

House panel chair backs DENR scrapping of 75 mine contracts

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Bayan Muna Partylist Rep. Karlos Isagani Zarate. INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

House Committee on Natural Resources chair and Bayan Muna Partylist Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate on Thursday expressed support for the cancelation of 75 mining contracts ordered by Environment Secretary Gina Lopez.

“Secretary Gina’s resolute stand for the environment and the people is commendable and needs our support. We salute her brave stand against the giants of mining and push

for more sustainable, pro-environment reforms that are the mandate of her agency,” Zarate said in a statement.

“Despite the destruction, protests, and human rights violations throughout the years, none of her predecessors in DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) had the guts to go against big mining interests,” he added.

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Lopez on Wednesday ordered the cancelation of 75 mining contracts, stepping up her campaign to stop extraction of resources in sensitive areas after earlier shutting more than half of the Philippines’ operating mines.

Zarate said the deed was a welcome development to environment activists, mine-affected communities, and all other people resisting the entry and the destruction caused by large-scale mining.

“The existence of these mining contracts in watershed areas is clearly anathema to our people’s interests, if we want to ensure adequate, clean, and safe water supply for our people,” Zarate said.

“These mineral contracts should not have come to pass if we have the people’s welfare in mind,” he added.

The House committee on Natural Resources chair also cited that the committee is prioritizing the deliberations of a new mining law that aims to replace the Philippine Mining Act of 1995. *CBB/rga*

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