

# No need to fuss over rare earth

THE Lynas Advanced Materials Plant is back in the news. I still remember the time when the issue started. The Academy of Sciences Malaysia, had engagements not only with local experts, but also from the Academy of Sciences China, University of Queensland in Australia as well as the United States.

The most interesting experience for me was when I was asked to visit a similar rare earths facility in La Rochelle, France. La Rochelle is a popular beach holiday resort. I went expecting to see an isolated rare earths extraction facility away from residents.

I found that the facility was right in the midst of the resort town and had been in operation for more than two decades without any fuss from the locals. A big contrast to what we experienced here.

We suggested that critics of Lynas visit the La Rochelle facility. The offer is still open. It would be a pity if a genuine business like

Lynas is judged based on hearsay and unsubstantiated facts.

Business interest in rare earths has surged in recent years. Many believe this has been driven mainly by the growing demand for new electronics.

Super magnets and sensors require rare earths. Both light and heavy rare earths have become much sought after materials.

The search for better batteries to support the growing demand for electric transport has also fuelled the demand for rare earths.

China has vigorously mined rare earths. However, as with all chemical processing, strict environmental procedures are necessary in the extraction of rare earths.

China has since learned the lessons to tighten the rules on environmental safeguards.

In the case of Lynas, experts in rare earths processing have given their environmental standards the thumbs up.

I am told that the recent concern

by opponents of Lynas is with regard to the management of their wastes which, as expected, do contain some radiation.

At the La Rochelle facility, the waste materials are kept under tight security. This is because the wastes still contain traces of rare earths which they hope to recover in the future using some newly developed technique.

The price of rare earths is expected to rise in the future. We should consider evaluating our own rare earths deposits for possible revenue generation in the future.

Experts have confirmed that we have rich deposits of rare earths waiting to be exploited, especially the higher-priced heavy rare earths.

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