

Duterte says mining law to stay

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President Duterte yesterday said on Wednesday the government cannot scrap an existing mining law, suggesting he is open to easing up on a crackdown launched by a dismissed minister who ordered the closure of half the country's mines.

His comments appear to be in sync with Roy Cimatu, the new secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) who has said it was possible to balance mining and natural resources protection in the world's top nickel ore supplier.

Duterte said he told Cimatu "to be to be true to yourself, to be true to your country and protect the environment."

"But remember there is a mining law and we cannot altogether banish it," he told a media briefing just before he leaves for visits to Cambodia and China.

With an existing law, mining "has to be regulated and allowed" Duterte said, adding he wants stricter measures enforced.

Cimatu replaced staunch conservationist Regina Lopez who ordered the closure of 22 of 41 mines in the world's top nickel ore supplier and banned open-pit mining. Lopez, whose mining crackdown was backed by the president, was removed last week by a panel of lawmakers that review Duterte's appointments.

No mine has yet been closed as companies pursue an appeals process that can only be settled by Duterte. –
Reuters

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