

PM: Lynas plant 'factually and scientifically' safe
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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 26 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak today dismissed concerns raised by anti-Lynas protesters, insisting the RM700 million rare earth refinery in Kuantan is “factually and scientifically” safe.

The prime minister charged that the opposition is using the issue to gain political mileage by attacking the government to shore up local support.

“But what they are doing is not to find a solution for this.

“We want to find a solution acceptable to the people but at the same time, would not affect our investments,” he told reporters after a function here this afternoon.

Thousands of anti-Lynas protestors attended an opposition-backed mass rally in Kuantan today, in the single largest protest yet against the rare earth refinery that is expected to fire up operations later this year.

Buoyed by a successful turnout this morning, the anti-Lynas protest group, Himpunan Hijau, issued a 24-hour deadline for the federal government to shut down the Lynas plant in Gebeng or face an even bigger demonstration.

Today’s protest comes hot on the heels of the Atomic Energy Licensing Board’s (AELB) decision on January 20 to grant Lynas a temporary operating licence (TOL), which will let it embark on a trial run.

Critics have alleged 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.

But Najib said today that the government has already reviewed Lynas Corp’s operations and the firm has been given strict guidelines to follow.

“We would not give an operating license unless we are satisfied that the local community can accept that this project is safe,” he said.

He noted that one of the conditions attached to Lynas Corp’s TOL is that the disposal of toxic waste materials must be done at a remote location away from the local community.

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