
BHP ends dispute with Philippine partner Asiaticus

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Reuters reported that BHP Billiton and Philippine partner Asiaticus Management Corp have agreed to end a legal dispute.

The report quoted Mr Lito Atienza Philippines environment secretary as saying that clearing the way for development of a nickel mine. He said that BHP and Asiaticus had agreed to start with a clean slate by withdrawing all legal cases filed against each other.

He added that "This is a major breakthrough after one year of talking sense to each company. It's a big step. They also promised to renew their good relations in a partnership that was on the throes of dissolution. I told them to immediately address their concerns and make their partnership work."

The two mining companies have been in a legal tussle since last year after unlisted Asiaticus cancelled its joint venture agreement with BHP, whom it accused moving too slowly in developing the Pujada mine in the southern Mindanao region.

Pujada is estimated to have 200 million tonnes of nickel ore reserves with 1.3% nickel.

In May 2008, the Philippine firm obtained a ruling from a Philippine court barring BHP from the Pujada site, prompting the foreign miner to halt exploration activities.

(Sourced from Thomson Reuters)

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