

HUBUNGAN MASYARAKAT  
DEPARTEMEN ENERGI DAN SUMBER DAYA MINERAL

MONITOR BERITA

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GEOLOGI DAN SUMBER DAYA MINERAL  
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HALAMAN : 3

TAHUN 2004

# Govt to conduct new Buyat study

The Jakarta Post  
Jakarta

The government decided on Wednesday to send a joint team to conduct a comprehensive study on Buyat Bay, South Minahasa, North Sulawesi, and its surrounding areas to verify reports of serious pollution there.

Interim coordinating minister for people's welfare Abdul Malik Fadjar said the results of the study would be used to determine the validity of the reports and subsequently identify and prosecute those responsible.

"The team will start work next week and will be required to finish its work by the end of the month," Malik told reporters after a coordinating meeting.

Law No. 23/1997 on the environment says a polluter may face criminal charges and, if found guilty, may be ordered to rehabilitate the polluted area.

The team will consist of representatives of the Office of the Coordinating Minister for Political and Security

Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health, Office of the State Minister for the Environment, the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, the Office of the State Minister for Research and Technology, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the National Police and non-governmental organizations.

The decision comes as the police are completing their laboratory tests on samples they took from 10 locations in the bay and from some residents. The preliminary results showed mercury and arsenic levels that exceed environmental health standards.

The police had promised to complete their investigation this week and summon executives from the PT Newmont Minahasa Raya mining, a mining company operating near the bay, to cross check their findings with data on the firm's waste management system.

Malik said the team would follow up on the previous studies that had been carried out, identify the ailments suf-

fered by people in Buyat, and reveal the source of the contamination.

"We will ensure the results of our study can be justified scientifically, academically, socially and legally," said the minister.

Some Buyat residents recently filed a report with the National Police over alleged pollution, which they, backed by a number of NGOs, blame on PT Newmont Minahasa Raya. The people displayed lumps, rashes and other symptoms of skin diseases, and complained of sore throats and impaired eyesight.

Malik said the health ministry would provide medication and health services for the people while the study was underway.

Energy minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro said the mining license awarded to PT Newmont had expired in 2001, while its ore processing license will expire on Aug. 31.

However, he said, the company would still be responsible for rehabilitating the local environment.

Police investigators an-

nounced last week that Buyat and Totok bays, which are separated by Cape Rataatok, were contaminated with heavy metals.

National Police Director of Special Crimes Brig. Gen. Suharto said on Monday the larger Totok Bay was allegedly polluted by illegal miners using mercury to separate gold from other minerals.

However, no illegal miners operate around Buyat Bay, and the only mining company operating there is PT Newmont Minahasa Raya.

"We have yet to conclude which party has polluted Buyat Bay because several sources of pollution are possible. One possibility is that the undercurrent swept away contaminated seawater from Totok Bay to Buyat bay," said Suharto.

He said officers would question experts about whether it was possible for contaminated water from Totok Bay to find its way into Buyat Bay.

Suharto said police had questioned 21 people as witnesses in the case.