

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD

Answer to treatment of waste is in technology

AN executive review committee formed at the ministerial level on the operations of Lynas Advance Material Plant (LAMP) concluded that Lynas' operations complied with regulations.

Despite the positive conclusions, the committee has recommended further action to rectify the flaws with the Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Ministry insisting that Lynas should send the waste back to Western Australia.

This is odd, knowing fully well that the waste does not pose the radiation risks as claimed earlier.

Even nuclear power plants, which import uranium from third countries, are not obligated to send back their nuclear waste to the uranium exporting country.

If we can still recollect the early days when the country was once colonised, the colonial masters took our raw rubber, tin and palm oil converting them into higher value products and exporting them back to us.

We not only earned the low value end of the value chain but also paid for their high value items through imports.

Inadvertently, waste was produced but it was not sent back to us.

Through the development of advanced processing technology, most developed economies earn their income through the conversion of low value imported crude products into higher value consumer and commercial items for export.

Hence, Malaysia should do the same if we want to be a world-processing and value-adding centre.

Developing the right waste treatment technologies would also bring handsome returns in the future.

Many agree that waste will become the resource of the future, as we witness the continued depletion of the world's natural resources.

The real answer lies in technologies.

One technology is to produce viable biodegradable plastics, and another technology to reprocess waste plastics.

The recycling of electronic waste, initiated by the Multimedia and Communications Ministry, should be commended.

More than just bringing in technologies from outside, we also need to develop our own.

The waste from Lynas should be treated the same.

Since radiation is not an issue any more, as articulated by the experts' committee, we can ask Lynas to put in the necessary remediation technologies before the waste is safely disposed.

The important consideration is that it should not harm the environment.

If indeed the presence of heavy metals is confirmed, then the necessary technologies should be deployed to neutralise the potential hazards.

We can emulate Germany, which has made treatment of heavy metal waste a standard practice.

So there is no need to ask Lynas to send back the waste.

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Lynas can put in the necessary remediation technologies to neutralise hazards. FILE PIC