

# Mining law just needs proper implementation

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Repealing the Mining Act of 1995 could only encourage illegal mining activities that do not respect government regulations, according to an environment group.

The Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST) warned against moves by Congress to repeal the Mining Act and replace it with proposed legislation collectively referred to as Alternative Mining Bills (AMBs).

PBEST said the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives had started conducting technical working group meetings to deliberate on the AMBs.

“The law has technically been just in operation for less than eight years, and a cycle in the mining industry spans more or less 20 years. There is no need to repeal the mining law. The real problem is implementation,” said Prof. Dindo Manhit, Convenor of PBEST and President of Stratbase-Albert Del Rosario Institute.

The Mining Act – or Republic Act 7942 – faced constitutional challenges while Executive Order No 79 in 2012 effectively stymied its implementation.

Changing the rules in the middle of the game may just foster illegal mining activities that do not follow environmental regulations, Manhit said.

He said while the goals set in amending the Mining Act or creating new mining regulations are in the best interest of the country, the proposed methods may not be the most effective.

Some of the proposals include limiting the raw metals the country will produce to only serve the local market. PBEST said this will not jumpstart industrialization as envisioned but may even kill the mining industry.

Proposals to extend the no-mining zones over what are already covered under the Mining Act and the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act are practically tantamount to a nationwide mining ban.

Atty. Ysan Castillo, Secretary General of PBEST said despite the group’s opposition to the law’s amendments, PBEST does not think that the existing law is perfect.

“There is still a lot of room for improvement, such as the transparency and dissemination of data concerning environmental programs, findings and mineral production,” he said.

Castillo said additional funds should be dedicated to environmental protection, the increase of waste generation fees and some form of substantial guarantee fund for natural hazards.

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