

Anti-Lynas group says won't join Bersih if plant scrapped
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 25 — Himpunan Hijau will call off its Saturday gathering at KLCC if Datuk Seri Najib Razak withdraws the temporary operating license (TOL) for the controversial Lynas rare earth plant by tomorrow.

The coalition of groups opposed to the refinery in Kuantan that has raised fears of pollution had planned to meet at noon before joining Bersih's rally for free and fair elections at Dataran Merdeka in the afternoon.

"At this critical moment, we request the prime minister cancels Lynas' TOL by tomorrow. Then we will call off Himpunan Hijau 3.0. Is that too much to ask?" said Wong Tack, the movement's chairman.

He said in a press statement that Najib had promised he would scrap the project if the public is "emotionally and mentally affected by the Lynas project."

Wong Tack, the movement's chairman. — file pic

"Our prime minister should and must come to the realisation that not only the community of Kuantan, but people from across the nation strongly reject the Lynas project," he added.

More than 8,000 anti-Lynas protesters gathered just two months ago in Kuantan in the biggest rally so far against the Australian miner's plant that received conditional approval in early February.

Himpunan Hijau's support for Bersih will be a significant boost to the electoral reform movement's numbers.

Bersih's last rally on July 9 last year saw tens of thousands flood the streets of the capital in chaotic scenes which saw over 1,500 arrested, scores injured and the death of an ex-soldier.

Widespread condemnation of the Najib administration's clampdown saw Putrajaya make major concessions including announcing a bipartisan parliamentary select committee to look into improving the electoral system.

But Bersih, a coalition of 84 civil societies, called this Saturday's sit-in at the historic square after saying the findings of the poll panel was disappointing and did not meet its demands for electoral reform.

Local regulators Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) had said it would approve a TOL subject to further conditions including identifying a suitable long-term waste disposal site.

Lynas had said last month that identifying this site "is a work in progress" but local residents have made an appeal under the AELB Act to the science, technology and innovation minister to cancel the project.

The Sydney-based firm, which has projected a windfall of RM8 billion annually from the plant, insists it has met and exceeded local and international safety standards.

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