



KESATUAN KEBANGSAAN WARTAWAN SEMENANJUNG MALAYSIA
NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

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To all News Editors.

PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NUJ urges judiciary to declare that public interest cases be heard in open court.

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) calls on Chief Judge of Malaya Tan Sri Zulkefli Ahmad Makinudin to issue a practice direction to his subordinates (High Court judges and Judicial Commissioners) that judicial review applications involving public interest cases be conducted in open court.

This will allow journalists to report such cases by obtaining information direct from parties submitting before a judicial officer, instead of getting secondary information from lawyers and federal counsel.

Open court proceedings will facilitate reporters to carry out their public duty to immediately access information and report the subject matter accurately

However, sourcing information from counsel emerging from judge's chambers could result in journalists reporting the issue out of context.

Journalists would better understand the issue if they had the opportunity to hear the matter "live" and then seek clarification from opposing parties after proceedings were over.

Closed door judicial sessions also denied the people who occupy seats in the public gallery from hearing arguments from opposing parties.

The NUJ takes the position that open court hearing would reflect that the judiciary was transparent and accountable to the public.

This call to Zulkefli is in reaction to a hearing held in chambers on Tuesday following a group of 10 Gebeng residents who filed an application for leave for a judicial review.

On Feb 17, the residents filed the application to challenge Atomic Energy Licensing Board's (AELB) decision to grant a temporary operating licence (TOL) to Lynas Malaysia Sdn Bhd over the proposed construction of a rare earth processing plant.

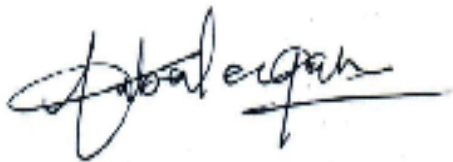
What was to be a ex-parte hearing turned out to be an inter-parte proceeding as Lynas was also allowed to make submissions.

About 15 reporters had to wait for lawyers and federal counsel, representing the Attorney General's Chambers, to find what transpired for more than an hour in High Court judge Rohana Yusof's chambers.

Hearing was adjourned to April 4.

The courtroom was packed with Gebeng residents, lawyers and media personnel, with some members of the public forced to crowd along the aisle and sit on the floor.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Anbalagan', with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

V. Anbalagan
General Secretary
National Union of Journalists