

DENR's internal mining review expected this month

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THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said it hopes to complete its own mining review “within the month.”

“We have not yet brought out the results,” Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu told reporters on Wednesday.

“There are several versions so we’ll have to harmonize them first,” he said, adding that the study by the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) “will be a very big factor in my decision.”

In June, the MICC cleared 23 out of 27 mines based on legal, technical, economic, social and environmental compliance, around four months after the interagency council began its review.

However, Finance Undersecretary Bayani H. Agabin was quoted last month that this is still subject to change.

The MICC audit, which Mr. Cimatú has said will be merged with DENR's own review, will be submitted to the Office of the President and the DENR. Mr. Cimatú will ultimately decide whether the mines are shut down.

On Wednesday, President Rodrigo R. Duterte in his speech during DENR's 31st anniversary reiterated that he is still for banning open-pit mining because it "really destroys the land."

"[Mr.] Duterte said he wants it closed. Open pit mines will be closed if they don't shape up," Mr. Cimatú said,

"And we have to reinvent mining: find a way to extract minerals by not using open-pit mining."

The Philippines is the second-largest nickel supplier in the world, though the mining and quarrying industry accounts for only 3.7% of gross domestic product.

The DENR plans to enforce a department administrative order (DAO) on progressive rehabilitation which will limit mining operations to 100 hectares (ha) a year.

Prior to the DAO, miners were allowed to conduct operations on 4,000 ha. before rehabilitating the site, Mr. Cimatú said.

"Progressive rehabilitation [is] different now, because you can only extract minerals for only 100 hectares for one year," Mr. Cimatú said.

"Just disturb the 100 hectares; after you have extracted for one year, then close it, rehabilitate that and you go on to the next 100 [hectares]." – **Anna Gabriela A. Mogato**

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