

UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHEMICAL INDUSTRY



Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) recently organised a public lecture that highlighted lessons learned from issues rose from the rare earth refinery plant operated at Lynas Advanced Material Plant (LAMP) in Gebeng, Kuantan.

The title was, 'Integrity, Science, Perception: Lessons From Controversies Among The Society in Malaysia Brought About By Issues Involving LYNAS.

One of the things learned from the controversies was that despite the hullabaloo, it had piqued the public's interest in wanting to know more about rare earth, be it from the scientific nature, the processing methods involved as well as its impact on the economy and environment.

According to Dean of Faculty of Chemical & Natural Resources Engineering (FKKSA), Professor Ir. Dr. Jailani Salihon, it was well-timed that the public lecture was held during which rare earth was the issue being debated.

He added that it gave the opportunity to present the matter from an academic point of view, those relating to health, environment and safety – issues that had caught the attention of not

only the nation but also at the international level.

"This lecture aims to clarify problems faced in investments of chemical industrial projects and public perception by bringing in Professor Dato' Ir Dr. Badhrulhisham Abdul Aziz, a qualified academician, who will share some of his experience and expertise.

"From the explanations, we hope to clear the air from an intellectual perspective and to present the real situation so the public can benefit from it," he said in his remarks when introducing Professor Dato' Ir Dr. Badhrulhisham as the speaker at the talk held at Astaka Hall, UMP Gambang campus on March 20, 2013.

Professor Dato' Ir Dr. Badhrulhisham is also the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) and a Professor at the faculty.

In his talk, Professor Dato' Ir Dr. Badhrulhisham said in line with Malaysia moving towards becoming a developed nation, a lot of mega investment projects were brought into the country but some were turned into issues due to public concern - especially those relating to safety, health and environment.

Some of the projects that had come under

public scrutiny were Lynas Advanced Material Plant (L.A.M.P) and the Refinery and Petrochemical Integrated Development Project (RAPID) in Pengerang, Johor.

"In facing the challenges, it is important for all parties such as the government, industries, decision-makers, public and others to make decisions based on facts that included scientific facts when dealing with issues relating to integrity, science and perception," said Professor Dato' Ir Dr. Badhrulhisham, who was also appointed as a member in the Malaysia Science Academy (MSC)'s Rare Earth Work Committee and Chairman of UMP's Rare Earth Research Work Committee.

On the LYNAS plant, he said all the operations in plants had risks but the question was whether the risks could be managed and minimised without causing harm to public health and safety as well as the environment.

"The LYNAS plant is a chemical plant that produces rare earth metals from physical and chemical processes such as separation process. It is not a nuclear plant.

"In fact, it can be categorised as a low-risk plant, provided all safety, monitoring and enforcement