

**No disposal site needed if Lynas waste recycled, says AELB**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**April 26, 2012**  
**By Shannon Teoh**

DENGKIL, April 26 — Lynas Corp will not need a permanent disposal facility (PDF) if it can recycle all its waste, according to local radiation regulators.

The Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) told a media briefing today the Australian miner must submit plans, including design and location, for disposal of radioactive waste within 10 months of being issued a temporary operating license.

"If the proposal is rejected, then they have to ship the waste back to its origin," special adviser to the AELB director general Noor Hasnah Mohamed Khairullah said.

But she admitted that if Lynas Corp could recycle all its waste from the RM2.5 billion plant in Kuantan as planned, then it would not matter if the PDF proposal was rejected.

"If there is no waste, then there is nothing to ship out," added licensing division director Hasmadi Hassan.

The government had insisted on the PDF, an additional requirement over standard regulations, as a backup in case of a "worst-case scenario," Noor Hasnah explained today.

Lynas had said last month that identifying this site "is a work in progress." AELB approved a temporary operating license (TOL) for the Australian miner's controversial rare earth plant in early February.

But it said it would only issue the license if Lynas agreed to certain conditions, such as submitting plans for a PDF within 10 months of receiving the license and undertaking to ship the waste out of Malaysia should the proposal be rejected.

The government said in March that Lynas had agreed to these conditions but Datuk Mashal Ahmad, managing director for the company's Malaysian subsidiary, said last week the process to recycle waste with low-level radiation into non-hazardous commercial products is ready.

"But we cannot submit to the authorities for approval yet because we have to do it with actual residue from our plant," he said.

However, AELB has not issued the TOL as Kuantan residents opposed to the plant have appealed to the science, technology and innovation minister to reverse the decision as allowed for under the AELB Act.

"We are waiting on the government decision. The minister did not tell us when he will decide. He has complete jurisdiction," Hasmadi said.

According to Lynas, refining rare earth ore from Mount Weld, West Australia will result in three forms of residue, two of which have a radiation level of below 1 Becquerel per gram (Bq/g) which is considered non-radioactive and outside of regulatory control by both international and local authorities.

Professor Ismail Bahari, the company's radiological safety adviser, has said that it can process the last residue and dilute radioactivity to below 1 Bq/g.

The Sydney-based firm, which expects a windfall of RM8 billion a year from sale of the highly-sought after mineral, says the processed waste can then be safely used as material for road-building.

Lynas has faced fierce protests from local residents and opposition politicians who say that the plant will cause radiation pollution despite the company insisting it has met and exceeded local and international safety standards.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/no-disposal-site-needed-if-lynas-waste-recycled-says-aelb/>