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31 MAR, 2026

‘Track record of Lynas plant underscores focus on safety’

The Sun, Malaysia

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Refining process does not increase or concentrate radioactive material: Spokesperson

BY **FAIZ RUZMAN**
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PETALING JAYA: For 14 years, Lynas Malaysia’s rare earth plant in Gebeng, Kuantan, has operated without a single incident harming public health or the environment, even as experts urge vigilance over radioactive waste in Malaysia’s tropical conditions.

The company said the record underscores the safety of its operations as it embarks on a new decade under a renewed licence.

In an email to *theSun*, a company spokesperson said concerns about radioactive elements such as thorium and uranium should be considered in the context of naturally occurring materials already present in soil and rocks.

“Radioactivity is a natural part of life, and thorium and uranium are found naturally in soil and rocks all around the world.

“The Water Leach Purification (WLP) residues generated from the Lynas plant have been scientifically tested and proven to be non-hazardous.”

The company clarified that its refining process does not increase or concentrate radioactive content in its residue stream.

“The first stage of processing at the Lynas Malaysia advanced materials plant separates the rare earths from the surrounding low-level naturally occurring radioactive material.

“There is no enhancement or concentration during this process and levels remain the same,” the spokesperson added.

On long-term environmental safeguards, Lynas said its residue storage systems, including the permanent disposal facility for WLP residue, are designed and managed to prevent any impact on surrounding soil, groundwater or nearby communities.

The spokesperson said the company uses filter presses to produce dry residue stacks in line with international best practices, with facilities monitored regularly by independent scientific experts and regulators.

“Lynas Malaysia’s residue storage facilities meet Malaysia’s regulations as well as international standards, including those adopted by the International Atomic Energy Agency.”

Lynas said the plant has undergone four independent scientific reviews, including two by the International Atomic Energy Agency, which found it to be low risk, compliant with regulations and aligned with international best practices. – ***ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN***

The company added that research into the use of WLP residue as a soil conditioner has shown it to be safe for agricultural applications.

It also said under the new licence, Lynas will stop producing WLP waste by 2031, and the company is already working to reduce the radioactivity of existing waste to very low, safe levels.

“Over the past three years, Lynas has worked with the Department of Atomic Energy, and Malaysian and Australian academic institutions to remove thorium from WLP residue during production through low-temperature cracking.

“The project has completed laboratory and pilot stages, with industrial-scale trials next.”

Highlighting its operational record, Lynas said the Gebeng plant has run safely for 14 years without any incident affecting public health or the environment.

“The Lynas Malaysia advanced materials plant has operated safely for 14 years since operations commenced. This reflects the strength of our processes and policies.”

Lynas added that the plant has undergone four independent scientific reviews, including two by the International Atomic Energy Agency, which found it to be of low risk, compliant with regulations and aligned with international best practices.

On March 2, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Chang Lih Kang announced that Lynas Malaysia had received a 10-year licence renewal for its rare earth processing plant in Gebeng from March 3 until March 2, 2036.

Since the renewal, environmental experts have raised concerns over the long-term behaviour of radioactive traces in waste from rare earth refining, particularly in Malaysia’s tropical conditions.

On March 16, experts told *theSun* that heavy rainfall and groundwater movement could affect how such materials behave over time if waste is not carefully managed, with potential pathways into soil, groundwater, rivers and the wider food chain.

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