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Indonesia Gov't To Allow Underground Mining At All Forest Areas

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Bambang Setiawan, the Director General for Mineral, Coal and Geothermal of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM Ministry) on the eve of a Business Gathering and Gala Dinner held by the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kadin Indonesia) in Jakarta, 20 April 2009, stated that a Presidential Regulation on Underground Mining is only a step away from approval. The regulation would authorize underground mining to be performed beneath every forest area with mineral or coal reserves.

"The ball is in the hands of the Cabinet Secretary now, as the three relevant Ministers who previously put their signatures in the current law must again sign the new regulation," he added, referring to some amendments to the draft Presidential regulation that require the Ministers' approval before it is passed on for a validation. He mentioned that the government should provide a legal cover for mining activities beneath the protected forest areas.

The article 38 of the Forestry Law No. 41 of 1999 stipulates that open-pit mining activities are barred on protected forest areas. The law does not stipulate whether underground mining is permitted or not at protected forest areas.

The regulation is expected to provide a benefit to the mining sector as the areas for mining activities would now be expanded. "It would not be too significant if we only counted on the protected forest areas. The regulation would ensure that it could be performed at conserved forest, productive forest, and so on," concluded Mr. Setiawan.

