

₱3 billion. The current issue on hand is the repayment terms for each of the copper firms involved. Repayment schemes are being studied at the moment in order to arrive at a compromise agreement.

Ecological Issue

Ecological issues have started to bother the industry. For example, Marcopper was closed down last April as its tailings disposal system was allegedly polluting Calancan Bay in Marinduque. Benguet and Philex faced similar charges of polluting rivers near their mining areas. Drumming up the issue has elicited proposals of higher tailings fees in Congress. Nothing concrete has been decided yet.

Just recently, The DENR filed charges against Lepanto due to the leakage of acid gas to three barangays in Mankayan, Benguet. The acid gas allegedly came from the mine firm's concentrate dryer which had been installed without any anti-pollution devices.

On the other hand, gold panners were cited as the culprits in mercury pollution. In the process of recovering the gold--by blowtorching the amalgam (gold plus mercury)--the poisonous fumes not only pollutes the air. As mercury condenses, it also settles in creeks and rivers when rain comes.

The National Pollution Control Commission and the National Environmental Protection Council are tasked to regulate activities that may affect the environment and the health of the public near industrial plants. So far, a solution still has to be found to strike a healthy balance between industrial progress in the mining sector and environmental concerns [4].