

Najib gives assurance Lynas plant is safe
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PEOPLE FIRST: Government will not base decisions on imaginary fears

KUALA LUMPUR: DATUK Seri Najib Razak yesterday gave his assurance that the Lynas rare earth plant in Gebeng would not have a negative impact on the people or the environment.

He said he was sure of this as the parliamentary select committee (PSC) report on the matter had proven it to be safe.

The prime minister said the report, recently tabled in Parliament, had been based on scientific facts.

He said, however, that while the government had the safety of the people as its priority, it could not base its decisions on imaginary fears and worries.

Speaking after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting at Menara Dato' Onn, Najib said even Hulu Langat member of parliament Dr Che Rosli Che Mat was confident that the rare earth plant was safe, despite him being a member of the opposition.

"But as a scientist, he said there was no doubt on Lynas' safety," he said.

The PSC on the Lynas Advanced Materials Plant (LAMP) had given the green light for Lynas (M) Sdn Bhd to be given a temporary operating licence.

The committee had said in its report that it was satisfied that Lynas had complied with all the standards and legal requirements in Malaysia based on international standard practice. In some cases, the standards applied to LAMP were even more stringent than that of international standards.

On suggestions by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz that the government should stay in charge for the full five-year mandate, Najib said the minister was entitled to his personal views.

"We are not restricted to holding elections early or at the end of the term, as long as we follow the Constitution where the prime minister has the discretion to advise the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on when to dissolve Parliament."

He said the Federal Constitution would have to be amended if general elections are to be held after fixed five-year mandates.

"Until the Constitution is amended, we cannot say we have to do it earlier or until the end of the five-year term."

Asked to comment on Pas deputy president Mohamad Sabu's statement that it was a sin if Najib could not guarantee that the election would not be held during the haj season, the prime minister lashed out at the opposition politician for playing God.

He said the government had never restricted anyone from performing their religious obligations.

"That should be their priority and not the election.

"If you have decided, then it is wajib," he said, adding that the government was not obliged to heed the urgings of Pas.

Najib said in Malaysian history, the election was called once during the haj season, during former prime minister Tun Hussein Onn's time in the 1980s.

"I know this because a committee member from my division was nominated (to stand for election) but could not be contacted because he was in Mecca.

"When they came back, they had to accept the fact that they could not be selected as candidates."

Najib also commented on the cracks in the Parti Keadilan Rakyat-led Selangor government following the resignation of Rafizi Ramli, the chief executive officer in the Selangor economic adviser's office.

He said the "serious cracks" were caused by infighting, or else Rafizi wouldn't have resigned so suddenly.

"I believe the people can make their own decision and judge which is the better party that can govern the state," he said.

When asked if he was confident of taking back Selangor, Najib said Barisan Nasional always worked hard, not just in Selangor, but in all the states, to show the advantages of voting for the ruling coalition.

On a report that three Singaporean diplomats allegedly took part in the illegal Bersih 3.0 rally on April 28, the prime minister said the Foreign Affairs Ministry would deal with the issue.

"The important thing is to determine the authenticity of the report, whether they were merely observers or were involved in the demonstration," he said.

Najib, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman and Umno president, said Umno's membership, as of June 19 was 3,359,151.

He also said 18,028 party branches had held their annual meetings as of June 12, while another 1,863 branches had yet to do so.

In another development, Najib said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin would visit Indonesia from July 2 to 4 at the invitation of the republic's Golkar party. Muhyiddin would be accompanied by 20 party leaders, including several supreme council members, he added.

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