

**AELB says close to appointing independent assessor for Lynas**  
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DENGKIL, April 5 - The national nuclear regulator has selected an independent assessor to verify Lynas Corp's safety claims and is now awaiting confirmation from the Australian miner.

Lynas will have to agree to a third-party assessor, which it will pay for, and four other conditions before it can obtain a temporary operating licence (TOL) for its rare earth plant in Gebeng, Kuantan.

Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) chairman Raja Abdul Aziz Raja Adnan said the UK-based assessor was a "very, very old" company that had experience in chemical and radiological industries.

"We have just identified the assessor and we're asking Lynas to agree to the appointment and we will invoice them," he told reporters at AELB headquarters here.

The assessor, selected with the help of the Institute of Engineers Malaysia (IEM) and the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA), will cost Lynas "millions", he said.

Its job will be to conduct a full audit on the Lynas' rare earth plant after the TOL has been issued and operations begin to ensure the refinery meets all local and international safety standards.

Other conditions imposed on Lynas for its TOL include paying the first of five instalments on its US\$50 million (RM155 million) deposit to the government and locating a site for a permanent disposal facility (PDF).

Many thousands of anti-Lynas protestors thronged an opposition-backed rally in February to protest the rare earth plant, which has stoked fears of environmental pollution.

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, which is expected to fire up later this year.

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

Parliament approved a select committee on Lynas on March 20 amid opposition furore over its terms of reference and suspicion that the nine-man panel will be used to "whitewash" the issue.

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