



Sahabat Alam Malaysia
Friends of the Earth Malaysia
For Environmental Justice

1, Jalan Joki, 11400 Penang, Malaysia
Tel No: +604 827 6930
Fax No: +604 827 6932
Email: foemalaysia@gmail.com
<https://www.foe-malaysia.org>

Press Release

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Lynas operating licence: SAM disappointed with government's U-turn

Sahabat Alam Malaysia is most disappointed to learn about the MADANI government's latest decision with regard to extending Lynas's operations till March 2026.

We are baffled by the U-turn made by the government from its earlier decision. The government must explain why the change of heart, when earlier, it was concerned about the radioactive component of the company's activities.

According to the statement from the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), this reversal of decision that the Cracking & Leaching (C&L) activities of the company will continue is subject to the condition that Lynas ensures that the radioactive content in the Water Leach Purification (WLP) residue is below 1 Bq/g through an R&D programme led by local experts.

The current level of the radioactive component is at 6-7 Bq/g and how local experts are going to get this down to below 1 Bq/g is quite baffling and questionable.

It seems the decision of the Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) was based on the findings of a laboratory level preliminary study which showed that the radioactive material from thorium can be extracted from the WLP residue until this residue no longer needs to be regulated under the Atomic Energy Licensing Act 1984.

No explanation has been given on how the radioactive level is going to be brought down.

Does the local experiment include the CondiSoil research which was rejected before or is there another yet-to-be-proven laboratory experiment?

SAM is most baffled by this explanation and calls for more transparency and public disclosure on what this study is about and its details.

A reversal of the government decision based on this preliminary study does not at all sound convincing or assuring from a public health and environmental standpoint.

The government needs to be more accountable and transparent in this regard and the Ministry needs to come clean as to the details of the research.

It is clear from the government's orientation of making money from the rare earth industry but this cannot be at the expense of people's health and the environment.

We reiterate our call for a public disclosure of the preliminary study urgently.

Mageswari Sangaralingam
Honorary Secretary
Sahabat Alam Malaysia