

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DATE : 14 AUG 2016

DAY : **Sunday**

# DENR

## IN THE NEWS



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# DENR putting up interactive website for mining firms' audit

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is set to come out with a website where all audit findings concerning mining companies will be made public, its top official said.

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

"That website will be interactive. Everything will be made transparent. We'll be doing, either big or small companies, DENR Secretary Gina Lopez said.

Apart from mining permits issued to companies, all the environmental compliance certificates will also be subjected to audit and review. We will not be selective," she added.

Lopez also plans to put up her own blog to document and discuss the audit being done by the department, as well as other activities of the DENR.

She reiterated the DENR would not hesitate to shut down all mining operations that will be found to have violated environmental and health and safety laws and regulations.

"If you break the law, you face the consequences of breaking the law. Whatever the law says that's what we should follow. If you break the law, there are penalties," Lopez said.

So far, the DENR has suspended operations of 10 mining companies. The three which were recently suspended include the Bulacan-based Ore Asia Mining Development Corp., and Mt. Sinai Exploration Mining and Development Corp. and EMIR Mineral Resources Corp. both in Homonhon, Eastern Samar.

Ore Asia reportedly failed to secure an ISO 14001 certification.

On the other hand, Mt. Sinai, which mines chromite, caused siltation of the coastal waters and failed to practice engineered mining methods while the nickel-producing EMIR Minerals has also reportedly caused siltation of coastal waters.

The DENR intends to finish the audit of all 42 metallic mines within the month.



## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### EX-EXECS SEEK DENR PROBE OF DAMAGES BY RAPU-RAPU MINE

By MANLY M. UGALDE

Correspondent

**L**EGAZPI CITY—A former mining executive of the South Korean-owned Rapu-Rapu Mining consortium in Albay has asked President Duterte to order a probe and study the abandoned town of Rapu-Rapu, after it was mined out of minerals that generated a whopping income of P65 billion in five years and left with a measly P158 million in rehabilitation fund.

Among the minerals mined on the tiny island were gold, copper, zinc and bronze in a 186-hectare land, where two disastrous cyanide spills dumped mine tailings to coastal villages, resulting to heavy fish kills in Rapu-Rapu and neighboring coastal communities of Sorsogon province.

Cecille A. Calleja, communication executive of South Korean-owned Rapu-Rapu Mines, was one of four complainants in the environmental case filed against four top officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources

SEE "RAPU-RAPU," A2

## Rapu-Rapu... CONTINUED FROM A1

(DENR), the four companies under the Rapu-Rapu Mines consortium and 10 of their executives.

The residents of Rapu-Rapu town are dependent on fishing and are still waiting for the "huge" amount the South Korean mines executives promised under the Final Mines Rehabilitation Decommissioning Plan.

In a long-distance interview, Calleja—on vacation in the US—asked President Duterte to order an investigation on how the South Korean firm's last shipment of ore in 2013, worth P440 million, was able to slip away despite a hold order by the DENR. The last shipment was demanded held by Rapu-Rapu as a sort of guarantee the rehabilitation plan would be complied with. Calleja said that, from the very beginning, the South Korean firm committed numerous violations with its continuous refusal to consult stakeholders regarding the health risks they faced following the mine's closure in 2013.

In a complaint filed on January

16, 2014, at the Legazpi Regional Trial Court "for environmental protection order," the former mine executive said the accused had "conspired to abandon the ecologically damaged Rapu-Rapu town." Charged were then-Environment Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje, Mines and Geosciences Bureau Director Leo L. Jasareno, DENR Region 5 executive Director Gilbert C. Gonzales and MGB Regional Director Theodore Kommel E. Pestaño. Gonzales has been promoted as Environment Management Bureau director in June, with Paje's niece Crisanta Paje Rodriguez succeeding as Bicol DENR regional director.

The charged foreign mining firms and executives were Rapu-Rapu Minerals Inc., Rapu-Rapu Processing Inc., Rapu-Rapu Holdings Inc., Korea Malaysia Philippines Resources Inc., Young Tae Park, Jason Lim, Soon Bang Ko, Melvin Alonso, Rogelio E. Corpuz, Marc Campos, Ben Dayao, Young Bong Ha, Mohd Ajib Anvar and Jung Sik Kho.

Aside from Calleja, complainants included former Rapu-Rapu councilors Giovani Guapo and Marino Baranda, and Integrated Bar of the Philippines Albay Chapter President Emerson Aquende. Guapo and Baranda are serving as incumbent Rapu-Rapu councilors.

Court records obtained showed the first filed environmental case with damages was dismissed by RTC Branch 1 Presiding Judge Solon B. Sison on April 13, 2015, for lack of merit. The court record showed a countercomplaint for damages is ongoing for trial.

Both Calleja and Baranda lamented the dismissal of the case with a counterdamage claim, saying they filed an appeal before the Court of Appeals.

The Rapu-Rapu mining operation started in 2005 by Australian-owned Lafayette Mining Philippines, which sold the operations to the South Korean group in 2007, after it suffered bankruptcy following the suspension of its operations by the Pollution Adjudication Board.



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# Solon upbeat on mining reform bill approval

By ELLSON A. QUIMORIO

**R**epresentative Teddy Baguilat Jr. of Ifugao province expressed confidence that his pet measure on mining reform would have smooth sailing in the 17th Congress.

This, after Baguilat noted that his proposed statute was practically the same as the "People's Mining Bill" filed by Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Carlos Zarate during the 16th Congress.

It just so happens that Zarate is the new chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources, the panel that would handle mining bills.

"Tinutulak namin itong [Philippine] Mineral Resources Act (We're pushing or the Philippine Mineral Resources Act)," said Baguilat, a Liberal Party (LP) stalwart and member of the so-called "Legitimate 8" Minority in the House of Representatives (HOR).

Baguilat was specifically referring to House Bill (HB) No.113, the full title of which reads "An Act to regulate the rational exploration, development and utilization of mineral resources, and to

ensure the equitable sharing of benefits for the state, indigenous peoples and other communities".

"We filed it on the very first day of the 17th Congress. I plan on talking to Rep. Zarate because the People's Mining Bill which he filed during the previous Congress is very similar to it," the Ifugao lawmaker said.

The proposed People's Mining Act has itself been refiled as HB No.171.

Baguilat jointly filed HB No.113 with Agusan del Norte 1st district Rep. Lawrence Fortun.

The LP solon said he'll talk to Natural Resources panel chair Zarate for the purpose of helping prioritize the measure.

"So kung maari sana mapabilis ito. No less than President [Rodrigo] Duterte and [Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Secretary Gina] Lopez have said there is a need to review the Mining Act," said Baguilat, the de facto leader of the Legitimate 8.

Duterte has time and again stressed his abhorrence for irresponsible mining, saying it destroys the environment.

Current mining regulations are

based on Republic Act (RA) No. 7942.

In the explanatory note of HB No.113, Baguilat and Fortun cited the various major mining disasters in the last four years as well as cases of violence against known leaders of anti-mining movements in affected communities.

"Indeed the industry and its govern-

ing law failed to ensure the constitutionally guaranteed rights of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology, to social justice in all phases of national development, to a self-reliant and independent economy effectively controlled by Filipinos, and other important rights," it read.

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# PH lauded for climate change initiatives

By ELLALYN B. DE VERA

The Philippines has earned international praise for leading the fight for climate justice during the last 19 months of serving as head of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, a group of nations highly susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change.

Dr. Shiferaw Teklemariam Menbacho, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Climate Change of Ethiopia and the incoming chair of the CVF, said the Philippines showed an exemplary performance in taking the cudgels for climate-vulnerable nations during the

21st Conference of Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Le Bourget, France in December last year.

"The Philippines has set the bar very, very high. This forum has achieved a huge momentum and the Paris Agreement session, the COP21 has been exemplary to demonstrate what the Philippines and the CVF have achieved," Menbacho said in his opening remarks during the CVF Seminar Retreat on Climate Diplomacy, Leadership, and Negotiations held in Tagaytay City.

"The climate challenge, however, is far from being resolved. So, in taking for-

ward the work of this important group, we will strive to continue to strengthen our impact. The lives and livelihoods of our people are at stake and we cannot gamble that away," he added.

The Philippines has been the CVF chair since January 2015 and is scheduled to turn over the position to Ethiopia at the end of the high-level Climate Policy Forum to be held at the Philippine Senate in Pasay City on Monday.

CVF is a global intergovernmental body of collaboration exclusive to developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change.



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## Climate Change group prepares research institute

By VANNE ELAINE P. TERRAZOLA

A research institute will be built by the Climate Change Commission (CCC) in Quezon City.

CCC Secretary Emmanuel De Guzman made the announcement during the first day of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) in Tagaytay City, Thursday, where environment officials and leaders from countries susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change gathered for a collaboration of information and practices to address the problem.

De Guzman said a CVF Center of Excellence for Climate Information and Services will be established as part of the proposed Philippine Climate Change Institute to be built in Quezon

City.

"We are establishing the CVF Center of Excellence that will be a part of the Philippine Climate Change Institute along with the Center for Climate Policy Research and the National Panel of Technical Experts," he said.

The institute also aims to become the resource backbone for capacity building on climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, and for facilitating the exchange of experiences and good practices among local government units in the country.

De Guzman added that the institute will also have a network of research and learning centers throughout the country. Among them are universities Ateneo de Davao, Ateneo de Zamboanga, Xavier University Cagayan de Oro, and

Visayas State University.

The gathering in Tagaytay City was the culmination of the Philippines' chairmanship of the CVF, which will then be turned over to Ethiopia.

De Guzman, along with officials of the CCC, welcomed the delegates led by incoming CVF chair Dr. Shiferaw Teklemariam Menbacho from the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Climate Change of Ethiopia; and past chairs from Bangladesh and Costa Rica.

For his part, Menbacho said it is important for CVF members to learn from each other to build capacity in the long term for climate action.

The event will be followed by the CVF High-Level Climate Policy Forum to be held at the Senate of the Philippines in Pasay City on August 15.



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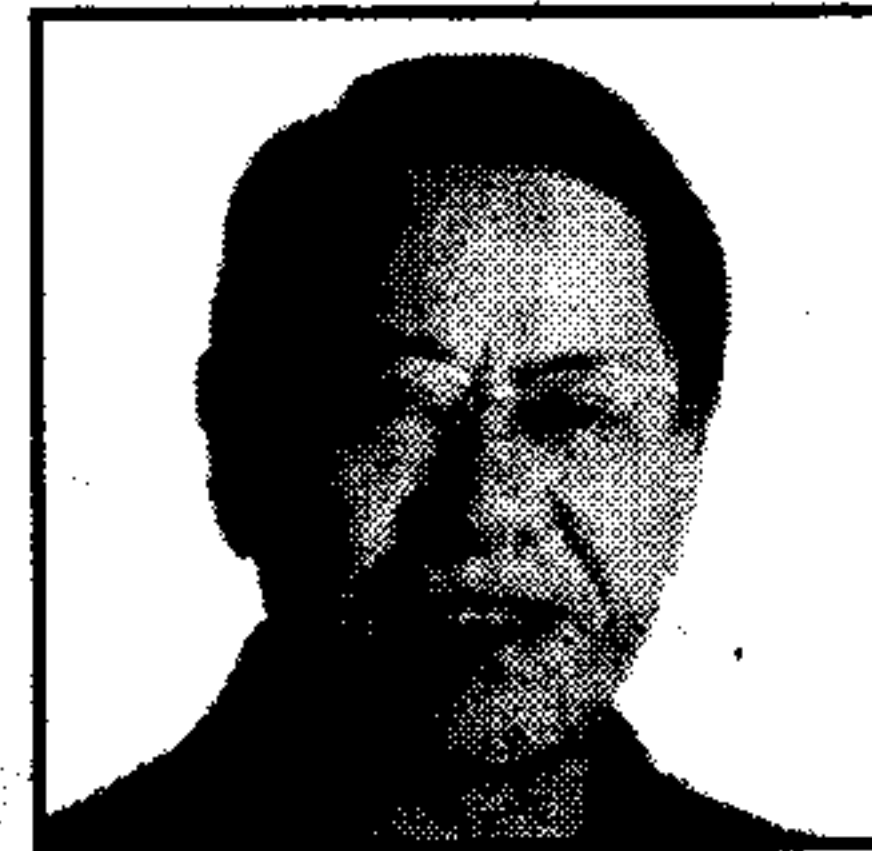
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MORE VITAL THAN EVER

## Honoring the Paris Agreement



BY EDUARDO S. ANGARA  
FORMER SENATOR

**P**RESIDENT Duterte explicitly stated in his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) that countering global warming will be a top priority of the Philippines. For sure, he cautioned that the global solution proposed be based "upon a fair and acceptable equation." In his recent meeting with US State Secretary John Kerry, he said the Philippines would abide by the Paris Accord. And he asked the Senate, as the treaty-ratifying body and the President's partner in foreign relations, to give him advice regarding the Paris Accord.

The President's views jive with the concept of "climate justice," calling for the world's top carbon emitters to take the lead not just in reducing emissions, but also in lending finance and technology support to developing countries transitioning to a zero-carbon mode of economic development.

President Duterte is quite firm in believing that the country should work to mitigate global warming, but he is also convinced that the country's development should not be stifled as a consequence. I would argue that by pursuing a carbon-neutral economy more single-mindedly, the Philippines would get developed smartly and do so sustainably.

By signing the Paris Accord with nearly 200 other countries last December, the Philippines affirmed that the country's "intended nationally determined contribution" (INDC) is to reduce expected carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030, under a "business as usual" (BAU) scenario.

This is, yes, an ambitious target and a huge commitment—but one that is contingent on "the extent of financial

resources, including technology development and transfer, and capacity building that will be made available to the Philippines."

In other words, our treaty obligation to reduce emissions is conditioned on how much financial and technical assistance we receive from our partner-countries. Hence, abiding by the Paris Accord is to safeguard a strategic opportunity for us to leverage the resources of our more prosperous friends to decarbonize our economy, without jeopardizing our efforts to grow and industrialize it.

Honoring the Paris Accord is equally about keeping people safe and healthy. The Philippines is not even a net carbon emitter, but it is among the most vulnerable and most affected countries because of climate change. Last November, a United Nations report determined that the Philippines was the 4th most disaster-prone country in the world.

Data from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) showed that the average sea level rise in the Philippines since 1901 was 60 centimeters, three times faster than the global average of 19 centimeters. If such rate continues, some 171 coastal towns and municipalities are projected to go underwater, displacing up to 13.6 million Filipinos, according to a University of the Philippines study.

Doing an about-face on the Paris Accord—that is, to allow governments around the world, including ours, to continue burning carbon in the name of economic development—is a step towards an increasingly unsafe and vulnerable future for the Philippines, where achieving prosperity would be next to impossible. This only makes it imperative that we honor the historic agreement. (30)

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# De Lima seeks ban on black sand mining

**SENATOR Leila de Lima has sought the banning of "black sand mining" or extraction of magnetite due to its harmful effects on the environment and people.**

She filed Senate Bill No. 960 requiring mining firms to dispose dredge materials in government-controlled landfills to prevent black sand from being passed off as "waste."

Under SBN 960, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau will also have to check on the presence of black sand before dredging permits can be issued to miners.

Any person or firm found guilty of black sand mining may be jailed for six to 12 years and fined from P1 to 10 million, according to the bill.

De Lima noted how some mining companies are taking advantage of the absence of a law that directly prohibits black sand mining as long as they could secure dredging permits for their operations.

"The alarming adverse effect of exploration and extraction of black sand on the environment and human life, and despite government efforts to curb illegal activities, black sand mining has been proliferating in different parts of the country," she said.

"At dahil sa black sand mining kumokonti ang huli ng ating mga mang-ingisda, at ang mga ko-

**By Bernadette E. Tamayo**



DE LIMA

munidad sa tabing-dagat ay nakakaranas ng pagguho ng lupa at pagbaha. Darami pa ang magdurusa kung hindi natin ito ipagbabawal," said De Lima.

She also noted that some unscrupulous mining operators, mostly foreign nationals, are conniving with some local government officials to operate despite opposition from the residents of the affected areas.

"A lot of mining firms conduct black sand mining under the cover of dredging permits. Safeguards must be put in place to prevent this abuse

of dredging permits," she said.

De Lima said when she was Justice secretary, an inter-agency group led by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) conducted raids on illegal black sand mining operations, as a result of which, complaints were filed against individuals, including Chinese nationals.

She expressed concern over the plight of people living near the mining sites where they suffer illnesses, their houses destroyed, and their livelihood compromised.

"Erosion has been noted in areas near black sand mining operations. Communities are slowly crumbling because of magnetite mining. In communities within these mining operations, there have been cases of severe eye infections and hernia. Farmers and fisherfolk now yield smaller harvests and catch," she said.

De Lima believes that her proposed measure is an effective step toward "ridding one form of environmental plunder with stiff penalty and heavy fines."

"Through the passage of this bill, not only are we able to penalize those who plunder our natural resources, the government will be able to properly regulate mining and other related activities," she said.



## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### EDITORIAL

# Conflicting signals

**P**RESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has shown a bold and uncompromising stance in the war against illegal drugs, and to some extent in crime and corruption. True to what he said during his inauguration, these are his priority areas. While there are diverse opinions on the manner in which he implements his policies, he cannot be accused of being half-hearted, or tentative.

The same cannot be said, however, of the President's policy on the environment.

Mr. Duterte has issued at best conflicting statements on how he intends to ensure a healthy balance between using up resources today and making provisions for future generations.

For example, talking at a business forum in February, at the height of the campaign, Duterte expressed support for the mining industry provided players acted responsibly and

abided by law and regulations. But upon his assumption of the presidency, he appointed, as secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, a known anti-mining "crusader" in the person of Regina Lopez. The environment secretary has been quoted as saying there is no such thing as responsible mining.

"If there is responsible mining, why is it that whenever there is mining there is poverty?...The poorest sites in the world are mining areas," she said.

Duterte then lashed out at big mining companies, daring them to "shape up" because they were supposedly destroying the environment.

Only the big mining interests from Manila were benefiting from these arrangements, he said.

And then there is the issue of gas emissions.

During a campaign debate, the United Nations a hypocrite mining developing countries to curb

emissions when it is the industrialized countries who have been spewing these gases into the atmosphere for centuries.

He also derided the apparent shift to renewable energy, citing the country's dire need for power which can only be supplied by coal-fired power plants.

Lopez, prior to her government appointment, has advocated a complete shunning of coal plants, citing their deleterious effect on the health and well-being of the residents of communities in which they operate.

Mr. Duterte has also said—and emphatically—that he would not honor the Paris Agreement which the Philippines and 195 other countries arrived at in December after the Conference of Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

But by virtue of his office, Duterte is also the chairman of the Climate Change Commission, the body tasked by law to craft mitigation and adaptation policies in relation to

climate change. He has thus far been silent on how he intends to discharge his leadership role here.

Environmental issues are no less urgent than the problem of drugs, crime, corruption or poverty. These have short- and long-term consequences on the people. Specifically, these affect how people live and how well. They dictate whether communities can be resilient in times of extreme weather events to which the country, as an archipelago, has become even more prone. They decide whether our investments today will bear fruit tomorrow or will just go to waste. They determine whether our children's children will be able to provide for their own needs, and sustainably so.

President Duterte's advisers must be reminded of their job to make him appreciate, and thoroughly, the complex issues surrounding the environment. The resulting policy—objective, consistent and unequivocal, will guide the next crucial steps of the administration.



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# BusinessMirror

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## National task force: Waging a green war

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

**C**RIMES against the environment, which lead to the destruction of forest and coastal ecosystems, often go unpunished in the Philippines. Environmentalists blame this on the poor enforcement of environmental laws.

An environmental advocate, Environment Secretary Regina Paz Lopez, wants this changed.

Last week taking the cudgel and standing side-by-side with various government and law-enforcement agencies, the country's chief steward of the environment and natural resources, vowed to go after environmental offenders and stop what she described as social and environmental injustice.

Lopez is pinning her hope on the creation of the National Anti-environmental Crimes Task Force, or Task Force ng Kalikasan, "to respond quickly to verified reports" of environmental crimes from affected communities.

The members of the task force are the departments of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Interior and Local Government (DILG), Transportation (DOTr), National Defense (DND) and Justice (DOJ); the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

Signing the agreement on August 8 at the DENR central office in Quezon City were Lopez, Interior Secretary Ismael D. Sueño, Transportation Secretary Arthur P. Tugade, Defense Undersecretary Eduardo D. del Rosario and Defense Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, representing AFP chief Gen. Ricardo R. Visaya, and PNP chief Director General Ronald "Bato" M. de la Rosa.

The agreement includes a Declaration of Cooperation between members of the task force.

As the agency mandated to protect the environment and manage the country's natural resources, the DENR is the designated head of the task force.

### Mining problem

LOPEZ has ordered the suspension of at least seven mining companies as part of an ongoing mining audit to stop environmental destruction and people's suffering in mining-affected areas. So far, the DENR, through the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), has issued preventive suspension orders against two nickel-mining companies in Zambales, two in Palawan; one on Manicani Island in Eastern Samar, and one in Surigao del Norte.

Just last week, DENR chief also ordered the suspension of the country's only iron-producing mine operating in Bulacan.

Large-scale mining, however, is not the only problem. A bigger problem confronting the minerals-development sector involves the environmental destruction and pollution caused by small-scale mining operations.

Small-scale miners use toxic-heavy metals, like mercury, to separate and purify the gold and indiscriminately dump wastewater that end up in water bodies.

There are around 300,000 small-scale mining companies and operators in the Philippines. Most of these companies operate outside the declared Minahang Bayan, which is in violation of existing environmental laws and policies.

There are only five Minahang Bayan all over the country. The MGB is currently in the process of "fixing" the problem by identifying more Minahang Bayan.

DENR Senior Undersecretary Leo L. Jasareno said the task force would deal with the problem of illegal-mining operations, as well.

### Illegal logging, fishing, wildlife trafficking

BESIDES illegal mining, the task force now targets illegal-logging,



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wildlife-trafficking and illegal-fishing activities, which Lopez consider as heinous environmental crimes.

"When you do illegal logging and illegal fishing, the people suffer," Lopez said.

Lopez added that environmental protection and conservation is a key strategy in the fight against poverty in the rural areas.

The DENR, she said, is fighting these environmental crimes by addressing poverty in rural areas.

Illegal activities common in many areas include cutting and harvesting of trees banned by Executive Order [EO] 23; commercial fishing in municipal waters that result in overfishing; and use of illegal- and destructive-fishing methods that destroy coastal and marine environment prohibited under the Republic Act 8550, or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998.

The campaign against illegal logging under the six-year Aquino administration achieved relative success. From the 197 illegal logging hot spots identified by the DENR in 2010, only 23 remains.

These remaining illegal-logging hot spots are high-risk areas, as those engaged in illegal logging are heavily armed.

Illegal fishing continues to be a major problem in many areas. Besides foreign fishing vessels encroaching in the country's territory to raid fishing grounds, the use of illegal and destructive fishing methods by local commercial and small fishers aggravate the already sorry-state of the country's marine environment.

Lopez lamented the dwindling fish catch, making life harder for small fishers who represent the poorest of the poor sector in the Philippines.

Illegal wildlife trade and the destruction of ecosystems, including protected areas, continue to threaten the country's rich biodiversity, as well.

### Alternative livelihood

IN response to growing concerns of local mine workers affected by the ongoing audit, Lopez said the DENR would provide alternative livelihood.

The DENR chief said the agency could tap the displaced workers for the National Greening Program (NGP) as part of the agency's move to shift focus from being a regulatory arm to a more development-driven agency that will utilize its resources to pave the way for sustainable development.

She said upland dwellers, including indigenous people, such as the lumad of Mindanao, would benefit more from protecting the forest and coastal areas against destructive activities, promising them government support.

"The bottom line is they need money. We will teach them how to make money without cutting the trees because that is for their own good. It is for their own protection."

The DENR is eyeing other revenue streams as an alternative to mining, such as ecotourism, to boost income in rural areas to ease human pressure on their local environment and natural resources.

"We will work with the tourism and agriculture departments, as well as with the trade industry [department], to help jump-start the economy using the country's resources in an approach that is inclusive," Lopez said.

### Stronger law enforcement

THE poor enforcement of environmental laws remains a major challenge in the Philippines. While the country has an extensive line up of environmental laws, it has no specific unit dedicated to enforce the laws.

According to Lopez, the task force would ensure cooperation among concerned government agencies and their respective law-enforcement units to fight environmental crimes.

The DND has mandate and jurisdiction over the AFP; the DILG over the local government units and PNP; the DOTr over the PCG; and the DOJ taking charge of prosecution.

During the signing of the agreement, the signatories affirmed their support behind the DENR's leadership of the task force.

Lopez is confident that the government would be able to carry out effectively measures to prevent and investigate environmental crimes, and arrest and prosecute offenders more effectively.

Under the agreement, each of the agencies would designate at least two representatives to form the core group of the task force.

Members of the task force are mandated to conduct an immediate assessment of law-enforcement

needs and operations, form multisectoral law-enforcement teams based on the assessment of the requirements of each operation, conduct monthly action planning and ensure quick response to urgent calls from the DENR chief.

As part of the agreement, checkpoints and camps or stations manned by multisectoral teams in flashpoints and transit points of illegally harvested or hunted natural resources would be set up.

### Intensified campaign

LOPEZ is expecting a positive outcome from an intensified campaign against environmental crimes within two weeks. DENR Undersecretary Arturo T. Valdez, Lopez's designated head of the task force, said the campaign will be anchored on community support and cooperation.

"We will depend on the help of the communities. Before we strike, we will make sure that the information is verified. There will be complete staff work," Valdez said.



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*National task force: Waging a green war*

Operations of the task force, he said, will be conducted in identified illegal-logging hot spots, as well as in areas where illegal fishing and use of destructive methods, such as dynamite and cyanide, are rampant.

Tawi-Tawi, he said, will be visited with the help of the AFP and the PCG. Palawan and the Sierra Madre Mountain Range, he said, will, likewise, be monitored for illegal logging and wildlife trafficking.

With the PNP, the AFP and the PCG backing the campaign, Lopez assured that the task force will work and strike hard.

"Now we have [PNP Director] General Bato the AFP and the PCG. I really feel this is going to [be] good [work]," Lopez said.

### **Environmental justice**

ENVIRONMENTAL groups under the Kalikasan-People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan-PNE) welcome the creation of the task force. Clemente Bautista, the group's national coordinator, expressed hope that the task force would lead to the protection of the environment, as well as the communities affected by destructive human activities.

However, more than environmental protection and shielding communities against harm, however, the group is battling

for environmental justice. "We acknowledge the effort of Environment Secretary Lopez. We hope this will genuinely protect our communities and ecosystems from environmental criminals," he said.

Seeking environmental justice should start first inside the DENR, particularly on its head office, Bautista said.

"Previous corrupt officials should be investigated and, if found liable, should be prosecuted, particularly those involved in the NGP reforestation fiasco," Bausta said.

He said investigation should start with the involvement of former Environment Secretary Ramon Paje.

Kalikasan-PNE believes that administrative and executive orders, which allow and give consent to corporations to plunder the country's resources, should be revoked, citing EO 79, and the Investment Defense Force, which allows regular military and paramilitary forces to be hired by private corporations, particularly mining and agricultural corporations.

"The task force will be an exercise in futility if these guidelines and laws remain the same," he pointed out.

The creation of the Task Force ng Kalikasan offers renewed hope for stronger environmental protection. The DENR chief herself has expressed excitement and hopes of better days ahead.

### **Not the first time**

THIS is not the first time that government agencies have come together to fight environmental crimes. Under the previous administration, the enforcement of EO 23 resulted in the filing of 1,370 cases in court and the conviction of close to 200 individuals involved in illegal-logging, -fishing and wildlife trade, a record the task force, hopefully, would surpass in the next six years.



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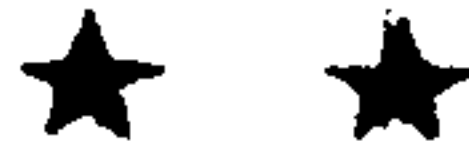
ENVIRONMENT Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez (center) is flanked by key members of the Cabinet as they launch Task Force ng Kalikasan on August 8. DENR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

REGINA PAZ L. LOPEZ  
Secretary





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## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

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### PAHINA SIYETE

#### PAGGIBA SA MGA FISHPEN SA LAGUNA DE BAY

#### Clemen Bautista

ISA sa mga nabanggit ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa kanyang unang State of the Nation Address (SONA) noong Hulyo 25 ang Laguna de Bay. Inatasan niya si Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez na gibain ang mga fishpen sa Laguna de Bay na ang mga may-ari ay mga retiradong opisyal ng pulisya at militar, maipuwensiyang mga negosyante at mga opisyal ng pamahalaan.

Ayon kay Pangulong Duterte, kapag siya'y nasa eroplano at pauwi sa Davao City, at nadaraan sa tapat ng lawa, taniw niya na halos nabakuran na ng mga fishpen ang lawa. Ang mga mangingisda na wala nang lugar sa Laguna de Bay na mapangisdaan.

Sinabi pa ni Pangulong Duterte: "I am saying in a diplomatic way that Laguna Lake should transformed into a vibrant economic zone showcasing ecotourism by addressing the negative impact of the watershed destruction, and pollution. Ito ang inilagay ko: "This is what I am telling you. The poor fishermen will priority to its entitlements." Agad naman kumilos si DENR Secretary Gina Lopez. Sa isang press conference kamakailan sinabi niya na ang mga unang plano niya sa Laguna de Bay upang sundin ang utos ng Pangulong Duterte ay ang paggiba ng mga fishpen sa lawa, ayusing muli ang mga sewage system sa mga pamayanan na nasa tabi ng lawa at ang malawakang reforestation sa mga bundok na nakapalibot sa Laguna de Bay. Dahil sa pagkapanat ng mga bundok, kapag bumabaha, ang mga putik ay napupunta sa lawa at nagiging dahilan ng pagbabaw o siltation nito.

Ayon pa kay DENR Secretary Lopez, kailangang magkaroon ang lokal na pamahalaan ng sewage treatment plant. Gagawing demokratiko ang mga fishpen at industriya ng pangingisda upang makinabang ang mga mamamayan lalo na ang mahihirap at hindi ang mga mayayaman. Sisiguruhin din ang pagpapatupad ng mga batas lalo na ang mga batas ng Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) na ang mga fishpen operator ay kailangang kumuha ng valid permit. Pag-uukulan din ng pansin ang lahat ng reclamation na nangyari na naging dahilan ng pagbabaw ng lawa. Kung maibabalik ang dating kalagayan ng Laguna de Bay, magiging mabuti ang kapakanan ng lahat ng munisipalidad na nasa paligid ng lawa.

Ang paggiba sa mga fishpen sa Laguna de Bay noon pa man ay isang tuluy-tuloy na gawain ng LLDA, sa pangunguna ni LLDA General Manager Neric Acosta. Pinagigiba ang mga illegal fishpen at mga walang permit na ang mga may-ari ay balasubas. Bukod sa walang permit ay nagdudulot pa ng pollution sa lawa sapagkat ang ipinakakain sa mga bangus sa loob ng fishpen ay dumi ng mga manok.

At noong Hulyo 15, 2016, may 23 ektarya ng fishpen ang giniba ng LLDA. Ang fishpen ay nasa Barangay Boor, Talim Island, Cardona, Rizal. Ang kawalan ng permit ay isang malinaw na paglabag sa rules and regulations na ipatutupad ng Revised Laguna de Bay Zoning and Management Plan (ZOMAP).

Bilang pagsunod sa atas ng Pangulo na gibain ang mga fishpen sa Laguna de Bay, nitong Agosto 9, giniba ng LLDA at ng DENR ang mga fishpen sa Laguna de Bay na nasa bahagi ng Pritil, Binangonan, Rizal. Bukod dito ay giniba rin ang dalawang illegal fishpen na parehong may 50 ektarya ang lawak ng fishpen na pag-aari ng Seven Eleven Fishing Corp na walang mga kaukulang dokumento mula sa LLDA.

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### Environmentalists satisfied with EDC expansion plan in Negros

THE Lopez-owned Energy Development Corp. (EDC) organized a recent site visit for various stakeholders to its Southern Negros Geothermal Power Plant (SNGP) in Valencia, Negros Oriental, to dispel environmental allegations about its 60-megawatt (MW) expansion plan.

EDC, the country's biggest geothermal-energy producer, is expanding SNGP's capacity from 222.5 MW to 282.5 MW to meet the region's growing electricity needs.

Earlier, some quarters claimed that EDC expansion required an additional 5,163 hectares that would encroach into Mount Talinis, considered a key biodiversity area in Negros Oriental.

During the site visit on August 10, however, the stakeholders learned EDC expansion calls for an increase in capacity, not in area.

"We will confine our expansion within SNGP's existing geothermal production block in Valencia," Jay Joel Soriano, head of EDC's Negros Integrated Geothermal Business Unit (Nigbu), told the visitors, most of them from local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

SNGP's existing geothermal production or development block spans 5,163 hectares in the Palinpinon-Okoy watershed in Valencia, which is physically separate from Mount Talinis.

Within the geothermal production field, SNGP's steam field and power plant occupy less than 200 hectares, and the expansion will be confined within the existing development block of 5,163 hectares.

"I believe the issue about SNGP's plan to expand by another 5,163 hectares is a result of a misunderstanding, because the supposed additional expansion area corresponds to our existing development block," Soriano noted. "But as we have been saying, we are not on Mount Talinis, and



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**GUESTS and hosts pose for a group photo during their recent visit to the Southern Negros Geothermal Power Plant in Valencia, Negros Oriental. Energy Development Corp. organized the site visit to dispel erroneous environmental allegations about its 60-megawatt expansion plan.**

we are not going to Mount Talinis."

During the visit, Vicente Omandam, Nigbu senior manager, pointed to a direction southeast of SNGP's power plant.

"Mount Talinis is two mountains away from our location," he told the visitors. "From here, it will take you almost a whole day of walking to reach it," he added.

EDC is awaiting the release of the environmental compliance certificate (ECC) from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for its 60-MW geothermal expansion.

Contrary to criticism from some quarters about EDC's lack of transparency and stakeholder support, the company has gone through public consultations and hearings for its ECC application and has received the strong endorsement for an ECC from the host communities and local government of Valencia.

"But pending the release of the

ECC, EDC has not started any activity for its proposed geothermal expansion project," Soriano said.

NGOs that sent officials or representatives to the site visit included Green Convergence, The Climate Reality Project-Philippines, Haribon Foundation, Archdiocesan Ministry on Environment, SEED4COM, Let's Do It Philippines, EcoAgri, Climate Change Congress of the Philippines, and Development Options and Social Entrepreneurship Inc.

After the visit, Angelina Galang, president of Green Convergence, threw her organization's support behind EDC. Green Convergence is a coalition of networks and individuals working for sustainable development.

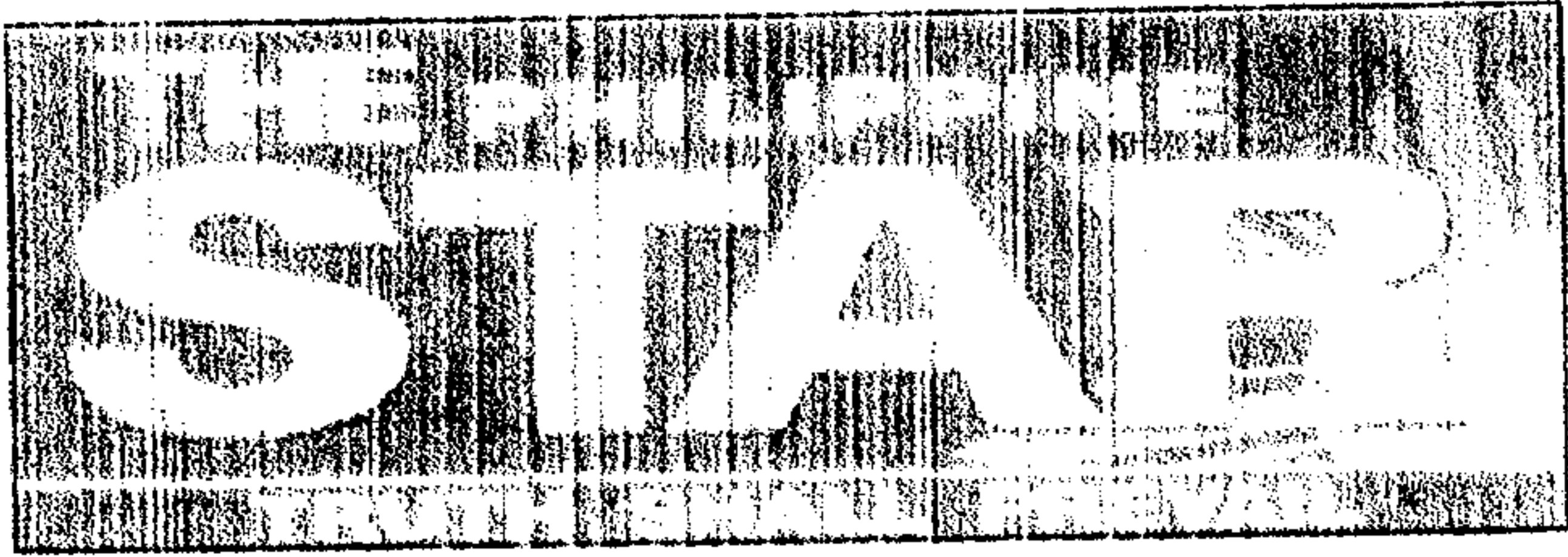
"We, in Green Convergence, commend EDC for its environmental practices and processes. These practices and processes in protecting the environment and in developing clean and renewable energy should be emulated, not criticized," Galang

said during the site visit.

Rodne Galicha, Philippine country manager of CRP, under former US Vice President Al Gore, also expressed satisfaction over EDC's openness and appealed that any issue raised on their project should be addressed in a manner, which conforms to international standards and targets of relevant sustainable-development goals supported by empirical evidence.

"We are happy that EDC has clarified the issues raised against it, however, we call on both parties, including the DENR, to sit down together for a genuine dialogue in good faith, with full transparency and participation of communities. Negros Island has won the battle against dirty old coal and is blessed with renewable-energy sources, such as geothermal, to utilize without compromising the capacity of the next generations to survive while addressing the present needs of its people," Galicha said.





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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# EDC building dedicated transmission for Bac-Man

By DANESSA RIVERA

Lopez-led Energy Development Corp. (EDC) is constructing a P130-million dedicated transmission facility for its P7.6-billion 31-megawatt (MW) Bac-Man 3 geothermal plant to ensure that the project will deliver its capacity to the Luzon grid on time.

The project, located in Sorsogon province, has already been approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission.

EDC sought clearance from the power regulator to build a connection asset with a total project cost of P130 million "to cater the direct delivery of the full 31 MW capacity of the Bac-Man 3 geothermal project to the Luzon grid."

"The interconnection of this plant to the Palayang Bayan Switchyard owned by Bac-Man Geothermal Inc. (BGI) is essential for the plant's testing and commissioning targeted to start by the fourth quarter of 2017, and dispatch by December 2017," EDC said.

In approving the company's request, ERC ordered EDC to transfer the operation control of the Palayang Bayan Switchyard from BGI to the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines.

The power regulator also directed EDC to construct the transmission link in accordance with the System Impact Study and Facility Study requirements.

Once completed, Bac-Man 3 will augment the power generating capacity of the Luzon grid and address the projected demand growth in the region, EDC business development VP Vincent Villegas earlier said.

The company has tapped Hyundai Engineering Co. Ltd. for the design and equipment supply contract, and Galing Power & Energy Construction Co. Inc. construction services contract.

Bac-Man 3 will add to EDC's geothermal portfolio, solidifying its leadership in the Philippine geothermal industry, which currently owns and operates 1,169 MW of integrated geothermal projects in Leyte, Negros Islands, Bicol and North Cotabato.

It is also into wind technology through its 150-MW Burgos wind project, the largest in Southeast Asia. It also operates hydropower and solar energy plants.