

North Sumatra, Indonesia: Community people, NGOs and Experts condemn Dairi Prima Mineral's new Environmental Impact Assessment and call for the United Nations to investigate.

Date: 18 December 2025.

Key Points:

- Following a Supreme Court decision, on 21 May 2025, the Ministry of Environment revoked the Environmental Approval that had been provided for the Dairi Prima Mineral mine in 2022.
- Residents and NGOs decry the lack of transparency and adherence to proper process by the government
- BAKUMSU have submitted a complaint to the United Nations Special Procedures, including the Special Rapporteur for toxics and the Working Group on Business and Human Rights.
- The new EIA contains mine plans that involve backfilling all tailings into the underground mine cavity, something international experts say is an impossibility, and that DPM will eventually build a dangerous tailings dam anyway.
- The parent company of the majority owner of DPM has been responsible for huge disasters related to tailings dams in countries like Zambia, and has been repeatedly reprimanded in China for environmental damage.

The revocation of the 2022 DPM Environmental Approval¹, followed years of protest and legal action by Dairi residents.

Mr. Susandi Panjaitan from Pandiangan village said “It’s was a relief when DPM’s 2022 Environmental Approval was finally revoked. But, now they are back and still proposing a mine that threatens our lives and the environment.”

Ms. Juniaty Aritonang, Director of BAKUMSU, an NGO providing legal support to communities, said, “The Ministry of Environment should not even consider a new proposal from DPM. Experts said the previously planned dams would fail sending a flood toxic waste over villages. In three previous versions of the Addendum, they failed to consider expert advice. This is not the sort of company that should be allowed to request Environmental Approval again”.

However, in March 2025², the Vice General Manager of the parent company above the majority owner of DPM and a state-owned company - was reported as saying that “relevant Indonesian authorities indicated they would actively provide policy support for the project”. Ms. Juniaty Aritonang commented: “Government is meant to remain independent and transparent, not support a mining company that has shown such huge disregard for people and the environment. Indonesian government interaction with this mining project needs to be carefully examined. It’s shameful.”

Ms. Nurleli Sihotang, legal counsel for the affected residents and member of BAKUMSU’s legal unit said “the previous Supreme Court case, and now this new EIA Addendum, illustrate that the law in Indonesia is not being implemented correctly. Community rights and the environment are being abused. The Indonesian government’s role in supporting a dangerous DPM mine leaves us with no choice but to go to the United Nations.”

Ms. Juniaty Aritonang said: “Community people, through BAKUMSU, have requested the United National Special Rapporteur on Toxics look into this case³. A complaint was lodged at the end of November 2025, and has also gone to other Special Rapporteurs, and to the Working Group on Business and Human Rights. We hope the UN, the highest human rights authority in the world, will investigate what is going on”.

Opung Gisele from Bongkaras village said “we have a government that is meant to be protecting us from unscrupulous mining companies. We have to go to the United Nations, in the hope they can bring some independence and transparency into this matter. We have Chinese state-owned and state-financed companies making dangerous plans, and we have the Indonesian government actually courting them. We need international attention on this matter”.

Ms. Juniaty Aritonang said “the Special Rapporteurs can only come to a member country to investigate if that country invites them. We want the Indonesian Government to invite them. If the government has nothing to hide, they will invite

¹ <https://news.mongabay.com/2025/06/a-fragile-win-as-indonesia-cancels-high-risk-mine-permit-after-court-ruling/>

² <https://nfc.cnmc.com.cn/jssj/xwzx/gsxw/2025/3/l1349790723049783296.html>

³ See a copy of the complaint to UN at <https://bakumsu.or.id/en/advokasi-tambang/>

the Special Rapporteurs. If not, the UN will rely on written reports, and we will know the Indonesian government is scared of transparency.”

With regard to local procedure, Ms. Nurleli Sihotang, member of BAKUMSU’s legal unit, said “BAKUMSU have been legal representatives for aggrieved community members, but, for a national EIA Commission hearing on 27 November 2025, BAKUMSU did not receive an invitation. Only Dairi-based NGOs received an invitation, and they only received invitations on 25 and 26th of November. That contradicts the regulations⁴ which state at least 5 days’ notice needs to be given.”

Ms. Monica Siregar of YDPK, and NGO based in Dairi, said “The hearing on 27 November was not a legal EIA consultation. It seems DPM and the Ministry of Environment are intentionally avoiding serious input”.

The new EIA Addendum says, instead of constructing a tailings dam, DPM will mix all tailings with cement and pump them back into the underground mine cavity as backfill. Dr. Steven Emerman, who reviewed previous and November 2025 Addendums, said “It’s an impossibility. Mined material expands when it is extracted and processed. Even after zinc and lead concentrates are extracted from the ore body, all of the tailings cannot fit back into the depleted underground galleries. According to mining industry standards, only 50-60% of the tailings can be backfilled with this cement paste approach, even if there is no backfill of waste rock.” He has previously reported how much waste rock will also be acid-generating and will need disposal⁵.

He added: “DPM will end up having to build an above-ground tailings dam, probably for 2.5 million tons of tailings. Any tailings dam in the Dairi area will be unsafe, due to the geology and conditions there. DPM’s new Environmental Impact Assessment Addendum says nothing about a tailings dam, yet the mine will need a large tailings dam. Really, this whole DPM saga is alarming. I’ve said before, and I will say again, this is without doubt the most irresponsible mining proposal I have seen in all my years reviewing mine plans and Environmental Impact Assessments.”

The November 2025 EIA Addendum also disclosed that there were a number of “Technical Approvals” provided to DPM in 2024 and 2025. One was for Hazardous Waste Management. Emerman commented: “Why is the Ministry providing approval for aspects of a mine without checking whether the mine plan is even technically feasible?” His report concluded that “these Technical Approvals should be regarded as irrelevant and not fit for purpose.”

Mr. Susandi Panjaitan from Pandiangan village, one of the complainants against the previous Environmental Approval said “we still have huge concerns. Our very lives, our water and our farms depend on this mine not going ahead. We have not been consulted about this new EIA Addendum. DPM only talk to people who know nothing of the dangers of the mine”.

Ms. Juniaty Aritonang, Director of BAKUMSU said “The Chinese parent company of the majority owner of DPM also operate subsidiaries in other countries. See what they have done in Zambia. A tailings dam recently failed in the Kafue River⁶ basin, causing a toxic waste flood down hundreds of kilometers of river. It’s killed the river. No fish. Poisoned water supplies. We don’t want such renegade operator in North Sumatra.”

She added: “This parent company is also known in China to be environmentally irresponsible. Even a Chinese Government inspection group in 2021⁷ found it was characterized by lax enforcement and diminished accountability at various levels, with prominent violations. This is not a company Indonesia should be encouraging – especially not into disaster-prone areas”.

⁴ Government Regulation Number 22 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Environmental Protection and Management. See also press release 29 November 2025: <https://bakumsu.or.id/warga-dairi-tolak-rapat-komisi-penilai-AMDAL-pt-dairi-prima-mineral-desakklh-bplh-ri-untuk-menerbitkan-surat-keputusan-ketidaklayakan-lingkungan-pt-dairi-prima-mineral/>

⁵ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C1QlxCSkgMkN8zbDQasv_d_62sl2qML/view?usp=sharing

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cj6nly288j4o>

⁷ http://www.news.cn/politics/2021-12/13/c_1128159709.htm . An AI translation includes: “The group’s environmental management was characterized by lax enforcement and diminished accountability at various levels, with prominent violations. There were also clear falsification of equipment inspection and maintenance records at the New Materials Company under China Nonferrous Eastern Company”.

Contact information:

1. Ms Juniaty Aritonang. Director, BAKUMSU.

Languages: Batak Toba, Indonesian, basic English, Ph: +62 0813763563311; email add: aritonangjuni@protonmail.com

2. Community representatives can be contacted through Ms. Monica Siregar Ph: +62 0823 6216 2928; email: monicasiregar53@gmail.com.

Languages: Bahasa Indonesia, Batak Toba, basic English.

3. Dr. Steven Emerman, mine hydrologist and owner of Malach Consulting, Ph: 1-801-921-1228, Email: SHEmerman@gmail.com . Languages: English. Time Zone: USA, Mountain Standard Time (GMT-7)

4. Ms. Nurleli Sihotang, legal counsel for the affected residents, and member of BAKUMSU's legal unit Ph: +62 085296935053; email add: nurlelilawyer88@gmail.com

Further information about the community opposition to the mine may be found at <https://bakumsu.or.id/en/advokasi-tambang/>