

Cimatu to uphold open-pit mining ban

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Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu yesterday said he will uphold President Duterte's plans to ban open-pit mining.

"We will eventually abide by the instruction of the president to stop open-pit mining in the future," Cimatu told lawmakers at a confirmation hearing in Congress.

Duterte said last month he agreed with banning open-pit mining in the world's top nickel ore exporter, given the environmental damage it causes, but would give mining firms time to find other ways to extract minerals.

Open-pit mining is formally allowed under the Philippines' mining law, but Cimatu's predecessor, Regina Lopez, slapped a ban on it during the 10 months she spent in office before being forced out after failing to win congressional confirmation.

Cimatu was confirmed yesterday by the Commission on Appointments as he expressed commitment to push for people-centered agenda in pursuit of environmental protection and sustainable development.

"It is high time that every Filipino, regardless of status in life, should have equal access to the benefits of clean environment and sustainable natural resources," Cimatu said in a statement.

He said the confirmation of his ad interim appointment as DENR secretary will allow him to continue to institute reforms, and pursue programs and projects that would truly protect the environment and improve people's lives. - ***With Reuters***

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