

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

08 AUG 2016

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DAY : **Monday** \_\_\_\_\_

# DENR

## IN THE NEWS

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Demilitarization of lumad lands sought; Defy DENR orders, risk arrest – Duterte

By **ELLALYN B. DE VERA**  
and **GENALYN D. KABILING**

**D**epartment of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez has called for the immediate demilitarization of lands owned by lumads, or indigenous peoples (IP) in Mindanao, to ensure the safe return of those who left their communities because of heavy militarization and encroachment of mining activities on their ancestral lands.

Lopez visited last Friday the Haran compound of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines (UCCP), which has been serving as refuge for around 300 lumad evacuees who fled their homes and farmlands last year following the alleged harassment by paramilitary groups and indiscriminate killings of their leaders.

“Why do you have to bring these people out of the forests and bring them to the city? This is senseless,” Lopez said.

She noted that the commander of

the Philippine Army’s 10th Infantry Division, Major-General Rafael Valencia, already assured her about the withdrawal of military troops from lumad areas next week.

Lumad leaders claimed military personnel and some of their fellow IPs belonging to paramilitary groups have struck fear among IP members and forced them to evacuate their lands to allow large-scale mining and logging companies to proceed with their operations.

Meanwhile, President Duterte said top executives of mining firms face ar-

rest if they defy the closure order issued by the DENR.

The President advised mining firms to follow the closure order by Secretary Lopez to avoid such adverse consequence.

“If she orders the closure, you close or else I’ll have you arrested,” the President said in a televised public address in Davao City early Sunday morning.

“I will not hesitate to arrest you,” added Duterte, who has criticized the mining industry for the critical damage caused on the environment.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Lopez seeks demilitarization of Lumad communities

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Regina Paz Lopez has called for the immediate demilitarization of lands owned by the Lumads or indigenous peoples (IP) in Mindanao to ensure the safe return of those who left their communities because of heavy militarization and encroachment of mining activities on their ancestral lands.

Lopez made the call after she visited on Friday the Haran compound of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines (UCCP), which has been serving as refuge for around 300 Lumad evacuees who fled their homes and farmlands last year following alleged harassment by paramilitary groups and indiscriminate killings of their leaders.

"Why do you have to bring these people out of the forests and bring them to the city? This is senseless," Lopez said.

The chief of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said the commander of the Philippine Army's 10th Infantry Division, Major General Rafael Valencia, already assured her about the withdrawal of military troops from Lumad areas next week.

Lumad leaders claimed military personnel and some of their fellow IPs belonging to paramilitary groups have struck fear among them and forced them to evacuate their lands to allow large-scale mining and logging companies to proceed with their operations.

They further alleged that some mining firms had turned IP members against each other by arming and forcibly offering them money in exchange for their lands.

Lopez vowed to immediately look into the permits of the mining companies mentioned by Lumad leaders and prioritize them in the ongoing mining audit being conducted by the DENR.

DENR Undersecretary Leo Jasareno, head of the agency's mining audit team, assured Lumads their ancestral lands encroached by mining operations would be returned to them within the month.

"The DENR will return their lands to the Lumad within August, as long as it is proven that the areas were occupied without the consent of the entire tribal community since it is illegal for mining companies to operate in ancestral lands," Jasareno said.

During her visit to the UCCP compound, Lopez could not hide her dismay when she found out that the tents occupied by the Lumads were set on fire by still unidentified men last February, hurting at least five evacuees.

Touched by the plight of the Lumad evacuees, Lopez promised she would do everything in her power to make sure their ancestral lands are returned to them.

The DENR secretary also invited members of civil society, including the youth and mountaineering groups, to help and join the Lumads in their journey back to their ancestral lands.

At the same time, Lopez promised to help provide the needs of the Lumads for them to start new lives.

She said she would coordinate with the Department of Agriculture in assisting the Lumads, who rely heavily on agriculture, to support their livelihoods.

**JAMES KONSTANTIN  
GALVEZ**

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Lopez echoes call for military to pull out from lumad communities

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez on Sunday called for the immediate pullout of state forces from lumad territories in Mindanao.

Lopez believes the military pullout would ensure the safe return of evacuees to their mining-affected lumad communities.

Lopez made the call after she visited on Friday the Haran compound of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), which has been serving as a haven for around 300 lumad evacuees who fled their homes and farmlands last year, allegedly because of the harassment by state forces characterized by killings of their lumad leaders.

"Why do you have to bring these people out of the forests and bring them to the city? This is senseless," Lopez said in a statement.

The environment chief said the commander of the Philippine Army's 10th Infantry Division, Major General Rafael Valencia, already assured her about the withdrawal of military troops from lumad areas next week.

Lumad leaders claimed military personnel and some of their fellow indigenous peoples (IPs) belonging to paramilitary groups have struck fear among IP members and forced them to evacuate their lands to allow large-scale mining and logging companies to proceed with their operations. They further alleged some mining firms had turned IP members against each other by arming and forcibly offering them money in exchange for their lands.

Lopez vowed to immediately look into the permits of the mining companies mentioned by the Lumad leaders and prioritize them in the ongoing mining audit being conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Gina: Why bring the Lumads out of the forests?

DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Regina Paz "Gina" L. Lopez decried the senselessness of forcing out the Lumads from their communities, as she obtained the assurance of Major General Rafael Valencia, Philippine Army 10th Infantry Division commanding general that the military troops will withdraw from the Lumad ancestral lands by next week.

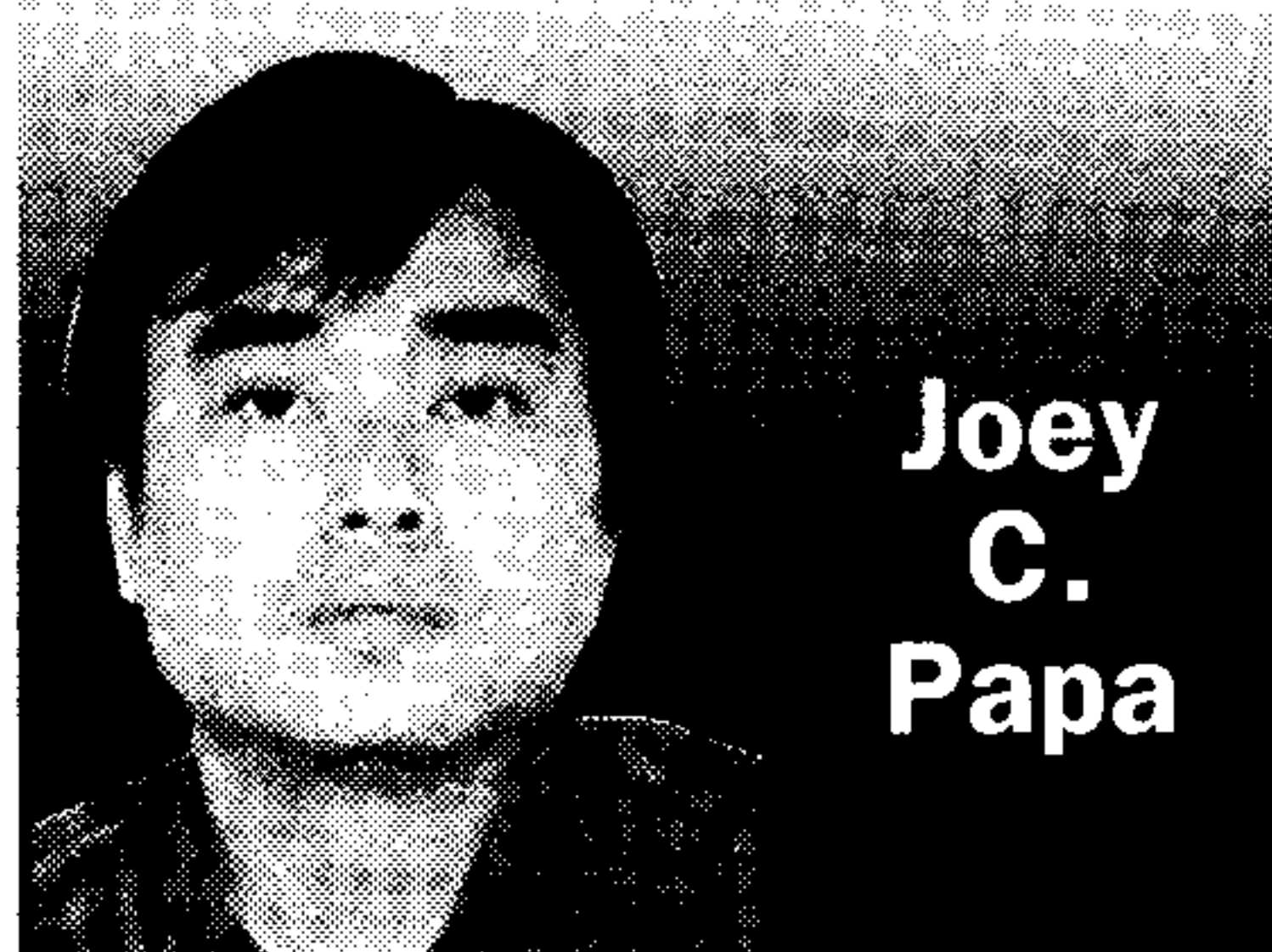
In her visit to the Haran compound of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines (UCCP), according to a statement from the DENR's Strategic Communication and Initiatives Service, Sec. Gina said, "Why do you have to bring these people out of the forests and bring them to the city? This is senseless."

One imagines how Sec. Gina must have uttered those words with such passion but managing to smile as well, just as she talked before the DENR employees in Mindanao, urging them to do their best to serve the people in their field.

Indeed, this is a most welcome posture from a government official underscoring, yes, the senselessness of it all; of how, as the statements says, "Lumad leaders claimed military personnel and some of their fellow IPs belonging to paramilitary groups have struck fear among IP members and forced them to evacuate their lands to allow large-scale mining and logging companies to proceed with their operations."

Sec. Gina put it simply, that people must not suffer. This we will take note of, how her department will be able to ease that suffering: "Lopez

#### BANGON KALIKASAN



Joey C. Papa

vowed to immediately look into the permits of the mining companies mentioned by the Lumad leaders and prioritize them in the ongoing mining audit being conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)."

At the same time, "DENR Undersecretary Leo Jasareno, head of the agency's mining audit team, assured the Lumad that their ancestral lands encroached (upon) by mining operations will be returned to them within the month. 'The DENR would return their lands to the Lumad within August, as long as it is proven that the areas were occupied without the consent of the entire tribal community since it is illegal for mining companies to operate in ancestral lands,' Jasareno said."

The Lumads are holding on to Sec. Gina's promise that "she would do everything in her power to make sure their ancestral lands are returned to them," and must be looking forward also to the response to her invitation to civil society, the youth, and mountaineering groups "to help and join the

Lumad in their journey back to their ancestral lands."

Sec. Gina's visit reminds me of an earlier visit by Department of Social Welfare and Development Secretary Judy Taguiwalo the day after the first meeting of the newly appointed cabinet officials in Davao, and no DENR secretary had yet been appointed.

But why are the Lumads still in Haran several weeks after that visit? Reports stated that even as they were encouraged to go back to their homes, they feared they would still be harassed, harmed allegedly by paramilitary groups who killed their two leaders.

More than the visits of Sec. Judy and Sec. Gina should be President Rodrigo Duterte's immediate and strongly issued order, the way he orders "kill" on the drug lords, pushers, and users, for the military to once and for all retreat from the community of the Lumads, the police to make safe their return, and the local government to fully commit to protecting them.

Sec. Gina's intent to "coordinate with the Department of Agriculture in assisting the Lumads, who rely heavily on agriculture to support their livelihoods" brings up the next very important move to help achieve and sustain a "comfortable life" for the Lumads, as the president said he seeks to give to the people. Not only the DA should be involved here, or DENR, but also other government agencies such as the DSWD, and the Departments of Interior and Local Government, Education, Health, National Anti-Poverty Commission.

(bangonkalikasan@yahoo.com)



# The Standard

DEFINING THE NEWS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION



OUT OF THE  
BOX

RITA LINDA  
V. JIMENO

## Do we really need mining?

PRESIDENT Rodrigo R. Duterte pronounced that the country would survive without mining companies and that mining as an industry is now at the sunset of its life in the Philippines.

To appreciate the President's words, every Filipino who loves his country must take a look at the following figures. The Philippines has a land mass of only 30 million hectares and a population of now more than 100 million people. Australia has a land area of 76.8 million hectares—more than double ours—yet its population is only 24.3 million as of early 2016. Canada, on the other hand, has a land mass more than triple that of the Philippines, with 99.8 million hectares, and a population of only 35.8 million in 2015. With the size of these countries' land areas and small populations in contrast to our much smaller land mass and much bigger population, is it logical to allow destructive mining to prosper in the Philippines?

Open-pit mining, which has been the trend in mining operations for lower costs, has caused the lopping off of mountains, the killing of flora and fauna, the cutting of trees, the poisoning of the soil and water and the creation of barren wastelands in its wake. Considering the Philippines' small land mass and huge population, mining will displace inhabitants of land areas and impoverish them. It will also cause soil erosion that can cause untold disasters. So, why should mining be allowed to thrive in the Philippines? On the other hand, even if open-pit mining operations were done many times over in either Canada or Australia, there will be little, if any at all, impact on their respective environments and people. Yet, why are foreign mining firms, most of which are Canadian and Australian, in the Philippines, mining our minerals?

**“President Duterte, ever the man with a vision for what is best for the Filipino people, is right.”**

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It must be remembered that Marcopper—that mining company which caused an environmental disaster in Marinduque, is a Canadian mining company. MRL Gold Inc., that company which violated environmental laws in Agusan del Sur, causing suffering to indigenous peoples, for which the company was sanctioned by the Ombudsman of the International Finance Corporation, is an Australian company.

Canada and Australia, as President Duterte said, have the best practices and laws on mining. This means, as columnist Jarius Bondoc once commented these Canadian and Australian companies come to the Philippines to mine because their own countries have strict laws that regulate mining and guarantee jailing for violators. In the Philippines, on the other hand, most politicians are easy to manipulate and there are oligarchs who allow themselves to be used by foreign companies—going around Constitutional restrictions on full foreign ownership—in the name of money, at the expense of the environment and the people.

As often stressed by Environment Secretary Gina Lopez, the poorest areas in the country are mining sites. When an area is mined, especially the open-pit type of extracting minerals, the soil, the water and the air get poisoned. Mining sites become barren wastelands that cannot sustain agriculture or fisheries. The water sources such as rivers and lakes become unfit for human consumption. Yet, Secretary Lopez added, the mining industry contributes less than one percent to the Philippine economy. Explaining further, she said that out of P35 billion net in mining proceeds, P29 billion goes to the mining company, and only P6 billion go to the coffers of the government. A meager amount—hardly anything—she said, trickles down to the community that is left with contaminated soil, air, and water.

The Environment secretary's strict stance on mining explains why, when her appointment as DENR secretary was announced, the religious and hordes of lay people in Batangas exclaimed, “*May Diyos talaga!*” (There truly is God!) At the time the appointment of Gina Lopez was announced, the citizens of Lobo, Batangas and the clergy were in the thick of a struggle against mining in the municipality. You see, Lobo, which lies along the coast of the Verde Island Passage, has been the site of gold mining exploration by an Australian company which sought to be given a permit to do open-pit mining in several mountainous barangays of Lobo, most of which, were watersheds. Before Secretary Lopez's appointment, and right after the May elections, the mining company was on a roll as it seemed to have mysteriously gained the backing of the local government of Lobo despite widespread opposition by the community.

Just when the people of Lobo felt lost and defeated, the President—who has warned mining companies to shape up and follow strict environmental regulations—appointed Gina Lopez to head the environment department. And, indeed, barely a month since her appointment, Secretary Lopez has already closed down or suspended seven mining companies found violating environmental laws. As communities suffering from the impact of mining become more emboldened to complain, and as the Environment Department does its audit of mining operations in the country, the nation can look forward to more mining operations that cause destruction, to be sanctioned, even closed.

President Duterte, ever the man with a vision for what is best for the Filipino people, is right. We do not need mining for the little income it contributes to the Philippine economy and the size of destruction it causes.

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

## Mining officials face arrest

Top executives of mining firms face arrest if they defy the closure order issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, President Duterte said yesterday.

The President advised mining firms to follow the closure order by DENR Secretary Gina Lopez to avoid such adverse consequence.

"If she orders the closure, you close or else I'll have you arrested," the President said in a televised public address in Davao City.

"I will not hesitate to arrest you," added Duterte, who has criticized the mining industry for the critical damage caused on the environment.

Upon the orders of the President, Lopez has launched a crackdown on irresponsible mining companies in the country, ordering an audit of their operations. At least six mining companies have been suspended since the audit began last month.

The President earlier said the country could survive without the mining sector which he claimed is already a "sunset industry." Duterte said he was ready to forgo ₱40 billion in annual revenues from mining industry for the sake of the protection of the environment.

As the country cracks down on violating environmental laws, the government intends to limit the issuance of new mining permits to save the country's lands from further destruction, Duterte said. **(Genalyn D. Kabiling)**

## Closure of Irisan dumpsite cited

By Dexter A. See

BAGUIO CITY—The former Special 6th Division of the Court of Appeals commended the Baguio City government for the continuous rehabilitation of the closed 5.2-hectare Irisan open dumpsite which was the subject of a consent decree after being subjected to a writ of kalikasan by concerned environmentalists in Baguio and Benguet.

In a two-page resolution dated June 27, signed by Associate Justices Ricardo Rosario, Rosemarie Carandang and Japar Dimaampao, the CA cited the local government for the sustained activities leading to the permanent closure of the dumpsite and the adoption of appropriate solutions to address the city's garbage disposal problems.

On March 21, the CA directed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources through the Office of the Solicitor-General and the Baguio City government and its officials to submit their respective periodic reports on the implementation of the covenant's content in the consent decree issued in the environmental case.

In its monitoring report on the closed Irisan dumpsite, the DENR informed the CA the facility remained closed for dumping and was secured with a perimeter fence; upon entering the facility, mounds of compost were noted inside the facility; as previously observed, the dumpsite has not been used for dumping and the area has slowly been covered with natural vegetation; the two environment recycling (ER) machines continue to process the city's biodegradable waste with each machine capable of processing 24 tons of biodegradable waste into compost fertilizer and that the retaining walls, its buttresses, perimeter canals, storm or surface run-off canals, fence and other engineering structures are still intact and functioning.

Under its semestral updates on the closure and rehabilitation plan of the dump facility, the city government informed the CA that the two ER machines continue to accommodate and daily process delivered biodegradable waste collected from the city public market as well as commercial and residential barangays; a developmental plan is in place for the conversion of the former dumpsite into an ecotourism center and the 10-year ecological solid waste management plan of the city has already been approved by the National Solid Waste Management Commission.



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## Toyota valued Eco partner of Santa Rosa city

TOYOTA Motor Philippines Corporation (TMP) was recently recognized by the City of Santa Rosa for being a strong partner of the city's environmental programs. Toyota has been a long-time supporter of the City of Santa Rosa's "Sikad-Lakad-Takbo para sa Kalikasan" (SILAKBO) during Earth Day celebrations, as well as the annual Earth Hour activity scheduled by the city.

The recognitions were given during the City's Environment Awards Day. In photo are (from left) Santa Rosa City mayor Danilo Fernandez, TMP first vice president for manufacturing Alden Sapit, Laguna governor Ramil Hernandez, Toyota Motor Philippines Foundation assistant vice president Ronald Gaspar, and Laguna 1st District representative Arlene Arcillas.



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Shell to review all options on Greenpeace case

LIPINAS Shell Petroleum Corp. said its other firm based in the Netherlands added that it will review all possible options after receiving an order from the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) to respond to the complaint filed by Greenpeace Southeast Asia against companies allegedly reducing most of the carbon emissions in the world.

“Shell has received an order from the CHR requesting a response to the petition filed by Greenpeace Southeast Asia. We are taking this matter seriously and reviewing our options. Shell’s public position on climate change and the challenge CO2 (carbon dioxide) poses is well known and can be documented for over a decade through publications,” the company said in a statement.

“Recognizing the climate challenge and the role energy has in enabling a decent quality of life, we continue to pursue and

advance constructive dialogue on this topic as the challenge is one for all of society,” it added.

Last July 27, CHR sent copies of the complaint filed by the petitioners as well as an official order to the headquarters of 47 fossil fuel and cement producers. The order stated the companies have 45 days to submit their response to CHR.

Aside from Shell, other firms directed by CHR to respond to allegations of human rights abuses resulting from climate change include Chevron, ExxonMobil, BP, Total, BHP Billiton, Glencore, Suncor and ConocoPhillips.

In 2015, CHR launched a probe to find out if companies are violating or threatening to violate the human rights of Filipinos by significantly contributing to global climate change and failing to reduce emissions.

Alongside the probe, the petitioners

also asked CHR to require the companies to submit plans on the steps they will take to eliminate, remedy and prevent the devastating effects of climate change in the Philippines.

“Ultimately, those who have profited most from pumping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere must bear the burden of preventing the havoc already being wreaked by climate change... The courageous Filipino people are the first to put the world’s largest carbon producers on notice that they must account for their emissions,” said Jennifer Morgan, Greenpeace International executive director.

Greenpeace also noted it is the first time a national human rights body has taken steps to address the impacts of climate change on human rights. The group expects hearings on its complaint to start this October, after the 47 companies submit their response.



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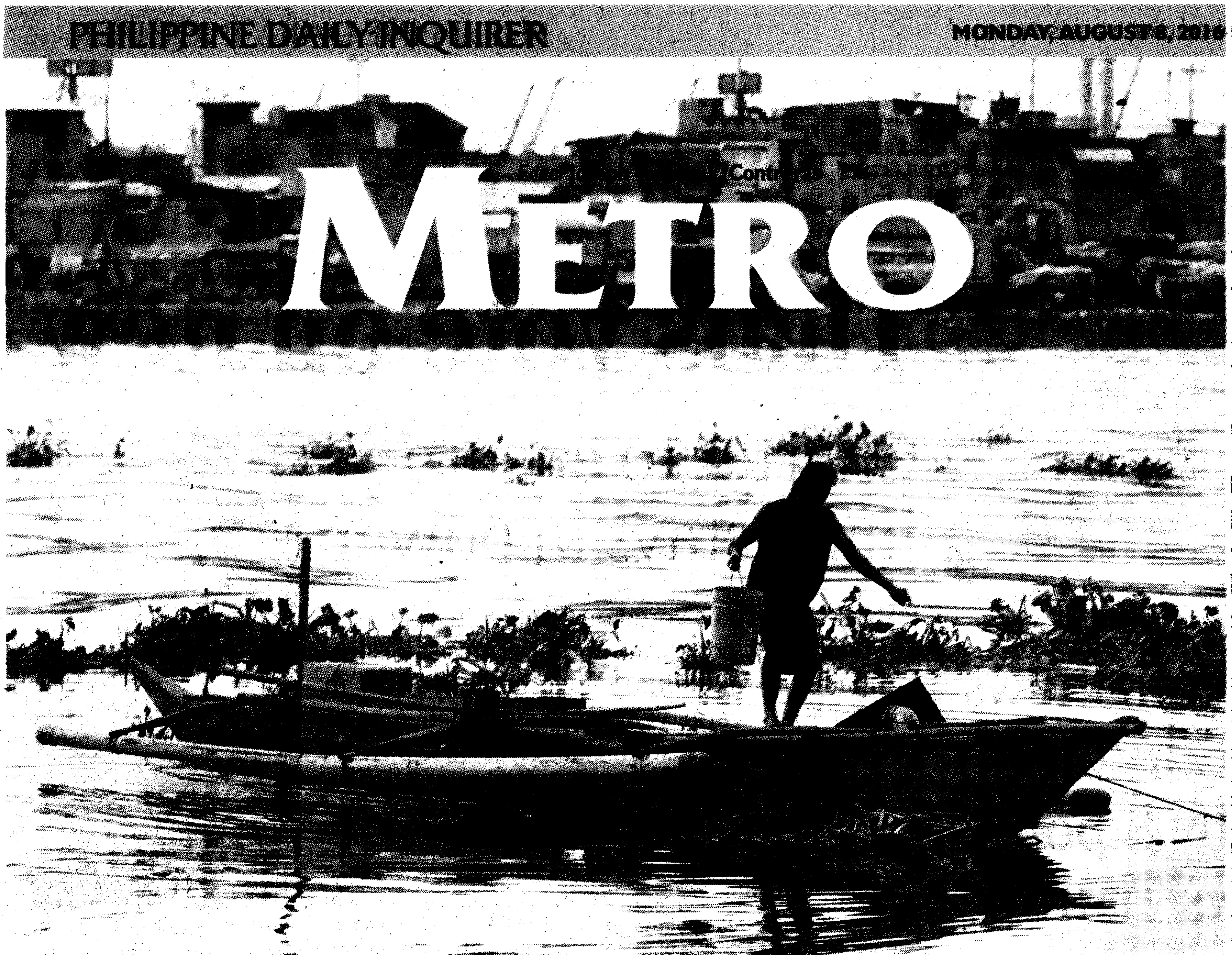
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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**







**FISHING PREPARATIONS**

A man gets his fishing gear ready as he prepares to head out further into Manila Bay where, despite big patches of water hyacinth and garbage, several species of fish manage to thrive.

MARIANNE BERMUDEZ



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### DENR, LGUs, CSO agree to manage protected areas in Negros Island

**V**ARIOUS stakeholders vowed to strengthen the protection and promote the sustainable management of six protected areas within the Negros Island Region (NIR).

To do this, officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), local government units (LGUs) and civil-society organizations, vowed to work together to come up with and implement management plans for each of the six protected areas within the region.

Backed by legislative measure or Presidential Proclamation, the protected areas are the Apo Island Protected Landscape and Seascape; Balinsasayao Twin Lakes Natural Park; Mount Kanlaon Natural Park; Northern Negros Natural Park; Sagay Marine Reserve; and Tañon Strait Protected Seascape.

Last month the DENR organized the First Negros Island Region Protected Area Management Summit (NIRPAMS) in Bacolod City in partnership with the LGUs and CSOs led by ocean conservation advocacy group Oceana Philippines.

The summit, held from July 28 to 30, was attended by senior officials of the DENR, led by Undersecretary Demetrio Ignacio and newly designated undersecretary for field operations Arturo Valdez.

The three-day summit served as venue to inform stakeholders of the present state of the six protected areas, share management success stories, identify key issues and concerns, and highlight the various contributions and interventions of the DENR, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) local government units, civil-society organizations and other partner-agencies in biodiversity conservation.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR, LGUs, CSO agree to manage  
protected areas in Negros Island



**EL NIDO, PALAWAN** Tourists kayak through many scenic spots in El Nido, Palawan—a favorite among local and foreign visitors. MAUVICTA

“We are privileged to be part of the summit, as we shared our initiatives to end illegal and destructive fishing in Tañon Strait, in partnership with LGUs, other CSOs and fishers’ groups,” said Gloria Estenzo Ramos, vice president of Oceana Philippines.

During the event, Oceana Philippines highlighted the advocacy of individuals who had shown courage in protecting the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape to push for adoption of vessel monitoring mechanism to deter illegal fishing and other illegal and destructive human activities in Protected Areas.

The group saw the event as an opportunity of strengthening partnership with DENR, the Department of Agriculture-BFAR and other stake-

holders to ensure the sustainable management and effective conservation and protection of terrestrial and marine protected areas.

Daniel Ocampo, campaigns director of Oceana Philippines, lauded NIR’s environmental advocates under the leadership of DENR Regional Director Al Orolfo for bringing together key stakeholders, including park managers of the six protected areas, to tackle the various issues confronting protected area management with the end goal of improving management of Negros Island Region’s natural wealth.

Like other protected areas in the country, NIR’s six protected areas remain highly vulnerable to human pressure. Illegal activities, such as

logging, wildlife trafficking in forests and use of dynamite and cyanide and other destructive fishing methods, are among the problems identified during the summit.

“We are also pleased the participants are supportive of efforts to curtail illegal fishing in Tañon Strait and other marine protected areas through stricter enforcement and the adoption of vessel monitoring mechanism to track vessels transiting and docking in these areas,” Ocampo said.

Ocampo said the effort to improve the management of protected areas in the region is one of the promising outcomes of the meeting as participants agreed to finalize and adopt management plans for the six key biodiversity areas in Negros. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*





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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## El Nido Resorts counts on biodiversity to attract travelers

Since its establishment in the '80s, the marketing and operations plans of El Nido Resorts in Palawan have always revolved around conserving its natural attractions, including 855 species of marine fish, 400 species of coral, and five species of marine turtles in Bacuit Bay.

With the rise of ecotourism and travelers preferring places that have remained generally untouched by development, El Nido Resorts today is experiencing heightened interest from high-end global tourists.

Bacuit Bay hosts three of the four resorts, namely: Miniloc, Lagen and Pangulasian. The fourth resort, Apulit, has also been lauded for its biodiversity. It is in neighboring Taytay Bay.

"El Nido Resorts has been aware from the get-go that its long-term viability is tied up with the conservation of its surroundings," according to marketing director Joey Bernardino. It was named in 2015 by the Pacific Asia Travel Association, the leading travel organization in the region, as a business that "demonstrates excellence in social, environmental and economic sustainability in tourism."

El Nido Resorts bested resorts in Thailand, Malaysia and the rest of the region in the Best Branded Accommodation category of The Tourism Inspire Awards organized by PATA. Inspire is an acronym for Industry's Sustainability Practitioners Inspiring Responsibility and Excellency Awards.

Its main thrust has been to make visitors appreciate the unique



Tours of the Big and Small Lagoon in Bacuit Bay are part of the room rates at Miniloc and Lagen Island resorts, which occasionally post special deals local Filipino residents are in the best position to enjoy. setting of the resorts mainly by making all its front-liners undergo extensive nature interpretation courses.

"Most of our front-liners, who are native Palawenos, are trained to make our guests fall in love with this piece of paradise," he says. They are mostly successful, indicate El Nido Resorts TripAdvisor reviews, which even mentioned the names of front-liners.

The Facebook posts of El Nido Resorts visitors and other guests to the area, which consists of a good mix of global and lo-

cal guests, have also been creating significant global awareness for the destination among their travel circles, according to Marc Cerqueda, director for operations. Visitor arrivals to El Nido Resorts have been growing exponentially in the past year and are expected to grow further. Bernardino recalls that Bacuit Bay first caught the attention of international travelers in the '80s when Japanese scuba enthusiasts, who were mesmerized by its unique topography, decided to set up a dive camp in the area. Since then, the firm, which today is wholly Filipino-owned, has largely influenced the growth of tourism in El Nido and neighboring Taytay municipality.

Also unique to Miniloc and Lagen are the inclusion into the room rate of popular tours like visits to the iconic Big and Small Lagoons, Snake Island and Sunset Cruise. Pangulasian guests, as a rule, prefer customized packages. In fact, El Nido Resorts properties are distinguished from all other hotels in the area by their guest activity coordinators who plan day activities for the guests, including tours, hiking, kayaking, snorkeling, visits to beach clubs exclusive to El Nido Resorts guests at no extra cost. The arrangements cover boat rides, tour guides and equipment. Cerqueda observes that the deal is so good that many guests — even non-swimmers — are persuaded by reassuring guides to snorkel for the first time and see for themselves the marine life that has been lauded by travelers from all over the world.



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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



● **Solving forest degradation**

TACLOBAN CITY, Leyte – The introduction of income-generating livelihood activities in rural areas helped address and curb forest degradation in Leyte, a report from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources regional office 8 (DENR-8), said bared. DENR - 8 regional director Leonardo Sibbaluca bared that forest degradation slowed down when alternative sources of income and livelihood were introduced and made available to people in the area. DENR 8 records showed that based on the findings of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) satellite imagery survey, about 15 percent or 41,060 hectares of forest cover in Leyte Island has been damaged in recent years. Among areas mostly affected are the forest covers along the Mahagnao Volcano and National Park in the towns of Burauen and La Paz within Leyte's geothermal reservation area with the slash-and-burn farming practices or "kaingin" as the main culprit. Sibbaluca said that the livelihood programs and projects provide the hinterlands farmers and their families with alternative income generating activities and abandoning activities and practices detrimental to forestlands. Leyte Governor Leopoldo Dominico Petilla informed local reporters that his office is also implementing livelihood projects in the hinterland areas to provide alternative income generating activities to help curb forest degradation in the province. Petilla said that his office is implementing training programs on modern agriculture and organic farming of high value crops for the farmers to have better income. (Restituto A. Cayubit)



## Bureau tasked to ensure fish supply ample

AGRICULTURE Secretary Emmanuel Piñol on Sunday ordered the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to ensure the steady supply of fish in Metro Manila.

He gave the order following President Rodrigo Duterte's order to dismantle the fish pens on Laguna Lake that are inundating the river but are Metro Manila's main sources of fish.

"While the order to dismantle the fish pens was directed at the DENR [Department of Environment and Natural Resources] secretary, the DA [Department of Agriculture] and its line agency—the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources—will be actively involved in the effort because of the order's impact on the fish supply of Metro Manila," Piñol said in a statement.

The 911-square-kilometer Laguna Lake

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## Bureau...

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is the largest in the Philippines and one of the largest in Southeast Asia.

But the lake has suffered increasing levels of pollution as a result of high population growth and environmental degradation.

Piñol said the fish pens in Laguna Lake or Laguna de Bay were the sources of 36 percent of the fish requirements of Metro Manila, so that their dismantling would have an adverse effect on the supply and prices of fish in the area.

"I have never really liked the smell and taste of fish from Laguna de Bay," Piñol said.

"Given the shortage of fish supply, however, Metro Manilans have long accepted the Laguna de Bay fish as part of their table fare."

Duterte has said he wants the lake to be "transformed into a vibrant economic zone showcasing eco-tourism by addressing the negative impact of the watershed destruction, land conversion and pollution."

He also wants huge portions of the lake developed for small fishermen. **PNA**



# MANILA MIRROR

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AMIN NG KATOTOHANAN •

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

## Sa pagbuwag sa mga fishpen sa Laguna de Bay SUPPLY NG ISDA TIYAKING 'DI KUKULANGIN

INATASAN ni Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol ang Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) na tiyakin na may sapat na supply ng isda sa mga pamilihan sakaling simulan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang pagbuwag sa mga malalaking palaisdaan na nasa Laguna de Bay.

Sinabi ng kalihim na dapat makagawa ng back-up plan ang BFAR upang masiguro na may sapat na supply ng isda sa mga palengke lalo na sa Metro

Manila.

Ang 36 porsiyento ng supply ng isda sa Metro Manila ay mula mga palaisdaan sa Lawa ng Laguna at karamihan sa mga ito ay bangus at tilapia.

May 911-square kilometer ang lawak ng Laguna de Bay at ito ang pinakamalaking lawa sa Pilipinas at pinakamalaki sa rehiyon ng Southeast Asia.

Aminado ang pamahalaan na dahil sa maraming gamit at benepisyo, naging catch basin ng Metro Manila ang lawa bukod pa sa paglaki ng populasyon at industriyalisasyon na nag-

resulta ng polusyon.

Dahil sa polusyon sa lawa ay naapektuhan ang mga isda at ang iba ay nag-aamoy gilik.

Nais ni Presidente Duterte na maibalik at mapaganda ang Laguna de Bay para maging economic zone at eco tourism ang lugar ganon din ay upang mabigyan ng prayoridad ang maliliit na mangingisda sa lawa.

Sa tala ng Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), may 357 rehistrado at hindi rehistradong palaisdaan ang may operasyon sa Laguna de Bay.

Plano ng DENR na ipatupad ang malawakang reforestation program sa paligid ng lawa at tiyakin din na hindi magiging tapunan ng mga dumi mula sa mga pabrika, at maging mula sa komunidad.

Magdidisenyo ng programa ang DA-BFAR sa mga may-ari ng palaisdaan para mabigyan sila ng opsyon upang hindi mapuno ang lawa habang binigyan ng prayoridad ang mga maliliit na mangingisda na mapakinabangan ang rehabilitasyon na lawa.

**MONCHET LARANO**



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Nature lovers' paradise, wealth of wonders in Danjungan Island, Negros Occidental

Can you survive a vacation without electricity?

A marine and wildlife sanctuary within a 43-hectare island off the Negros mainland in the Sulu Sea is encouraging visitors to get as close to nature as they possibly can, minus the conveniences of modern-day living.

Danjungan Island, a four to five – hour boat ride away from Bacolod City or Dumaguete City, is described by its executive director Dave Albao as a private conservation site and marine protected area.

In other words, definitely “not a resort”.

### Marine habitat preservation

It is managed by the Philippine Reef Rainforest Conservation Foundation Inc. (PRRCF), a non-government organization led by Gerry Ledesma who bought the island in 1994 for preservation.

Ledesma saw how the reefs were slowly experiencing degradation and wanted to prevent further damage.

The island has five lagoons and is covered with limestone forests which is home to over 74 bird species, 10 bat species, 579 fish species and many other wildlife species such as corals, turtles, snakes and the rare coconut crabs.

### Rare, feathered attraction

Among the island's star attractions is its lone Beach Stone-Curlew or Beach

Thick-knee, a grey-brown shorebird with a massive yellow-based bill and thick knees — thus the name.

It can be found across Australia and a few other Asian countries including the Philippines.

The Beach Stone-Curlew is a rare bird, so rare that been tagged as ‘near threatened’. Albao said that Asian tourists would even fly to the Philippines on a weekend just to see the bird, take photos and fly back home.

### Serenity, defined

Visitors that first set foot on the island will immediately feel peaceful as it only welcomes more or less 50 guests excluding its 10-member staff. It's the perfect hideaway from the hustle and bustle of city life.

Modern conveniences such as mobile phone service, television and running water will not be part of the Danjungan Island experience, Albao said stressing that people rely solely on natural entertainment and human interaction.

If by chance a part of the island does have cell service, visitors will have trouble charging their gadgets as the island uses solar power to run lights while water is usually brought from the mainland, he explained.

### Camps and basic provisions

The island offers simple accommodations in either the Moray Lagoon

Camp or Typhoon Beach Camp. Air-conditioning units are non-existent and visitors will also be given just a bucket of water for bathing.

Albao said that the island is heavily dependent on tourism as its source of income, which is used to further preserve its biodiversity. However, he said that the priority is still conservation and not the entertainment of visitors.

### 'It's more fun in Danjungan'

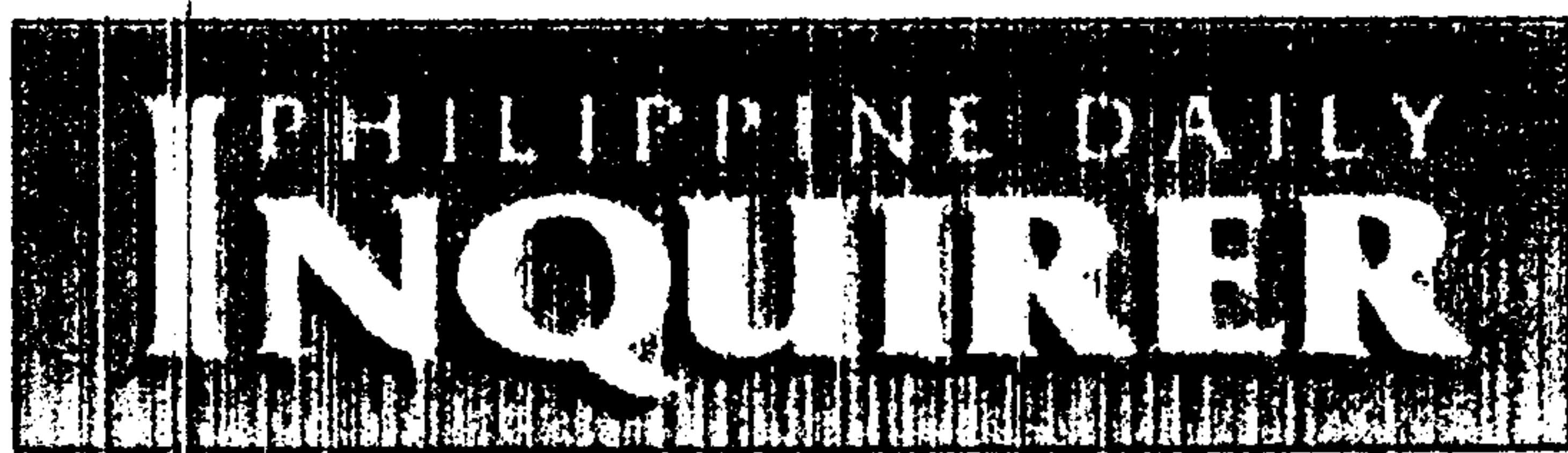
Of course, visitors will have enough activities to keep them preoccupied such as boat-trips, island tours, snorkeling, kayaking to name a few. It's a favorite among yogis and quiet-loving individuals.

A number of marine and wildlife summer camps are also held to educate elementary and high school students of Southern Negros communities through its Danjungan Island Environmental Education Program (DEEP).

With seven different types of ecosystems — beach forest, mangroves, lagoons, bat caves, coral reefs, seagrass beds and an open sea affords students who aspire to be future ecologists and biologists the best, most ideal classroom.

Those who have been to the island before would say that it receives far less attention than it ought to receive, but they also agree that it only adds to the mystique that surrounds this hidden gem in the Sulu Sea. (PNA)





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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

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## Most optimistic

**F**ILIPINOS HAVE figured prominently in many local and foreign surveys on their level of happiness, confidence and optimism. So it was no surprise that Filipino consumers emerged as the most optimistic in the world in the second quarter of 2016. For the first time in more than a decade, the Philippines topped the latest Nielsen global survey on consumer confidence and spending intentions, beating perennial topnotcher India.

### EDITORIAL

The surge in the confidence level of Filipino consumers also represented the biggest jump on a quarter-on-quarter basis among the 63 countries surveyed. Of the three confidence indicators measured in the survey, job optimism increased the most, rising 16 percentage points to 88 percent in the second quarter. Responses on immediate spending intentions rose 10 percentage points, while that on personal finances rose five percentage points.

Nielsen Philippines managing director Stuart Jamieson observed that confidence in the Philippines was at an all-time high, and that the 6.9-percent GDP growth rate in the first quarter, one of the fastest in Asia, had a lot to do with it. The local economy relies heavily on consumption, and with sales of consumer goods growing at a 7.1-percent rate in the year ending May 2016, people were indeed happily spending their money.

An earlier Social Weather Stations survey showed that Filipinos' personal optimism on the quality of life surged to a record high during the last quarter of 2015. A high 45 percent of Filipino adults expected their quality of life to improve in 2016—an election year—while only 5 percent said otherwise. This has been traced to the policies of the Aquino administration that led to improvements in education, healthcare and other social services, particularly the expansion of the CCT (conditional cash transfer) program, and expectations that those policies would continue in the next administration.

The promise of change made during the recent presidential election, which took place during the Nielsen survey period, likely helped buoy positive consumer sentiment. An end to the menace of illegal drugs and criminality within six months, lower income tax rates for the working class, agricultural development to improve the farmers' lot, projects and programs to finally ease the traffic gridlock in Metro Manila, cutting poverty by nearly half by the end of six years through job generation... Who wouldn't want change for the better?

Also playing a big part in the survey results is the Filipino consumers' general attitude in life—resilience in the face of adversity, a good sense of humor that at times seems silly, and the constant feeling that things will be better tomorrow. Experts only cite the fact that Filipinos always find a reason to celebrate—a pay increase, a class reunion, a friend's birthday, a wedding or baptism, the arrival of a *balikbayan* relative, and so on.

It is the Filipinos' resilience that has made them survive the most difficult of times. This was tested in the wake of Super typhoon "Yolanda," which devastated towns and farms and killed thousands in the Visayas, or similar disasters before it, like the Mount Pinatubo eruption or the landslides that buried towns in Ormoc, Leyte. All these failed to break the Filipino spirit. Religion also has a part in Filipinos' optimistic nature. There is this belief in fate—that everything that happens in life is according to divine will, and that something better has been planned for everyone.

Back to the Nielsen survey: The only drawback in it was that it covered only those with internet access, which make up just a little more than a quarter of the population. Despite the Philippines being dubbed the "texting capital of the world," only 26.9 percent of Filipino households had access to the internet, according to the 2015 edition of The State of Broadband report jointly undertaken by the International Telecommunications Union and Unesco, putting the Philippines at No. 59 among 133 countries covered. The same report showed that only 39.7 percent of individuals had access to the internet, putting the Philippines at No. 106 among 191 countries.

Still, there is no denying that Filipinos are generally a happy lot, no matter what the circumstances. And as every new regime promises a better life, this will probably be the case in the years to come.



## Microfinancing climate resilience

LONDON—Vulnerable communities face the brunt of climate change—from rising sea levels and extreme weather events to prolonged severe droughts and flooding. According to the World Bank, without effective mitigation measures, climate change could push more than 100 million people into poverty by 2030.

To help the most vulnerable communities become more resilient to the effects of climate change, financial institutions should support small- and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). In emerging economies, SMEs account for as much as 45 percent of employment and up to 33 percent of GDP—and these numbers are significantly higher when informal SMEs are included. When an SME builds up its own climate resilience, it can have cascading effects in the community around it.

Unfortunately, SME owners generally have trouble securing bank loans, and instead must turn to informal lending and alternative funding sources to support their businesses. According to the World Bank, 50 percent of formal SMEs lack access to formal credit, and the total credit gap for both formal and informal SMEs is as high as \$2.6 trillion worldwide. While the gap varies considerably among regions, it is particularly wide in Africa and Asia.

Microfinance can close this gap by providing the small loans that SMEs need to get off the ground and thrive. According to the OECD, microfinance institutions, including national foreign-aid agencies, banks, credit unions, and nonprofit organizations, already provide basic financial services to more than 100 million of the world's enterprising poor, 90 percent of them women.

The role of microfinance in boosting SMEs' climate-change resilience needs to be more fully defined. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, microfinance has enabled SMEs to invest in drought-resistant crops, build better irrigation

### WORLD VIEW

*Mark Malloch Brown*



systems, and purchase climate insurance to protect incomes when crops fail because of too much—or too little—rainfall.

These projects already have a proven track record. According to a review by the OECD, 43 percent of microfinance activities in Bangladesh in 2010 had strengthened the resilience of communities. These projects include lending programs for weather-resistant housing and drought- and salt-tolerant seeds, and they enhanced climate-change resilience. In Nepal, microfinance is supporting disaster relief and preparedness, crop diversification, and improved access to irrigation. Microfinance can also help SMEs transition to low-carbon business models, by financing their efforts to adopt renewable energy sources and shift to sustainable production and supply chains.

Microfinance is not the only solution, and it certainly has its critics. To allay concerns about money being poorly spent, microfinance institutions should reward SME owners who use loans to finance climate-change resilience and renewable-energy projects. This need not be an act of corporate social responsibility. In fact, according to the Business and Sustainable Development Commission, which I chair, such an approach is in microfinance institutions' own self-interest.

The private sector should understand that the climate crisis is also an opportunity, especially

with regard to SMEs. In fact, some in the private sector already recognize this.

GSMA—a trade group that represents hundreds of telecoms operators, and whose director general, Mats Granryd, is a member of the Business Commission—and its members are facilitating microfinance in rural areas. With mobile phones, farmers can quickly find information ranging from seed prices to weather patterns, and have immediate access to the funds they need to complete transactions. This mobile-enabled information leads to better decision-making, saving the farmers money and boosting their resilience to extreme-weather patterns and droughts. And of course mobile providers benefit as well from operating in an expanded rural market.

There are also opportunities in peer-to-peer lending networks, whereby online services match lenders directly with borrowers. P2P microlending platforms, such as lendwithcare.org, Lendico, and RainFin, have proved popular, and could reenergize the microfinance community and provide wider access to loans for SMEs in developing countries. Financial products like weather derivatives—which ensure the harvests and enterprises of SMEs and some of the world's poorest people—also have potential.

If the world is serious about mitigating the worst effects of climate change, especially its disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities, both the public and private sectors should support efforts to extend microfinancing to SMEs. Those on the front line of protecting lives and livelihoods can't go it alone.

*Project Syndicate*

*Mark Malloch Brown, a former UN deputy secretary general and UK Foreign Office minister of state for Africa, is chair of the Business and Sustainable Development Commission.*



## Federalism, for what?

PRESIDENT DUTERTE has made the project of federalism a core deliverable of his administration. This seems consistent with his penchant for going deep as he examines our society's basic institutions and proposes structural changes by way of revisiting first principles for social organizations. To the extent that we have a President who is not interested in superficial solutions or glamorous facelifts, this clearly has to be celebrated. He's gunning for the big waves, and the payoffs are potentially massive.

Even then, we must tab the fact that federalism, as a concept, does not really have any content beyond ideas such as having clear lines of separation between the state and the federal government, or dual sovereignty, or subsidiarity, or some other fancy legal term. The truth is that federalism is as federalism does, and only the details of any federalism project can reveal its various practical meanings.

The relevant question is therefore not whether we should become a federal republic, but what we want to use federalism for. Federalism is but an instrument, a vehicle for carrying solutions in a new constitution. It is a structural platform that will constitute the base in which the nuts-and-bolts solution to our social problems will be grounded and fastened. You cannot judge the beauty of a house by just looking at its foundation.

The way to unpack the President's federalism project is through a clarification of purpose(s), by asking which problems he is trying to solve.

Here's a basic laundry list: Is this about the inefficiencies and injustices caused by "Imperial Manila"? Does he see our unitary state as a source of the political and bureaucratic bottleneck that has only served as a barrier to provincial growth? Has our Manila-centric politics failed to unlock the vast potential of the other regions, and sapped resources away from them? Is the attention lavished on Manila so undue as to suppress the identities of the various ethnic communities in the country? Is this about the flow of taxes and wealth, such that we need a constitutional repiping of the

### COMMENTARY

*Florin T. Hilbay*

channels of resources to allow a more equitable distribution of income? Is this about who gets to control our natural resources? Or is this about the sale of agricultural lands? How will a federal structure change the way basic services are conceptualized and delivered?

We need to see the fine print so we can compute costs and benefits.

At the same time, while federalism may be able to offer theoretical advantages, that certainly is only half the picture. How the text of the new constitution will interact with Philippine society is the other half. Will the paper change result in a transformation of political culture and governance? The interaction between law and culture is an entirely separate challenge. Convincing the people to ratify a new constitution is easier than making them change their ways. There are simply no models that can predict the impact of a new constitution on individual consciousness and institutional practices.

Our biggest problems, bad governance and corruption, are problems about people, not (necessarily) of political structure or political consciousness, not (necessarily) political institutions. They are subjective, not objective, concerns. People will not wake up to a new constitution that will magically confer upon them the ability to govern themselves well or make them less corrupt.

These questions must be raised not only so that we can have reasonable bases for buying into the project (or rejecting the offer) but also because we need to assess whether such out-of-the-box, extra-constitutional measures can be accommodated by more modest, less expensive, within-the-box solutions. Ultimately, the question may be: Do we need a revolutionary or incremental remaking of the legal construct? Is there a need to burn the house down and build a new one, or will a serial

renovation of the rooms suffice?

For instance, the goal of decentralization may be remedied by a more potent local government code. Redistribution of bureaucratic powers may also be done through a revision of the administrative code. We can also do constitutional amendments for autonomous regions. In other words, once made aware of the problems, we just might realize that the patient need not be opened up and can be cured by minor operations requiring local, not general, anesthesia.

Intertwined with the substance of the proposal to change the Constitution is the proposed procedure for doing so—that is, either by way of constitutional convention or constituent assembly. The bottom line here is control: A constitutional convention will be institutionally independent from both the legislative and executive branches, and less immune to the usual motives and pressures that are viewed as having a gravitational influence on decisions made by our legislators. It is likely that the credibility of the final proposals will depend on *who* gets to propose them, independent of the substance of the proposals.

Regardless of the situation, we should take advantage of the President's open-mindedness and willingness to propose solutions that he believes are commensurate to the gravity of the problems our society is facing. After all, when political scientists talk about a shift toward a federalist structure, what we have is an academic discussion; when it is the President who speaks about it, what we have is a real conversation.

*Former solicitor general Florin T. Hilbay teaches at the UP College of Law, where he offers a course on constitution drafting.*

### THERE'S THE RUB

*Conrado de Quiros is on medical leave.—Ed.*





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## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

### Lifestyle check sa DENR, LGUs sa minahan

Magugulantang sina Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte at Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez kapag isinailalim sa seryosong lifestyle check ang mga dati at kasalukuyang opisyal ng DENR, Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) and Environmental Management Board (EMB).

Ito ang pahayag ni Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert 'Ace' Barbers kaya hiniling nito na magsagawa ng imbestigasyon bilang bahagi kanilang kampanya laban sa ilegal mining activities sa bansa.

"Mr. President, Madame Secretary, I urge you to conduct a no-nonsense lifestyle check on the past and current officials of these 3 agencies, especially those based in the so-called mining provinces. You might just get the shock of your lives," ani Barbers.

Sinabi ng mambabatas na totoong tiba-tiba ang mga mining companies at mga pulitiko sa industriyang ito subalit mayroon din aniyang mga kumikita sa mga nabanggit na ahen-sya kasama na ang mga Local Government Units (LGUs) sa lugar ng pagmimina.

"Clearly, irresponsible mining practices could not have thrived without the blind consent of these people and the Local Government executives who are tasked to implement the laws," ayon pa sa mambabatas.

Kasabay nito, kailangan aniyang tingnan ang situwasyon ng mga minero sa lahat ng mga minahan dahil habang lumalangoy sa bilyones ang mga may-ari at mga corrupt officials, at mga pulitiko ay kakarampot na sahod lang ang natatangap ng mga minero. (Bernard Taguinod)