

NOTE

Rare Earth

A Correspondent writes :

EXPORT RESTRICTIONS BY China on rare earth, have caused global shortages of rare earths and soaring prices. To beat China's competition, a \$230 million rare earth refinery plant is being built in Kuantan, in Malaysia. The project is plagued by environmentally hazardous construction and design problems. Rare earths metals are crucial to the manufacture of a wide range of technologies, including smart phones, smart bombs and hybrid cars. Rare earth plants could also leak radioactive and toxic materials into the water table. Since March 2011, there have been weekly demonstrations against the Kuantan plant, which would be the world's biggest refinery for rare earths. Rare earths when mixed with thorium become radioactive. The Kuantan plant is being constructed on a sprawling complex of 100 hectares, or 250 acres. Although approved by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the overall designs and planned operation procedures prepared by Lynas, an Australian company, do not indicate construction details and engineering decisions involved in construction of the plant. There are fears of structural cracks, air pockets and leaks. □□□