

Duterte: Losses from mine closures worth pondering

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President Duterte addressed alumni members of the Philippine Military Academy during his first official visit at the premiere military school during its 2017 alumni homecoming on Saturday (Feb. 18). Photo by EV ESPIRITU

FORT DEL PILAR, Baguio City—President Rodrigo Duterte will look into the mining closure orders of environment secretary Regina “Gina” Lopez due to the possible loss of gains from the industry.

“We get something like 70 billion a year out of the mining operations in the entire Philippines. So iyan ang (that is what) we have to also take into consideration and that’s

really money,” Duterte said in a speech before the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1967 at the Baguio Country Club here on Friday.

Duterte, however, did not cite the source of his figures.

Duterte earlier said that his hands were tied over the fate of mining firms ordered closed by Lopez.

“I leave it up to Gina (Environment Secretary Lopez). If she says that the mines should be closed, then I can do nothing about it,” Duterte said in Surigao City.

READ: Duterte: If Lopez wants mines closed, they’ll be closed

Lopez, who conceded that Duterte had final say on the appeal of the mining firms, earlier ordered the closure of 23 mines allegedly for ruining watersheds.

Despite criticisms from the mining industry, the environment chief also ordered the cancellation of 75 mining contracts, stepping up her campaign against illegal mining.

During the Cabinet meeting on February 7, Duterte officials agreed that Lopez should follow “due process” in her campaign against illegal mining.

Lopez said she has been consistent in upholding the rule of law in closing mines violating the Philippine Mining Act of 1995.

During the campaign period, Duterte has expressed strong opposition to illegal mining in the country.

In a speech in August 2016, the President said the country could survive without revenue from mining companies.

He warned the firms to strictly follow environmental rules and regulations or face closure. *IDL*

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