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PRESS STATEMENT

**HAJAH FUZIAH SALLEH
MP FOR KUANTAN**

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Lynas has a Serious Wastes Problems Malaysia Does Not Want

Earlier today, Minister of Energy, Technology, Science, Climate Change and Environment, Ms Yeo Bee Yin has released the Report of the Executive Review Committee on the Operations of the Lynas Advanced Materials Plant (LAMP). Yeo has also set conditions and timelines for Lynas to deal with its wastes or face suspension of waste storage licence.

Fuziah Salleh, Federal Member of Parliament for Kuantan says: “I applaud Minister Yeo for these new conditions for Lynas’ wastes. I am especially relieved that Lynas will have to remove its hazardous waste from Malaysia. A responsible corporation would have made sure that its wastes have a realistic and safe disposal mechanism before commencing its operations to generate them.”

Rare earth processing is notoriously known for the massive amount of waste contaminated with cancer causing radionuclides, heavy metals and hazardous chemicals. Since late 2012, Lynas has been generating nearly 1.8 million tonnes of wastes and has stored them at its refinery premises in Gebeng. Lynas has persistently refused to acknowledge that its waste is hazardous, instead it has deliberately played down the risk and sidelined debates from its appalling waste management practices. As a result, piles of wastes, from the radioactive and hazardous stream known as water leached purification (WLP) and the non-radioactive stream classified as scheduled waste, have been accumulating by the refinery plant.

“No decent country in the world would allow its citizens and its environment to endure the risk of contamination from radionuclides and toxic substances. This is a serious public health, ecological and economic problem for Malaysia.” Fuziah adds.

Following the Ministerial directives, Lynas will have to deal with over one million tonnes of scheduled waste as stipulated in the Environmental Quality Regulations (Scheduled Waste 205) 2005 by the mid-February 2019 extension deadline.

As for its WLP wastes, Lynas has not pursued any safe disposal option beyond experimenting with dilutions and mixing of this hazardous waste, trying to get regulatory exemption based on this flawed and risky method of waste dispersion. Lynas’ WLP waste storage licence will expire in September 2019.

“I am relieved that Minister Yeo has banned the use of WLP waste in future trials. The Pakatan Harapan Government will not subject our rakyat as guinea pigs and our precious environment as testing grounds for risky trials and experiments with hazardous substances.” Explains Fuziah.

In Western Australia (WA), where Lynas has a provisional approval for a refinery plant previously, its WLP waste would have to comply with stricter requirements and subject to

tighter scrutiny from regulatory authorities there, to be returned to its giant Mt Weld mine pit in special ponds designed for radioactive waste.¹

“Australia is a vast country with less people than Malaysia. Land use needs in Malaysia is pressing. Lynas’ Mt Weld mine pit is an ideal location for its wastes as it will need filling up to fulfil Australia’s mine decommissioning regulations.” adds Fuziah.

Since 2011, Kuantan residents and concerned Malaysians have staged strong protracted protests and opposition against Lynas. Lynas refinery plant has never managed to acquire a social licence to operate in Malaysia. Fuziah has consistently been a strong citizens advocate for Lynas’ wastes to be returned to Australia. In fact, Lynas has made that commitment to then Najib Government, and has undertaken to ship its wastes back to Australia when the temporary operating licence was issued in 2012.

Fuziah reiterated that demand, “Lynas should proceed with its previous application with relevant authorities in Australia to seek permissions to send back its radioactive waste. PH is committed to a sustainable clean and safe developmental pathway for Malaysia. Malaysia will no longer accept any hazardous materials or foreign rubbish onto its shore.”

“I commend Minister Yeo for her courage and commitment to uphold the PH manifesto by prioritising public and environmental health in her handling of the Lynas issue. I would like to thank the Review Committee for the mammoth efforts in working under a tight timeline to complete the review as scheduled. I am especially grateful for the rakyat for their patience and support to put in concerted efforts to monitor Lynas all these years, and to participate in this Review.” She adds.

“This is a good first step to stop more hazardous wastes from being generated. Making sure that Lynas will take active steps to clean up its wastes will be an on-going challenge. We will need to keep an eye on that.” Concludes Fuziah.

For further information, please contact Fuziah Salleh on +60 192 702 838

¹According to the WA Public Environmental Review Report for Ashton Rare Earths Ltd., which Lynas has subsequently acquired, ‘Solid residues would be blended and returned to Mt Weld for disposal in a series of 5m deep linked ponds. Continuous addition of the residue slurry would maintain a wet surface layer and prevent dust generation.’