

# DENR expects more complete MICC review

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The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is hoping that the review by the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) on mines it ordered closed, suspended or cancelled will be more comprehensive than the mining audit that took place a few months ago.

Environment Undersecretary Maria Paz Luna said in an interview that there are certain aspects about the mining operations — such as the standards for drinking water near and within mine areas — that the DENR was not able to cover during the controversial audit.

“So there is value added to a separate review that is multiagency high-level because the DOH (Department of Health) for example (require) the drinking water standards, whether they are met,” Luna told reporters.

“And if they are not met,” she added, “whether they are caused by the mine or not. If they are not caused by the mine, the DENR and DOH will have to figure out what caused it to solve it. So there is value added to the MICC review in terms of the interdisciplinary nature.”

When asked why the audit didn’t cover such standards, Luna said, “there wasn’t an opportunity to actually do independent testing”.

“Now it will be done (by the MICC technical review team),” Luna said, adding that the mining audit was only able to check legal compliance.

The MICC decided to implement the technical review in order to clear the issue surrounding the result of the mining audit that the DENR conducted last year.

The MICC, which is co-chaired by Secretaries Carlos Dominguez III of the Department of Finance (DOF) and Regina Lopez of the DENR, has approved on Friday the guidelines on the conduct of an “objective, fact-finding, science-based” review of mining operations nationwide.

After the review, the MICC will present the findings and submit its recommendations to the Office of the President, which shall make a final decision on the DENR’s closure and suspension orders.

Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin, who heads the Legal Affairs Group and Revenue Integrity Protection Service (RIPS) of the DOF, said the mandate of the MICC covers all 311 mining contracts across the country but the review will first begin with the 28 sites ordered shut down or suspended by the DENR.

The review will not yet cover the 75 Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) contracts facing cancellation.

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