

**Lynas Plant Of International Standard, Operations To Benefit Economy, Say Staff
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KUANTAN, Nov 4 (Bernama) -- Workers of the Lynas Advanced Materials Plant (LAMP) here are steadfast that the first rare earth plant in the country is compliant with international safety standards and that its operations will benefit the economy and local population.

According to Lynas Malaysia Sdn Bhd engineer Chin Yin Yee, her health will not be at risk, noting that the plant was built according to international safety standards and given the green light by the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"I don't have any doubts on the safety of the plant. It is very frustrating when we are trying to explain to people that the plant is fine but people do not want to listen. They prefer to go with their misconception," she said.

Chin said despite the negative publicity and concerns raised with regards to the safety of the plant, her family members had given her full support from the time she decided to join LAMP four years ago.

She noted that the rare earth industry was expanding worldwide as many components such as hybrid cars, batteries, bulbs and magnets needed the material in their manufacturing processes.

"Downstream industries will boom with the operations of the Lynas plant. It will be a loss to the country without it. A lot of people will also lose their jobs. It is going to be very sad," Chin added.

The LAMP operation is expected to bring substantial economic benefits as it will create 400 skilled jobs plus a multiplier effect of five times in secondary jobs through the economic ecosystem. It will also have 200 permanent contract workers and 1,000 indirect workers providing services to its facility.

Chin said the chain reaction to LAMP's operations would be an increase in job opportunities via supporting industries, noting that more food outlets, contractors and businesses located near the Gebeng industrial area would also benefit.

The senior manager of engineering services at LAMPS, Abdul Rahman Mohamad Ali, said he was happy to be employed by the company and it came as a shock to him that the matter of safety was politicised to an extent that it could jeopardise their livelihoods.

"The fear of Lynas came about because it was not based on facts. The fact is Lynas is safe," he said.

"My family is supportive of my decision to work at Lynas. There is a lot of fear out there but I am convinced we know what we are doing here and international safety measures are in place.

"I really hope Lynas can start operations so that my family can have peace of mind and my three children can continue their studies here. If Lynas cannot begin operations, many people will be out of jobs and investors will be afraid to come to Malaysia. Our industries will not grow," he added.

Echoing him, Abdul Rahman's wife, Rozita Md Yassin, said she was initially worried about her husband's safety but having gained a clearer understanding about the rare earth industry, she understood that all the fears were unfounded.

"I hope all those who created the rumours that the plant is unsafe, will stop spreading untruths. They affect the lives of many people," she said.

Meanwhile, Azlin Zawawi, a technician, said the danger of radiation has been blown out of proportion.

"Just like any other factory, there are safety measures in place. Safety is of the utmost priority. I hope all those parties out to smear Lynas will stop. As a wage earner who has to support a wife and child, why would I want to endanger myself if the plant was hazardous?" he asked.

"Lynas is the first rare earth plant in Malaysia. It is bringing in new technology and should be given a chance before condemning it. If it succeeds, there will be other industries linked

to rare earth which will grow. Perhaps Malaysia can be among the largest producers of rare earth," Azlin said.

Superintendent Zaini Sabidin said what the Kuantan community fears is far from reality.

"I have been to rare earth plants in China and Lynas is modern and safer with better safety and engineering policies. The issue of safety has been played up in the interests of specific parties which will jeopardise the rice bowls of at least 1,000 families.

"Lynas has been transparent about its safety. It has also installed a 24-hour monitoring service open to public viewing to check on any potential pollutants," he said.

Datuk Dr Looi Hoong Wah, a resident of Kuantan and a medical specialist who took up an interest in nuclear medicine and partical physics some 40 years ago when he was a medical student in Manchester, said what was dangerous is the political play by some people on Lynas.

Stressing that LAMPS radioactive rays are close to zero, he added:"They have to wake up and realise that this plant is of great benefit to the whole country. People's jobs are at stake. Don't destroy their jobs. You may have a nice, comfortable job at home, don't go around destroying other people's jobs. That's not a way to win an election.

"All these are good quality jobs, for people especially from the kampung area. They need the jobs to feed their children. It is very unfair to break their rice bowls.

"Some people are telling us to get rid of Lynas. Who is going to feed the children of these 1,750 people? They have families, they need work. In Malaysia we don't have any special social security. Good jobs are very difficult to come by," said Dr Looi.

Explaining about radiation, he said there was not risk of radiation exposure. In a worse case scenario, he said "the radiation you get from a wooden house you live in is almost 100 times more radioactive than living next to Lynas."

"Living in a brick house exposes you to 200 times more radioactivity than living next to Lynas in a tent," Dr Looi said of the safety features of the plant and of the radioactive elements of wood and bricks.

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