

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DATE : 15 JUN 2016

DAY : Wednesday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

PHL hosts 10th Asean forestry meet

THE Philippines is hosting the three-day 10th Asean Social Forestry Network (ASFN) in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Ricardo L. Calderon, director of the DENR's Forest Management Bureau (FMB), said the country's hosting of this year's ASFN meeting is part of an agreement among Asean members. The meeting kicked off on Tuesday.

"The Philippines was accorded the honor to host and chair this year's ASFN meeting by Myanmar during the

Ninth ASFN meeting held last year in Inle Lake, Shah State," Calderon said in a statement.

Calderon added that ASFN is a government-driven social-forestry network in Southeast Asia with the main goal of strengthening Asean cooperation in social forestry through the sharing of information and knowledge.

He also said ASFN links government forestry policy-makers directly with network members from civil society, research organizations, academe, private sectors and experts of related fields.

"ASFN supports the development of the Asean community,"

Calderon said.

Expected to attend the 10th Annual ASFN meeting are delegates from 10 Asean member-states, including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam to be headed by their respective Asean Senior Officials on Forestry (Asof)/ASFN leaders and focal points.

Representative of the implementing partners of ASFN, such as the Centre for People and Forests, Center for International Forestry Research, Non-Timber For-

est Products-Exchange Program, World Agroforestry Center and the Southeast Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture are joining the meeting.

The agenda of the meeting include discussions on Asean cooperation in forestry, promoting policy and practice of social forestry, including reports by Asean member-states and implementing partners and development of strategic plan of action of ASFN to support Asean and global objectives.

The establishment of ASFN was endorsed by the Asof during their eighth Meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in August 2005.



PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

PH's greening program

WITH the continued destruction of the country's remaining forests, it is critical for the government to intensify the implementation of its multi-pronged national greening program (NGP).

It is equally critical for the incoming administration of President-elect Rodrigo "Digong" R. Duterte to go after illegal loggers and their cohorts and protectors in government uniform.

No less than the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) admitted that the agency failed to meet its target of planting 1.5 billion seedlings from 2010 to 2016.

Outgoing DENR Secretary Ramon Paje made the admission during the 29th year anniversary celebration of the agency last June 10.

He claimed that one of the principal reasons why DENR failed to meet the target was the shortage of seedlings.

For the past six years, he said, the agency tried to meet the target. But he said "nagkulang sa seedlings dahil hindi talaga natin kayang patubuin ang seedlings na 'yan," added the DENR head.

However, Paje was also quick to claim that DENR exceeded the targeted number of hectares (1.5 million) to be planted to trees during the six-year Aquino administration.

The DENR plans to set up 11 mechanized nurseries, which are capable of producing an estimated 100,000 seedlings a day.

"With those 100,000 seedlings a day, we will be able to produce close to 350 to 380 million seedlings a year," said the outgoing DENR secretary.

The production of more than 380 million seedlings a year is expected to fast-track the implementation of the government's National Greening Program across the country.

Hopefully, no shortage of seedlings will happen during the Duterte administration, which starts at 12 noon on June 30.

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Kalikasan to Duterte: Don't appoint former military man DENR chief

GROUPS under the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan-PNE) on Tuesday asked President-elect Rodrigo R. Duterte to refrain from appointing a former military man to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Clemente Bautista, national coordinator of Kalikasan-PNE, said it will be better if Duterte will appoint "a civilian with a clean record" in terms of graft and corruption and human-rights violation, and proven track record in environmental service.

Duterte earlier promised to give to the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) the top environment post along with labor, agrarian reform and social welfare.

Jose Maria Sison, the self-exiled founder of the CPP, declined to accept any Cabinet position, but instead said the CPP-NPA will give a short list of candidates to Duterte. Duterte himself said the list given by the CPP-NPA leaders emissary, Fidel V. Agcaoilli, was "impressive."

However, before the list was

handed to him, Duterte changed his mind and decided that he will name a former military officer to the DENR post.

Before that, Duterte also changed his mind for the Department of Labor and Employment and decided to name former peace negotiator Silvestre H. Bello III for the position.

Bautista said the relationship of big polluters, like mining companies, with the military has always been reciprocal over the past decades, to the detriment of the people and environment.

He said former military top brass become the security consultants and defense contractors of big mining, logging and plantation interests.

"It will be the military man listening to miners and loggers, and not the other way around like what the Duterte administration might be hoping for," Bautista added.

He said Duterte's offer is seen as the incoming President's recognition of progressive political principles and leadership as much-needed interventions in the national government. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*

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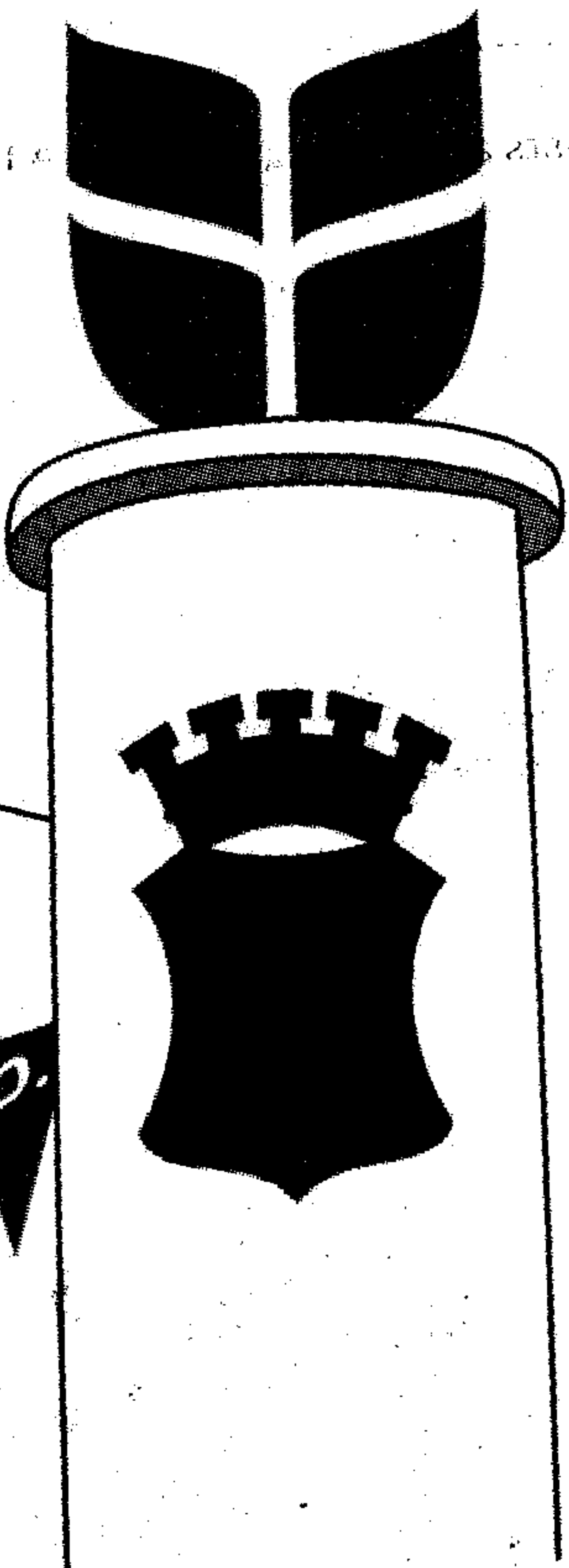
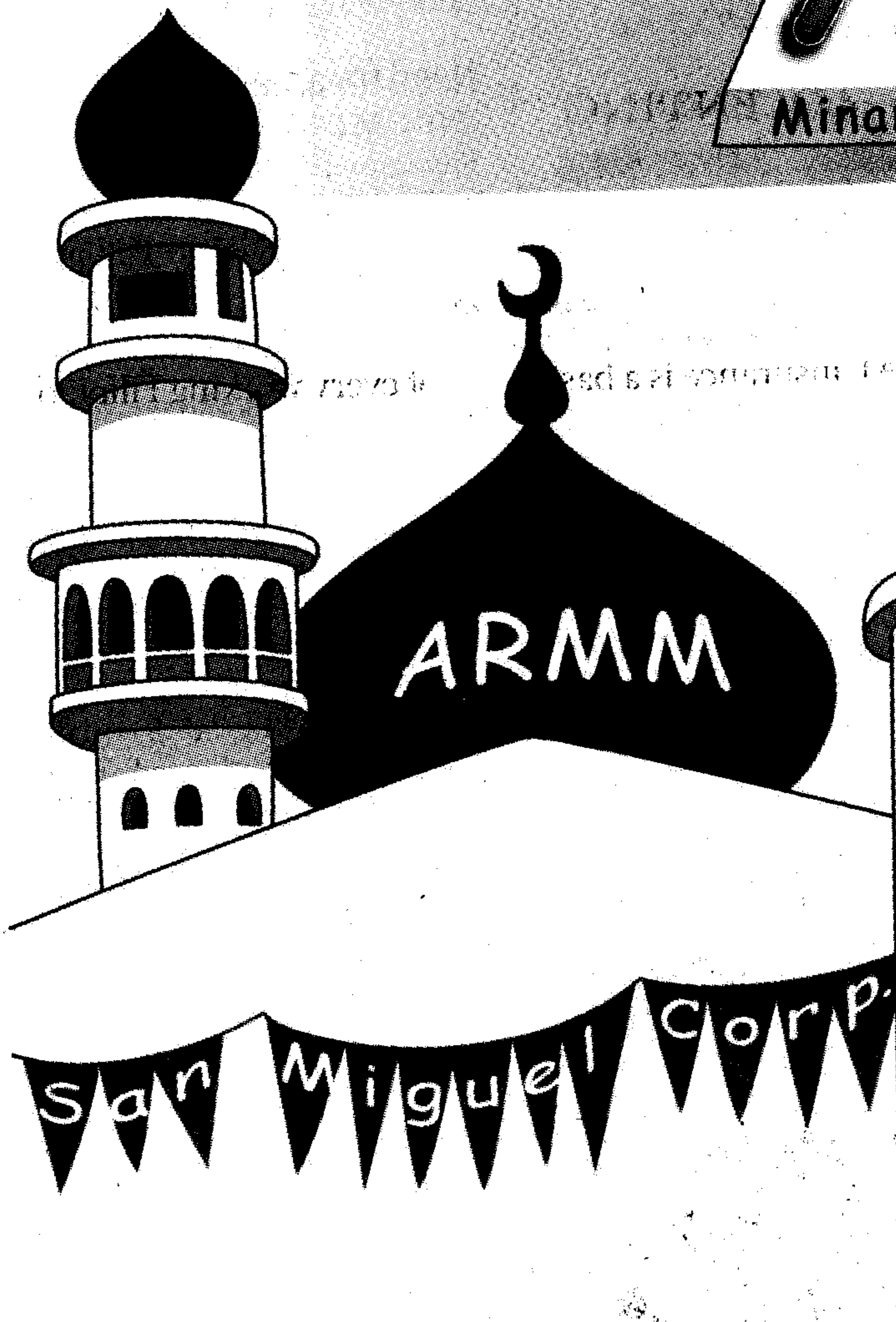
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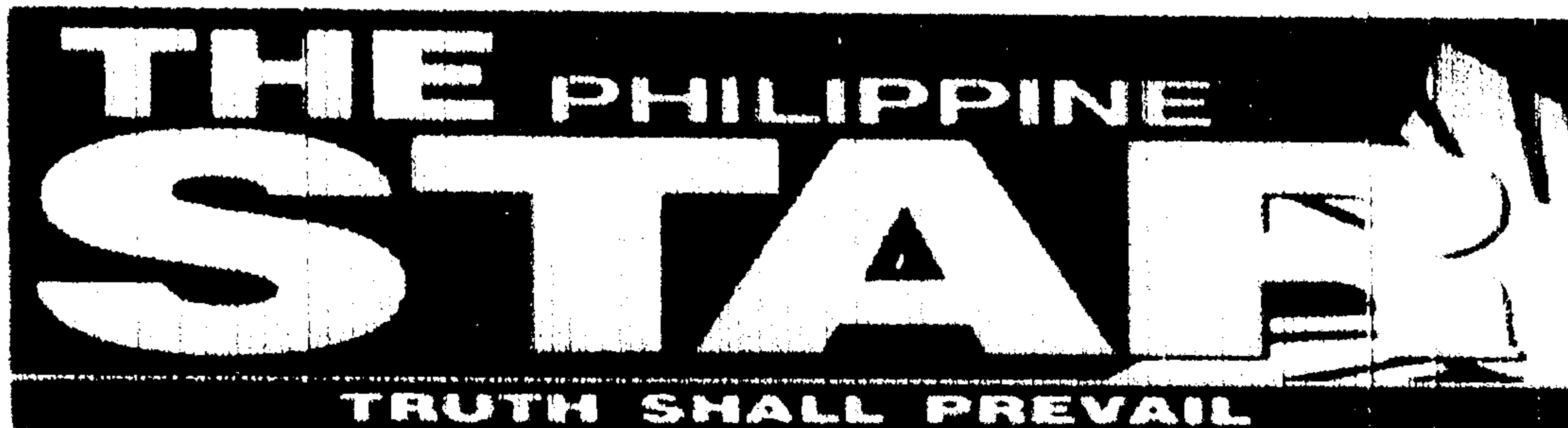
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Ship carrying cement destroys coral reef

A Panamanian vessel carrying 48,000 tons of cement ran aground off Malapascua Island in Daanbantayan, Cebu on Monday and destroyed 483 meters of coral reef, according to the Philippine Coast Guard.

PCG-Central Visayas commander Commodore George Ursabia said the 29,104-ton *M/V Belle Rose* came from Tsukumi, Japan and was on its way to San Fernando, Cebu.

Ursabia said the plan to transfer the cargo to one of *M/V Belle Rose*'s sister ships did not push through in view of the possibility that it would also run aground in the shallow water.

He said the PCG is leaving it up to the provincial government of Cebu to conduct an investigation, assess the damage to the corals and to file for damages.

The ship's crewmembers remain on board. No oil spill has been reported.

— Evelyn Macairan

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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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Foreign vessel damages 2.4 hectares of Cebu corals

By MARS W. MOSQUEDA JR.
and RAYMUND F. ANTONIO

DAANBANTAYAN, Cebu – About 2.4 hectares of corals in waters off Malapascua Island in northern Cebu were damaged after a foreign vessel loaded with cement ran aground in the area last Monday.

The Cebu Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) said its initial assessment indicated that 2.4 hectares of corals were ruined when the Panamanian-registered cargo ship MV Belle Rose broke down off Monad Shoal, a known diving spot here.

PENRO Officer-in-Charge Baltazar Tribunalo told reporters that another team from his office, non-gov- ►4

ernment group Sea Knights, and personnel from the University of San Carlos Marine Biology department will get back to the area to conduct more thorough inspection.

Tribunalo also said that diving activities in Malapascua Island have been suspended due to the stranded vessel. The suspension could hurt the island's tourism industry as Malapascua is regarded as one of the country's best diving sites and known likewise to divers overseas as a top diving destination in this part of the world.

As of press time, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)-Cebu Station was still trying to determine what exactly caused the breakdown of the 29,104-ton vessel considering that there was no weather disturbance when the accident occurred.

M/V Belle Rose, registered under Alpha Ship Management Corp. and skippered by Captain Vicharniel delos Reyes, ran aground about "four nautical miles southeast off Malapascua Island at 3 a.m." on Monday.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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CARS OLDER THAN 15 YRS
SCRAPPED?

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Should cars older than 15 years be scrapped?

By Jason K. Ang

THIS week, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) locked horns with the providers of school shuttle services over the age of their vehicles.

The LTFRB has mandated that shuttles older than 15 years should be phased out in favor of newer, Euro 4 emissions compliant vehicles.

Should such a ban on older vehicles be imposed for other types as well?

Right now, the Philippines

does not impose an age limit to engines when it comes to registration. In fact, older vehicles are somewhat favored as the cost of registration goes down for older vehicles.

Newer ones pay more and are required to fork out a bigger amount in the beginning by lumping together the first three years of payment.

The main reason for scrapping older vehicles is emissions. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) mandated the adoption of Euro 4 fuel standards

beginning this year.

Euro 4 is significantly cleaner than the previous Euro 2 standard. Euro 4 fuel has one-tenth the sulfur content of Euro 2 fuels. Sulfur in pollutants can contribute to heart and lung diseases, and can increase the risk of cancer. Starting 2016, fuel and automobiles have to comply with the new standard.

Still, that leaves millions of vehicles sold before 2016 on the road and polluting like it was 1999. Even if we start the scrapping law now, it will still take 15 years to remove pre-

Euro 4 cars from the roads.

Phase out

DENR Secretary Ramon Paje Jr. has recommended that vehicles older than 15 years be phased out to improve air quality, particularly in Metro Manila.

As an alternative, he suggested that older vehicles be banned from major roads that are usually clogged with traffic.

"Heavier traffic means more idling time for vehicles on the road. This leads to more emissions, and older vehicles have more toxic emissions," he said.

That newer vehicles would be safer and cleaner is not being disputed, even by the school shuttle operators. Their contention is that the 15-year age limit is too low, as school shuttles may not be running the whole day and for long distances, unlike other utility vehicles.

The reverse would be true of trucks and buses. These run for many hours straight, and travel hundreds of kilometers on a single journey. For trucks and buses, the 15-year age limit would be applicable. The age limit would have to be counted from

the original date of manufacture, and not when the vehicle was imported to the Philippines.

Used trucks and buses that have run for 10 or more years are routinely registered as new. Trucks and buses are designed to ferry heavy loads and passengers, and thus should be subject to more stringent regulations.

Not a day goes by without a report of a truck crashing due to failing brakes or suspension components. Even worse are buses that cause multiple deaths to passengers and pedestrians,

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CARS OLDER THAN
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Should cars older than 15 years be scrapped?

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sometimes due to component failure.

Motioncars and INQUIRER columnist Botchi Santos has suggested a seven- or eight-year age limit on vehicles, particularly for taxi cabs.

Proving roadworthiness

He suggested that reducing the number of old vehicles on the road will help free up traffic and reduce crashes due to poor maintenance. Such a scrapping law would also stimulate new vehicle sales.

The rules in other countries vary. Singapore imposes a 10-year registration limit on a new vehicle, via its Certificate of Entitlement (COE) program. One cannot buy a vehicle without this.

The COE of a new vehicle expires after 10 years. It can be renewed, but at an enormous cost, so most owners would decide to buy a COE for a new vehicle instead.

The Netherlands requires a roadworthiness certificate for cars. It's required annually for vehicles older than six years, and every two years for vehicles less

than six years old. Germany has a similar inspection program.

Using roadworthiness as a criterion would actually make more sense than an age limit. But the LTO has proven incapable of implementing regulations based on emissions and roadworthiness, so an age limit would be easier to follow.

Vintage cars

What about that classic sports car in your garage? Vintage motor vehicles (defined as 40 years and older) can be restricted for use on certain days such as weekends and holidays. This

was precisely the subject of an administrative order issued by the Land Transportation Office.

But as with everything in the Philippines, special interest groups started raising a fuss, and soon the order was put on the back burner.

The logical conclusion must be: Older cars, in the range of 15 years and up, should be scrapped. The alternative is to tax older vehicles prohibitively so that registering them will become less attractive, allowing owners to opt for newer vehicles instead. *With a report by Dona Z. Pazzibugan*

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MGB pushes for responsible offshore minerals utilization

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) has issued new guidelines to instill responsible offshore mining among companies.

In a statement, MGB announced the effectivity of the Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 2016-05 establishing the Guidelines on Offshore Mining.

"The issuance of the Guidelines is geared towards the attainment of responsible offshore minerals utilization," the agency said.

The memorandum covers mining operations, mine decommissioning

and mine rehabilitation in offshore areas within the Philippine territory and its exclusive economic zone and extended continental shelf.

Among the most notable provisions of the MC include the prohibition on the use of high-pressure water jets in the extraction of seabed minerals; prohibition on the use of chemicals and size reduction in on-board mineral processing and laboratory testing/analysis; and return of non-valuable extracted minerals to mined-out areas through the use

of submerged discharge pipes and use of sediment screens/curtains to minimize the dispersion of particulates.

The circular also imposes a contingency plan for emergency situations.

The MC likewise iterated that offshore mining shall comply with other laws, rules and regulations that concern safety, health, social development and environmental protection and enhancement. (Madelaine B. Miraflor)

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Guidelines released on offshore mining

THE Mines and Geosciences Bureau has issued a memorandum circular (MC) establishing the guidelines on offshore mining geared towards responsible offshore minerals utilization.

According to the statement, MC No. 2016-05 dated May 16, covers mining operations, mine decommissioning, and mine rehabilitation in offshore areas within the Philippine territory and its exclusive economic zone and extended continental shelf.

Offshore mining relates to mining the beyond the coastal baseline, in the sea and the seabed. Exclusive economic zone means the water, sea bottom and subsurface measured from the baseline of the Philippine archipelago up to two hundred nautical miles (200 n.m.) offshore.

Offshore mining also relates to exploration for, and mining of minerals on the waters, sea bottom and subsurface from the mean low tide level to the two

hundred nautical miles exclusive economic zone including the archipelagic sea and contiguous zone.

Among the provisions of the MC include the prohibition on the use of: high-pressure water jets in the extraction of seabed minerals, chemicals and size reduction in onboard mineral processing and laboratory testing/analysis, and sediment screens/curtains to minimize the dispersion of particulates.

The circular also forbids the return of non-valuable extracted minerals to mined-out areas through the use of submerged discharge pipes and use.

It also imposed the adoption of a contingency plan for emergency situations.

In addition, the MC reiterated that offshore mining complies with other laws, rules and regulations that concern safety, health, social development and environmental protection and enhancement. — **Janina C. Lim**

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

Hamon kay Digong ang small-scale mining sa Paracale!

ALL weather talaga si Hector Honasan, ang bagman ng small-scale mining sa Bgy. Bulaay, sa Paracale, Camarines Norte. Kahit natalo ang manok nila na si Liberal Party standard-bearer Mar Roxas, heto't nagbukas pa rin ang ilegal na negosyo nila. Nagsara kasi itong minahan sa Bgy. Bulaay nang halos isang buwan at ang ipinagyayabang ni Honasan ay magbubukas sila kapag nanalo si Roxas dahil sa padrino nilang si ret. Gen. Marcelo Garbo. Naging kontrobersiyal kasi si Garbo nang makita siya at ang ilang heneral ng PNP at AFP sa Novotel sa Cubao, Quezon City bago sumapit ang May elections. At dahil bagyo si Garbo kay Roxas, lumakas ang loob ni Honasan na mapabuksan ang minahan kapag nanalo ang LP standard-bearer nga. Subalit kahit natalo si Roxas, aba nagbukas noong nakaraang linggo ang minahan ni Honasan. At mukhang nakakuha ng bagong linya si Honasan sa pamamagitan ni alyas Rasco, na bukambibig naman ang pangalan ni incoming PNP director Chief Supt. Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa. Boom Panes! Punyeta! Di pa nga nakaupo si Dela Rosa eh nasangkot kaagad ang pangalan n'ya sa katiwalian dahil kay Honasan. Get's n'yo mga kosa?

Nagsimulang magpatayo ng butokan o kubo ang grupo ni Honasan na sina Egay Varde, Jun Bermundo, Agil Orqueza at Mark Lustaños noong nakaraang linggo sa Bgy. Bulaay at inihanda ang mga gamit para sa pagmina ng ginto. Makaraan ang apat na araw na paglilimas, nagtataas na sa ngayon ng bita ang mga alipores ni Honasan. At para hindi magambala ang ilegal na operation nila, komolekta ng tig-P20,000 si Honasan sa mga financiers ng small-scale mining bilang advance payment ng lingguhang intelihensiya ng mga kapulisan. Ayon sa mga kosa ko, maliban kina Bicol regional director Chief Supt. Augusto Marquez at Camarines Norte provincial director Sr. Supt. Rudolf Dimas, ang mga nabahagingan ni Honasan ng lingguhang intelihensiya ay ang R2 ni Marquez, regional at provincial commander ng CIDG at siyempre si Rasco na pumalit kay Garbo bilang contact ni Honasan sa Camp Crame. At natural na kasama sa mga nabiyayaan ni Honasan, ayon sa mga kosa ko, ay itong opisina sa Region 5 ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at ng Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB). Punyeta! Hinog na si Honasan para maging ehemplo sa kampanya laban sa corruption ni incoming president Davao City Mayor Rodrigo "Digong" Duterte ah, di ba mga kosa? Punyeta! Tingnan natin kung uubra ang all weather ni Honasan kay Digong sa pag-upo niya sa Hunyo 30.

Napasara na rin itong small-scale mining sa Bgy. Bulaay noong 2012 dahil pinasok ng tubig ang mga butas at nalunod ang tatlong minero. Dahil sa malakas na pagkondina sa minahan, si Camarines Gov. Egay Tallado mismo ang nag-utos na isara ito. Subalit si Tallado, na dating LP, ay nasuspende dahil sa kasong inilatag ng asawa niya kaya tahimik na nagbukas itong minahan. At dahil nanalo nang muli si Tallado, na tumakbo sa partido ng UNA, nitong nakaraang election, nanganganib na masarang muli itong minahan, di ba mga kosa? Punyeta! Dapat unahan ni Tallado si Digong sa pagpasara ng ilegal na minahan dahil pagnagkataon, mapapahiya siya. Hehehe! May kalalagyan talaga si Honasan na maraming pangalan sa Camp Crame na ang ginagasgas, di ba mga kosa?

Sa pag-upo naman ni Bato, dapat sibakin niya sa puwesto si Rasco para paniwalaan siyang matino at malinis ang liderato n'ya. At 'wag na din niyang bigyan ng puwesto si Rasco para patunayan na hindi niya kinukunsinti ang paggamit ng pangalan n'ya para mapabuksan ang small-scale mining sa Bgy. Bulaay. Hindi kasi magandang pasalubong sa liderato nina Digong at Bato ang pagbubukas ng minahan dahil lalabas na pitsa-pitsa rin pala ang lakad nila, di ba mga kosa? Masipag ding maglakad at maghanap ng padrino si Honasan, pero tingnan natin kung maalpasan pa niya ang galit ni Digong sa illegal mining. Abangan!

SUPALPAL!



NON ALQUITRAN

The Standard

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Govt issues rules on offshore mining

By Anna Leah E. Gonzales

THE Mines and Geosciences Bureau has issued a memorandum circular establishing the guidelines on offshore mining.

MGB issued Memorandum Circular No. 2016-05 covering mining operations, mine decommissioning and mine rehabilitation in offshore areas within the Philippine territory and its exclusive economic zone and extended continental shelf.

MGB said the provisions of the memorandum circular included the prohibition on the use of high-pressure water jets in the extraction of seabed minerals and prohibition on the use of chemicals and size reduction in onboard mineral processing and laboratory testing or analysis.

Other provisions include the return of non-valuable extracted minerals to mined-out areas through the use of submerged discharge pipes and use of sediment screens or curtains to minimize the dispersion of particulates and imposition of a contingency plan for emergency situations.

The circular also requires offshore mining to comply with other laws, rules and regulations that concern safety, health, social development and environmental protection and enhancement.

"The issuance of the guidelines is geared towards the attainment of responsible offshore minerals utilization," MGB said.

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Malaya Business Insight

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A tale of two Sisters

JOSE BAYANI BAYLON



'A tale of two Sisters which tells us a lot about why we can't have an honest to goodness discussion on responsible mining.'

I AM in the habit of inviting sisters – nuns, that is – to go on a trip with me to exotic Palawan. No, there is nothing to be suspicious about my intentions, though some would argue otherwise. You see, I invite Sisters to come and visit Palawan because in my other life I work for a mining firm and I want the good Sisters to see how we do mining in Palawan.

Maybe next to abortion, divorce and same sex marriage, mining as an issue is what drives many members of the Philippine clergy up the wall. “Many,” let me stress, does not necessarily mean “most” and definitely does not mean “all”. But many – from good Bishops to parish priests, nuns and school administrators, to even lay ministers, believe that mining brings no good to the communities where it happens, nor to national progress much less to human civilization. And not only do they believe this – they use the power of the pulpit and the power of being church people to spread this “gospel”. Oh, yes, to do this they ring their cast iron church bells to call the flock into cement and steel cathedrals and, after the sermon, have the truly “devout” kiss their gold rings and crucifixes.

Hmmp.

I have always felt that this absolutist stand is unproductive and denies certain facts. We would still be living in caves if mankind never learned how to harness the earth's mineral riches and convert them first into basic tools and weapons like knives and spears and later into deadlier weapons like bombs and grenades and bullets as well as ballpoint pens and cellphones and laptops.

I have also always felt that taking the sins of one, two, three or a handful of irresponsible miners and using that to label every miner as irresponsible is, well, irresponsible. It's like calling all priests including the Pope a pedophile just because one, two, or three – actually thousands of priests worldwide – are real pedophiles. (You don't believe me? Watch the Oscar 2016 best picture “Spotlight”).

But understanding what members of the clergy face, I invite them to Palawan because I adhere to the “Doubting Thomas” philosophy of advocacy – meaning “don't take my word for it, go see for yourself.” And that's where I get interesting results.

Take one Sister from a central Philippines province. She was part of a mining forum I attended recently and where I offered to bring five participants to Palawan for free. What do you know – she was chosen together with four of her students. They were all excited about it – in the beginning. As I followed up on a daily basis for the purposes of scheduling the trip her replies became less frequent. Until I received this text (edited a little lest she get defrocked!):

“I am so sorry for a delayed response Sir JB... But my congregation is so brutally and fundamentally Anti-Mining. Until now almost all d sisters here do not allow me and d students to go. No matter what explanation we gave. No presentation would suffice to convince them. It is black and white. One sister even told me to go but go without wearing our habit. Isn't it painful? And OBEY I MUST. Thank you.”

Nothing would convince them and they wouldn't even try to see or hear the other side. Hmmm. According to the will of God?

In contrast there is this Sister who is involved in another insti-

A TALE

tution of higher learning... One that surprisingly offers courses in mining! I asked her – isn't that controversial and doesn't that put you in the crosshairs of the anti mining clerics? This is what she had to say AFTER visiting our mine site:

“Indeed, those who were with me learned a lot of positive ideas about mining today.

As you said, many Church people, especially those I used to

join in advocacies against mining in the last ... years could not understand, much less accept that I have turned pro-mining –and supported the offering of mining engineering and mining technology.... For my part, I was just driven by my own honest to goodness desire to serve the education needs of the people I have been sent to serve--a people gifted by God with mine resources which needed to be explored and utilized for development. It is in this light that I see my mission

to reconcile many of the current teachings of the Church on stewardship over creation and care of the environment and Mother Earth.

Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity of exposure to good mining practices; we bring home with us a lot of good news about mining...”

I am sorry for the first Sister and happy for the second; sad for the students of the school where the first one teaches and happy for those where the second one

teaches. You know which school offers its students a free environment in which to learn about the world around them, yes? One is for the 21st century while the other harkens back to the Pleistocene era with everyone in it imprisoned in mind if not in spirit.

A tale of two Sisters which tells us a lot about why we can't have an honest to goodness discussion on responsible mining in the Philippines!

Amen? Ring the cast iron church bells!

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ARCHAEO DONTOSAURUS / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

MAGNETITE, which is used in making steel, is one of the minerals extracted from black sands in the deep seas.

The Manila Times

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Pangasinan gov, several others face graft raps

THE anti-graft court Sandiganbayan's Sixth Division has found sufficient grounds to try the graft charges against Pangasinan Gov. Amado Espino Jr. and several others for allegedly authorizing two unqualified firms to extract black sand in the Lingayen Gulf Area in 2011.

In March, the Office of the Ombudsman filed two counts of graft against Espino.

"After going over the Information [charge sheets] in this case and evaluating the Joint Resolution dated 28 January 2014 of the Office of the Ombudsman, the evidence in support thereof, and the records of the preliminary investigation attached thereto, the Court finds that sufficient grounds exist for the finding of probable cause and for the issuance of warrants of arrest against accused-movants and the rest of the accused," the court's Sixth Division said in part in a resolution promulgated on Monday.

The ruling threw out the omnibus motion filed last March 15 by Espino, Provincial Administrator Rafael Baraan, and Provincial Housing and Home-site Regulation Officer Alvin Bigay who sought dismissal of the case for lack of probable cause.

According to the court, the arguments raised by the respondents "are matters of defenses that are best addressed during the trial of these cases."

Espino and Baraan posted P60,000 bail for the two counts of graft on Monday afternoon.

Bigay, indicted only in one case, posted P30,000 bail.

Named respondents in the first graft charge were Espino, Baraan, Bigay and then-members of the Board of Directors of Xypher Builders Inc: Michael Ramirez, Gina Alcazar, Avery Pujol, Cynthia Camara, and Lolita Bolayog.

Meanwhile, in the second graft charge, Espino and Baraan were included along with then-members of the Board of Directors of Alexandra Mining and Oil Ventures, Inc: Cesar Detera, Edwin Alcazar, Bolayog, Denise Sia Kho Po, Annlyn Detera, Camara, Glenn Subia, and Emiliano Buenavista.

The Ombudsman alleged that the respondents gave unwarranted benefit, privilege or advantage to Xypher Builders Inc. and to Alexandra Mining and Oil Ventures, Inc. and caused undue injury to the government.

The firms were authorized to conduct soil remediation and/or magnetite and mineral extraction activities within Barangay Sabangan in Lingayen Gulf, Pangasinan even if they were "not lawfully entitled to conduct mining activities within said protected area."

Based on the charge sheets, the two firms were allegedly not duly-accredited by or registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board and the mining activities allegedly lacked the requisite area clearance from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Alexandra Mining and Oil Ventures, Inc. also did not possess any business permit from the Municipality of Lingayen, the Ombudsman alleged.

It also added that "Baraan upon authority of accused Espino" issued a Gratuitous Permit and that Espino issued a Mineral Ore Expert Permit in favor of Xypher Builders Inc., thus allowing the firm to unlawfully sell to DH-Kingstone Holdings Co. Ltd. and export minerals to China worth P10.75 million which the Ombudsman said was the amount of undue injury suffered by the government.

Also, "Baraan upon authority of accused Espino" issued a small scale mining permit in favor of Alexandra Mining and Oil Ventures, Inc.

The Ombudsman recommended P30,000 bail each in both graft charges for the respondents' provisional liberty.

REINA TOLENTINO

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BusinessMirror

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

briefs

→GROUP LAUDS EASTERN SAMAR'S GOV FOR STOP ORDER AGAINST MINING

THE Philippine-Misereor Partnership Inc. (PMPI) on Tuesday lauded Eastern Samar Gov. Conrado Nicart for ordering at least three mining companies to stop their operations in Manicani and Homonhon islands.

Citing peace and order as the reason, Nicart issued separate letters to Hinatuan Mining Corp. (HMC), Cambayas Mining and Emir Corp. to stop their operations.

HMC is still hauling stockpiles of nickel in Manica Island, while Cambayas and Emir are operating in Homonhon Islands. PMPI is a network of people's organizations, non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups and Misereor, the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church based in Aachen, Germany.

In an interview, PMPI Communication Officer Amor J. Tan Singco said they are "delighted" by the stop order coming from the province's top official.

"First, we are delighted by the order and we hope that the operations of the mining companies will immediately stop until issues surrounding their operations are resolved," Singco said. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Replace income taxes with carbon tax

REAL TAX reform requires bold and unconventional thinking.

The tax reform proposals currently being bandied about consist largely of modest reductions in both the individual and corporate income tax rates (e.g., from 32 percent to 25 percent) and a raise in the exemption for wage earners (up to, say, P1 million). A bolder, better approach is to just scrap taxes on income altogether and replace these with excise taxes based on the carbon emissions impact of specific goods and services. Simple arithmetic calculations can determine the appropriate carbon tax rates in order to make up for the loss in government revenue as a result of the elimination of income taxes.

Actually, it is inherently unfair to tax people simply because they earn an income. What this effectively does is penalize individuals and businesses for working hard and being successful at producing goods and services that the community wants. It is not consistent with an objective of providing economic incentives and moral encouragement to those who engage in activities that boost the economy and ultimately benefit the nation as a whole. Income taxes are thus inconsistent with the compelling goal of creating jobs for the many millions of unemployed and underemployed citizens.

Taxing carbon is far more logical than taxing income. A tax based on the carbon-emission consequences of the product or service consumed means taxing people based on the pollution they cause. Taxing products or services that cause the emission of carbon dioxide (and other noxious gases) in their production and use is a direct way of making the polluters themselves pay for the cost of cleaning up their mess. Indeed, it would be unfair to let someone dirty everyone's air and then make everyone else bear the cost.

Whatever the government now raises from income taxes can be just as well raised from an

COMMENTARY

René B. Azurin

appropriate percentage tax based on the amount of carbon one's lifestyle causes to be emitted. In lieu of the government raising money by confiscating part of the income people generate through hard work, the government should raise revenues by penalizing people who pollute a shared environment and cause harm to everybody else. Not just fairness but also economic logic demand this.

A carbon tax means higher taxes on oil products, on products that use petroleum as raw material (like most plastics and synthetics), on coal, on natural gas, and on activities that generate polluting emissions. The tax can take the form of a sales or excise tax. Though there may be vehement objections to such a tax from the public-transport sector, the labor sector, and the consumer sector, it should be borne in mind that taxes on oil and oil-based products, by raising their prices, discourage their consumption and make the clean energy sources that global warming campaigners are trying to promote—like sun, wind and ocean wave—more attractive to the consuming public.

Putting a price on the amount of carbon one emits (or causes to be emitted) will—better than mandated limits and complicated cap-and-trade systems—direct consumers to less carbon-intensive products, and producers to less carbon-intensive methods of production.

A carbon tax is, in effect, a consumption tax. The usual argument against consumption taxes is that these are “regressive” because they penalize low-income groups proportionately more than high-income groups. This objection can be easily overcome by exempting food and other

basic commodities—like generic medicine and essential health services—from any consumption taxes. Because low-income earners spend 60-70 percent of their income on food, the non-imposition of taxes on this item alone virtually frees this income segment from sharing any part of the cost of government.

Taxes on consumption—like sales taxes and value-added taxes—effectively penalize individuals and businesses for using up more of the nation's resources. The more one consumes, the more taxes one pays. This makes economic sense since consumption uses up resources that could be used elsewhere, by others, for alternative purposes. A price paid to the community—a tax—for the privilege of consuming more is thus founded on very reasonable grounds. Taxes on consumption logically make those who consume more of society's resources assume a greater share in the cost of managing the society.

Finally, it should not be overlooked that taxes on income—because they prescribe permissible deductions—are more complicated, more subject to the revenue collector's discretion, and therefore more susceptible to corruption. If hard-to-collect income taxes are scrapped altogether and the required government revenue is raised instead through easy-to-collect consumption taxes, a messy, susceptible-to-corruption system will be replaced with a simpler, less corruptible one.

Admittedly, it requires a small sense of adventure to adopt something that isn't being done anywhere else. It can only be hoped that those with the power to make this tax reform proposal happen will be of an innovative mind-set and evaluate this idea solely on conceptual and practical logic.

Dr. René B. Azurin is a management professor, policy consultant, and author of several books on government and the economy.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Oceans in peril



Edgardo J. Angara

LAST June 8 (World Oceans Day), the Haribon Foundation and Newcastle University released a study that described the alarming decline of 59 reef-fish species in Philippine waters.

The study, first published in the journal *PLOS One*, attributed the fast disappearance of species like groupers (*lapu-lapu*), parrot-fish (*loro*), pompano (*talakitok*) and humphead wrasse (*mameng*), to decades of unsustainable fishing—spurred on by the demands of a fast-growing Philippine population.

These fish are essential to keeping reef ecosystems balanced and healthy enough to sustain a wide array of marine life. The upshot is that the fishermen, who are dependent on these species, are imperiling their livelihood by overexploiting these so-called elephants of the ocean.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) tried

to prevent a similar problem by recently declaring as water-quality management areas Coron Bay in Palawan and Sabang Bay in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro.

The two bays—found along the 1.14-million hectare marine corridor called the Verde Island Passage—are among the country's top diving sites and have supported the local tourism of the adjacent communities.

However, it appears human activities are posing significant risks to the reefs. During a World Wide Fund-sponsored event along the Verde Island Passage in commemoration of World Oceans Day and Coral Triangle Day (June 9),

participants noted that the waters they swam in were heavily littered with plastic. Numerous studies have shown that such waste damages and poisons marine life.

Last year a study by Ocean Conservancy and the McKinsey Center for Business and Environment determined that more than half of the plastic waste leaking into the ocean comes from only five countries. Alarming, the Philippines ranked as the world's third-biggest dumper of plastics, next only to China and Indonesia, and ahead of Thailand and Vietnam. Of the 2.7 million metric tons of plastic garbage the Philippines generates each year, up to 521,000 tons (or 20 percent) somehow end up in the ocean.

Each of the five countries recently benefited from significant surges in GDP, reduced poverty and improved quality of life. However, this growing economic strength, the study pointed out, has also generated an explosive demand for consumer products without the commensurate waste-management infrastructure in place.

Overfishing and pollution are among the man-made hazards

our oceans immediately face. But as *The Economist* pointed out in February, higher levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere pose even greater threats to our ocean's health. Scientists have demonstrated that more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere leads to a warmer, more acidic ocean, which results in "coral bleaching," where entire reef ecosystems are unable to sustain marine life.

Such bleaching has already been observed here, particularly on Snake Island (Kalumpang) in Honda Bay, Palawan. Earlier this month, marine experts estimated that up to

90 percent of the corals in the sites they visited were affected.

As an archipelagic nation, our lives are dependent on the waters that surround us. Ironically, we are among those who pollute, damage and destroy these vital sources of life. What happens on land ultimately affects even the deepest parts of the oceans—and vice versa. When the ocean's health is imperiled, so are people's lives and livelihood placed in jeopardy.

E-mail: angara.ed@gmail.com.

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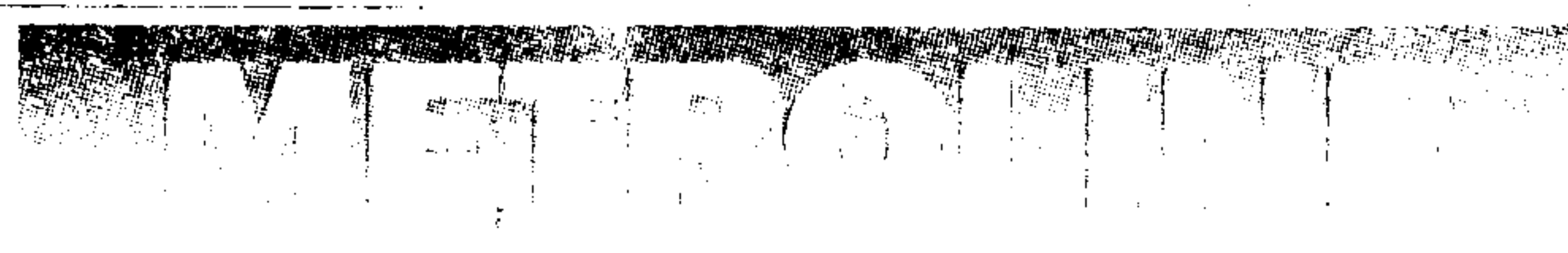
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



**DENR to check
for smoke belchers**

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will soon deploy teams along major roads in Metro Manila to monitor smoke belchers 'round the clock.

The teams from the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau will monitor the surveillance cameras of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, take down the plate numbers of smoke-belching vehicles and report them to the Land Transportation Office, DENR Undersecretary Jonas Leones said.

These violators will have to pay fines once they renew the registration of their vehicles, he added.

The fines, based on the Clean Air Act, range from P2,000 to P30,000. The vehicle owner could also have his or her registration suspended or cancelled, depending on the gravity and frequency of the violation.

— Rhodina Villanueva



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'GIYERA' VS CLIMATE CHANGE

DAPAT maipanalo ang laban sa climate change para sa kinabukasan at sa susunod pang henerasyon.

Ito ang iginiit ni Senadora Cynthia A. Villar kung saan tinukoy niya ang disaster risk assessment, adaptation at mitigation ng climate change sa coastal habitats bilang ilan sa mahahalagang isyu na nangangailangan ng tuloy-tuloy na atensyon at agarang aksiyon.

"We have so much at stake if we were to take climate change for granted. The Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change," anang senadora.

Binigyang-diin pa niya ang ang ulat ng United Nations na tumutukoy sa bansa bilang 'third-most at risk' sa

climate change sa buong mundo.

Ang Pilipinas ay sumusunod sa South Pacific island nations na Vanuatu na may 255,000 populasyon at Tonga na may 105,000 populasyon.

"Compared to our country, which has a po-

pulation of over 100 million, their population is a comparable to a small city or a big barangay here. So, the adverse impact of climate change is deemed worst in our country," ani Villar.

Binanggit din niya ang ulat ng environmental organization German

Watch, ang Global Climate Risk Index 2015, kung saan naitala ang Pilipinas bilang nangungunang bansa na apektado ng mga kalamidad na may kaugnayan sa klima gaya ng bagyo, baha at heat waves.

VICKY CERVALES

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Aussie rodent 1st climate change victim

SYDNEY—Climate change appears to have driven to extinction an Australian Great Barrier Reef rodent, according to a new study, which suggests the species may be the first mammal lost to the global phenomenon. Extensive searches for the Bramble Cay melomys, a small rat-like animal, have failed to find a single specimen from its only known habitat on a sandy island in far northern Australia. Researchers said the key factor behind the extinction was “almost certainly” ocean inundation of the low-lying cay, likely on several occasions, over the last decade which resulted in dramatic habitat loss.

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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Remember Pinatubo's eruption - Phivolcs

On the eve of the 25th anniversary of the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) called on the public to remember the tragedy, which is considered one of the largest eruptions to hit the planet in the 20th century.

"Phivolcs encourages everyone to look back and remember not only the tragedy, but also the lessons we learned," the agency said in a statement.

"Awareness and preparedness would increase our chances against natural hazards and disasters. Through continuous monitoring, and information, education and communication campaign of Phivolcs, let us keep our communities safe," it said.

Phivolcs will lead other government agencies in commemorating the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo today.

— Rainier Allan Ronda

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1st Rody Cabinet meet on June 30

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY – President-elect Rodrigo Duterte will hold his first Cabinet meeting right after his inauguration with vice president-elect Leni Robredo on June 30.

But with two weeks left before their inauguration, Duterte is not yet changing his decision to shut Robredo out of the official family even as he has yet to appoint a Cabinet secretary for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

There are also reports that Duterte might not allow Commission on Higher Education

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1st Rody From Page 1

(CHED) chairperson Patricia Licuanan to finish her term until 2018.

Reports on her possible replacement circulated on Monday night when Ateneo de Davao University president Joel Tabora wrote in his blog that Duterte has designated former Lyceum of the Philippines University professor Jose David Lapuz as CHED chairman.

Tabora said that Duterte announced the designation of Lapuz in a “room filled with people” during a meeting in the wee hours of June 8.

“To the professor’s self-deprecating query, ‘Are you really nominating me CHED chair?’, the President replied emphatically, ‘Yes!’” Tabora wrote.

But replacing Licuanan would not be as easy as selecting her replacement.

Unlike other Cabinet posts, the

CHED chairperson and the commissioners serve a fixed term of four years, with a possible reappointment, as mandated by Republic Act 7722 or the Higher Education Act of 1994.

Licuanan, who assumed post in 2010, was reappointed by President Aquino in 2014. Her term expires in 2018.

Sought for comment, CHED said Licuanan does not want to second-guess as the announcement of the supposed designation of Lapuz did not come from Duterte.

“She prefers that the designation come from president-elect Duterte himself,” the CHED said in a statement. “She has a fixed term of office and believes the president-elect will respect it.

In an interview with reporters in Davao City yesterday, incoming presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo

said he is not aware of the designation of Lapuz as CHED chairperson.

Lapuz was also not among the names of new appointments bared by the camp of the incoming president on Monday night.

Ernesto Abella, an educator and former pastor, has also been designated as spokesman for Duterte, who has been evading the media for almost two weeks now.

Abella clarified that he would not serve as “deputy spokesperson” as reported by the media last Monday, but was tapped as “designated presidential spokesman.”

He is expected to work alongside Panelo, whom Duterte previously said would serve as his presidential spokesman.

Abella, who spoke with journalists for the first time yesterday, said he wants to “act as a conduit between himself and the people through the media.”

For the Department of Health,



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1st Rody Cabinet meet on June 30

Duterte recently named DOH assistant secretary Paulyn Jean Rosell-Ubial as the new health secretary.

Ubial has been in public health for 26 years now, starting as rural health practice volunteer in Kidapawan, North Cotabato in 1998.

Ubial currently heads the Steering Committee of the Red Orchids Awards, a program of the DOH designed to recognize local government units and government offices and hospitals that have successfully implemented 100-percent smoke-free environment.

She is also vice-chair of the Integrity Management Committee that looks into corruption practices at the DOH and its attached agencies.

She has also been involved in the DOH's promotion of maternal and child health and immunization programs.

She was the regional director for Davao City from March 2006 to October 2008 and director of the DOH

Center for Family and Environmental Health and DOH-Center for Health Development from 2000 to 2006.

Former health secretary Esperanza Cabral welcomed Ubial's appointment. Cabral described Ubial as a "pro-reproductive health advocate."

"We welcome her assumption to office and we wish her all the best," Cabral added.

Philippine College of Physicians Foundation Inc. president Tony Leachon also welcomes Ubials' appointment, saying it "uplifts the DOH bureaucracy (with the new secretary) being an insider."

"I hope her vast experience in community health as a career officer will bring the DOH to greater heights particularly in pushing for primary care system. In my brief meetings with her, I believe she is also a visionary who can steer the DOH to extraordinary levels," he added. – **With Janvic Mateo, Sheila Crisostomo, Alexis Romero**

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Duterte names more members of Cabinet

By John Paolo Bencito

DAVAO CITY — With about two weeks before his inauguration, President-elect Rodrigo Duterte has named secretaries to the Health, Tourism and Trade Departments.

In a video statement coursed through government station PTV4, Ernie Abella, who was named deputy spokesman in the incoming administration, said Health Assistant Secretary Paulyn Ubial, who handles the DOH's Office for Health Regulations, will be promoted to secretary when the President-elect assumes office on June 30.

Wanda Corazon Tulfo-Teo, the owner of Mt. Apo Travel and Tours and president of the National Association of Independent Travel Agencies, has been named Tourism secretary.

Teo is a sister of broadcasters Ramon, Ben, and Erwin Tulfo—who are known Duterte supporters.

Duterte's incoming Press Secretary Salvador Panelo said there was no conflict of interest in appointing Teo, saying she could divest her share of the travel agency.

Businessman Ramon Lopez, a top executive of the RFM Corp. handling strategic planning and business development, mergers and acquisitions and executive director of Go Negosyo, will serve as Trade and Industry secretary.

Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion said the appointment of Lopez signals stronger support for all entrepreneurs, especially those with micro and small enterprises.

Abella, meanwhile, is a Christian pastor in Davao and is a close friend of transition team spokesman Peter Laviña.

Laviña said that Abella will be an asset to the communications team of the Palace.

Duterte has yet to appoint his choices for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Housing and Urban De-

velopment Coordinating Council, National Anti-Poverty Commission, Presidential Legislative Liaison Office, Office of the Political Adviser, Presidential Legal Counsel, Climate Change Commission and the newly-formed Department of Information and Communications Technology.

Despite reports that Duterte had named his former professor to head the Commission on Higher Education, the president-elect's camp said Tuesday they would respect the term of the current chief, Patricia Licuanan, which expires 2018.

Ateneo de Davao University president Joel Tabora in a blog post said Monday night that Duterte designated Jose David Lapuz, his former professor at Lyceum of the Philippines, as the new CHED chairman.

Outgoing Health Secretary Janette L. Garin welcomed Ubial's upcoming promotion to secretary.

"I believe the continuity of the DOH programs will not be a problem," Garin said.

The 53-year-old incoming Health chief started as a rural health practice volunteer in Kidapawan, North Cotabato and has had 26 years of experience in public health.

With PNA

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ALUM BEETLES

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Alien beetles threaten native bee population

By Maricar Cinco, *Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Small hive
beetles
destroyed
hundreds of
colonies of
commercial
bees in
Mindanao,
say
scientists

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna—A beetle, slightly bigger than a grain of rice, is threatening the native bee species, after it destroyed hundreds of colonies of commercial bees in Mindanao, a group of scientists here said.

Scientists, led by Dr. Cleofas Cervancia of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), are studying the distribution pattern of the small hive beetles (SHB), a species introduced from sub-Saharan Africa that has infested bee colonies in Australia, North America and parts of Europe.

In Asia, the presence of SHB (*Aethina tumida Murray*) was first detected in Lupon town in Davao Oriental province where it infected European bees (*Apis mellifera*) there. European bees in the Philippines are commonly used for commercial purposes.

Visible to the naked eye, SHB feed on the pollen and the brood. It defecates inside the hive giving the honey a rancid odor, Cervancia said.

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She said SHB's presence in the country was noted in June 2014 after it hit 687 colonies in Davao Oriental. The infestation had spread to apiaries (bee farms) in General Santos City, Tagum City and Panabo in Davao del Norte, affecting 40 more colonies, as of December 2015.

"We can say about 80 percent [of Mindanao's commercial bee population] is affected," Cervancia said, noting that this was a "conservative" estimate of the extent of the damage.

The infestation, she said, had cost millions of pesos worth of losses to beekeepers, as each colony costs about P20,000.

Bee smuggling

Cervancia said scientists are flying in to Mindanao later this week to continue an experiment by the UPLB and the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Research on the "transfer" of SHB from European bees to the local bee population.

Citing a report that her group intends to publish soon, Cervancia said three colonies of *Apis cerana*, a native species, were infested by SHB within 24 hours after these were exposed to an SHB-infested apiary in Davao.

The report said how SHB reached the Philippines remains unknown, although scientists suspect that the illegal shipment of queen bees from abroad was the "likely route."

"Queen bees, along with their young, are kept in a container as small as a matchbox, hence, these could be easily smuggled into the country," Cervancia said in a recent interview.

Cervancia, who is also president of the Regional Commission for Asia of Apimondia, an international federation of beekeepers, said commercial beekeepers import queen bees from Hawaii and Australia to improve the genetic pool and increase the stock of commercial bees.

The Philippines, she said, used to import about 1,000 queen bees yearly, until Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala, in 2012, issued an administrative order transferring the regulation of bee importation from the Bureau of Plant Industry to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

"Queens are imported ... but the recent changes in importation policies slowed down the process. Hence, colonies are weak, making them vulnerable to SHB damage," Cervancia's report said.

Traps

In 2015, the BAI recommended the use of traps laced with a chemical paste, called Maxforce, to control SHB infestation in Mindanao.

Cervancia said Maxforce is used as cockroach bait and is banned in European countries because it is classified as one of the most harmful chemicals to bees.

"So far, SHB infestation is confined in Mindanao. But one day, it will spread into the Visayas and Luzon and to native bees," Cervancia said.

She asked incoming Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol to quarantine and stop the movement of bees from Mindanao. She also urged Piñol to facilitate importation of 1,000 queen bees by October to fill the gap in queen bee population.

More than its byproducts, like honey, bees serve as important commodity in agriculture, with 35 percent of crops, mostly high-value products like mango and rambutan, being bee-pollinated, Cervancia said.

Bees, as pollinators, increase agricultural yield by more than 50 percent, she added.

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Senator says agri products smuggling alarming

Cold storage facilities being used to hide goods

By Jigger J. Jerusalem
Inquirer Mindanao

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—The smuggling of agricultural products has reached what a senator said was alarming levels as cold storage facilities that would have helped farmers earn more are being used for smuggling instead.

Sen. Cynthia Villar, chair of the Senate committee on agriculture and food, said smugglers have resorted to using cold storage facilities to hide untaxed agriculture produce and keep these from rotting.

Villar said some cold storage facility owners are in collusion with smugglers which makes it more difficult for farmers to sell their produce at competitive prices.

Speaking to members and officers of the Cold Chain Association of the Philippines (CCAP) in a recent forum here, Villar said millions of pesos worth of produce harvested by Philippine farmers have gone to waste because of the refusal of some cold storage facility owners to accommodate local produce.

ing cold storage facilities to carry out their illegal trade.”

“We were informed that there are smugglers who pay cold storage facilities in the provinces not to accept crops or harvest of farmers or farmers’ groups and cooperatives so their produce will rot,” she said.

“Of course, when the local produce rot, the imported ones will be sold, including those that are smuggled,” she added.

To validate these reports, Villar said her committee inspected some cold storage facilities “and we discovered that they were empty.”

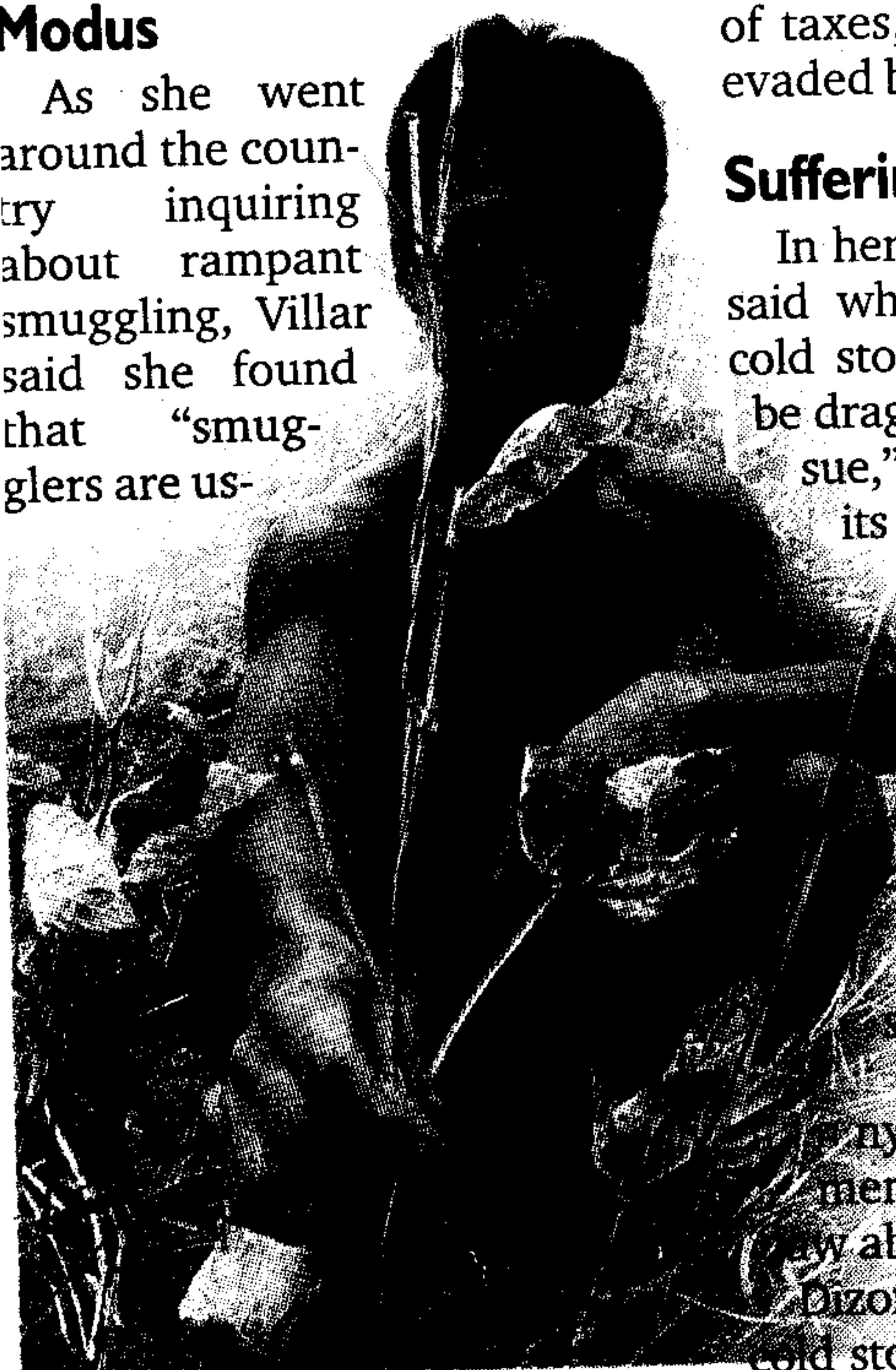
“When they refused to store crops, they said the cold storage facilities were full,” she said.

Republic Act No. 10845, authored by Villar, has declared large-scale agriculture smuggling as an act of economic sabotage.

Under the law, for smuggling to be classified as economic sabotage, a heinous crime, the amount of smuggled agricultural products should be at least P1 million.

Modus

As she went around the country inquiring about rampant smuggling, Villar said she found that “smugglers are us-



THE FARMER'S life, made difficult by the smuggling of agricultural products, is worsened by the drought that dried up land in many places, like this farm in Cebu province where a farmer shows the effect of too much heat on his string beans.

JUNJIE MENDOZA/CEBU DAILY NEWS

Violators face a penalty of life imprisonment and a fine equivalent to twice the fair value of the smuggled agricultural products and the aggregate amount of taxes, duties and other fees evaded by the smuggler.

Suffering

In her message to CCAP, Villar said while she does not want cold storage facility owners “to be dragged in the smuggling issue,” the group should police its ranks.

“It has to stop once and for all,” said Villar. “Smuggling is one of the main reasons our farmers are suffering. Farmers and fishermen are still the poorest sectors in our country,” she said.

CCAP president Anthony Dizon, however, said members of his group are all abiding.

Dizon said Villar is referring to cold storage facility owners who are not members of the group.

“She was referring to a particular industry sector,” said Dizon. “The owners of those facilities mentioned [by Villar] are not members [of CCAP],” he said.

“I think at this point, I can vouch for the integrity of our members,” he said.

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Chinese, Asean foreign ministers meet amid tensions in disputed sea

YUXI, CHINA—Continuing Beijing's push to ease concerns about its assertions of sovereignty over the South China Sea, China's foreign minister told his Southeast Asian counterparts on Tuesday that both sides should take a "long-term perspective" as they try to solve their disputes.

Wang Yi's comments underscore China's desire to contain damage to its reputation over its assertive tactics in the highly strategic and resource-rich waterway. Four of the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) have claims to South China Sea islands and reefs that overlap with China's own.

"We should review our relationship with strategic height and long-term perspective," Wang told the foreign ministers gathered in the southern city of Yuxi, in China's Yunnan province, which borders on Asean members Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam.

"We should keep on expanding our consensus and cooperation and properly handle and control our differences," Wang said. "We should jointly lead and push forward the China-Asean relationship toward a healthy and stable development."

Among Asean members, Vietnam has strongly protested China's plac-



CHINA'S Foreign Minister Wang Yi (first row, left) speaks during the Special Asean-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Yuxi, Yunnan province, China. REUTERS

ing of an exploratory oil and gas drilling rig in disputed waters, while the Philippines has brought a case before a UN arbitration panel challenging China's claim to virtually the entire South China Sea, including artificial islands it has constructed from coral reefs. Asean members Brunei and Malaysia also claim territory there, while Indonesia's exclusive economic zone overlaps with Chinese maritime claims.

Fishing craft and law enforce-

ment ships from all sides have clashed on occasion, although China has taken pains to avoid escalating such conflicts by intervening with its powerful Navy.

China has refused to cooperate with the UN arbitration panel and says it will ignore any ruling it makes, although Chinese and foreign analysts say Beijing's desire to be regarded as a trusted member of the rules-based international community will likely suffer as a result. AP

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