

# Lopez bans prospective open-pit mines

Written by **Ted Tuvera**

Friday, 28 April 2017 00:00

Her fate as Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) secretary is still uncertain but Gina Lopez yesterday unleashed her wrath anew on mining firms.

At a press conference, the embattled DENR chief ordered the ban on some mine operations, saying that they are “prospective open-pit mines.”

“I’m banning open-pit mining —not the existing ones because they are already there. We just have to find a way out of it. But we’re banning prospective open-pit mines,” Lopez said, adding that she wants to maximize her stint as Environment secretary as she herself appears to be unconfident as the powerful bicameral Commission on Appointments (CA) may render judgment by next week.

“I’m doing it now because I have no idea what’s going to happen on Tuesday,” she stressed.

Lopez said that she wants to ban open-pit mines because “it’s a continuing financial liability to the government and that it places the host community at risk.”

Asked if she thinks that her move has bypassed the stipulations stated in the Republic Act 7942 or the Mining Act, Lopez replied, “I can do it as a matter of policy... I’m DENR secretary.”

Lopez is quite notorious for making sweeping decisions which tend to sideline official procedures, including her move months back to suspend scores of mining operations without giving due mining audits at hand.

She had had exchanges of argument with Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez before as the latter said that she has bypassed the Mining Industry Coordinating Council — of which they are both chairmen — before doing her controversial crackdown.

The DENR secretary also publicly attacked Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, saying that he hampers her decision requiring suspended mining companies to give P2 million for every hectare of lands affected by their operations.

However, it was clear the senior Palace official was only following due process.

Recently, Lopez also pitched the idea of allowing communist New People’s

Army rebels to participate in development projects for mining communities in Agusan del Norte.

<http://www.tribune.net.ph/nation/lopez-bans-prospective-open-pit-mines>