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IN THE NEWS

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'Drugs, mining lobby funding destabilization'

President Duterte holds a report with photos showing the violations and destruction committed by several mining firms as he tackled mining issues during a press conference at Malacañang yesterday. KRIZJOHN ROSALES

Total mining ban mulled

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ and ALEXIS ROMERO

Concerned about the impact of open pit mining in the country, President Duterte last night asserted he would not be cowed by some mining groups that, he bared, have partnered with the opposition and drug dealers in a campaign to oust him.

"*Kayong mga* mining (You mining firms), I know you are funding the opposite side. *Alam ko na ngayon kung sinong gumagastos sa kanila* (I know now who is financing them). I know that some of you are giving funding to the other side to destabilize me," Duterte said in a media briefing at Malacañang.

"If the police and military will allow it, it's their problem," the President added.

Duterte said he would not bow to the mining firms'

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pressure, adding he is ready to forgo the P70 billion in revenues from this sector.

"*Ngayon, kung mag*-lobby-lobby *lang kayo ng* mining *diyan o maggastos kayo. Gusto ninyo akong palitan na Presidente na paluhurin ninyo* to do your bidding... (Now, if you're just lobbying on mining firms or provide funding. You want to replace me as President who would kneel to do your bidding...)," he said before citing names of mining firms that destroyed the country's resources during their operations.

The Chief Executive talked about destabilization moves in the briefing where he and his party mates in PDP-Laban also issued party stands on major issues ranging from federalism, corruption and the death penalty to social justice and economic development.

Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III and Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez sat with the President to answer queries from reporters for about two hours. Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II and Interior Secretary Ismael Sueno and other officials were also present.

Duterte presented documentation and photos of the adverse impact of mining activities all over the country, as he reiterated support for Environment Secretary Gina Lopez, who failed to get the nod of the Commission on Appointments (CA) last week.

Duterte commended Philex Mining for being a responsible firm, citing tree-planting activities it has spearheaded in areas where it operates.

Seeking explanation

Duterte then challenged the mining sector for a confrontation over the destruction on the environment by irresponsible firms, citing the Berong Nickel Corp. in Narra, Palawan; Citinickel Mines and Development Corp., Oceanagold, Emir Minerals Corp. and Adnama Mining.

"This is Berong Nickel Corp. in Narra, Palawan. Look at the greens. You think you can live with it? Because of the P70 billion? Or because nag-contribute sa campaign funds mo (it contributed to your campaign funds)? *Hindi sa akin. Maski na mag-contribute ka, ganon din. Upakan kita* (Not to me. Even if you contribute, it's the same. I'll hit you)," he said, as he showed photos of the firm's site.

"Explain to me how is this. *Sabihin mo sa akin dito, magharapan tayo* (Tell it to me here, facing each other). What have you done to my country?"

"Economy? Well, *siguro, mawawalan tayo (ng) trabaho sa mga tao. Maghintay kayo* (maybe, we'll lose jobs for people. You wait). We will scrape the bottom of the barrel to look for the money, but I'm going to give you food kung 'yan lang," he added.

Duterte expressed hope that the P70-billion revenues that could be lost from mining can be covered by new investments.

"And let us just pray that enough business will come in, new ones, but not as... not as devastating as this one. Kasayang (What a waste)," he said.

As he expressed his disappointment over the destruction of the environment, the President sought an explanation from the mining firms over their operations.

Duterte also shot down reports that he might be implicated in the destruction of the environment when these activities happened during the past administrations.

"*Tapos, i*-charge *mo sa akin ito sa aking panahon? Ay, anak ng... Sino mananagot nito? Eh 'di ako, pati ito, pati ito. Kayo 'yung nasa* power, *kayo 'yung pretentious diyan* (Then, you will charge it to me during my term? Son of a... Who is responsible for this? It is I, for this one. You are the ones in power, you are the pretentious ones), that we will work for the benefit of the people. God d*** this people, you are always forgotten," he said.

Defending Lopez

A lawyer and a longtime politician, Duterte said he shares Lopez's serious concern for the environment.

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Drugs, mining lobby funding destabilization

"Now, is Gina a liar? No, I don't... *Mahirap 'to. Tingnan mong ginawa, o,* green, *tapos, dito* (This is hard. Look what was done, green, and then, here). So where are the trees that God gave us? Where is the environment that God gave us?" he said.

"It's visual eh. How can you argue with Gina when she's presenting, confronting you with a visual thing? So, kami rito (we here), it appalls us," he said.

In the same briefing, Duterte said he is amenable to the re-imposition of the mining ban.

"Maybe, it would be worth the while of Gina to re-impose the ban. Total (mining ban) *muna tayo, tapos mag-usap. Dito, mag-prangka-prangkahan tayo* (Let's have a total mining ban first, then let's talk, let's be frank with one another)," he said.

Duterte urged mining firms to follow Australian or Canadian mining practices, which help preserve the environment. He also ordered Philippine National Police (PNP) Director General Ronald dela Rosa to impose strict guidelines when it comes to giving permits for procurement of explosives such as TNT, which are mostly used in illegal mining activities.

In other developments, President Duterte said he would do "what is necessary" to protect his country's environment when asked about his plan to impose a total mining ban.

"When it comes to the preservation of my country, the land... I will do what is necessary," Duterte said in the same briefing.

The firebrand leader earlier said it may be "worthwhile" for Lopez to implement a ban on mining, given the environmental damage that producers have caused.

Lopez has authority to do what she likes, according to Duterte.

It was not immediately clear whether Duterte was calling for a total ban on mining or a strengthening of Lopez's order closing more than half of the mines in the Philippines.

Graft charges vs Lopez

A nine-page complaint was filed yesterday before the Office of the Ombudsman by the Chamber of Mines, represented by its chairman Artemio Disini and spokesman Ronald Rex Recidoro.

The group charged Lopez with violation of Section 3 (e) of Republic Act 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and Sections 4 (b) and 5 (a) of RA 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

The complainant said Lopez caused "undue injuries" to the mining industry when it ordered the closure of 23 mining firms and suspension of five other firms based on an unsubstantiated mining audit.

The group lamented that as early as September last year, Lopez had already announced the suspension of about 20 mining firms even before the results of the DENR mining audit was completed.

Lopez may also face graft charges after intervening with the Department of Energy (DOE) to award a service contract to a private company for a $100-million power plant in Zamboanga City.

Vienna Tañada, business development officer of Eco Global Inc., will file on Wednesday before the Office of the Ombudsman cases for violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

"Lopez could be found guilty... for having sought to influence the DOE to award the contract to Eco Global and for traveling to France with all expenses paid by the company to visit one of its partners in Paris," Lester Pascua, Tañada's spokesman said.

Pascua added that Eco Global paid for a trip to France for Lopez and her five-person party last Oct. 2, a day before the DOE awarded it the renewable energy service contract (RESC).

Last Sept. 29, Eco Global chief executive officer Jean-Philippe Henry, a Frenchman, issued a letter of guarantee to the French embassy in Manila pledging to pay Lopez's team's "airfare, hotel accommodations, insurance coverage and travel allowances for the entire duration of their business trip."

– With Reuters, Rhodina Villanueva, Louise Maureen Simeon, Non Alquitran

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DUTERTE:

'Mining firms funding destabilization plot'

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte on Monday accused some mining firms of financing what he called a "destabilization" plot against his administration.

Speaking to reporters in Malacañang, the President said mining firms, which he did not name, were funding the political opposition to undermine his government.

"*Kayong mga* mining [You miners], I know you are funding the opposite side. I know that some of you are giving funding to the other side to destabilize me," Duterte said during a joint press conference with Senate President Aquilino Pimentel 3rd and Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez.

"If the police and military will allow it, it's their problem," the President added.

Duterte made the statement as he defended anew Environment Secretary Regina Paz "Gina" Lopez for ordering the

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'Mining firms funding destabilization plot'

closure of mining firms found to have violated mining regulations.

On Saturday, the President said he was willing to lose P70 billion in mining tax revenues, as he reiterated his support to the anti-mining position of Lopez.

Showing photos of the ill effects of destructive mining, Duterte slammed mining companies that had failed to follow regulations.

"Look at what mining does to our country. Is Gina a liar? No, I don't [think so]. It's difficult. The environment was once[green. So where are the trees that God gave us? Where's the environment that God gave us?" he said.

"How can you argue with what Gina is presenting to you—a visual thing?" he added. "We have to talk with the mining people...Explain to me bakit ganito [why]."

As he talked about the violations of mining firms, Duterte dropped the names of CitiNickel Mines and Development Corp., OceanaGold and Benguet Nickel Mines, among others.

The President also said he was considering a total mining ban "in the meantime."

"Maybe it would be worth the while for Gina to reimpose the ban. Total [mining ban] muna tayo, tapos mag-usap [then we talk]. Dito magprangka-prangkahan tayo [Let's be frank with each other]," he said.

Duterte said there was "no redeeming factor" for him to favor erring mining companies and give up Lopez, an environmental activist, as Environment secretary.

"What can the degradation of environment do to us? What can your P70 billion do with the government? Nothing... Give me a redeeming, something I can hang on to drop Gina. No redeeming factor," he said.

Duterte on Friday cursed at mining firms for environmental destruction as he backed anew Lopez's stance against illegal mining.

In his speech during the launch of People's Television Network's Cordillera Hub, the President said he would rather support Lopez than condone environmental abuse, even at the cost of billions of pesos in tax revenues.

"There is a law. If there is a law about mining, then mining is allowed. The problem is I saw the denuded mountains!... the hole you dug has gone too deep, because it's an open pit. If that's the case, I have to support Lopez. And I cannot help you," the President said, addressing himself to miners and speaking in a city whose sources of livelihood include mining.

"Let me just add that all you contribute to the country is about P70 billion in taxes. We can live without it. I would rather follow Gina...We'll get the P70 billion somewhere else and preserve our environment," he said.

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"DUTERTE MULLS - -" PAGE 1/2

Duterte mulls over total ban on mining

By Leila B. Salaverria
@LeilasINQ

President Duterte on Monday raised the possibility of a total ban on mining in the country, as he accused mining companies of funding efforts to destabilize his administration.

Mr. Duterte, however, did not cite specific acts of destabilization or mention anybody behind the supposed attempt to destabilize the government.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) issued a statement denying its members were involved in any destabilization attempt against the Duterte administration.

Destructive effects of mining

Speaking in a press briefing in Malacañang, Mr. Duterte ranted about the destructive effects on the environment of the operations of big mining companies.

He said it may be "worthwhile" for Environment Secretary Gina Lopez to enforce a ban on mining given the environmental damage that producers have caused.

"Total for now, then we talk. We can be frank with each other," Mr. Duterte said.

Belittling the P70 billion in taxes the country gets from the mining industry, Mr. Duterte said he needed to talk to the mining operators.

MINING ISSUES President Duterte discusses the effects of mining and other issues during a press conference in Malacañang. —JOAN BONDOC

Destabilization?

He charged that certain mining were planning to remove him and replace him with someone who would do their bidding.

"You in mining, I know that you are funding the opposite side. I know who is the one spending. I know some of you are giving funding to the other side to destabilize me," he said.

But COMP quickly denied the charge.

"Our member companies vehemently deny any involvement in any destabilization efforts against the administration," the group said.

"The Chamber of Mines fully support the administration of President Duterte and [is] unaware of any mining company that is supportive of any destabilization efforts against the administration," it said.

"We condemn such efforts

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and reaffirm our commitment to work with this administration, and to follow the law and the Constitution," it added.

Environmental pollution

Showing pictures of the aftermath of mining operations, Mr. Duterte also demanded an explanation from the mining companies of the effects of their activities, including polluted bodies of water.

"Explain to me why it is like this. Explain to us and the lawmakers," he said.

Pointing to pictures of polluted waters, Mr. Duterte lamented that the poor people living in mining sites had lost their sources of food.

"Look at the water. So where's the fish? Where's the marine life? Where's the aquatic life there?" he asked.

"So what can your P70 billion do for the government? Nothing," he added.

'Misinformation'

COMP accused the opponents of mining of spreading "misinformation."

"The pictures given to the President show active mining areas and do not present a complete picture of responsible mining," it said.

"Like any project still under construction, an active mine does not look green or pleasing to the eye. However, mining areas, once completed, are rehabilitated, planted with local species, and made useable for agriculture or forestry, or preserved as an ecotourism site. We will be glad to clarify this matter with the President, if given the opportunity," the group said.

Support for Gina

Mr. Duterte said he still supported Lopez, whose nomination had met with stiff opposition from the mining industry in the Commission on Appointments.

He also said he would direct the Philippine National Police to stop the miners from using explosives to dig into the earth.

Asked how a mining ban would be enforced, Mr. Duterte said he would just direct the military to arrest the miners.

"If they would not be arrested, I would drop them in the pit and then cover it," he said.

In explaining his plans, Mr. Duterte said he would do what was necessary to preserve the environment, including natural resources, and the people.

He lamented that the government was going after small *kaingin*, or slash and burn, farmers and yet allowing mining.

"Where's the justice for the Filipino? We might as well resign because we cannot do anything rather than bear the burden of not being able to answer because you have done nothing," he said.

As for the workers to be affected by the closure of the mines, he said he would "scrape the bottom of the barrel" to give them money.

He also promised to give them food.

"Let's pray enough business would come in but not as devastating as this one," he added.

Mr. Duterte noted, however, that there were responsible mining operations in the country.

"If this is what you would do, I would give you the monopoly," he said.

Against illegal mining

In its statement, COMP said it shared the concerns of Mr. Duterte about the environment and the communities affected by mining.

"Like the President, the Chamber of Mines and its member companies are also committed to responsible mining and [to] ensuring that mining is done under the highest standards and using the best technology available. Our member companies are all ISO14001 compliant, and consult with Australian and Canadian consultants in the course of their operations," the group said.

COMP said it condemned all illegal and irresponsible mining activities being undertaken by unscrupulous individuals and companies that had obtained permits from either the national or local governments.

"Illegal mining is a scourge that must be eliminated, and we are committed to help [the] government achieve this objective in any way we can," it said.

—WITH REPORTS FROM JAYMEE T. GAMIL AND REUTERS INQ

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Tuesday, March 14, 2017 Vol. 12 No. 153

Duterte to impose more stringent mining rules

By Elijah Felice Rosales @alyasjah

WHILE he has ruled out a total ban on mining for now, President Duterte on Monday said he will tighten mining regulations to ensure that their operations will not destroy the environment.

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The annual contribution of mining companies to government funds

In a news briefing in Malacañang, Duterte told reporters that he has already instructed the Philippine National Police (PNP)

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to go after mining firms that make use of explosives to break up rocks. Blasting is often used in open pit and underground mining operations.

I am ordering PNP Ronald M dela Rosa to tighten rules [on importing] explosives. Explosives should never be used because it will destroy the environment," the President said.

Under Republic Act (RA) 9516, only persons or entities issued a manufacturer's license, dealer's license or purchaser's license by the PNP-Firearms and Explosives Division may import any of the chemical or accessories that can be used in the manufacture of explosives or explosive ingredients from foreign suppliers.

RA 9516 covers chemicals, such as chlorates, nitrates, nitric acid and accessories, that can be used for the manufacture of explosives and explosive ingredients.

"Any person or entity who intends to import, sell or possess the aforecited chemicals or accessories shall file an application with the chief of the PNP, stating therein the purpose for which the license and/or permit is sought and such other information as may be required by the said official," RA 9516 read.

Duterte said the issue of the preservation of the environment is "nonnegotiable" for him, and that mining firms and prospective investors should keep this in mind.

"If firms can do responsible mining, then maybe we can have a compromise. But please do not contaminate our waters. Do not destroy marine life," Duterte said.

He also said investors who are keen on setting up mining operations in the Philippines should be required to allocate one third of their start-up capital for the rehabilitation of their mine area.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has cited the preservation of watersheds as one of the major factors behind the government's decision to shutter 23 mines last month.

Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez has been getting the flak for her order to shutter mines operating on or near watersheds. The President, however, threw his support behind the embattled DENR chief.

Duterte said he would rather listen to Lopez than earn P70 billion from mining.

"We can live without the P70 billion in taxes. Let's just develop other industries and preserve our environment," he said.

The President made the statement after the chief of the DENR was grilled at her second Commission on Appointments hearing last Thursday.

During the hearing, mining firms and engineering students argued that Lopez lacked the technical expertise and preparation for the post.

Last month the DENR shuttered 23 mines for operating on or near watersheds. Lopez said these mines contaminated coastal waters.

Lopez also canceled 75 mineral production-sharing agreements approved by her predecessors.

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Mining executives funding destabilization plot – Duterte

By **ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS**

President Duterte yesterday revealed that some mining executives are funding the opposition's destabilization plot against him.

In a press conference with Senate President Koko Pimentel and House Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez in Malacañang yesterday, Duterte said t mining executives are actively funding the destabilization ▶8

Mining executives... ◀1

plot.

"Kayong mga mining (You in the mining industry), I know that you are funding the opposite side," he said, assuring that mining executives will deny his claims.

"Alam ko na ngayon kung sino ang gumagastos sa kanila (I now know who are funding them). I know that some of you are giving funding to the other side to destabilize me," he added, sans naming those behind the said plot.

Duterte said the problem now is if the police and the military will allow such destabilization plot to materialize but expressed doubt that it will happen.

"Alam ko active sila ngayon sa destabilization (I know they are active in the destabilization). Well, it takes two to tango," he said.

"Gusto niyo akong palitan ng presidente na paluhurin niyo (You want to replace me with a president who you can force) to do your bidding," he added.

Duterte said that even foreign personalities, particularly Americans, are helping the mining executives fund his administration's destabilization.

"Sa America madalas yan (That is a thing in America). They go with the popularity of the issues. Kasi kahit ako naman, bakit ako gagastos (Because even I – why would I fund something unpopular)? Somebody there is really funding," he said.

He also cleared the name of Vice President Leni Robredo as among the personalities planning the destabilization.

"Hindi ko sinasabi na kasama 'yang si Leni. Hindi 'yan (I'm not saying that Leni is one of them. She's not). I don't want to drag her name," he said.

However, Duterte said he still does not know how people are plotting and carrying out his destabilization.

"Siguro (Maybe) destabilization to make me unpopular. Sige lang (Go ahead)," he said.

'It takes two to tango'

Duterte also urged Environment Secretary Gina Lopez to re-impose the total mining ban so he can have a frank conversation with the mining executives because not even Lopez can control them now.

He said the mining executives should explain how the environment have turned to 'overturned bottle caps'.

"What have you done to my country? Kasi kung hindi mo masagot, [expletive] isampal ko itong papel sa mukha mo. Explain to me bakit nagkaganito (Because if you cannot explain how it turned to this, I will use this file to slap you)," he said referring to a few pages of paper containing pictures of the "sabotaged' environment due to mining.

"Mag-usap tayo dito. Tayo-tayo lang kung gusto niyo (Let us talk. Just us). Explain to me kung bakit ganito. Can you explain well to me bakit ganito (Explain to me why is it like this). Explain to us, to the lawmakers," he added.

"It's visual. How can you argue with Gina when she's presenting, confronting you with the visual thing. It appalls us. Nagkamali ba si Gina diyan? Maawa naman kayo sa Pilipinas (Was Gina wrong there? Have pity for the country)," he said.

Duterte, meanwhile, praised two mining companies in Zamboanga del Norte which were able to rehabilitate the mountain they are mining.

"There is such a thing called 'responsible mining,' kung ito magawa mo ibigay ko na sa'yo. I-monopolize mo (If you can adhere to it, I will give the mining industry to you for you to monopolize)," he said.

'Spreading the barrel'

Meanwhile, Duterte said not even the P70 billion in yearly revenue nor their support for him during the campaign period can spare the mining industry from his scrutiny now.

According to the President, are destroying the environment under the guise of giving people jobs.

"Look at the drills. You think you can live with it because of the P70 billion or because nag-contribute sa campaign funds mo (you contributed to my campaign funds)? Sa akin, [hindi] porke nag-contribue ka – upakan kita (To me, not because you contributed I will spare you – I'll even punch you)," he said.

"Economy? Siguro oo, trabaho sa mga tao (Maybe because you're providing jobs to the people). Maghintay kayo (But just you wait), we're going to spread the bottom of the barrel, maghanap ng iba pang trabaho (we'll look for other jobs for them)," he added.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR chief gets Duterte support, complaint ahead of vote on appointment

EMBATTLED Environment Secretary Regina Paz "Gina" L. Lopez on Monday bagged renewed vote of confidence from President Rodrigo R. Duterte on the eve of a Commission on Appointments' (CA) meeting on her fate, even as the country's mining chamber filed a complaint against her before the Ombudsman.

Flanked by Senate President Aquilino "Koko" L. Pimentel III and Speaker Pantaleon D. Alvarez at a press conference in Malacañang, Mr. Duterte held up photos of areas purportedly spoiled by miners ordered sanctioned by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) last month, even as he praised some of the 13 that had passed that audit.

Ms. Lopez early last month ordered shut 23 of the country's 41 operating metal mines and suspension of five others, following that first tranche with an order for holders of contracts for 75 other projects in pre-production stage to explain why they should not be similarly sanctioned.

"*Nagkamali ba si Gina dito* (Did Gina make a mistake here)?" Mr. Duterte said as he flipped pages with the photos.

"All of this for P70 billion?" he asked, referring to the sector's gross value added to the economy.

"*Maligaya ba kayo dito* (Are you happy with this)?"

Mr. Duterte then threatened to impose a "total" mining ban.

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"Maybe it would be worth the while of Gina to impose the ban. Total [mining ban] *muna tayo, tapos magusap dito, magkakaprangkahan tayo* (and then we will talk frankly with miners about these cases)," the President said.

"What have you done to my country? Explain to us... such degradation," he added.

"Give me a redeeming [quality of mining] -- something I can hang on to -- to drop Gina. No redeeming factor."

Mr. Duterte also accused unnamed miners of "funding" the "opposition" to "destabilize" his government.

He made these remarks as the Environment committee of the CA — made up of lawmakers from both chambers of Congress — is set to decide in executive session today whether to proceed to vote on Ms. Lopez's appointment in her absence, since she is abroad.

CA member Senator Panfilo M. Lacson — who had quizzed Ms. Lopez on her competence during hearings -- told reporters separately in the Senate yesterday that Mr. Duterte's remarks did not have any bearing on the constitutional commission's decision. "CA members will not vote a certain way just because the President says so," he said in Filipino, citing the case of former Foreign Affairs chief Perfecto R. Yasay, Jr. whose appointment the CA unanimously voted to reject.

Some miners Ms. Lopez had penalized have appealed to Mr. Duterte and the multi-agency Mining Industry Coordinating Council is reviewing the DENR's audit at miners' request to ensure due process was observed.

On the other hand, Artemio F. Disini and Ronald Rex S. Recidoro, president and vice-president for Legal and Policy affairs, respectively, of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (CoMP), yesterday filed a complaint before the Ombudsman against Ms. Lopez for allegedly violating Republic Act No. 3019, or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, and RA 6713, or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

Among others, they accused Ms. Lopez of "ordering the closure of several mining corporations without bases in law and/or without due process" and of "falsely reporting to the public and making unfounded and biased allegations" that "ruined... the good reputation" of miners.

— **I. N. P. Cigaral *and* J. C. Lim**