

**Lynas's Plant Safe If Regulations Adhered To - Nuclear Medicine Expert**  
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**By Fadzli Ramli and Norhayati Mohd Akhir**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 (Bernama) -- Lynas Corporation's rare earth processing plant in Gebeng, Kuantan, Pahang is safe as long as the company complies with its safety regulations, said former professor of nuclear medicine technology Dr Proom Promwichit.

He said the plant needed to maintain the highest level of operations to avoid untoward incidents such as radiation leakage from occurring.

"Just like driving a car, what is important is safe handling. The company must make ensure that that when the plant start operations, it does not have a negative impact on local residents. If there is an alpha particle radiation, it will be dangerous.

"Alpha rays are not like X-ray as they are not dangerous if exposed directly to us. But when alpha rays are emitted into the air and water and then entered the body, they can be dangerous," he told Bernama.

On Jan 30, the Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) approved a temporary operating licence (TOL) to Lynas with stringent conditions imposed, including it must submit a plan on a permanent disposal facility.

Dr Promwichit, a former lecturer on nuclear reactor and radiation safety at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for 23 years, said besides alpha rays, chemicals used in the operations needed to be addressed, particularly effective methods to dispose waste materials.

AELB director-general Datuk Raja Abdul Aziz Raja Adnan said the board would invite five international observers soon to propose the best method to monitor the project.

"An evaluation panel consisting of the AELB, the Ministry of Health and the Department of Environment will select one or more observers to propose the best method to monitor the project.

"Let me stress that the TOL approved by the AELB is for a period of two years. If the AELB is not satisfied during the period, we can stop Lynas operation immediately. The TOL has to be renewed after the expiry date," he said.

He said many people opposed the project during the public viewing of Lynas documents and public consultation, but they did not substantiate their disagreements with facts.

"Such opinions are apolitical. But we take serious view of public opinions," he said, adding that, it was important that they were enlightened on the project.

Malaysian Malay Businessmen and Industrialists Association (Perdasama) president Datuk Moehammad Izat Emir said the project would benefit the people, especially Bumiputera, and spur economic development.

However, the people's safety must be taken into account as the welfare of the community

become a major issue, he said, adding that the people should not listen only to negative views, but also positive aspects of the project.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Department of Environmental Management Assistant Prof Dr Mohd Bakri Ishak advised the people not to become agitated over the project for the government had imposed strict conditions on the plant and would not have issued a licence if it was not satisfied with its safety features.

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