

February 2007 update on latest developments regarding Toka Tindung goldmine

From January 15th 2007 another AMMALTA delegation of ten went to Jakarta to visit the ministries for environment, traffic and tourism, have an audience with the chief of the Indonesian police and lobbying major political parties; they also had meetings with former presidents Megawati and Abdurahman Wahid (Gus Dur).

Finally the Indonesian parliament commission 7 scheduled a hearing on the case for January 30th with the special EIA commission of the Ministry of Environment, the governor of North Sulawesi and the management of Meares Sopotan Mining (MSM) being interrogated. MSM one more time tried to manipulate the case in their favor. They had bribed nine village and five subvillage chiefs and paid their journeys to Jakarta in order to give false witness at the hearing that the villagers in the surroundings of Toka Tindung mine were happy to have the mine operating. They were promised a car each if they were successful. This endeavour was known beforehand though and reported to the parliament, thus the village chiefs were not given permission to attend as they were misusing their offices. AMMALTA presented their objections and report of environmental violations committed by MSM. The governor stated his concerns on risks for environment if the mine is going to operate.

MSM general manager Peter Brown and public relations chief Terkelin Purba trapped AMMALTA members to Jakarta's Mandarin hotel on January 29th to offer them bribes ("shares in the projects") in order to "find a peaceful solution". Of course the AMMALTA members refused.

On February 2nd the governor of North Sulawesi who was asked by the Ministry of Environment commission in a letter of December 8th 2006 to give his evaluation on the EIA MSM had submitted in August 2006, officially rejected the operation of MSM. In the letter 660/209/Sekr dated February 2nd 2007 he wrote:

"Referring to the letter B-8382/Dep.I/LH/12/2006 dated December 8th 2006 asking me to evaluate the EIA of PT. MSM and PT. TTN, I state as follows:

1. Until the very moment there is still rejection by the people regarding the gold mining project of PT. MSM and PT. TTN.
2. The technology of tailings processing which will be employed cannot yet guarantee the safety of the environment and the people's health.
3. According to the zonal usage plan of the province of North Sulawesi in the vicinity of the mining operation planned are touristic enterprises, fish farming enterprises and a coastline proposed to become a world heritage zone.

For the above given reasons we cannot agree to the EIA proposed by PT. MSM and TTN.

The Governor of the Province of North Sulawesi

S. H. Sarundajang”

A hearing of the special parliament commission 3 on February 5th ordered the Head of the Indonesian Police to thoroughly investigate the case of PT. Meares Soputan Mining (MSM) and present the findings on February 19th 2007 to the parliament. Special focus will be given to the head of the Police of North Sulawesi who earlier had rejected an environmental violations report that AMMALTA had tried to submit. Also why police were protecting mining operations that didn't have a government permit yet.

On February 6th the company Bakrie constructions who got an over 20 mio USD tender by MSM to build the tailings dam were again trying to land building materials via the illegally built jetty at Rinondoran Bay. Villagers of Rinondoran and Kalinaun started another sea blockade. The members of the North Minahasa regency held a meeting and decided to visit the mining location to inform themselves about the building activities without permit.

In the meanwhile the Australian owner company Archipelago Resources PLC officially announced “newly found high-grade gold mineralisation intersections “could extend the mine life beyond its initial six years”. This news, they hope, will influence the government favourably.

Summary: The EIA of PT. MSM and PT. TTN which is crucial for the production permit and which the two companies hoped to obtain this February are still pending. The mining status officially is still on hold waiting for government permission.

AMMALTA, February 8th 2007

Notes:

Environmental Impact Assessment (Indonesian: AMDAL)