

# DENR says experts performed no scientific tests in mining audit

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**THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said experts connected with its mining audit performed compliance tasks only and will only undertake independent scientific tests in the validation of miners' environmental practices in a multi-agency review that starts this month.**



A mine near Davao city -- *AFP*

"We had (Department of Health) representatives, (Department of Agriculture) representatives... but they were only able to go through the checklist of legal compliance [requirements] and they only looked at the documents," DENR Undersecretary for Legal Maria Paz G. Luna told reporters on Friday after the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) meeting.

Ms. Luna confirmed that although the agency's Memorandum Order 01-2016 -- which mandated the conduct of the environmental assessment -- provided for the inclusion of experts in the audit teams, the individuals only performed fact-checking tasks.

"There wasn't an opportunity to actually do independent tests by those agencies. Now it will be done. Back then they only went through checklists and the Health department representative on the mining audit team did not perform tests on drinking water. We hope that will be done," Ms. Luna added.

DENR Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez called for the involvement of scientists from various government agencies when it launched the review on July 8 to ensure a scientific basis for the audit.

Ms. Luna, who also headed the mine audit for nearly a month last November, said scientific testing to assess a mine's impact on communities and the environment will be conducted through the MICC review which starts this month.

The MICC expects to take three months to complete its review, which was prompted by the DENR's decision to shutter 23 metal mines and suspend five others as a result of its audit.

The review, to be conducted by various experts from state universities and colleges, aims to ensure that due process was observed in ordering the suspensions.

On Feb. 2, the DENR ordered the closure of 23 of the country's 41 operational mines and the suspension of five others for violations such as allegedly being located in watersheds and polluting nearby bodies of water.

Two weeks after this, Ms. Lopez ordered the cancellation of the contracts of 75 other projects still in the pre-operation stage, saying they were located in watersheds. -- **Janina C. Lim**

<http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Economy&title=denr-says-experts-performed-no-scientific-tests-in-mining-audit&id=141681>