

DATE : 02 JUL 2016

DAY : Saturday

DENR
IN THE NEWS

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



DENR TURNOVER: New DENR Secretary Gina Lopez receives the DENR flag from outgoing chief Ramon Paje during the turnover ceremony yesterday at the DENR office along Visayas Ave. in Quezon City.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL VARÇAS

Daily Tribune

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Change of command Clockwise: New DENR Secretary Regina Paz Lopez receives the DENR flag from outgoing Secretary Ramon Paje during the turnover of command ceremony at the DENR Social Hall on Visayas Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City; newly appointed NBI Director Dante Gierran receives the NBI flag from outgoing NBI Director Virgilio Mendez as Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II looks on during the turn-over ceremony at the NBI central office in Manila; outgoing DSWD Secretary Corazon Soliman hands over to new DSWD Secretary Judy Taguiwala the transition reports containing the department's programs and projects during the turnover of the DSWD leadership at the DSWD Central Office in Batasan Hills, QC; and, new Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol (left) receives the DA flag from outgoing Secretary Proceso Alcala during the change of command ceremony at the DA Compound also in QC. PNA

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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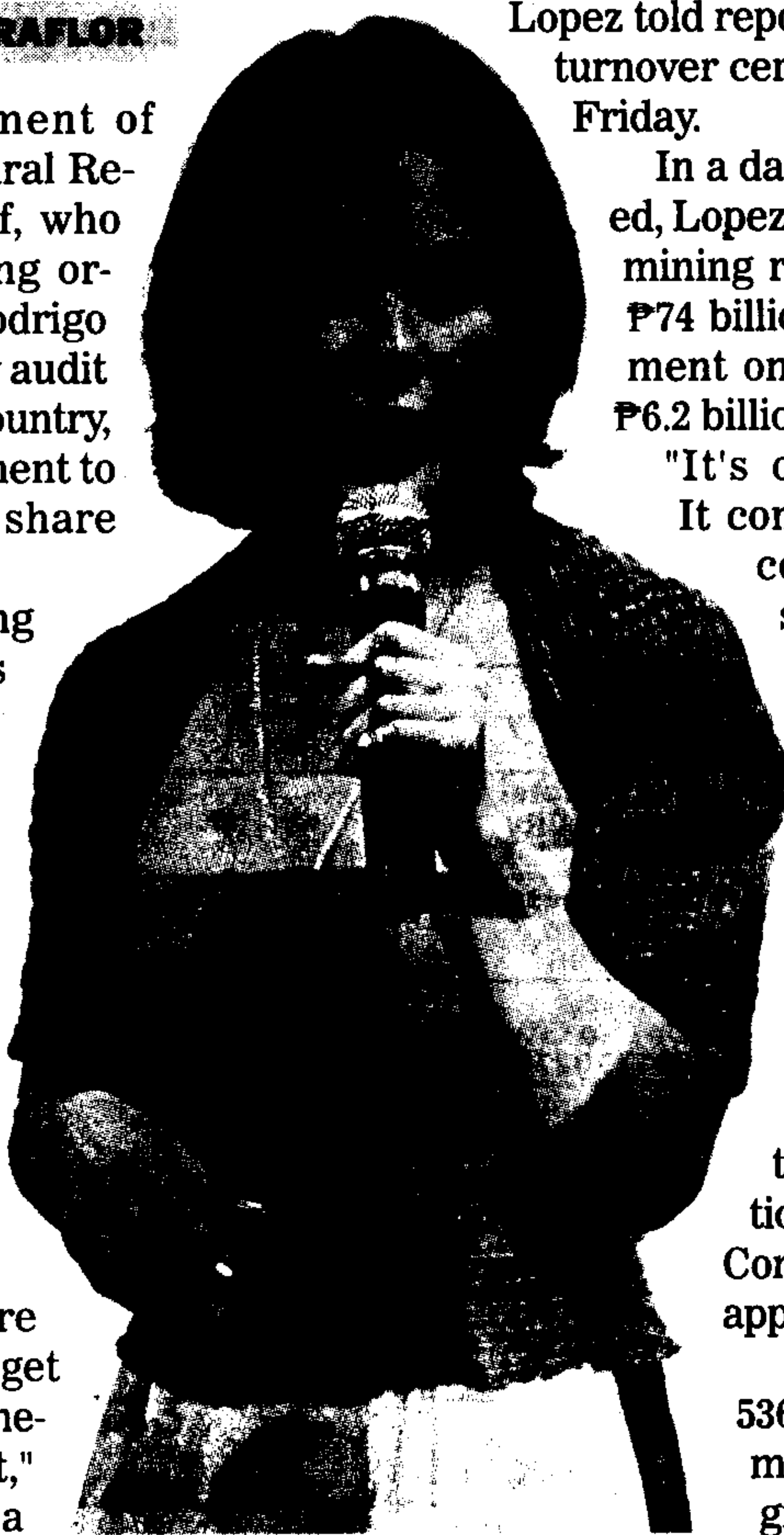
DENR to review all mining deals, seeks more revenues for gov't

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR**

The new Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) chief, who got the initial marching orders from President Rodrigo Duterte to immediately audit all mining firms in the country, also wants the government to seize bigger revenue share from mining proceeds.

But this is something that will only progress once a new mining fiscal regime bill has been passed.

"I feel that the government should get more. That's my take. If you look at the numbers, the suffering goes to the community but the bulk goes to taxes. I don't think that's right. And if you look at our share in the taxes, we don't get much at all. There's something wrong with that," DENR secretary Gina



Lopez told reporters after her turnover ceremony held on Friday.

In a data she presented, Lopez said that out of mining revenues worth ₱74 billion, the government only takes about ₱6.2 billion.

"It's our minerals. It comes out of our community. We should [take bigger share]," Lopez said.

The passage of the bill that would give the government a bigger mining revenue share is already up to this administration after the 16th Congress failed to approve it.

House Bill No. 5367 would compel mining firms to give the govern-

ment 10 percent of its gross revenues or 55 percent share in its adjusted mining revenue yearly. It argued that the government is "the owner of the minerals."

Once this bill is passed, it would also pave the way for the lifting of the ban on the grant of new mining permits which has been put in place in 2011.

Meanwhile, mining companies will face stiff scrutiny in the first few days of Lopez as a chief, with some of them on the risk of getting suspension.

This, according to her, is the initial order of Duterte to her during the first cabinet meeting held on Friday.

"There will be an assessment of all existing mining operations. We have to evaluate them. It is non-negotiable. There will be an audit to all existing mines... Mining companies have to get their acts together," Lopez said.

"I am not against the mining industry, I am against suffering. It's my challenge for the mining companies to prove their existence in this country," she added.

But on top of this auditing, 70 percent of mining companies are also now facing suspension for not being able to secure ISO

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14001 – Environmental Management Systems (EMS) certification.

The ISO 14001 is an internationally agreed standard that specifies the requirements for an EMS in order for an organization to develop and implement a policy and objectives to enhance its environmental performance.

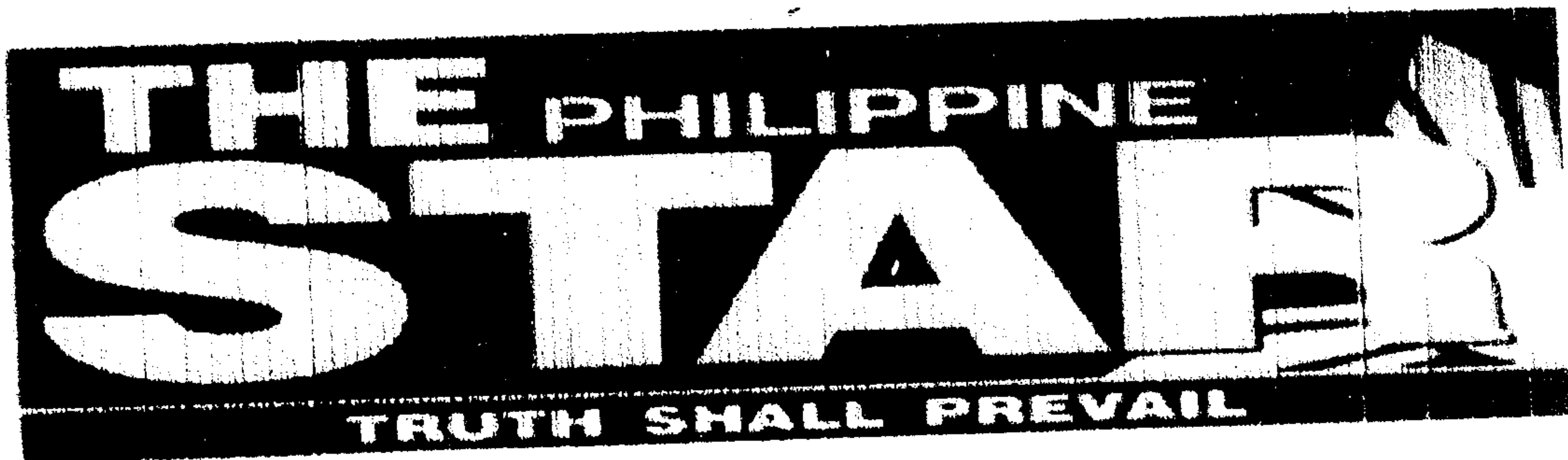
The DENR's order requires all holders of valid mineral agreements (MAs) and Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAAs) engaged in metallic operations to secure ISO 14001 Certification within one year from the date of the order. The DAO was issued on April

30, 2015 and signed on May 15, 2015.

Lopez said that all mining companies must be ISO 14001 compliant but according to Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) Director Leo Jasareno, only 30 percent of 42 metallic mining firms received the certification as of the April 30, 2016 deadline.

Two months after the deadline, Jasareno said "it will still be premature" to name the companies that are on the risk of being suspended.

"By August 1, the data will be released. After a month, we will give a full report," Lopez said.



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Mining firms ordered to secure ISO or face suspension

The new administration is giving mining firms another chance to secure their International Organization for Standardization

(ISO) 14001 certification for Environmental Management System (EMS) until next month to avoid suspension of operations.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez said there would be an assessment and

evaluation of all existing mining operations in the country.

"The mining industry has a role to play. Let's give them a chance. We just have to evaluate," Lopez said during the DENR's turnover ceremony.

"My challenge to the mining companies is that if you feel that your existence in the country is good, then prove it," she added.

The deadline of securing the ISO certification was originally set last April and only 30 percent or around 13 companies have completed the certification, from the 42 metallic mine companies listed under the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

Failure of companies to secure or maintain the ISO 14001 certification will lead to suspension of the environmental compliance certificate (ECC) and non-issuance of ore transport permit (OTP).

"In other words, that mine will have

to stop for failure to secure the ISO certificate which is the highest and most acceptable in extracting minerals and ensuring the environment is not compromised," MGB director Leo Jasareno said.

"Any decision I and the agency make, the main reason is for the common good. My stand on the common good is non-negotiable," Lopez said.

Established in 1996, the ISO 14001 EMS standard is a systematic framework to manage the immediate and long term environmental impacts of an organization's products, services and processes.

Former DENR chief Ramon Paje signed Administrative Order (DAO) 2015-07 mandating all mining contractors to secure the ISO 14001 certification that shows mining operations pass the international standard and has a good environmental management system.

— Louise Maureen Simeon

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DENR chief wants mining permits evaluated

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will start evaluating all mining permits issued to companies to determine if they are complying with mining laws.

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez said President Duterte directed her during their Cabinet meeting to assess mining operations and come up with a report after a month.

"There is a need for evaluation to see if these companies are complying with the laws. Responsible mining means people should not suffer," Lopez told reporters after she assumed the DENR post.

Last year, the DENR issued Administrative Order No. 2015-07 requiring mining firms to secure an ISO 14001 environmental management certification within one year upon issuance of the order.

According to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, only 30 percent of mining companies complied with the order.

"Mining firms must bear in mind that the common good

of the people is paramount in their operations and not the money they make," Lopez said.

She stressed the need for the agency to be pro-active and undertake policies and programs which would protect the environment.

Graft-free agencies

At the Department of Justice (DOJ), newly appointed Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II vowed to make his agency graft-free.

He said he has an order from the President to end corruption in his department and its attached agencies, help in the fight against illegal drugs and prosecute heinous crimes.

There have been reports that some high-ranking DOJ officials are involved in illegal activities.

However, there is no evidence yet submitted to support the reports, and that calls for thorough investigation, Aguirre said.

One of the alleged anomalies, he said, was the raffling

or assigning of cases to some favored prosecutors.

"On the raffling or assignment of cases, some are particularly favored. We will make some improvements. What was happening in the past was some prosecutors were being favored to get good cases, big cases."

He said he would form a fact-finding team to look into this allegation.

"I know that there are still a lot of good members in the DOJ and only a few got lost along the way. To those who got lost in the DOJ and its attached agencies, let us help them so they would change. Let's put a stop to these illegal activities," he said.

Aguirre also promised to address the backlog of cases by recalling prosecutors origi-

nally assigned to the DOJ main office in Manila but requested to be given city or provincial assignments to gain some perks being given by some local government units.

— With Evelyn Macairan, Rainier Allan Ronda

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Gina grilled on 1st day at DENR

By Jaymee T. Gamil

ON HER first day in office, Environment Secretary Regina "Gina" Lopez found herself in the hot seat, answering questions on her controversial stance against mining.

In her first press conference at the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR), Lopez' first interrogators were proresponsible mining students, who had, ironically, gifted her with a metal pot.

The pot was in reference to a video circulating online in which a promising advocate had attempted to humiliate the environmental activist by asking if she used materials such as *kaldero* (pots), which are mineral products.

Lopez, in her message during the leadership turnover at the DENR yesterday, had given a presentation showing data on the adverse effects of mining operations in some areas in the Philippines, concluding, among other things, that "the poorest areas in the Philippines are mining areas."

One of the Mining Engineering students, who introduced himself as an "advocate of responsible mining" had questioned Lopez about the accuracy of her data, calling it "misinformation," to which Lopez countered: "There's nothing I said that is not the truth."

"I don't want to fight with you ... I'm not against the mining industry. I use a cell phone, I have an iPad. We all use it. However, I am against suffering," Lopez said.

"Responsible mining is people must not suffer," Lopez told the student. "You want to be a mining engineer? My request to you is to do your job with integrity ... The No. 1 [priority] is that you should not let people suffer ... You cannot build an economy based on suffering."

Lopez later announced that within the day, an order will be issued for an audit or assessment on existing mining operations in the Philippines, as suggested by President Duterte.

Lopez also cited as one of her priority goals the exploration of the country's biodiversity, "such that communities that live there benefit."

"I would like to keep biodiversity and not let it be raped by any interests, because it belongs to the Filipino people," Lopez said.

"The country with the most endemicity per unit area is the Philippines. We have the most flora and fauna exclusive to this country," she said.

She cited Batangas as "the center of marine biodiversity in the planet," and Sibuyan, Romblon, for having the densest forest on Earth.

Lopez also disclosed her campaign for reforestation, and her plans to initiate programs and environmental summits for impoverished sectors and the youth.

In an interview, Lopez said the companies which fail the audit—"those which cause suffering" or "those who don't follow the rules"—would be closed.

When asked about possible conflict with Cabinet members with mining interests, she said: "As long as we're on the same page, which is love for country, we'll see what would be best."

She said she was willing to meet with mining industry players.

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Gov vows to back fight vs irresponsible mining

DAVAO CITY—The governor of one of Mindanao's mineral-rich provinces on Thursday said she was backing President Duterte's stance against destructive mining practices.

"I will personally assist President Duterte in booting out irresponsible miners in Agusan," said Agusan del Norte Gov. Angel Amante-Matba.

She said with the help of the national government, she would "keep an eye on irresponsible miners" in her province and "will not hesitate to castigate those who will evade the law, especially those who will not comply with environmental standards."

Earlier, Duterte said that he was against destructive mining practices and that mining companies must comply with international environmental standards or face sanctions.

He also asked Environment Secretary Gina Lopez to reject new mining applications, saying the environment had suffered enough.

"For a province tagged one of the country's mining hotspots, our people and land will benefit

from the strict measures to be implemented by the President," Matba said.

Among the mining companies operating in Agusan del Norte is the controversial S.R. Metals, which is linked with Caloocan Rep. Edgar Erice.

In 2006, S.R. Metals was among three firms ordered closed after government regulators found they exceeded the extraction limit of 150,000 metric tons of ore per year set for small-scale mines.

Matba said that mining operations in her province were mostly operated and managed by responsible miners.

She urged the Duterte administration to help her set up "a more stringent regulatory mechanism to pursue best practices among mining companies."

Matba also said she was thankful because Duterte did not ban mining altogether.

"Banning mining operations will certainly be a huge economic setback to a lot of people not only in Agusan province but the whole of Caraga region," she said. *Allan Nawal, Inquirer Mindanao*

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Environment chief wants higher govt share in mining revenues

By Anna Leah E. Gonzales

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Regina Lopez said Friday the government should have a higher revenue share in the mining industry.

"I feel that the government should get more. That's my take. If you look at the numbers, the suffering goes to the community but the bulk goes to taxes. I don't think that's right. And if you look at our share in the taxes, we don't get much at all," Lopez said in her first briefing as environment chief under the Duterte administration.

The Mining Act imposes a 2-percent excise tax on mining companies operating under

the mineral production sharing agreement. Companies under MPSA and operating in mineral reservation areas are also subject to an additional 5-percent royalty.

MPSAs are granted to mining firms which have at least 60-percent local ownership, while the financial or technical assistance agreement allows 100-percent foreign ownership of the projects. Projects under FTAA are subject to a 50-50 revenue sharing agreement.

The Mining Industry Coordinating Council approved a new mining revenue sharing scheme last year that aimed to increase the government's share from the mining industry.

MICC approved a 10-percent

tax on gross revenues or a 55-percent share of the adjusted net mining revenues, whichever was higher. Adjusted mining revenue refers to the difference between gross sales and costs.

"It's our minerals. It comes out of our community, so why should they get more?" Lopez said.

Lopez also said President Rodrigo Duterte ordered an audit of all existing mine sites. "What is in my prerogative is to do an audit on all existing mine sites. There will be an assessment on all mining operations," Lopez said.

"Any decision I make and that the agency makes, the main reason will be the common good. My challenge to the mining companies is to prove that the existence

of their operation is good," Lopez said.

Lopez said operations of mining companies found to be causing suffering would be stopped.

"Just to be clear, I am not anti mining. The mining sector has to shift its method because the poorest areas in the country are mining areas. They have to shift. They have to do with common good," Lopez said.

Lopez said all mining companies were also required to secure International Standards Organization 14001 - Environmental Management Systems certification.

The Environment Department issued Administrative Order 2015-07 on April 30, 2015 which

required all holders of mineral agreements and FTAA's engaged in metallic operations to secure the certification within a year.

Failure to secure the certification will lead to the suspension of the company's environmental compliance certificate. Companies will also not be issued ore transport permit.

Mines and Geosciences Bureau director Leo Jasareno said only 30 percent of 42 operating companies were ISO 14001 compliant so far.

"The deadline of securing was April 30, but majority or the 70 percent requested for an extension because some of them are in the process of securing the certification," Jasareno said.

The Manila Times

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Environmental safety is critical, says new DENR chief

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Regina "Paz" Lopez said on Friday that an audit of all existing mining operations is in the making as part of a process to weed out illegal and irresponsible miners in the country.

"I'm not against the mining industry but I'm against suffering. If they cause suffering [we will have to shut them down]," Lopez told reporters on her first day in office as a member of President Duterte's team.

The audit of existing mines, she added, is to determine if they are safe for the country. It would take a month to complete.

Lopez, the former chairperson of ABS-CBN Foundation and an environmentalist, said that the minerals development industry should change their methods, promoting common good, if they wish to continue operations.

The DENR chief earlier said that the choice is simply between for-

eign investors and Filipino people. "Doesn't matter if it is large-scale or small-scale, but if you kill the environment, is it worth it?" she said.

The economic growth of the country, she stressed, need not be built on the suffering of the people, particularly the marginalized farmers and fisher folks who have been directly affected by mining operations.

Meanwhile, the director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), Leo Jasareno, said that 70 percent of the 42 metallic mines in the country have yet to secure International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 14001 certification which is mandated under DENR Administrative Order (DAO) 2015-07 signed by Environment Secretary Ramon Paje early last year upon the recommendation of the MGB and the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB).

DAO 2015-07 institutionalizes an environmental management system

that ensures the adherence of local mining operations to international standards, particularly the ISO 14001 certification, as a measure of responsible mining.

It stipulates appropriate measures to be put in place to achieve minimal negative impacts of mining on the environment, Jasareno said. It also requires mining contractors to comply with mining and environmental laws.

The DAO covers all holders of valid and existing Mineral Agreement (MA) and Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) that are in the operating period.

Holders of MA or FTAA that are engaged in metallic mining operations are required to secure the ISO 14001 certification within one year from the date of said DAO; while other holder of MA or FTAA filing for the feasibility of metallic mineral mining should obtain the ISO 14001 certification within one year

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Environmental safety is critical, says new
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from receipt of the order approving the feasibility exploration.

MA or FTAA engaging in non-metallic mining, meanwhile, have the option to obtain ISO 14001 certification within one year period after which a deadline will be set for compliance.

The MGB chief said that 30 percent of the companies in operation have secured ISO certificate—many of them now holding higher ISO certificate than what is actually required to operate in the country. The 70 per cent without ISO certificate have requested for an extension and the majority has their application for certificate in process.

Without the ISO 14001 certificate, the Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) will be suspended and no Ore Transport or Mineral Export Permit will be granted.

The DENR has meanwhile created a team of technical experts to review the mining operations of all MA or

FTAA to ensure compliance with environmental standards.

Meanwhile, emphasizing the need for the agency to be pro-active and ensure that the environment is protected and natural resources are utilized sustainable manner, Lopez said that "integrity, public service and the common good are the key deciding factors for any decision that will be taken."

All industries, she said, "must bear in mind that the common good is paramount in their operations and not the money they make."

She also said that she recognizes and appreciates the importance of creating space for the participation of civil society, adding that mechanisms will be created in the operations that will guarantee meaningful engagement of the church, NGOs, the youth, farmers and fisher folk. "It is with their collaboration that we will achieve the change we need," she said.

JAMES KONSTANTIN

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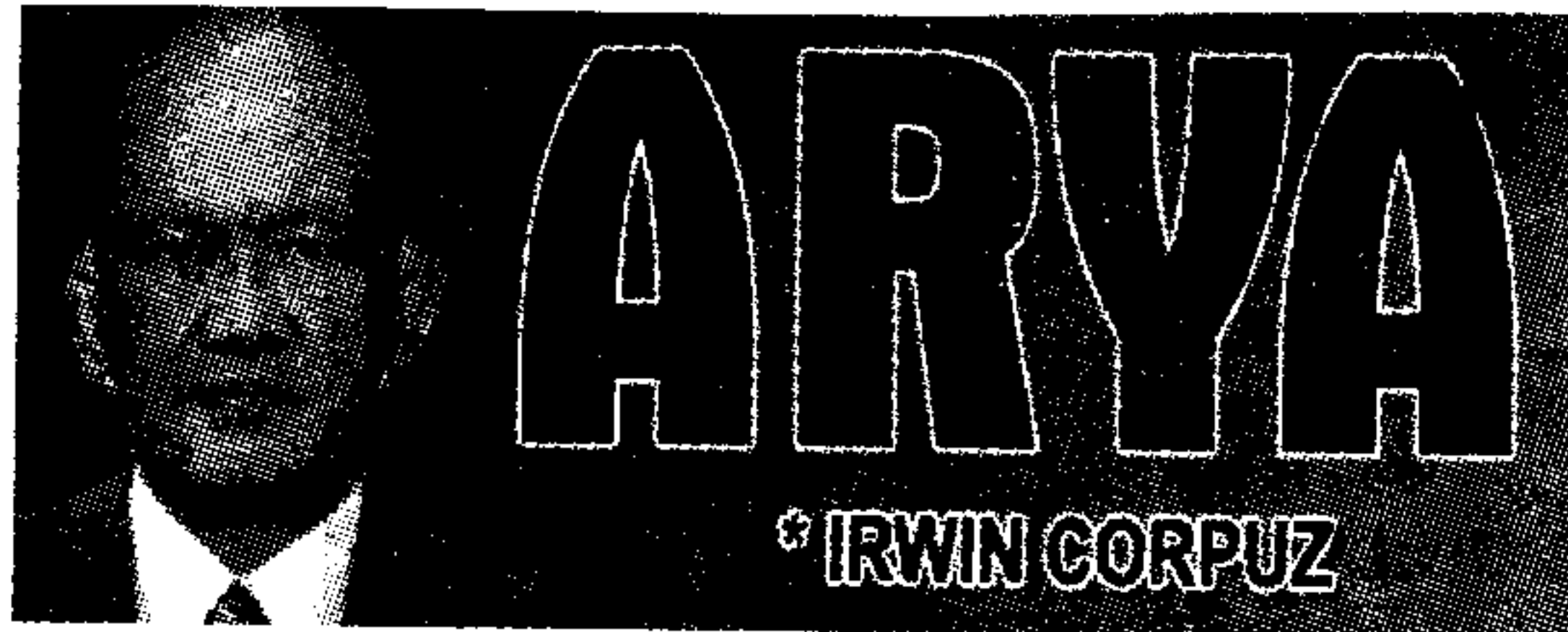
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BIG MINING COMPANIES MAKAKANSELAHAN BA NG DENR?

Nagsimula na sa panunungkulan ang naitalagang bagong DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (DENR) SECRETARY GINA LOPEZ na mismong si PRESIDENT RODRIGO 'DIGONG' DU-TERTE ang pumili sa kaniya na angkop naman siya dahil sa kaniyang pagiging environmental militant... na matalagal nang pinoproblema ng mga mangingisda at magsasaka ang masamang epekto ng mga pagmimina sa kani-kanilang mga lugar. Sandamakmak man ang reklamo laban sa mga minahan ay tila tinulugan lamang ng mga opisyaes ni dating presidente BENIGNO 'NOYNOY' AQUINO III... O SADYANG PRINOTEKTAHAN NILA ANG MGA MINAHAN KAPALIT NG PINANSIYAL NA TINATAMASANG MGA OPISYALES SA PANAHON NG AQUINO ADMINISTRATION?

Sa panahon ng pagiging aktibista at militante ni SEC. GINA LOPEZ para sa pangangalaga ng mga kalikasan ay siguradong marami na siyang naipon na mga matitibay na ebidensiya at hindi na mairarason pa ng kaniyang ahen-siya na pag-aaralan pa ang mga mining company... sa halip, dapat within 15-days ay may legal action na o napakanselahan na dapat ang lahat ng mga mining company na lumikha ng pagkasira sa ating mga kalikasan at sa kabuhayan ng ating mga mamamayan.

ISANG PANUKALA NG ARYA KAY SEC. LOPEZ... para mapangalagaan ang ating mga patubig o ang mga dam ay dapat ipagbawal ang mga puno ng MAHOGANY sa lugar ng mga dam, dahil maraming mga naging pag-aaral ng mga dalubhasa na ang MAHOGANY TREE ay MATAKAW SA TUBIG na malaks umanong sumipsip ang mga ugat nito ng tubig lalo na sa panahon ng tag-init, kaya madaling natutuyo ang mga dam sa ating bansa tuwing tag-init... dapat mapangalagaan ang mga dam para sa kapakinabangan ng sambayanan!

The Manila Times

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Cleaning up Aquino's mining mess

BY BEN KRITZ
COLUMNIST

THE alarm with which the mineral sector has received the news of the appointment of the apoplectically anti-mining Gina Lopez as head of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was quantified in a report released this week by the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP). The report summarized the potential loss from what would be a worst-case scenario for the industry under the new Duterte government, a virtual halt to any mining activities in the country: a total of about \$30 billion over the next five to 10 years in lost investment and foregone revenue.

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■ KRITZ FROM A1

Cleaning up Aquino's mining mess

ROUGH
TRADE

BEN KRITZ

Rather than speculate on what Lopez or her new boss intends to do with the mining sector—since neither has offered any real hints of policy direction, other than to indicate that they will view the issue very critically—it is perhaps worthwhile to review exactly how this part of the economy was thrown into turmoil. The blame for it falls squarely at the feet of the now-former President BS Aquino 3rd, who with typical arbitrary cluelessness undid two decades of struggle to develop and implement what was considered one of the world's model mining policies with a stroke of a pen, or in his case, maybe a crayon.

In the latter part of 2011, Aquino announced his intention to issue an Executive Order that would restructure the country's mining law, boost the government's share of mineral revenue, and clear up some points of contention regarding environmental management and regulation of the so-called "small scale" mining sector. Never mind that the Mining Act of 1995, which took years of legislative work to craft and then was held in limbo by legal challenges for a decade before being declared constitutional, had only been in force for about six years; the petulant former legislator who had never passed a bill into law or even independently introduced one decided that the Act was flawed, and needed to be changed.

In early 2012, a draft of the

proposed EO (later to become EO 79) was leaked, and immediately drew this reaction from a dumbfounded Joint Foreign Chambers:

"The draft EO, as presented, is profoundly disturbing in that it creates great uncertainty for established and potential investors in the Philippines. It proposes to review all existing contracts, and renegotiate or impose an increased government tax or royalty share, and potentially closes out granted contracts completely.

"It also unnecessarily damages sovereign credibility on the global stage, and in some cases violates the Foreign Investment Protection Agreements [FIPAs] signed by the Philippines with many countries. Such uncertainty would have a major and lasting impact on the Philippines' ability to attract responsible investors—particularly as it would come at a time when global and regional competition to attract foreign investment is so competitive."

Philippine Star columnist Alex Magno, in a column on February 9 that year, pointed out that arbitrarily abolishing a legislative act by executive fiat was, if not illegal, at least ill-advised:

"Many of the major investors

in the mining industry, bringing in billions of dollars in actual investments, came in after 2005. That was the year the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the 1995 Mining Act. The application of this forward-looking law was delayed for a whole decade because of legal obstacles set up by the anti-mining groups.

"After the constitutionality of the Mining Act was upheld, investors presumed the policy framework for this extractive industry was defined. The law is the policy.

The Mining Act is not a bad law either. It took many years to push this law through the legislative grind. The final product, although subjected to questions of constitutionality, has been pronounced the best mining law there is. Other countries looked to emulating our Mining Act.

"The Act was crafted to reconcile a wide field of considerations. The Act recognized the great economic potential mining holds, the social development of marginal communities it could foster and the employment opportunities it will create. At the same time, the Act made sure the economic potential will be realized without harming the environment. It includes stringent provisions requiring best practices to guard against environmental hazards, a plan for remediation of the mining areas, and assurance the host communities will economically benefit from the industry.

Because the Mining Act was law, it was taken as a guarantee of a stable and predictable policy framework. What else, after all, could be more certain than law?"

What seemed to have happened was that to craft the new EO Aquino had selected—or was

pressured into selecting—a Mining Policy Group that excluded anyone with an actual stake in the mining industry, the group being composed of then-DENR Secretary Ramon Paje, the Presidential Adviser on Climate Change, the chair of the Climate Change Commission, then-Presidential Adviser on Environmental Protection Neric Acosta (who has since been convicted by the Sandiganbayan on an unrelated graft charge).

EO 79 finally became official at the beginning of July 2012, but since it needs legislation to make it operative, the mining sector has been in a sort of limbo since then, meaning that the main task of the new Duterte Administration as far as the mining sector is concerned will be to clear up the confusion left behind by its predecessor. Lopez, in her new capacity as DENR head, has implied that the simplest solution, which would be for Duterte to rescind EO 79 and let the original Mining Act stay in force until new legislation could be developed, would not be acceptable and that she would be looking for quicker action on mining regulation. Thus, the presumption at this point is that the Duterte Administration will have to start from scratch.

Given that the original Mining Act of 1995 took nearly 20 years from conception to actual implementation, the dire scenario presented by COMP might actually be optimistic, and the stark choice presented by Lopez—mining or the environment—might unintentionally be a description of practical reality. It wouldn't be, if Aquino had left well enough alone.

ben.kritz@manilatimes.net

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Tree-planting on Arbor Day

TACLOBAN CITY - The Department of Environment and Natural Resources Eastern Visayas regional office (DENR-8) spearheaded the celebration of the Philippine Arbor Day with a tree planting initiative last June 25. DENR-8 Regional Director Leonardo Sibbaluca said the celebration was highlighted by the planting of 12,000 tree seedlings. An estimated 2,000 individuals participated in the activity. Sibbaluca said that participants in the tree-planting activities included the employees of regional office and field offices; employees of the national and local government agencies; members of non-government organizations; stakeholders; business and other private and concerned groups as well as private individuals. He added that some local government units likewise conducted tree planting activities in coordination with the DENR-8 field offices.
(Restituto A. Cayubit)

Daily Tribune

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Eco watchdog fears dislocation of Davao City residents for P40-B reclamation, port project

By Jason Faustino

A pro-environment group questioned the planned 200-hectare reclamation and port project that is to be undertaken by Mega Harbour Port in Davao City, saying that they and the citizens were not consulted about it.

According to Interface Development Interventions (IDI), an arm of Ecowaste Coalition, the P40-billion coastal project will affect the residents of Isla Verde, as they would be dislocated.

Ann Fuyertes, executive director for IDI, said that they only knew of the said project only after the second reading of the city council.

She said that they were not consulted about the project.

President Rodrigo Duterte, when he was still mayor of Davao City, admitted that the Mega Harbour Port and Development Inc., owned by the group of businessman Reghis Romero II, has spoken to him about the project.

Mega Harbour is reportedly pushing a three-year Davao City coastline and port development project, which involves the reclamation of 200 hectares of offshore area in two districts there.

The project will entail almost P40 billion, the financing of which will be covered by Mega Harbour Port and Development Inc.

Fuyertes said that they are

asking that they be given a chance to represent before the council.

"Yes we are aware of it and is calling for a comprehensive consultation because we didn't know about it until it after the second reading at the city council," she said, adding that they are very much curious about the said project.

While the target start of the project is this year, Duterte had stressed in previous interviews with the media that they had asked for an amendment to the presidential proclamation which declared Isla Verde as a residential site.

Isla Verde, which is 123,201 square meters, is covered by Presidential Proclamations 85. The barangay has an estimated population of 13,398.

Presidential Proclamation 85 was signed by then President Joseph Ejercito Estrada, who stated that Isla Verde is a human settlement site. Duterte said that if the residents will agree to the project they would be paid and they would be relocated.

Duterte had warned government agencies that they will be charged and dismissed from office if a single centavo over the project will be spent for corruption.

The project, now called the Davao Coastline and Port Development Project, was expected to undergo another Swiss challenge

as the matter is elevated to the agencies of the national government.

The proposal will be put forward to the Philippine Reclamation Authority after the city council passes an ordinance granting then Mayor Duterte the authority to sign a joint venture agreement with the proponent.

A Swiss challenge was organized by the local government in November last year, but no other bid was submitted.

The council approved the proposed ordinance on second reading on April 5 and it will be subject to a third and final reading.

Another unsettled issue is the sharing scheme between the developer and the city government for space within the reclaimed area covering the Sta. Ana Wharf to the Bucana area.

Under the proposal, the four-island project will include an international port, industrial and commercial components, residential complex and a government center.

The first island with 75 hectares stretching from Agdao to Sta. Ana will include a five-ha. government center and a port; the second island will be 39.24 has. for the central business district and shopping center; third will be 59.47 has. for tourist centers and residential resorts; and the fourth at 40.89 has. for township development.

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'TRYK IN JUAN'

Abaca to provide natural roofing for tricycle

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE COUNTRY'S ubiquitous tricycles will soon have something in common with luxury cars Mercedes Benz and Chrysler: abaca fibers or Manila hems for its body parts.

Woven mostly into fashionable clothes and handcrafts, the indigenous threads yesterday made a debut as an eco-friendly and lightweight alternative roofing for tricycles, probably the Philippines' most fitting contribution to the growing global technology of using natural fibers for industrial application.

Aptly named "Tryk in Juan," the project was launched yesterday by the Department of Science and Technology-Industrial Technology Development Institute (DOST-ITDI) in collaboration with the Korea Institute of Materials Science (KIMS) in Taguig City.

The DOST-ITDI and KIMS started the joint effort to explore

the use of different abaca treatments and composite production technologies for natural-fiber-reinforced composite production in 2010, years after Mercedes Benz and Chrysler started using abaca fiber for its exterior linings.

KIMS provided a yearly financial grant of P800,000 to the DOST-ITDI for the project, which took a vital turn in June last year when the latter signed a memorandum of agreement with Gnostek Inc. and the General Santos Street Lower/Upper Bicutan Taguig Tricycle Operators-Drivers Association.

Under the agreement, Gnostek Inc. was made the partner fabricator of the prototypes' roofs while the tricycle drivers' group was designated to pilot-test the reinvented tricycles.

Reinvention

At least 15 prototypes were distributed yesterday to the group to commence field testing.

The Tryk ni Juan, a reinven-

tion of the Filipino public vehicle most popular in small towns and the barrios, is equipped with a roof and sidecar made of abaca-fiber-reinforced composite that makes it lighter and more comfortable compared to its traditional steely counterpart, according to developers.

DOST Secretary Fortunato de la Peña described the project as "pioneering work," which will make Filipinos experience and become more aware of the benefits of science and technology.

"This is a commodity that will not harm our environment. It is very ecologically suited [and] it may even help the abaca industry, which is a very important industry to the Philippines," he said at the launch, his first official function as head of the department.

The reinvented tricycles look more handsome and sleeker with its white exterior, promising drivers and commuters a more comfortable ride.

Dr. Blesie Basilla, chief of the Materials Science Division of the DOST-ITDI, said the use of abaca-fiber-reinforced composite as roofing material makes tricycles lighter, thus, improving fuel efficiency. Because of its insulating properties, it also protects riders from the scorching heat of the sun.

"Under this project...we visited the abaca farms to be able to see the sustainability of supply and also we were trained for the different fabrication techniques as well as surface modification techniques on the abaca fiber," said Basilla.

Environment-friendly

The DOST-ITDI worked on the project with the help of new researches by KIMS on composite processing techniques, which led to the development of the composite material that now comprised the roof of Tryk ni Juan—a combination of abaca fibers and resin.

Basilla stressed that the abaca-reinforced composite as roofing material was a more environment-friendly alternative to conventional composites due to "reduction in carbon emission, renewability and biodegradability."

Project leader Dr. Marissa Paglicawan said materials science experts from DOST-ITDI developed the abaca-fiber-reinforced composite to focus on the "green attributes" of abaca fiber.

"We used the abaca fiber as reinforcement material to promote the philosophy of green composites and increase the share of nat-

ural fiber composites in automobiles as well as structural parts in other countries," Paglicawan said.

The project chose to capitalize on the abundance of abaca among a wide range of indigenous fibers in the country because of its good qualities as fiber reinforcement, she said.

Abaca fiber, which is endemic in the Philippines, is considered one of the strongest natural fibers. Aside from being lightweight, it is far more resistant to salt water decomposition than most of the vegetable fibers.

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TUBBATAHA

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Our big surprise in Tubbataha— diving with Destiny

By Alya B. Honasan

IT WAS a quintessential Tubbataha dive—volatile currents, tons of fish, and a big surprise.

We were at Seafan Alley on Tubbataha's North Atoll, making our way back to the shallows after some 40 minutes of spotting slender whitetip and chunky gray reef sharks, giant trevally, tuna, and turtles.

The graceful sharks showed up when the currents picked up and mingled with shimmering walls of jacks, or

The dive season in the greatest underwater mecca in the Philippines ended with a flourish, thanks to effective park management, continuous patronage, great accommodations—and a delightful sighting

a huge school of silvertips concealing a couple of big, round marble rays trying to sneak across the edge of the reef.

With my designated buddy, the Philippine Commission on Sports Scuba Diving's (PCSSD) energetic young executive director Karen Chan—also an instructor, by the way, so I felt really safe!—I had wandered a few meters ahead of the group, so we bided our

time at about 15 meters, until we all met up for our safety stop in a few minutes.

We were looking upward toward more schools of fish, with a couple of big, fat Napoleon wrasses cruising above us at 10 meters, when we glanced behind to see the whipping of a big tail in the murky distance.

The visibility in Tubbataha for this transition voyage of M/V Discovery

Palawan last June was unusually limited. Well, it was the end of Tubbataha season in an El Niño year, and this was the final journey for 2016 for this large, comfortable dive boat before it starts its northern Palawan trips, to Coron and Apo Reef, in a couple of months.

As finale, the boat was bringing 30 divers and a large crew back, from over 97,000 hectares of Tubbataha's Unesco

World Heritage Site reefs and water in the middle of the Sulu Sea, to the Batangas port.

You see, this crown jewel of the Philippines' marine protected areas and the only purely marine World Heritage Site in Southeast Asia is famous for insane visibility, so much so that you don't realize you're finning away your no-decompression dive time at great depths.

Located in the municipality of Cagayancillo, Palawan, Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park can be reached only after a 10- to 15-hour boat ride from Puerto

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