

DENR identifies 9M hectares of potential mining areas

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The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has identified nine million hectares of potential mining areas in the country as it vowed to boost the mining industry amid the country's continuous economic setbacks that started during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lawyer Jonathan Leones, DENR undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs, said that of the nine million hectares already identified by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), less than three percent of it were awarded as mining contracts.

“Since we are among the most highly mineralized country in the world, our priority is to build both a strategic and responsible industry,” said Leones in a speech on behalf of Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga during the 48th Philippine Business Conference and Expo hosted by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

“The MGB will vigorously promote the development of mineral processing and value-adding enterprises while at the same time intensifying the enforcement of environmental safeguards and targeting social development components in mining operations to address vulnerabilities,” he added.

Leones said the DENR will be reviewing mining laws, including small scale mining, to ensure that standards are updated and that the provision of the implementing rules and regulations take full advantage of remote sensing and innovation in artificial intelligence.

Under the Mineral Investment Promotion Program, the DENR will address illegal mining, particularly small scale mining operations through the assessment and declaration of the “Minahang Bayan” areas where small-scale mining will be confined and regulated.

He said the DENR will also undertake geological survey and mapping to populate the geoscientific and mineral information database, as well as rehabilitation and remediation of the remaining 11 abandoned mines to address the persistent misinformation that has stigmatized the mining industry.

Other policy directions in the mining sector, according to Leones, include the design of mineral extraction models with minimal environmental footprints; identification of new mineral reserves and the use of

technological support for decision making; bidding out of national government mining assets such as those under the Philippine Mining Development Corporation; development and expansion of roads, power and other infrastructure support to mineralized areas through the Department of Public Works and Highways; construction of modular mineral processing plants such as those for steel and nickel; conduct of studies of mine rehabilitation; reuse of mining waste and tailings and acid mine grain management; and integration of small scale mining sector into the industry.

He said the agency will also ensure that mining firms will strictly implement their respective Safety and Health program, Environmental Protection and Enhancement program, Final Mine Rehabilitation and Decommissioning Plan, and Social Development Management.