

**Putrajaya does not work for Lynas, says minister**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 27 — Australia has not formally informed Malaysia of its intention to reject waste from Lynas Corporation's rare earths plant in Kuantan, a Cabinet minister said today.

But, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili said the onus is on the Sydney-based mining firm to seek permission from its home country.

"We are not here for the purpose of just helping Lynas.

"We have set conditions and they must qualify," he told reporters when approached in Parliament.

Ongkili (picture) was referring to one of the five conditions attached to the Atomic Energy Licensing Board's (AELB) temporary operating licence (TOL) to Lynas Corp, which stipulates that the firm must determine a suitable location for a permanent disposal facility (PDF).

Should it fail to do so, Lynas Corp will be compelled to ship the radioactive residues back to Australia.

"If you (Lynas Corp) cannot process the wastes here according to our standard, or you cannot find a permanent place (disposal site), then you have to seek (a site) outside this country.

"Otherwise, I am not giving you this licence (TOL)... and they have signed for that, they have signed for that," Ongkili repeatedly said.

He added that Putrajaya does not "work for Lynas" and therefore, it was the firm's duty to seek permission from Australia to ship its waste back home.

"They (Lynas Corp) are the investors coming here. We are here to invite investors, of course, we are here to facilitate, but we are not going to work for you.

"You have to go and get (the permission). You must take (your) waste out of (this) area... It is up to you, I am not going to help you," he said.

Earlier when winding up debates on issues raised in the royal address, the House descended into chaos as several opposition lawmakers rose to accuse the government of failing to understand the full details of Lynas Corp's plans for its Malaysian plant.

Fuziah Salleh (PKR-Kuantan) argued that Ongkili's claim that residues from the plant's processing of rare earth minerals mined would not expose local folk to harmful radiation levels was flawed.

But the minister shot back, insisting that one of the three residues said to be dangerous only contains a "naturally occurring level" of radiation, similar to many public places.

P. Kamalanathan (MIC-Hulu Selangor) then stood up to accuse the opposition bench of deliberately frightening Malaysians to gain political support.

Datuk Bung Mokhtar Radin (Umno-Kinabatangan) joined in the pandemonium, asking, "I would like to ask, heart to hear, as a professional - which is more dangerous here, Lynas' plant or the mentality of the opposition?"

Ongkili, who is also Kota Marudu MP, said he was ready to bring lawmakers for a visit to Lynas' plant in Kuantan.

The Malaysian Insider reported last Friday the Western Australian government's stand on rejecting waste from Lynas Corp's controversial refinery from the Gebeng Industrial Estate, even if it is not radioactive.

Putrajaya had said early this month that Lynas, which plans to transport ore from Mount Weld in Western Australia to its RM2.3 billion plant in Gebeng, had promised to send its residue abroad, if it cannot find a suitable waste disposal site in Malaysia.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai had also said late last month the Sydney-based firm must find a way to ship the waste back to Australia, failing which no TOL would be issued.

But Western Australia Minister for Mines and Petroleum Norman Moore told the state's legislative council last Tuesday that it would not allow the residue, which Lynas says it can treat to reduce its radioactivity, to be returned to its source.

"Yes, as Commonwealth legislation prohibits the importation by Australia of any waste product produced from offshore processing of any mineral resources purchased here," he said in a written response to Mining and Pastoral Region member Robin Chapple obtained by The Malaysian Insider.

Chapple, who is Greens spokesman for mines and petroleum, nuclear issues and waste management, had asked if waste from the Gebeng plant would be accepted if it was not radioactive after being treated.

Local nuclear regulators had said on March 1 Australia's refusal to accept radioactive waste should not affect Lynas' efforts to return residue from its rare earths plant to the source.

Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) director-general Raja Abdul Aziz Raja Adnan said this was because the waste from the Gebeng refinery would not be radioactive once it was treated by Lynas.

The Australian miner has assured Malaysia that it will be able to reduce the concentration of radioactivity in the waste products so that the residue could be transformed into commercially viable aggregates, he noted.

AELB approved Lynas' TOL in January, subject to several conditions, despite continued protests from local residents, environmentalists and the federal opposition.

The Australian firm plans to ship rare earths ores from its mine in Mount Weld to its

Kuantan plant, where they will be processed into highly sought after rare earth metals.

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