

‘Green economy’ much better than mining – Lopez

Published February 5, 2017, 10:00 PM | Manila Bulletin

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez is optimistic that “green economy” can provide more jobs than “destructive” mining.

“Give me a year and a half, maximum of two years. I will prove that a green economy can create more jobs than mining could ever create,” Lopez.

The DENR chief was reacting to claims by the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) that over 1.2 million workers will lose their jobs with the impending closure of mining firms that failed the industry-wide audit conducted by the Department due to serious environmental violations.

Contrary to COMP’s assertion, Lopez said that available government data would show that mining produced only 234,000 jobs as against the 4.7 million jobs created by tourism in 2014.

Although she admitted that mining has indeed created jobs, the industry remains widely regarded as having adverse effects on the environment and communities.

Lopez insisted that sustainable economic development could be achieved without destroying the environment and causing suffering to people, and that inclusive green economy is way better alternative to mining.

Using the sustainable integrated area development approach, Lopez said the DENR would assume the developmental role of providing sustainable livelihood while teaching environmental conservation to affected communities.

“We will create ecological economic zones where there is respect for nature and value adding in resources, and where people benefit from the resources of the place,” Lopez said.

She said her decision to close down 23 mining firms was consistent with her non-negotiable stance against irresponsible mining.

“My issue is not about mining, my issue is about social justice,” she emphasized.

Lopez had earlier made an assurance that affected mine workers will not end up unemployed as they will be used in the rehabilitation of mine sites, which is one of the conditions imposed on erring mining firms.

She said that she intends to use the mine rehabilitation fund of the closed mining firms in rehabilitating mining sites.

“I would like to work with miners through this fund and use the funds to heal the land,” she said.

She noted that the DENR is tapping the services of a team of experts of the Sixto K. Roxas (SKR) Foundation in the rehabilitation of the mining sites. She is also looking at the potential of biochar as a tool for mine rehabilitation.

(Article retrieved from: <http://news.mb.com.ph/2017/02/05/green-economy-much-better-than-mining-lopez/>)