

Government Will Not Allow Lynas To Operate If Evidence Shows It's Harmful
Bernama
March 22, 2012

PETALING JAYA, March 22 (Bernama) -- The government will certainly not allow the Lynas project to operate if scientific evidence shows that it is harmful to human health and the environment, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

The Prime Minister said the government would not compromise on that issue as the safety of the people was absolutely the government's topmost priority.

"But for those who are against Lynas, we need to have dialogues. We need to know what are the scientific and technical arguments against Lynas.

"People have to indicate that there is a real evidence that this is going to affect the health and safety of the people, particularly those living in that area. And if there are serious evidence, we certainly will not allow Lynas to operate," he said in an interview with 988 FM radio station, here today.

Najib was interviewed by DJs Sam Mak and Tan Yi Hui, in the one-hour 988 Street VIP programme. Najib however said that the dialogue should not be based on emotion or a political argument because there was a tendency for the Lynas issue to be used for political objectives.

"What has started as a purely environmental issue, has become a political issue. And this is unfortunate.

"We do need to have this dialogue and engagement with the people before the government makes the final decision. But I can assure the people that the safety of the Malaysian citizens will not be compromised," he said.

He said the setting up of a Parliament Select Committee (PSC) on Lynas was to look at options the government would be able to take in overcoming some of the concerns of the people.

Asked whether the PSC's recommendations would be followed, Najib said: "We want a scientific evidence and PSC is one of the mechanism. Hopefully, there will be a very objective assessment on this project". "Certainly, there will be a very strong moral persuasion but we are not bound by it legally, but a strong basis for us to decide one way the other," he said.

Responding to a question from a listener on the shortage of Mandarin teachers in Chinese schools, Najib said Deputy Education Minister Datuk Wee Ka Siong had been appointed to hold dialogue sessions to come out with a proposal to overcome the problem.

Wee, he said, had presented the proposal to the Deputy Prime Minister who is also Education Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, and the proposal had been accepted in principle.

"And now, it is up to us to ensure that there is effective implementation so that what can be done immediately...(we) will do... what might take slightly longer (period), we have to make sure that this problem is overcome once and for all.

"For example, we have decided to empower the headmasters to appoint temporary teachers straight away so that the vacancy can be filled up.

"We also decided that non-Mandarin speaking teachers, councillors for example, should be transferred out and replaced by mandarin speaking councillors," he said.

Najib said those were some examples of comprehensive planning including recognising the need that more Mandarin speaking teachers must be trained to increase the number that was required to fill up the vacancies.

He also pointed out the need for having an efficient public transportation system to overcome traffic congestion in Kuala Lumpur which he said would "get worse and worse".

He said those who were worried about the Sungai Buloh-Kajang My Rapid Transit (MRT) project, especially property owners along Jalan Sultan, were actually not against the project.

"What they want from the government is that their shophouses will not be affected and I have given them such an assurance and we will do everything possible to preserve these shoplots.

"We are even prepared to declare these shophouses as heritage buildings because it is also important for us to preserve our history and legacy," he said.

On My First Home Scheme, Najib said hundreds of applications were still under consideration by various merchant banks and the government would make it easier for home buyers by making improvements on it.

Najib, who is also the Finance Minister, said the nation expected to record between 4.5 and five percent of economic growth this year.

"We are reasonably confident to achieve such growth rate for this year which is a good achievement. That is because there is enough momentum and resilience in the domestic economy.

"It is because of our ETP projects and programmes, because of our efforts to increase domestic investment and foreign direct investment, the government's spending is high so public and private consumption helps that provides very strong impetus for domestic demands.

"What I cannot do is to control the external factors. If these external factors improve, we will do better," he said.

---BERNAMA

Copyright © 2012 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/newsindex.php?id=654053>