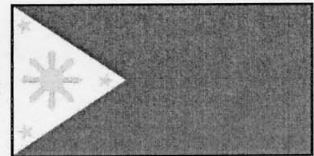


Philippines eyes resources boom

Alex Forrest

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FOLLOWING a decision by the Philippine supreme court to uphold the Mining Act of 1995 which allows wholly foreign owned companies to operate within the country, president Gloria Arroyo will convene a summit in February to address the concerns of environment groups that the Act will lead to environmental damage.



Arroyo hailed the court's decision, saying the Philippines is on the verge of an investment takeoff, reported the *Manila Standard*, with her government's analysts predicting a US\$6 billion injection of foreign capital into the mining sector over the next three years.

However, the Kalikasan-People's Network for Environment said in a statement that the long-awaited rehabilitation of Marinduque Island may be overtaken by government plans to reopen large-scale mining in that blighted province, leaving Marinduque's sick and dying people amidst a poisoned and still unrehabilitated environment.

Speaking at a press conference on Monday, Arroyo said her administration would ensure that mining operations would not be disastrous to the environment and nearby communities.

She said that after several years of insignificant growth, this sort of investment could balance out the government's budget deficit, and possibly the national debt.

Arroyo said the Philippines is sitting on mineral deposits worth an estimated \$840 billion.

Australian companies operating in the Philippines include Rusina, Medusa, Red 5, Coral Bay Nickel Corporation, Indophil Resources, Archipelago Resources, Pelican Resources, Lafayette Mining, AngloGold, Continental Goldfields and AXG Mining.