

Najib says will scrap Lynas plant if proven hazardous
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PETALING JAYA, March 22 — The government will not allow Lynas Corp to operate its planned rare earths refinery in Gebeng, Pahang if there is scientific proof that it is hazardous, the prime minister has said.

“The safety of citizens is our top-most priority... the government will not allow Lynas to operate if we think based on scientific evidence is harmful to health of people and environmental safety,” Datuk Seri Najib Razak (picture) told Chinese-language radio station 988FM in an interview today.

“We do need dialogue before government makes decision. Safety will not be compromised,” he said, referring to the setting up of a Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on the matter.

Najib said his administration wanted to know the “technical arguments” of those who were opposed to the refinery and did not want this to end up becoming a “political” issue.

“If there’s real evidence, will not allow Lynas to operate,” he stressed.

Thousands of anti-Lynas protestors attended an opposition-backed rally by Himpunan Hijau last month in Kuantan, the largest protest yet against the plant which is expected to fire up later this year.

Critics allege that Lynas Corp has failed to give enough assurances on how it will handle the low-level radioactive waste that will be produced at the plant some 25km from Kuantan city centre.

But the Australian miner maintains that waste from the Gebeng plant will not be hazardous and can be easily recycled for commercial applications.

On Tuesday, Parliament approved a select committee on Lynas amid opposition furore over its terms of reference and suspicion that the nine-man panel will be used to “whitewash” the issue.

Pakatan Rakyat lawmakers also questioned the purpose of the select committee given that the prime minister has already said the government will not be bound by the panel’s findings.

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