

AELB: No TOL for Lynas until MOSTI's appeal done
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By Yow Hong Chieh

DENGKIL, April 5 - The Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) said today it will not issue a temporary operating licence (TOL) to Lynas Corp until an outstanding appeal to the science, technology and innovation minister has been completed.

In January, the regulator approved the TOL for Lynas' Gebeng rare earth plant but has said it will not issue the permit until the Australian miner complies with extra safety conditions imposed.

AELB director-general Raja Abdul Aziz Raja Adnan said the decision to withhold issuance of the licence pending disposal of the appeal was made at the regulator's last board meeting on March 22.

He added that he did not know how long the appeals process would take as this was the first time members of the public have filed an appeal in more than two decades of the Atomic Energy Licensing Act.

Previously, only companies whose permit applications were rejected by AELB had filed such appeals with the minister, he noted.

AELB falls under Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Maximus Ongkili's portfolio.

"This is unprecedented so I have no idea," Raja Abdul Aziz told reporters at the regulator's headquarters here.

Ongkili agreed last month to hear an appeal made by Save Malaysia Stop Lynas chairman Tan Bun Teet and five others to review AELB's decision to grant Lynas the TOL.

The appeal was made under Section 32 of the Atomic Energy Licensing Act and will be heard from April 17, at a venue yet to be determined.

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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