

Parliament

Rare earth mining in Perak to commence in August

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A general view of the Lynas Advanced Materials Plant in Gebeng, Pahang, Malaysia, July 23, 2019.

KUALA LUMPUR (July 26): Mining of non-radioactive rare earth elements (NR-REE) in Kenering, Hulu Perak beginning this year will serve as a benchmark to be emulated by the government in other states, said the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources.

Speaking in the Dewan Rakyat, Energy and natural Resources Minister Datuk Seri Takiyuddin Hassan said the mining in Kenering is expected to begin in August 2022, with first production to be sourced in November 2022.

Several other states such as Kedah, Pahang, Kelantan and Terengganu have expressed interest to undertake similar NR-REE mining, he said.

The ministry will ensure close monitoring of the pioneer project in Perak, including in-site leaching, assessment of surface and underground waters as well as soil and plantations, mineral extraction costs, economic spillover effects and the health of communities in the surrounding areas, he added.

“Should the ministry determine that the standard of procedures would be able to control the mining activities and cause minimum impact to the environment, the government intends to extend its implementation of NR-REE mining in other states.

“For that purpose, the ministry is in the process of preparing Malaysia’s NR-REE SOP (standard operating procedure) based on the SOPs implemented in Perak,” Takiyuddin said.

The pilot activity on 11 land parcels measuring 5,339 acres in Perak is to mine lanthanide, according to reports, with the Environment Impact Assessment by MCRE Resources Sdn Bhd approved in May this year.

MOSTI reviewing Lynas cracking, leaching facility relocation condition

Another well-known rare earth processing plant in Malaysia is located in Kuantan, Pahang, operated by Australia-based Lynas Corp, whose current licence expires in March 2023.

Its licence renewal hinges on certain conditions set by the Pakatan Harapan-led government, including the relocation of its cracking and leaching facility, which produces radioactive water leached purification waste, outside of Malaysia.

That condition is now under review by the Ministry of Science and Technology following an application by Lynas, its minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba said in a parliamentary written reply dated July 21.

Concurrently, a permanent disposal facility for Lynas’ radioactive waste has been identified in Gebeng in 2020, with construction having started on Feb 23, 2022, Adham said.