

2nd review of PH mines to continue, says DOF

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by Reuters

The government will move forward with a second review of the country's mines despite the removal of Regina Lopez as secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), a finance official said on Thursday.

The Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC), an inter-agency panel that includes the finance and environment departments, ordered a review in February of the operations and the environmental and social impacts of the country's mines.

"Definitely it will continue because it's the mandate of the MICC to do just that regardless of who's in the DENR," Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin said in a statement.

The review will cover all 41 mines operating in the Philippines, including the 26 that Lopez had earlier ordered closed or suspended in February after a months-long audit last year led by the DENR.

She also canceled dozens of contracts for undeveloped mines in the world's top nickel ore supplier.

The MICC ordered the review following criticism from miners that Lopez's decision was baseless and lacked due process.

The Commission on Appointments (CA) rejected Lopez as environment secretary on Wednesday, ending her 10-month mining crackdown which was backed by President Rodrigo Duterte but led to demands for her removal.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines has said it would seek to undo Lopez's moves when a new DENR head is appointed.

Agabin said the review will also include contracts for undeveloped mines.

Lopez earlier asked President Duterte to halt the second mine review, challenging its legality despite initially supporting it.

The MICC is still in the process of selecting who will comprise the team that will inspect the mines, which is expected to take three months.

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