

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DATE : 27 JUL 2016

DAY : Wednesday

# DENR

## IN THE NEWS



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Lopez meets *lumads* over mining concerns

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez has urged *lumad* communities in Mindanao to submit their proposed development plan for areas that were affected by mining activities.

Lopez held a dialogue with representatives of *lumad* tribes at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines in Manila over the weekend.

She said mining operations in Mindanao that violated mining and environmental laws and regulations would be suspended.

"I am one with you in your cause... an investigation and audit of the mining companies you have mentioned is underway," Lopez said during the dialogue.

She assured *lumad* tribes that the government would study their proposal and address their concerns at the soonest possible time.

During the dialogue, representatives of *lumad* communities said open pit mines and tailings ponds have affected their livelihood.

They cited Sagittarius

Mines Inc. in Tampakan, Sultan Kudarat; SR Metals Inc. in Tubay, Agusan del Sur as well as Greenstone Mining and Taganito Mining in Surigao del Norte as among those whose operations have affected their communities.

The *lumads* urged Lopez to also stop illegal logging near watersheds and militarization in their communities.



# BusinessWorld

## INCREASE YOUR BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

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### STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Lopez slams erring mining firms in RP

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez vowed to do everything to recover the lost good values that President Rodrigo Duterte aims to revitalize by upholding the common good, concern and care for the helpless and the impoverished who are victims of an oppressive economy being controlled by abusive and irresponsible mining industries.

Lopez explaining that mining investors may be making money based on the suffering of the people. "At the end of the day, who is benefitting from this? Not the poor, so why do we keep doing it?" she said.

A staunch anti-mining advocate before being chosen by Duterte to head the DENR, Lopez expressed her intention to keep the country's rich natural resources in a way that benefits everyone.

"I would like to keep our biodiversity and not let it be raped by any selfish interest because it belongs to the Filipino people," she said.

Included in the sectors that pose various threats to environment is the cement manufacturing industry. Mining for limestone imposes great environmental impacts thus the government must maintain continuous monitoring and controlling of process operation to meet the requirements set by the governing agencies like the Environmental Management Bureau, and Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, the cement sector is the third largest industrial source of pollution in the world, emitting more than 500,000 tons per year of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide which are associated with health and environmental impacts such as

ground-level ozone, acid rain, global warming, water quality deterioration, visual impairment and lung diseases to affected population.

Meanwhile, advocacy group Kilusan Kontra Katiwalian at Kabulukan (4K) asked Duterte's government to stop the cartel in cement industry through the Cement Manufacturers of the Philippines (CeMAP).

Headed by former Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Undersecretary Ernesto Ordoñez, CeMAP campaigned against importers to allegedly control the price of their product.

"The DTI asked local cement producers to explain the recent surge in retail prices of cement in the country and CeMAP can explain why there are shortages of their product in some key areas," said 4K secretary-general Rodel Pineda.

"With the artificial shortage of cement, the government can't control the retail prices of cement and CeMAP is the first beneficiary in this situation," he said.

Pineda also questioned the merger of Holcim Philippines Inc. and Lafarge Republic Inc. which now controls 75 percent of cement industry which is a violation of Anti-Trust Law.

"How come the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) let this merger? Our local cement industry is now controlled by foreigners under CeMAP and they are making a killing in cement prices because they dictate the retail prices," Pineda explained.

"Ordoñez is the president of CeMAP and he is also an official of PCC and there is a clear conflict of interest in the merger of Holcim and Lafarge. This must be investigated by the government and CeMAP must be scrapped to stop the monopoly in cement industry," he added.



# The Manila Times

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## DENR to suspend abusive mining firms

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Tuesday assured the indigenous peoples of Mindanao (Lumad) that it will shut down mining operations violating environmental laws and regulations.

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez urged the Lumad to submit proposed development plans for areas which have been affected by destructive mining activities.

During a dialogue at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) in Manila, Lumad representatives complained about the new open pit mines and tailings ponds constructed in their areas, which have severely affected their livelihoods.

They also appealed to Lopez to halt illegal logging and encroachment in watershed areas, and stop militarization in their communities, which they claimed were related to the plan of large-scale mining companies to set up new businesses.

The Lumad also called for the return of all the Lumad displaced from their ancestral lands by mining and illegal logging activities.

The group cited Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI) in Tampakan, Sultan Kudarat; SR Metals Inc. in Tubay, Agusan del Sur; and Greenstone Mining and Taganito Mining, both in Surigao del Norte, whose operations have seriously affected IP communities because of siltation, open pit mining and stockpiles.

Tampakan is the largest copper-gold project in the Philippines at present, with development investments costing \$5.9 billion.

SMI, the local contractor of Glencore Xstrata for the copper-gold project, moved closer to mine development after securing local government endorsements last year, one of the main requirements in getting



**ANTI-ILLEGAL MINING PRACTICES** Environmental activists and indigenous people's groups from Zambales and Sultan Kudarat hold a protest rally in front of the DM Consunji Inc. (DMCI) office in Makati City, Metro Manila Tuesday demanding the permanent closure of its mining projects in the said provinces. PHOTO BY DJ DIOSINA

approval for its declaration of mining project feasibility (DMPF).

Under the Mining Act of 1995, a mining company should have the endorsement of the majority of LGUs to secure government approval for its DMPF.

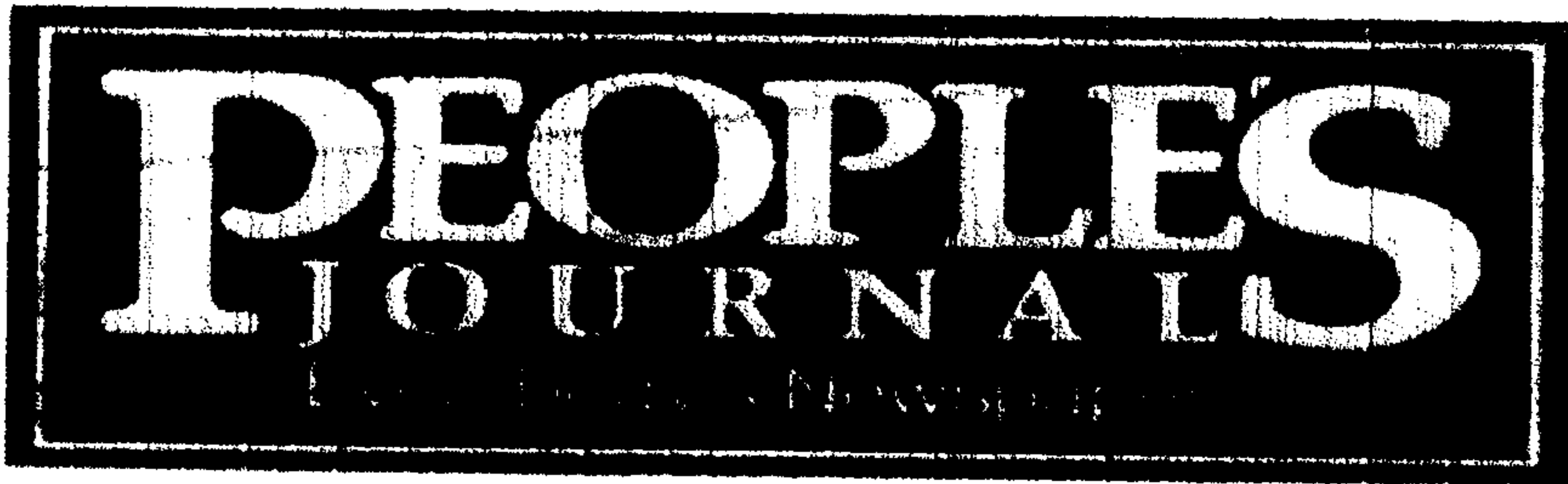
DMPF – which includes a proponent's final rehabilitation plan for the venture and an environmental protection and enhancement program, among others – is the final requirement for a mining company to commence in

the development of a project.

Tampakan, which involves one of the world's largest undeveloped copper-gold deposits, straddles four provinces in Mindanao – South Cotabato, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat and Davao del Sur. It represents one of the largest undeveloped copper-gold deposits in the Southeast Asia-Western Pacific region, estimated to have 15 million tons of contained copper and nearly 18 million ounces of gold.

**JAMES KONSTANTIN GALVEZ**





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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### DENR chief pummels irresponsible mining

DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez vowed she will do everything to recover the lost good values that President Rodrigo Duterte aims to revitalize by upholding the common good, concern and care for the helpless and the impoverished who are victims of an oppressive economy being controlled by abusive and irresponsible mining industries.

"Ito ang paninindigan ko, and this is what I really believe...we cannot and we must not build an economy based on suffering. We cannot do it," said Lopez explaining that mining investors may be making money based on the suffering of the people.

"At the end of the day, who is benefitting from this? Not the poor, so why do we keep doing it?" she said. A staunch anti-mining advocate before being chosen by Duterte to head the DENR, Lopez expressed her intention to keep the country's rich natural resources in a way that benefits everyone.

"I would like to keep our biodiver-

#### ENVIRO-WATCH

sity and not let it be raped by any selfish interest because it belongs to the Filipino people," she said.

Included in the sectors that pose various threats to environment is the cement manufacturing industry. Mining for limestone imposes great environmental impacts thus the government must maintain continuous monitoring and controlling of process operation to meet the requirements set by the governing agencies like the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) and Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the cement sector is the third largest industrial source of pollution in the world, emitting more than 500,000 tons per year of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and carbon monoxide which are associated with health and environmental impacts such as ground-level ozone, acid rain, global warming, water quality deterioration, and visual impairment and lung diseases to affected

population.

Meanwhile, advocacy group Kilusan Kontra Katiwalian at Kabulukan (4K) asked Duterte's government to stop the cartel in cement industry through the Cement Manufacturers of the Philippines (CeMAP). Headed by former Department of Trade and Industry undersecretary Ernesto Ordonez, CeMAP campaigned against importers to allegedly control the price of their product.

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# No 'sacred cows' in mining industry — DENR Sec. Gina Lopez

By Joel dela Torre

ENVIRONMENT and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez yesterday declared that there will be no "sacred cows" in the mining industry, most especially in Mindanao.

Lopez assured the Lumads or indigenous people of Mindanao that mining operation found violating the mining and environmental laws and regulations would immediately be suspended.

In a dialogue at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) in Sta. Mesa, the new DENR chief told the Lumad representatives that she was one with them in their cause, adding that an investigation and audit of the mining companies involved are underway.

Lopez urged the Lumads to submit their proposed development plan for areas which have been affected by destructive mining activities.

The Lumads complained about new open pit mines

and tailings ponds constructed in their areas, which are affecting their livelihoods.

The group mentioned the Sagittarius Mines Inc. in Tampakan, Sultan Kudarat; SR Metals Inc. in Tubay, Agusan del Sur; and Greenstone Mining and Taganito Mining, both in Surigao del Norte, as among those whose operations have seriously affected the IP communities due to siltation, open pit mining and stockpiles.

The Lumads also appealed to Lopez to halt illegal logging and encroachment in watershed areas, and stop militarization in their communities, which they said were related to the plan of large-scale mining companies to setup new businesses.

They likewise called for the return of all the Lumads displaced from their ancestral lands because of mining and illegal logging activities.





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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

(You can send your opinion on current issues to 09286603906 or [peoples@journal.com.ph](mailto:peoples@journal.com.ph). Please include your full name, age and address and barangay zone.)

### Lopez' anti-mining order adds injustice to small scale miners

Recently, the new DENR chief Gina Lopez issued Memo Circular directing regional MGB to stop the illegal mining operations nationwide. While the move was laudable to those who are totally against mining and who are unable to analyze the whole situation nationwide, the hapless small-scale miners particularly in Benguet were in a dilemma of losing their only source of livelihood. Lock out large mines also infringed themselves in small-scale mining to whisk all available mineral sources in their mined out operations at the expense of undocumented, inexperienced miners from all over the country. Madam Lopez must study the issues to prevent from being unfair to the families of miners who indubitably may go hungry. Her statement against new mining is just okay but when she said "let us fix the old" which is - in effect to revive old operations has

### People's VOICE

double meaning - 1) Innocence - deposits that ran out cannot be revive for ore veins are deposits of nature. 2) Gesture of tolerance to large scale mines - A hint for large scale mines to shift to small scale to glean the last and least ore veins ever left in their past operations. The resident small-scale miners are not only in jeopardy, they are victims of injustice by the law of man. - Domingo Q. Celestino, 62, #295, Barangay Ampucao, Itogon, Benguet, 09087881507



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## MGB 7 ties up with LGUs vs illegal mining, quarrying

CEBU CITY – The Mines and Geosciences Bureau in Central Visayas (MGB 7) is strengthening its partnership with local government units (LGUs) to stop illegal mining and quarrying activities in Central Visayas amid the call for responsible mining.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) 7 Director Isabelo Montejo noted that because mining and quarrying have significant and growing roles in economic development, “we cannot prevent mining and quarrying but we should be responsible.”

MGB 7 Director Loreto Alburo is looking for a stronger coordination with LGUs and local civil society sectors to report illegal activities in the region.

Small-scale mining operations, or those activities that rely mainly on manual labor and use simple implements, are regulated by the LGUs while large-scale mining is under the supervision and regulation by the bureau. .  
(Mars W. Mosqueda Jr.)



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Speaker pushes legislative license for mining firms

The Philippines' newly elected House Speaker said he wants new mining companies to get a legislative license before they are allowed to operate in the country as part of efforts to protect the environment.

Pantaleon Alvarez, a close ally of President Rodrigo Duterte, also said he will revive a proposed measure that will require miners to process their ores locally before they are shipped overseas to help create jobs domestically.

"Their activities would be subject to legislative oversight and their franchises can be revoked by the oversight body... if they violate the terms and conditions (of the franchise)," Alvarez said in a speech after he was elected speaker on Monday.

His pronouncement follows a nationwide crackdown on all miners operating in the Philippines led by the new mining minister, Regina Lo-

pez, an anti-mining advocate. Since assuming office, the country has ordered the suspension of three nickel ore mines for environmental violations and ordered a moratorium on new mines while existing projects are reviewed.

Duterte, who began a six-year term on June 30, has warned he could cancel mining projects causing environmental harm, suggesting a tough regulatory road ahead for Philippine miners.

Ronaldo Recidoro, the spokesman of the industry group Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, said Alvarez' plan would be a bigger disincentive to smaller miners than large-scale ones.

He said there was no need for additional environmental safeguards because the existing mining law is adequate.

"More than adding steps, they should increase the budget of the (regulator) or create a department that separates environment from natural resources," Recidoro said.

The country's mining sector, one of the world's largest in the 1970s, has since struggled partly due to environmental rules and policy flip flops, missing much of the mining boom in recent decades and now is dealing with much lower commodity prices. (Reuters)



# BusinessWorld

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

**By Janina C. Lim**  
Reporter

# Miners welcome local ore processing but incentives seen as key

AN OPEN-PIT mine atop Canatuan mountain in Zamboanga del Norte



AFP

LISTED mining companies welcomed the House Speaker's proposal to require more local processing of ore while discouraging ore exports, but said they must be given time and incentives to comply with any such scheme, which may require more investment and plant construction on their part.

On Monday, the Speaker of the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress, Davao del Norte Representative Pantaleon D. Alvarez, said he will pursue legislation that will require mining firms to process or semi-process their ores before they can be exported, which he expects to boost employment in the industry.

Dante R. Bravo, president of Global Ferronickel Holdings, Inc., said the company is in favor of the proposal if the terms support the establishment of processing facilities.

"One is the time when it should be implemented. This should be optional to existing operating mines. Or at the very least, allow them sufficient time to put up a plant if it is viable," Mr. Bravo said in a text message.

Mr. Bravo also said incentives for mine owners that put up their own plants must be globally competitive, saying the "ideal scenario" was a single tax on gross income.

"[Say] 5% tax based on gross income earned, in lieu of all national and local taxes, including exemption from payment of royalties to indigenous people)," he said.

Mr. Bravo also pointed out that a mine should have at least 20-year mine life in order to qualify for value-added processing and proper infrastructure to ensure continuous supply of raw material.

In addition, if such bill is imposed, the government should consider simplifying the permit process and relaxing foreign ownership restrictions.

Francis G. Ballesteros, Jr., division head for Public and Regulatory Affairs at Philex Mining Corp., said the Indonesian ore export ban could serve as a model and a cautionary tale for regulators.

"The proposed ban on raw ore exports, which is not novel... must be studied carefully if it be legislated because though the intentions may be noble the impact or consequences may be severe, as drawn from the experience in Indonesia," said Mr. Ballesteros.

In 2014, Indonesia, one of the world's top nickel ore producers, required the domestic processing of ore before any exports are permitted, but announced a review of the export ban earlier this year after the nickel and bauxite industries had to forego billions of dollars in revenue.

Meanwhile, the political left weighed in on the mining industry's poverty-statistics dispute, saying that any benefits derived by communities from mining are outweighed by environmental and health costs.

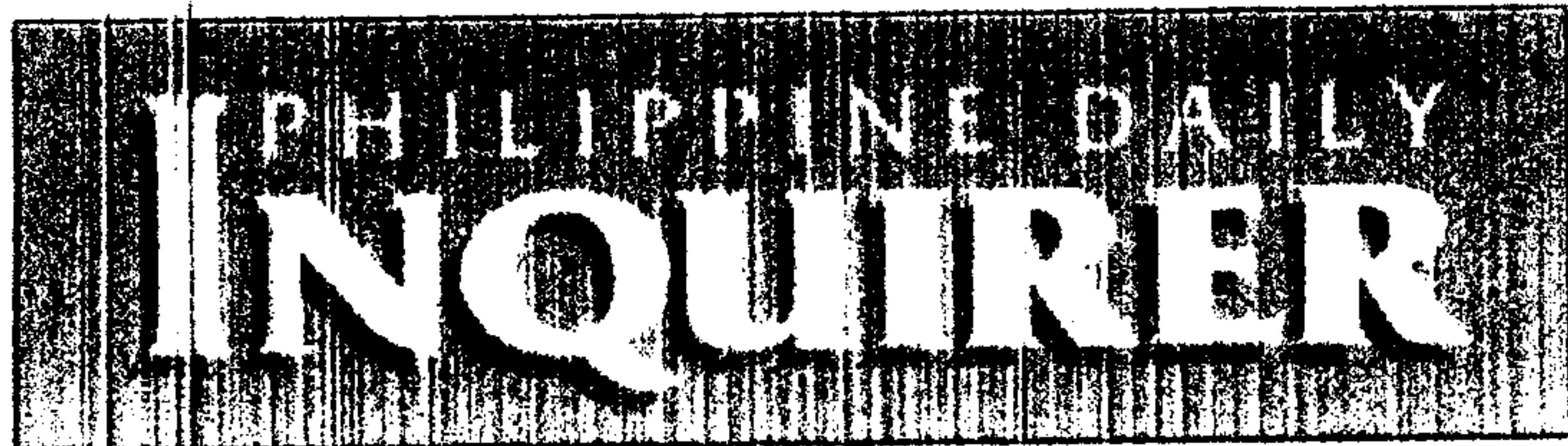
Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, in a statement, said mining contributes "virtually nothing" to the alleviation of poverty, leaving the people "net losers" because of the accompanying environmental damage.

It said poverty incidence remains "very high" in most provinces hosting large-scale mining, with Benguet deemed an outlier with a 3.7% poverty rate as of 2012. The poorest province on their list was Eastern Samar at 63.79%, followed by Agusan del Sur at 48.2% and Surigao del Norte at 41.8%.

Regulators and miners are putting out competing claims on poverty in mining areas, with Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez asserting that miners operate in places with the high poverty levels, while the Chamber of Mines says its members are not present in the top 10 provinces where poverty is highest.

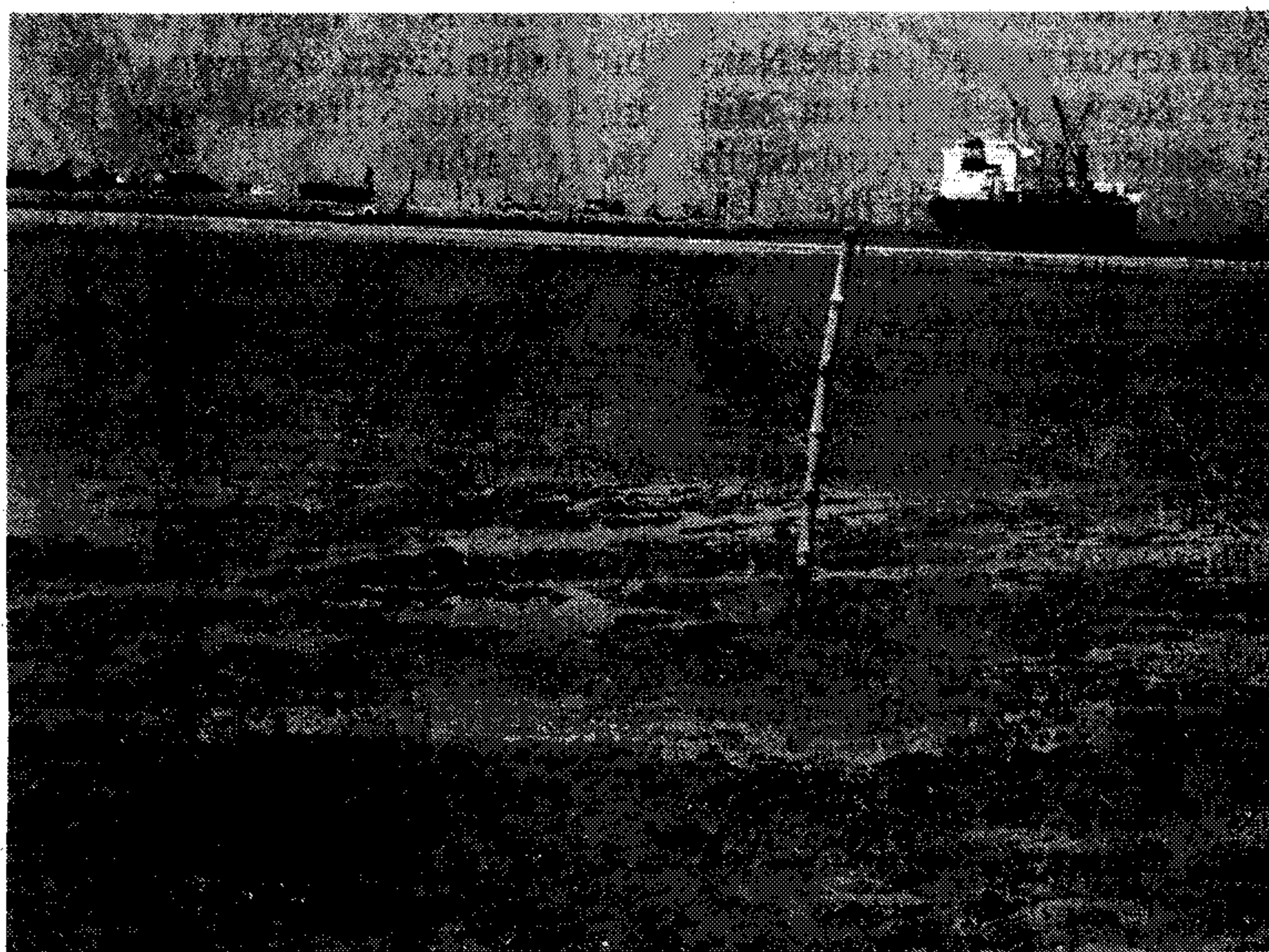


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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



**A FOREIGN ship is seen docked near a port area in Sta. Cruz, Zambales province. This ship was reportedly among those that transferred thick deposits of earth from three mountains in the province to China's reclamation site near the disputed Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal.**

ALLAN MACATUNO/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

**By Allan Macatuno**  
*Inquirer Central Luzon*

**OLONGAPO CITY**—China has been expanding its reclamation projects in the West Philippine Sea, using massive boulders and soil extracted from Zambales province by local mining companies, Gov. Amor Deloso said on Tuesday.

Citing information from local officials and residents, Deloso said China has been building military structures and an airport on 3,500 hectares of reclaimed area near the disputed Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal.

He said 450 trucks "worked day and night, shipping soil from three mountains in Sta. Cruz town" that were leveled by mining companies extracting nickel ore there.

"The shipment of soil to China's reclamation projects near the shoal went unnoticed because residents thought it was being taken to (mainland) China," Deloso told the INQUIRER by telephone.

He said he had informed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources about the reports for validation by the department.

When Deloso assumed office on June 30, he issued Executive Order No. 1 which suspended all mining activities in Zambales.

### **Anomaly**

During the interview, Deloso said he observed an anomaly in the manner that soil was being extracted and shipped out of the country.

"How come the ships that supposedly carried soil to China had been returning to our port areas so quickly? Certainly, those ships didn't bring the soil to mainland China," he said.

Aside from soil, Deloso said boulders from the towns of Botolan and Masinloc, both in Zambales, served as bedrock for China's reclamation activities.

"When China completed the bedrock sometime ago, they had to dump thick deposits of earth on it. The soil coming from Sta. Cruz town is ideal for their reclamation activities because it is clay," Deloso said.

In July last year, an inter-linked system of buoys and metal pipes measuring 1 kilometer was found in Zambales' waters.

An expert in the manufacture of industrial rubber and fiberglass pipes said the device is a "dredge floater assembly" composed of suction and discharge components.

"I believe these objects were used in reclamation activities [in the West Philippine Sea]," Erwin de la Torre said in an earlier interview.

### **Dredging tools**

De la Torre, a former executive of a company that manufactures equipment similar to those found in Zambales, said the device is usually attached to a dredging machine while the machine sucks up sand from the sea bottom.

Fishermen first saw the objects some 5.5 kilometers (3 nautical miles) from the shoreline of Cabangan town in Zambales.

They said they believed the objects could have been washed away from Panatag Shoal since they saw similar objects near that area.

The shoal, also called Bajo de Masinloc, is among the disputed territories in the West Philippine Sea. It is 230 km (124 nautical miles) west of Zambales.

Filipino fishermen reported encountering harassment from Chinese patrols when they go out to fish in Panatag. The harassment did not stop even after the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled in favor of the Philippines in its dispute with China over the West Philippine Sea.

# China reclamation using PH soil—gov



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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

## ZAMBALES GOV: GALING DITO 'YUNG PANAMBAK NG CHINA SA WPS LAND MASS

Ni Jojo Perez

OLONGAPO CITY, Zambales — Tila nagisa sa sariling mantika ang Pilipinas matapos ibunyag ni Zambales Governor Amor Deloso na ang lupang ginagamit na panambak sa mga proyekto ng bansang China sa Scarborough Shoal ay galing sa lalawigan ng Zambales.

Ayon kay Deloso, galing umano ang mga panambak na materyales sa tatlong bundok ng lalawigan na may lawak na 500 hektarya na ginagamit sa mga reclamation proj-

ects ng China sa pinag-aagawang isla sa South China Sea.

Inginuso ni Deloso si dating Governor Hermogenes Ebdane dahil pinahintulutan nito na magbenta ng lupa at malalaking bato ang lalawigan ng Zambales sa bansang China na siyang ginagamit sa mga itinayong istruktura.

“Siyempre may kumita diyan, imposibleng wala, hindi naman hahakot lang ng hahakot ng lupa kung walang ibinaba-

yad,” ayon pa kay Deloso.

Ginagamit umano ang mga naglalakihang bato upang magsilbing pundasyon sa ilalim ng dagat at pagkaraan ay sakanaman bubuhusan ng lupa upang makagawa ng platform.

Napag-alaman na sinuspinde na umano ni Deloso ang mga mining permits sa kanyang lalawigan.

Nabigo naman ang Abante na hingin ang panig ni Ebdane kaugnay sa naturang isyu.



# The Manila Times

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## GROUP SLAMS CEMENT CARTEL

A group opposing irresponsible mining urged the Duterte administration to stop the cartel in the cement industry, saying a few firms are actually controlling the price of cement in the market. Kilusan Kontra Katiwalian at Kabulukan secretary-general Rodel Pineda said the Department of Trade and Industry should ask local cement producers to explain the recent surge in its retail prices. Also, the Cement Manufacturers Association of the Philippines can explain the shortage of their product in some key areas in the country, he added. Pineda cited Environment Secretary Regina Lopez who vowed to stop mining that does not help alleviate the condition of the people in the mine sites. Included in the sectors that pose various threats to the environment is the cement manufacturing industry. Mining for limestone imposes great environmental impacts thus the government must maintain continuous monitoring and controlling of process operation to meet the requirements set by the governing agencies like the Environmental Management Bureau and Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

JAIME R. PILAPIL



# The Manila Times

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Mr. Duterte is taking the nation to a road less taken

PRESIDENT Duterte's pronouncements are full of unintended symbolisms. But there is a binding message. I am a different leader. I am an unorthodox President. Don't expect me to be in the mold of previous Presidents.

I will bend the nation to my unconventional will.

About the same time he rejected the Paris Climate Accord so as not to tie up the country to terms and provisions that would hamper his dream of industrializing the country and putting manufacturing as an economic savior, Mr. Duterte announced the appointment of aging rocker Ramon "RJ" Jacinto as his economic adviser. Mr. Jacinto might have spent much of his adult life as a rocker and a dilettante—or hawking guitars—but one factoid related to Mr. Duterte's manufacturing dream was connected to Mr. Jacinto.

It was Mr. Jacinto's father who actually built the Iligan Integrated Steel Mill, which he envisioned as the anchor of the country's industrial foundry, that would then mass-produce all the steel infrastructure for the factories and assembly plants. The IISMI was to be the foundation of the country's manufacturing dream. Before Jacinto's dad had a run-in with Marcos and was forced to flee, the IISMI was well on its way to power the country into an industrial/manufacturing powerhouse. The mill site? Mindanao.



### MIDWEEK COMMENTS

MARLEN V.  
RONQUILLO

He seemed to tell RJ this: Come on man, stop strumming guitars and we will fulfill the dream of your father.

For all the merits of taking a stab at manufacturing, that proposition from Mr. Duterte still raises a lot of questions and issues on viability. China is "Factory to the World" and the efficiency and speed of its manufacturing sector enables it to dump products at the cheapest cost—woe to would-be competitors. There are scale and efficiency and competitiveness to China's manufacturing and, right now, there is no country that can beat China in that area.

Can we start at this point and still be competitive? We don't have steel mills, we have lost the "manufacturing" culture and all the basic industries—from steel to chemicals to textile—have all but evaporated.

Still, Mr. Duterte is unfazed and standing pat. And no leader in contemporary history—we have to stress this—has had the audacity to reject climate change accords to pursue the 60s dream of industrial greatness.

Globalization—defined as adher-

ing to trade rules, adhering to the global consensus to fight climate change, adhering to the established rules of global conduct and civility, adhering to the security accords established by the western powers—has been turned upside down by Mr. Duterte's unorthodox views on governance.

The lame reaction of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez to the rejection of the Paris Accord—she simply said that Mr. Duterte is doing it for the country's good—reflected the hard shift of policymaking from the top that can make the thrust of national policies truly unpredictable. And can place Mr. Duterte's top aides such as Lopez in tight spots.

The planned visit of State Secretary John Kerry to talk mutual defense, freedom of navigation rights, and security at the West Philippine Sea with Mr. Duterte is an unstated admission from the US leadership that Mr. Duterte is not the same old, same old leader who would toe the US line on global security and geopolitical issues without prodding from the US. This time it is different. The US realizes that. Knowing the unknown, which is what Mr. Duterte is from the standpoint of the US leadership, will be part of Kerry's talks with the President.

The unorthodoxy of Mr. Duterte, while it is manifest to the outside world by his eschewing of some

features of the established global order that our previous leaders had assiduously followed, and followed to the letter, also baffles and perplexes domestic policy watchers who have been used to Presidents with limited goals and predictable policies.

Mr. Duterte is different. While his war on drugs has been a combination of legit police operations and extrajudicial killings, his signing of an EO on the freedom of information (FOI) rights is a classic, classy step on openness and transparency. His nationalist and nativist pronouncements are followed by his policies on easing the rules of doing business and tough anti-corruption, anti-red tape policies.

One day, Mr. Duterte is speaking of his left-of-center inclinations. The next day, he will do things that would please the transparency and openness welcomed by investors and the multilateral institutions.

His Cabinet, while it felt short of the Trudeau-like split between men and women, is still a diverse lot. He drew from the Left, from his political lieutenants, from his *kaklase*, and from the billionaire-political class.

Indeed, as Mr. Duterte earlier told the nation, we will be in for a "rough ride" within the next six years.

There is, however, one certainty: Mr. Duterte is taking the nation to a path less taken.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Salceda says PH worse off under Paris Agreement

**L**EGAZPI CITY, Albay (PNA) — Albay 2nd District Rep. Joey Salceda said the Philippines should not ratify the 2015 Paris climate agreement adopted during the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) last December 2015 because the country will be worse under it.

Salceda was former co-chair in 2013-2014 of the UNFCCC's Green Climate Fund (GCF) Board where he represented Southeast Asia and developing countries but has criticized the Paris accord as early as February this year, branding it as a "bad agreement" because it shifts the burden of responsibility of reducing carbon emissions to developing countries, and away from their wealthy counterparts which

have "actually caused untold damage to the environment" in the past decades.

The Paris agreement is a compilation of pledges to hold the increase of global average temperature to "well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" and "to pursue efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels."

Salceda, however, said the global average of "well below 2°C limit of temperature increase" in reality would translate into much more than that in the developing world — with more than 4 degrees for Africa alone.

President Duterte himself has criticized the Paris deal and threatened not to have it ratified. He has ordered a review of the "crazy" commitments the Philippines may have made when it signed the accord last April.



SALCEDA

He said as much in his State of the Nation Address (SONA). The Senate has issued a statement it will not ratify the treaty following Duterte's pronouncement.

Salceda, who was among the first to voice opposition to the Paris deal, however, said Manila's signature on it does not mean final commitment, for which reason it has to be ratified by the Senate.

The United States, he pointed out was a signatory too to the Kyoto Protocol, but chose not to become a Party to it.

In an article he wrote last February, he lamented that "Western-dominated media hailed the COP21 Paris Agreement but ignored the dissenting voices from developing countries including the Philippines."

Ratification for the Philippines, Salceda said, means looking into what was put on the table as our "intended nationally determined contributions which were mainly formulated under the tutelage of developed countries, without con-

sultations with concerned sectors of our society."

Ratifying the accord, he warned, "may lock our people in poverty for the rest of their existence until we are completely annihilated by continued extreme weather events."

An active climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) campaigner, Salceda said the Philippines has been fulfilling its commitments for over 20 years under the Kyoto Protocol.

"Despite our state of development, our country has honored its UN climate commitments under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, currently the only two treaty instruments on climate change that are in force. The Paris agreement has not entered into force yet and is, therefore not legally binding yet on the Philippines," he added.



# BusinessWorld

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## -DoE to review basis for 70% Paris emissions cut pledge

**By Victor V. Saulon**

*Sub-Editor*

THE Department of Energy (DoE) is calling for a review on how the previous administration came up with the 70% target reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from a business-as-usual scenario, as talks continue among government agencies to come up with a unified stand on climate change.

Felix William B. Fuentebella, DoE spokesperson, said that the department is looking at the country's commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as he described the pledge as "too general."

"What is business as usual as far as numbers are concerned and what is 70% of that," he said in a press conference on Tuesday at the agency's head office in Taguig City. DoE Secretary Alfonso G. Cusi was absent during the briefing.

The country late last year said its planned emissions reduction would come from energy, transport, waste, forestry and industry sectors ahead of the adoption of an agreement to keep the rise in global temperature under two degrees Celsius at the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties (Cop21) in Paris in December 2015.

Mr. Fuentebella said the department was gathering the needed data that it would submit to the Climate Change Commission, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the National Economic and Development Authority.

Along with the DoE, the government agencies agreed by year-end to come up with a sustainable national energy policy that will decide on the future of coal power projects in the country.

Mr. Fuentebella said the DoE's direction would be based on what President Rodrigo R. Duterte said during his State of the Nation Address on Monday that the country's energy needs would depend on what is called for by its move towards industrialization.

"We will follow the President," he said, although adding that the country's Cop21 pledge would also be considered.

Between now and 2020, about 4,792 megawatts (MW) of new power capacity will come from proposed coal-fired power plants. They account for about 70% of all the new power sources in the next four years, DoE data show.

Of the additional power from coal power plants, 2,762 MW will come from Luzon, 420 MW from the Visayas and 1,610 MW from Mindanao.

Other projects are also awaiting "financial closing" or funding from loans and investments that could move their proposed plants forward. These indicative projects are the ones most likely to be hit should the government come up with a stricter policy on coal-fired power plants, or if indeed these will be replaced by renewables.

In Luzon, nine such projects are in the pipeline with an estimated capacity of 5,600 MW. Visayas has about 900 MW while Mindanao has five projects with 1,400 MW. They still outpace the future capacity coming from renewable energy.

As it stands now, the country has about 16,451 MW of dependable capacity, which looks sufficient to meet an estimated demand of 12,000 MW.

"The president also directed... the concerned regulatory agencies to prioritize the issuance of required permits for power development," Mr. Fuentebella said,

quoting the president. "The heavy machineries could come in and even the power, the cheapest is coal."

"It's a matter of talking and explaining to them, you're using the state-of-the-art technology. I've seen it several times in other power plants in this country. If it's really a good one, then we will consider it. I said because we need energy to power our industrialization," he quoted Mr. Duterte as saying.

He said Mr. Cusi had instructed DoE bureaus to list the permitting process that power plant developers go through to start their projects.

"He emphasized that the priority is power," he said, adding the department was looking at each step of the development phase for all types of plants from traditional energy to renewables.

"When we face the inter-agency meeting where there will be an accounting of how many signatures are required from each department, the DoE should have already streamlined the maximum number to hasten the process," he said.

In the same press conference, Petronilo L. Ilagan, the other DoE spokesperson, said that the department had talks with the country's biggest distribution utility Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) and electric cooperatives to exercise their corporate social responsibility by making direct connections to relocation sites and depressed areas.

"There is a sense of urgency on the situation where some sectors of the community or the nation are deprived of electricity," he said.

Mr. Ilagan said it would be up to the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) to ensure that the costs incurred by the utilities

are not passed on as "recoveries" from consumers.

"We have the confidence that ERC would be applying this as a non-allowable expenses," he said.

In a statement released after the briefing, the DoE said that between July 8 and 24, Meralco had connected power to a total of 2,082 households via a combined regular service and prepaid electricity service schemes.

During yesterday's briefing, the DoE spokespersons also gave a timeline for the privatization of the country's remaining power generation assets that are under the management of Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM).

The first plant scheduled for auction is the decommissioned 850-MW Sucat thermal power plant in Muntinlupa City, with the bid and award date set in the second half of 2016.

Next year, the DoE is looking at selling the hydroelectric power plants along Agus and Pulangi rivers in Mindanao, but "subject to consultation with Congress as provided under EPIRA [Republic Act No. 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001]."

The Malaya thermal plant is scheduled to be bid out in the first semester of 2018, and turned over to the winning bidder in the second half. The Bataan thermal plant as well as gas turbines will be sold "subject to the resolution of court cases."

Mr. Fuentebella also said that a "technical audit team" at the DoE will look at whether there is a need for a third round of feed-in-tariff rate for renewable energy technologies such as solar and wind power. The audit would include factors such as the areas where more power is needed, the type of plant and the capacity of the grid.



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## Climate group alarmed by call for coal in Duterte SONA

BY VOLTAIRE PALAÑA

**T**HE Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCI), the largest climate justice group in the Philippines, welcomed the statement of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte that addressing global warming would be a top priority of his government.

However, the group expressed concern over the President's caveat in his State of the Nation Address that a global warming solution must not stymie the country's industrialization.

"The current global targets to address global warming and climate change are still very far from equitable, with the rich industrialized countries pledging actions that are very short of their fair share. A serious consequence of this inequity is that the aggregate impact of all country targets will still condemn us to nearly 3 degrees Celsius increase in the earth's temperature. This is not consistent with the avowed goal in the Paris Agreement of limiting global warming to

below 1.5 degrees," PMCI said in a statement on Tuesday.

President Duterte said in his SONA that, "Let us be very clear on this: We need to industrialize. We need the power and, therefore, the emissions would also be considered. You just can't say it: 'I established five economic zones here'. And you start to say that, 'you are spewing so much carbon footprints'. Mahirap yan. I mean, it's hard. I cannot just agree on anything that will delay. I'm only good for six years."

"And I intend to do something during my term. Now, I'm sure that the heavy machineries would come in and even the power, cheapest is coal," he said.

President Duterte also di-

rected the concerned regulatory agencies to prioritize the issuance of required permits for power development.

"If you're using the state of the art technology and I've seen it several times in the other power plants in this country, if it is really a good one, then we will consider it, I said, because we need the energy to power our industrialization," he said.

"Is President Duterte advocating unhampered industrialization? We hope not. Industrialization must be pursued within the bounds of sustainable, rights-based, and climate-friendly development pathways, and not the other way around. We believe there are ways to achieve development that is equitable and is in harmony with the welfare of the planet. That is the only kind of development that is in the interest of our people," the climate change group said.

"We are also alarmed by the President's reference to 'clean coal.' Is President Duterte falling for this dirty lie, this outdated and false information that coal is cheap? The cost of coal is

more than the financial cost of mining coal and building and running coal plants. Even the most state of art in coal energy technology has huge harmful consequences to people's health and environment, which cannot be fully compensated for financially. President Duterte should know that renewable energy is not only clean and healthy, the financial cost of building and running renewable energy systems has already achieved parity with coal," the group added.

Meanwhile, the Department of Energy (DOE) is in one with President Duterte on accelerating economic growth by implementing energy policies that will meet the country's specific requirements, especially baseload capacities.

"The DOE is mandated to ensure energy supply as the country is still in the process of industrialization. It should be emphasized that the Philippines, as a developing country, has low carbon emissions. The country must therefore use whatever energy resources are available and affordable for power generation," the energy department said.



## Kartel sa cement industry hiniling buwagin

NANAWAGAN ang advocacy group na Kilusan Kontra Katiwalian at Kabulukan (4K) sa administrasyong ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na durugin na ang kartel na Cement Manufacturers of the Philippines (CeMAP) sa ilalim ni dating Department of Trade and Industry undersecretary Ernesto Ordonez na nakikibang sa kanyang kampanya laban sa mga importer ng semento kung saan kontrolado ng grupo ang presyo ng kanilang mga produkto.

"The DTI asked local cement producers to explain the recent surge in retail prices of cement in the country and CeMAP can explain why there are shortages of their product in some key areas," giit ni 4K secretary general Rodel Pineda. "With the artificial shortage of cement, the government can't control the retail prices of cement and CeMAP is the first beneficiary in this situation."

Kinuwestiyon din ni Pineda ang pagsasanib ng malalaking kompanya na Holcim Philippines Inc. at Lafarge Republic Inc. na kumokontrol sa halos 75 porsiyento sa industriya ng semento na isang malaking paglabag sa Anti-Trust Law.

"How come the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) let this merger? Our local cement industry is now controlled by foreigners under CeMAP and they are making a killing in cement prices because they dictate the retail

prices," paliwanag ni Pineda. "Ordonez is the president of CeMAP and he is also an official of PCC and there is a clear conflict of interest in the merger of Holcim and Lafarge. This must be investigated by the government and CeMAP must be scrapped to stop the monopoly in cement industry."

Nauna rito, nangako si Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez na gagawin niya ang lahat ng kanyang makakaya upang marekober ang nawalang mabubuting bagay na nilalayan ni Duterte na mapasigla ang pagpapanatili ng kabutihan para sa nakararami, paglingap at pagkalinga para sa mga kapospalad at pag-ayuda sa mahihirap na mamamayang Filipino na biktima ng mapang-aping ekonomiya na kinokontrol ng mga abusado at iresponsableng industriya ng pagmimina.

"Ito ang paninindigan ko, and this is what I really believe...we cannot and we must not build an economy based on suffering. We can't do it," sabi ni Lopez habang ipinapaliwanag na maaari nang nagkakamal ng salapi ang mga mamumuhunan sa pagmimina ngunit nakabase naman ito sa paghihirap ng taumbayan. "At the end of the day, who is benefitting from this? Not the poor, so why do we keep doing it?"

Kilalang matibay na anti-mining advocate bago napili ni Duterte para pamunuan ang

DENR, ipinadama ni Lopez ang kanyang intensiyon na panatilihin matamasa ng bawa't isa ang mayamang natural na kalikasan ng bansa.

"I would like to keep our biodiversity and not let it be raped by any selfish interest because it belongs to the Filipino people," sabi ng DENR Secretary.

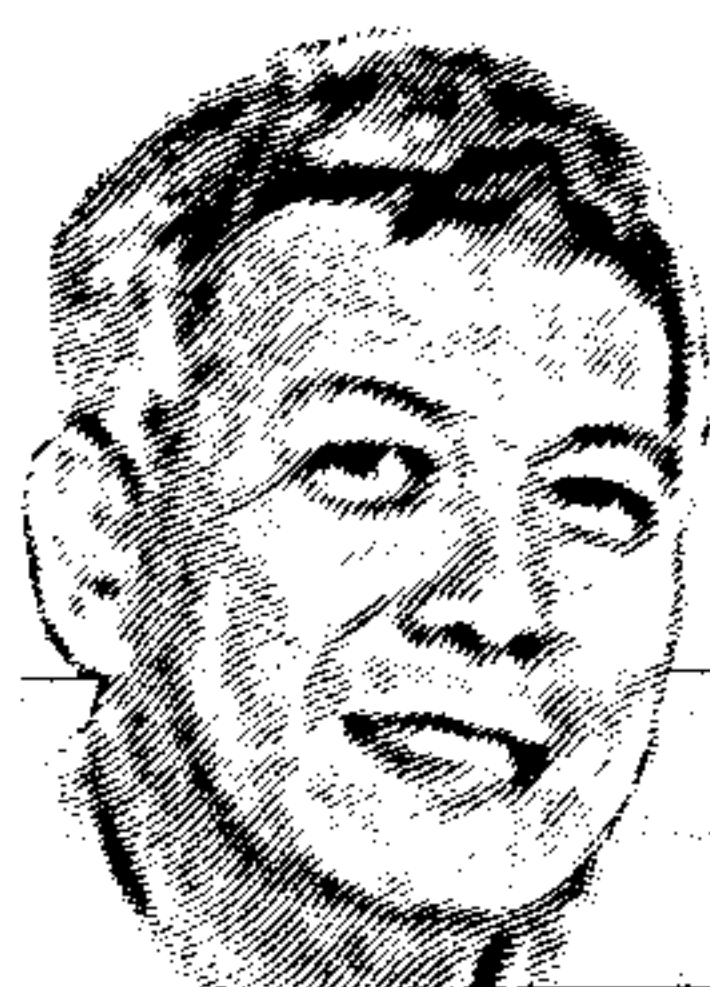
Kabilang sa mga sektor na nagdudulot nang malubhang panganib sa kalikasan ang cement manufacturing industry. Nagdudulot nang mabigat na suliranin ang pagmimina ng apog o limestone sa kalikasan kung kaya dapat panatilihin ng pamahalaan ang pagbabantay at pagkokontrol sa proseso ng operasyon upang matugunan ang mga requirement na itinakda ng mga ahensiyang kagaya ng Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) at Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

Ayon sa US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), ang cement sector ang pangatlo sa pinakamalaking industriyang pinagmumulan ng polusyon sa buong mundo, nagpapakawala ito ng mahigit pa sa 500,000 tonelada kada taon ng sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide at carbon monoxide na may isang malaking panganib sa kalusugan at kalikasan kagaya ng ground-level ozone, acid rain, global warming, water quality deterioration at paglabo ng paningin at sakit sa baga na nakaaapekto sa populasyon.



## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# 'TricyCLEAN' and the plight of the tricycle sector



Michael Makabenta Alunan

## ON THE CONTRARY

**O**VER the past decade and ever since the passage of the Clean Air Act, numerous technologies on tricycle emission reduction were imposed on the tricycle sector, and yet some have only created more problems than offered genuine solutions.

■ **EMB-NCR supports TricyCLEAN.** The environmental Management Bureau National Capital Region Director said, "One of our priorities is education and capacity building for transport groups, including what we jointly call with the tricycle sector as the TricyCLEAN program."

She explained that education implements two provisions of the Clean Air Act: 1) Section 11, which mandates government to make available all information on best maintenance practices, pollution-control techniques, state-of-the-art technologies to reduce emissions, etc.; and 2) Section 46 requiring

SEE "ALUNAN," A11

## Alunan. . .

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that apart from penalties slapped on smoke-belchers, the latter have to undergo education.

For the tricycle sector, Osorio said EMB-NCR will hold "Tricyclean" seminars, together with the sector itself, along with the support of the local governments, in pursuance of Section 36 on the "Role of Local Government Units" as main implementers of clean air at the local level and with the help of professional groups, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, people's organizations, like the NCR TODA Coalition, as provided under Section 35 on "Linkage Mechanisms."

Meanwhile, NCR TODA Coalition wants government to allocate even a fraction of what the sector contributes to the road users' tax back into a program for Tricycle Maintenance Centers based on their specific needs, Sevilla said.

Apparently, anything without maintenance deteriorates fast (i.e., Metro Rail Transit without maintenance, breaks down easily; airport runways, roads and other facilities, etc. will erode fast without maintenance). Same with vehicles, without maintenance, education and the right technological intervention, the sector's proposal for a clean emission-free compliance is worth a try. So kudos to the tricycle sector's TricyCLEAN joint activity with the EMB-NCR regional office!

E-mail: mikealunan@yahoo.com.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## #nationataglance

CENTRAL LUZON: SUBIC, ZAMBALES

### **DENR, BFP officials get forest fire management training**

FIFTY OFFICIALS from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) have recently undergone training on forest fire management from the US Forest Service through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The training was conducted in response to a series of forest fires that broke out in Mt. Apo Natural Park, Mt. Kanlaon, and Mt. Kitanglad in March and April this year, leaving more than 114 hectares burned. The three mountain areas are in the list of priority sites under USAID's Philippines Biodiversity and Watersheds Improved for Stronger Economy and Ecosystem Resilience program.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Govt can revoke Laguna de Bay permits

By DAVID CAGAHASTIAN [@davecaga](#)

**T**HE government can revoke the permits given to private corporations to develop and manage huge portions of the Laguna de Bay, as hinted by President Duterte in his State of the Nation Address (Sona) on Monday, but such move could affect the supply of freshwater fish from the lake.

Former Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) Chairman Edgardo Manda said on Tuesday it is possible for the government to revoke all licenses to manage fish pens in the Laguna de Bay, then give out new entitlements, with farmers having the priority.

However, he said such a move will immediately reduce production of tilapia and *bangus*, affecting market prices.

"That's possible, because it could be effected by the mere change in policies to revise or rescind the permits granted," Manda told the BUSI-

NESSMIRROR in an interview.

In his first Sona, Mr. Duterte noted that small fishermen making a living out of the Laguna de Bay are left with very little area to ply their trade, with most areas of the Laguna de Bay allocated for private fish pens owned by big corporations.

"I can see it from the plane every time I go to Davao. Every time I can see that, there's really nothing left, and the fishermen are complaining about their loss, because they have very little left for them," Mr. Duterte said.

"The Laguna de Bay shall be transformed into a vibrant economic zone, showcasing ecotourism by addressing the negative impact of the watershed destruction, land conversion and pollution. This is what I'm telling you: The poor fishermen will have priority in its entitlements," he said.

He then directed Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez to reduce the areas of occupation of those holding big areas of the Laguna de



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Govt. can revoke Laguna de Bay permits

Bay, and disclosed the big entitlements are owned by retired generals.

### **Not generals, but big corporations**

BUT Manda said the big entitlements in the Laguna de Bay are now held by big corporations, with those held by retired generals, referred to by Mr. Duterte, having dwindled through the years.

Manda explained that the entitlements currently held by big corporations may range from 50 to 1,000 hectares of the lake surface. He said some corporations now have big entitlements by merging those entitlements granted to their dummies.

Manda, who served as chairman of the LLDA during the Arroyo administration, said some 20 percent of the 90,000-hectare lake surface of the Laguna de Bay is now covered by entitlements granted to private persons to manage and develop fish pens.

Although the licenses of these

big corporations may be revoked, he said the small fishermen who will be given priority in the grant of new entitlements might not be able to fill in the resulting shortage in production because their capital in their individual capacities would not be enough to supply the huge demand for *bangus* and tilapia.

Aside from the lack of capital, Manda said all the stakeholders in the Laguna de Bay would also have to contend with the growing pollution in the lake, which has drastically reduced its production capacity. The lake had been so strained to the extent that its former average depth of 10 meters is now only at 2 meters.

### **Other sources of income**

MANDA said instead of focusing on water-based sources of income such as fishing, the fishermen should set their sights on new sources of land-based income, such as reforestation, which will also allow them to help

in the preservation of the Laguna de Bay watershed.

Manda said one of the advocacies he had been pushing is the reforestation of the areas around the Laguna de Bay with bamboo, with the fishermen in the area leading the reforestation effort.

Manda is currently the president of the Philippine Bamboo Foundation Inc., a nonstock, nonprofit corporation dedicated to research and development of all aspects of the bamboo plant.

"We need capacity-building programs to teach the fishermen how to care for the bamboo and manufacture its byproducts, because the fishermen are not used to land-based livelihood," he said.

Some of the byproducts of bamboo include charcoal, bamboo shoots and furniture.

Aside from selling bamboo byproducts, he said the reforestation and cleanup of the Laguna de Bay watershed would also allow ecotourism to flourish in the area.



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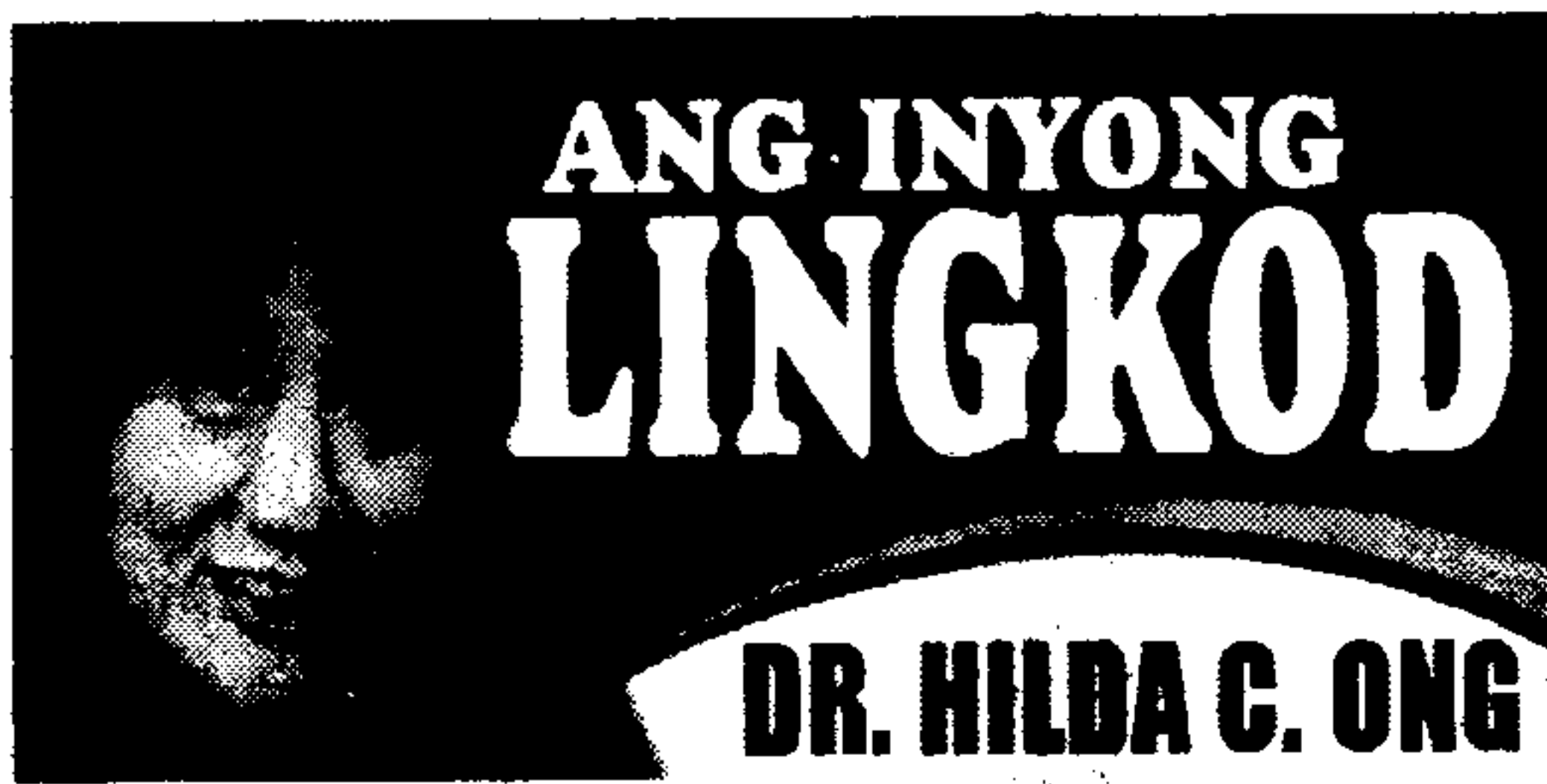
UMPISA ngayong umaga ng Hulyo 28 hanggang bukas Hulyo 29, isinasa-gawa ang "Annual Information Campaign" ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB) sa Baguio City.

NWRB ang pangunahing ahensya na responsable sa mapagkukunan ng tubig sa buong bansa. Ang mga naimbitahan na kalahok ay magmumula sa kalapit na rehiyon, Region I, II, III at Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

Kasabay sa ANNUAL INFORMATION CAMPAIGN, tumatanngap ang NWRB ng aplikasyon para sa Water Permit and Certificate of Public Convenience sa Hotel Elizabeth. Sa mga interesadong mag-aplay ng permit at certificate, hindi na nila kailangang maglakbay mula sa kanilang lalawigan patungo sa NWRB Central Office, Quezon City. Ang mga aplikasyon ay madaling mai-padala sa kanilang lugar.

Ang pagtanggap ng aplikasyon para sa WP at CPC sa iba't ibang rehiyon ay isang mahusay na paraan ng NWRB para maabot ang kanilang serbisyo sa mamamayan Pilipino.

Ang Water Permit (WP) ay isang dokumento na ibini-bigay ng NWRB, kung saan ipinagkaloob ang kara-



**DR. HILDA C. ONG**

### **NWRB TUMATANGGAP NG WATER PERMIT AT CPC APPLICATIONS HABANG NASA BAGUIO CITY**

patan sa paggamit ng tubig at ma-pagkukunan ng tubig mula sa ibabaw o lupa (right to appropriate and use water from surface or ground water resources). Ang Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC) ay isang pormal na kasulatan na may kapang-yarihan na maaari nilang mapatakbo at mapanatili ang isang sistema ng tubig na may ba-yad. Sa mga aplikante na interesado mag-aplay, kinakailangan dalhin ang COMPLETE DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS sa Hotel Elizabeth, 1 J. Felipe Street, Baguio City, Benguet mula 9:00 ng umaga hanggang 4:00 ng hapon sa Hulyo 28-29, 2016.

"Application for Water Permit costs P7,200.00 and P10,000.00 for the Certificate of Public Convenience. For

the complete list of WP and CPC application requirements, please log on to [www.nwr.gov.ph](http://www.nwr.gov.ph) or call (632) 928-2365 and (632) 920-2641".

**MAHALAGANG PAALALA:** Aplikante na may dalang "COMPLETE DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS" ang maaaring tanggapin ng NWRB.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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WEAK ASEAN

# US, Japan, Australia chide China

VIENTIANE—The United States, Japan and Australia have urged China to stop constructing military outposts and reclaiming land in the disputed South China Sea in a strong show of support for Southeast Asian nations that have territorial disputes with Beijing in the resource-rich area.

A joint statement by the three allies, issued late Monday in the Laotian capital of Vientiane, ironically fills the vacuum created by the 10-member Association of Southeast Asia Nations (Asean), which during its meeting of foreign ministers on Sunday failed to take a stand against China because

of disunity among themselves.

"The ministers expressed their serious concerns over maritime disputes in the South China Sea. The ministers voiced their strong opposition to any coercive unilateral actions that could alter the status quo and increase

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tensions," said the statement issued by US Secretary of State John Kerry, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Australian Foreign Secretary Julie Bishop.

The three met in Vientiane on the sidelines of a series of meetings organized by Asean, which could have leveraged the recent decision by the UN-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague.

Ruling in favor of the Philippines in a landmark case it brought against China in their dispute in the South China Sea, the PCA said China's claim over almost all of the South China Sea was illegal.

Implicit in the ruling is that China has no standing in its other disputes with Malaysia, Brunei and Vietnam, which also are Asean members. Taiwan is the sixth claimant in the dispute.

## US backs rule of law

Later on Tuesday, Kerry said the United States had no position in the sea disputes, but he stressed the US government wanted all parties to follow the rule of law and settle their differences peacefully.

Kerry said the tribunal's decision overturning China's claims was final, binding and based on international law. "We absolutely support rule of law, the legal process and diplomacy," he told reporters.

China, which also is attending the Asean conference hosted by Laos, has rejected the international tribunal's decision, saying it has a historical claim over most of South China Sea. Beijing insists all disputes should be resolved bilaterally.

Kerry, who is scheduled to fly to Manila late Tuesday night, said he would encourage the Philippines to engage in bilateral negotiations with China to resolve their dispute in the South China Sea.

## Divide-and-rule

During the meeting of its foreign ministers, Asean failed to reach a consensus because of China's divide-and-rule diplomacy.

China scored a diplomatic victory by securing the backing of its two staunch allies—Cambodia and Laos—which resulted in Asean issuing a joint statement on South China Sea that did not mention China by name or the arbitration ruling.

It fell upon Asean's three allies to rush to the regional bloc's support.

In their joint statement, Japan, Australia and the United States called on China and the Philippines to abide by the arbitration panel's award, "which is final and legally binding on both parties."

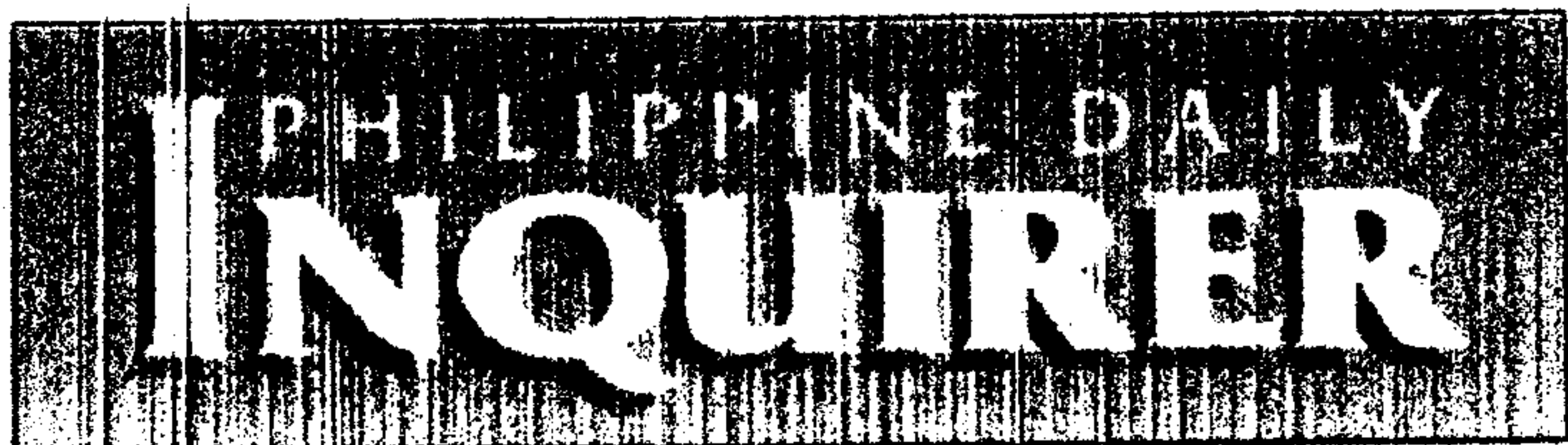
"The ministers stressed that this is a crucial opportunity for the region to uphold the existing rules-based international order and to show respect for international law," Kerry, Kishida and Bishop said in one of the strongest and most detailed warnings by the allies against China.

## Clear broadside

In a clear broadside at China, the statement urged all parties to refrain from "unilateral actions that cause permanent physical change to the marine environment . . . and from such actions as large-scale land reclamation, and the construction of outposts as well as the use of those outposts for military purposes."

China has been rapidly developing reefs and rocky outcrops into islands in the South China Sea, including building airstrips capable of landing military aircraft.





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China's so-called historic rights to the vast sea was considered rubbish by the arbitration panel. The tribunal ruled that the sea was international waters and the rocky outcrops did not constitute sovereign islands that would give states ownership of the surrounding waters.

### 'Meddling'

For years, China has prevented fishermen from other countries from venturing into the areas it claims, and has made it clear it will not back down despite the arbitration award, which it calls politically motivated, illegal and irrelevant.

It has accused countries outside the region—notably the United States, Japan and Australia—of meddling in Southeast Asia and destabilizing the region.

In recent days, China's military has staged live-firing exercises in the area and said it would begin regular air patrols over the sea. It also has asserted that it will not be deterred from continuing construction of its man-made islands.

### China seeks US help

In a sudden turnaround of Beijing's position, however, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has asked Kerry to support the resumption of talks between China and the

Philippines over the South China Sea.

On the sidelines of the Asean meeting, Wang told Kerry that China and Asean had agreed the dispute should get back onto the "correct" track of being resolved by direct talks with the parties concerned.

China "hopes the United States side takes actual steps to support the resumption of talks between China and the Philippines, and support the efforts of China and Asean to maintain regional peace and stability," Wang said.

China has repeatedly blamed the United States for stoking tensions in the South China Sea and of taking sides in the dispute, accusations Washington denies.

### Yasay position

Speaking to reporters in Vientiane, Philippine Foreign Secretary Perfecto Yasay said the dispute was not a fight between China and the United States but between China and the Philippines.

"We would like to pursue bilateral relationships in so far as the peaceful resolution of the dispute is concerned that is between the China and the Philippines. The others are not concerned with that dispute," Yasay told reporters.

*Reports from AP and Reuters*



# Stepping in for weak ASEAN, Japan, Australia, US chide China

**V**IENTIANE, Laos (AP) — The United States, Japan and Australia have urged China not to construct military outposts and reclaim land in the disputed South China Sea, in a strong show of support for Southeast Asian nations that have territorial disputes with Beijing in the resource-rich area.

A joint statement by the three allies, issued late Monday, ironically fills the vacuum created by Southeast Asia's main grouping, which during its meeting of foreign ministers on Sunday failed to take a stand against China because of disunity among themselves.

"The ministers expressed their serious concerns over maritime disputes in the South China Sea. The ministers voiced their strong opposition to any coercive unilateral actions that could alter the status quo and increase tensions," said the statement issued by Secretary of State John Kerry and foreign ministers Fumio Kishida and Julie Bishop.

The three met in Vientiane on the sidelines of a series of meetings organized by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN. The grouping could have leveraged the recent decision by a permanent arbitration panel in The Hague, which ruled in favor of the Philippines in a case it brought

against China in their dispute in the South China Sea.

The panel ruled that China's claim that amounts to claiming almost all of South China Sea was illegal. Implicit in the ruling is that China has no standing in its other disputes with Malaysia, Brunei and Vietnam, which also are ASEAN members.

But ASEAN became divided because of China's divide-and-rule diplomacy by winning support from Cambodia, and to some extent Laos, which resulted in the grouping issuing a joint statement on South China Sea that did not mention China by name or the arbitration ruling.

Instead, it fell upon ASEAN's allies to rush to their support.

In their joint statement, the ministers of Japan, Australia and the United States also expressed "strong support" for the rule of law and called on China and the Philippines to abide by the arbitration panel's award, "which is final and legally binding on both parties."

"The ministers stressed that this is a crucial opportunity for the region to uphold the existing rules-based international order and to show respect for international law," they said in one of the strongest and most detailed post-arbitration warnings by the allies against China.