

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

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The economy of the Solomon Islands is small and predominantly agrarian. Although the islands are considered to have abundant mineral resources, mineral production was limited during 1997 to small quantities of clays, crushed stone, and sand and gravel used in domestic construction and minor amounts of alluvial gold with contained silver. Gold and silver production for 1997 was estimated to be 25 and 10 kilograms (kg), respectively.

Though the Solomon Archipelago was named in the 16th century for the legendary gold mines of King Solomon, the Melanesian state has had only minor gold production. A relatively large gold mining operation was begun southeast of the capital city of Honiara on Guadalcanal Island in 1985, with a recovery plant opening in early 1986. The operation was closed, however, in 1987 owing to devastation caused by a severe tropical cyclone. The joint venture produced only 40 kg of gold.

Gold Ridge Mining Ltd., a subsidiary of Australia's Ross Mining NL, was developing a 2-million-ton-per-year (Mt/yr) carbon-in-pulp processing plant capable of producing 3,100 kilograms per year of gold. The plant was to incorporate provisions for the processing capacity to be increased to 3 Mt/yr of ore through the addition of another ball mill and additional leach tanks (Mining Journal, 1997).

The open-cut mine at Gold Ridge, 45 kilometers south of Honiara, was to be the first large-scale mining project in the Solomons (Metal Bulletin, 1997). The first gold pour was scheduled for mid-1998 (Resource Information Unit, 1998, p. 574).

References Cited

Metal Bulletin, 1997, Solomons green light: Metal Bulletin, no. 8168, April 7, p. 13.
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Major Sources of Information

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The Geological Survey is part of the Ministry of Lands