

Lynas plant should be scrapped, says Khir Toyo
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SHAH ALAM, March 30 — Umno's Dr Mohd Khir Toyo has waded into the controversy surrounding the construction of the Lynas refinery in Gebeng, Pahang, saying that it should not be built as its disadvantages outweigh the plant's usefulness.

"As far as I am concerned, personally for me, it should not (be built)... this can chase business out of the country, because of speculation of it being unsafe.

"If it's really not worth it, do not build it," Khir (picture) told The Malaysian Insider in an exclusive interview last week.

The former Selangor menteri besar suggested that the government should repay the investment made by Lynas Corp if it decided to not go ahead with the refinery, saying that safety and confidence of the public was a priority.

The Sungai Panjang assemblyman however praised Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak for saying he would scrap plant's construction if there was scientific evidence to prove it was hazardous.

"Rare earths are a problem, and I am happy PM Najib says that if Lynas was dangerous it would be scrapped. It is best if this case gets professional views, even if we have to hire people overseas it is okay," he added.

Najib told radio station 988FM in an interview last week he would scrap the Lynas plant if there was scientific evidence to prove it was hazardous.

Putrajaya announced that it would set up a Parliamentary Select Committee on the Lynas rare earths plant in Kuantan, which has stoked fears of radiation pollution.

The committee on Lynas was approved in the Dewan Rakyat recently amid opposition furore over the alleged lack of terms of reference and suspicion that the nine-man panel will be used to "whitewash" the issue.

Pakatan Rakyat lawmakers also questioned the point of the select committee given that Najib had already said the government will not be bound by the panel's findings.

They subsequently announced a boycott of the panel, saying it has no power to decide the fate of the RM2.3 billion project.

The decision to set up the panel came after months of fierce opposition to the project from PR, civil society groups and the public.

Thousands of anti-Lynas protestors attended an opposition-backed rally by Himpunan Hijau last month in the largest protest yet against the refinery, 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, 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.

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