

Peru's Miners Begin National Strike to Combat Labor Reforms



Lima, July 20 (RHC)-- Peruvian mine workers began an indefinite, nationwide strike Wednesday to protest the government's proposed labor reforms, which they say will affect their rights. Workers at 56 mines in the Andean country, including the country's top copper mines, are taking part in the strike, said Ricardo Juarez, the head of the National Federation of Mining, Metallurgical and Steel Workers of Peru.

This is the first miners' strike facing the government of President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, the former investment banker in his first year in office.

Juarez said the miners want Kuczynski to drop the proposed labor reforms that would loosen safety rules — making the firing of workers easier and shifting the burden of paying into an unemployment fund from employers to workers.

Peru's labor ministry has rejected the unions' request to authorize the strike, but workers can continue with the stoppage for several days under an appeals process.

Juarez said the number of unions joining the strike will increase for the rest of the day and it would likely curb copper production at some of the country's largest mines.

Peru is the world's second largest copper producer and the sixth-biggest gold and tin producer. The

mining exports account for 60 percent of the country's total shipments.

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