled" by Adnan's suggestion to dump radioactive material in Sungai Lembing, saying this would discourage tourists from visiting the resort town and eventually return it to its past "post-mining doom".

"The thousands of tourists who visit this lovely town each year will go elsewhere in the presence of a radioactive waste dump.

"Imagine the loss of livelihoods and income for the local people?" Tan Bun Teet from Save Malaysia, Stop Lynas (SMSL) said in the statement.

When contacted, Tan told The Malaysian Insider that Adnan's suggestion, allegedly made during a dinner in Kuantan last night, was reported to the anti-Lynas groups by those who were present at the function.

"We have our moles and informers. These are highly-placed sources," he said.

Another anti-Lynas activist, Andansura Rabu, said Sungai Lembing was an important water catchment for Kuantan residents and that dumping Lynas's waste into the area would likely contaminate their water supply.

He also pointed to communities in Balok who live along the river near to Lynas's rare earth refinery in Gebeng, saying their livelihood would likely be affected if the plant were to fire up operations this year.

"How will they live if their seafood and the sea become polluted?" the Badan Bertindak Anti Rare Earth Refinery (Badar) and Stop Lynas Coalition (SLC) head asked.

"Even if a permanent waste dump is found, what about the 500 tonnes of effluents and 100,000 cubic metre of waste gas that will be discharged into our river and the sea every hour?"

Both Tan and Andansura also accused Adnan as being an "unfit" to lead Pahang for willing to place the needs of the Australia-based mining firm above the health and welfare of the state.

"We are appalled by the MB (Adnan) for making this ludicrous and damaging suggestion.

"Australia will be getting A\$18 million (RM55 million) in taxes from Lynas each year... all we will be getting in Pahang are Lynas's toxic waste and pollution," they said.

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.

Despite the pressure, 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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