

Demonstrators are calling for Mining Minister's Resignation due to illegal permit

Members and supporters of Delhiin Mongol Nогоон Negdel ("DMNN"), an environmental NGO in Mongolia started a 3-day sit-in today in front of the Victims' Monument in Ulaanbaatar demanding the illegal gold extraction permit given to Australian-Mongolian joint company to be cancelled since the permit itself violates a couple of laws such as an environmental law known as the Long Name Law which prohibits mineral exploration and extraction activities at and near headwaters, river basins, forests and protected zones and Mining Minister Jigjid Rentsendoo to be resigned.

MV-019023, the special permit to extract gold at Onon river basin was issued on August 13, 2015. This permit covers 779.32 hectares of land in Batshireet and Binder counties, Khentii province. The Ministry of Environment, Green Development and Tourism of Mongolia confirmed that the borders of the land completely overlaps with and lies within the protected forest zone.

Onon river, one of the most transparent and clean rivers in Mongolia rises in Burkhan Khaldun mountain (one of Khentii mountains) and enters Amur river. The region around Amur river has one of the most biologically diverse temperate forests in the world, vast steppe grassland and unbroken taiga biome. Amur river basin was named one of the 20 largest protected watersheds and eco-zones in Asia by the World Wide Fund. Also, the WWF advised to prohibit any mining operation at and around Onon river.

Most mining companies in Mongolia use cyanide to extract gold which is extremely toxic and pollute the surrounding environment, animals and bodies of water. Using cyanide will have a devastating effect not only on Onon river but on Amur river and Burkhan Khaldun mountain's ecosystem.

DMNN has tirelessly been fighting to stop all illegal mining activities around the country since 2013. During their recent trips to Tov, Selenge, Darkhan-Uul, Arkhangai, Ovorkhangai and Bulgan provinces, they discovered many mining companies have been operating illegally, violating the Long Name Law, all under the current Mining Minister Mr. Rentsendoo's watch.

Since no tangible actions have been taken by the government against these companies after repeatedly notifying the proper government agencies, DMNN is organizing a three-day sit-in in front of the Victims' Monument demanding that Mr. Rentsendoo to resign for supporting and encouraging irresponsible mining operations and that the illegal permit allowing to extract gold right at Onon river be cancelled.