

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DATE : 05 JUL 2016

DAY : Tuesday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

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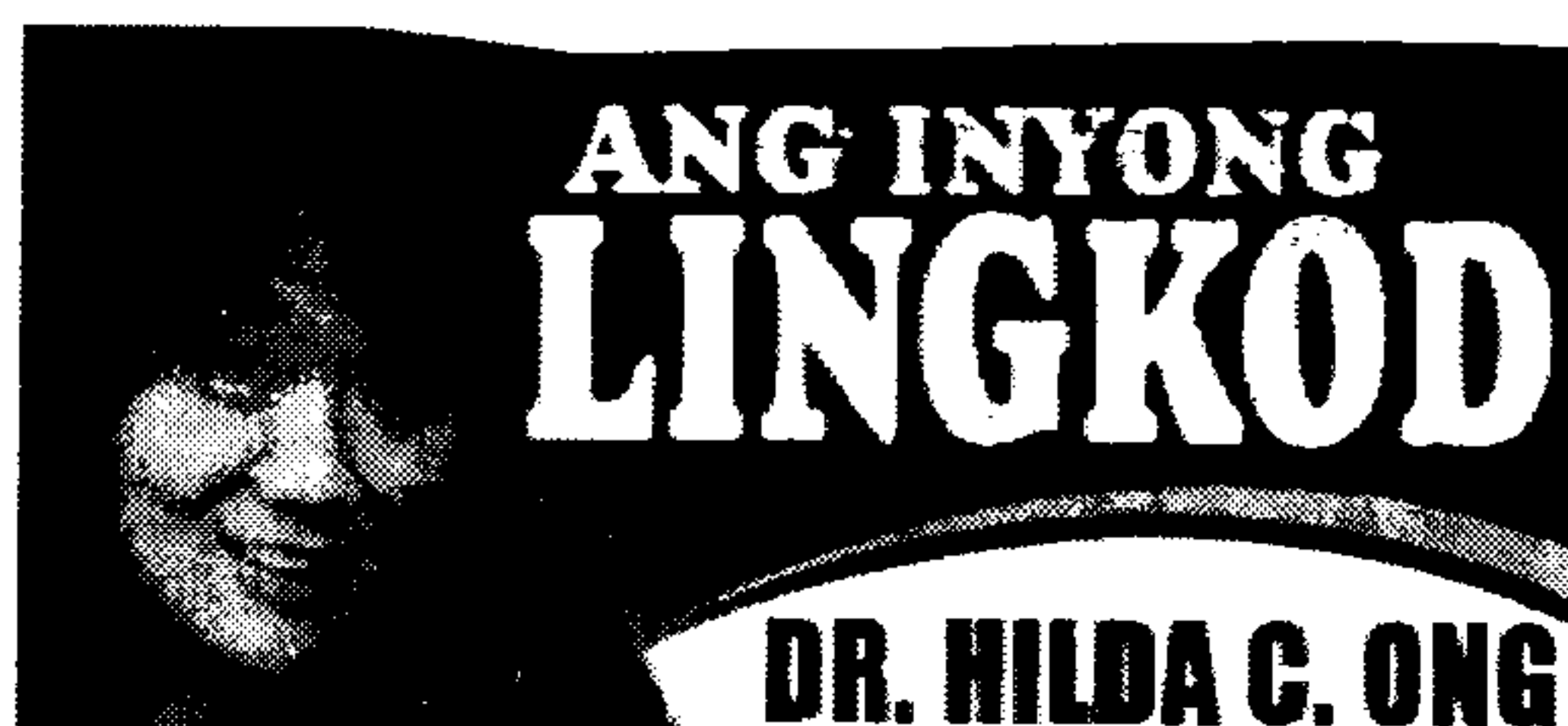
PORMAL nang isinalin nitong July 2, 2016 ni dating kalihim Ramon J.P. Paje ang pangangasiwa ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa kilalang environmentalist na si Secretary Gina Lopez, ang itinalaga ni President Rodrigo R. Duterte para sa kagawaran. Personal na sinaksihan ito ng inyong lingkod.

Sa loob ng anim na taon simula July 2010 ay pinamunuan ni dating kalihim Paje ang DENR sa ilalim ng administrasyong Aquino. Nagpasalamat siya sa lahat ng kawani na nagpamalas ng ibayong sipag at dedikasyon upang magampanan ang mandato ng ahensiya - ang mapangalagaan ang kalikasan at kapaligiran.

Nito ngang ika-29 anibersaryo ng DENR, sinabi ng dating kalihim sa bawat empleyado na "You have supported this department beyond what you can. We have shown that not only do we do our best. We better our best".

Sa ilalim ng pamumuno ni Paje, nakumpleto ang century-old program na Cadastral Survey ng pamahalaan. Nang umupo siya noong 2010, nasa 46% pa lamang ang na-survey na kalupaan ng bansa, at sa loob lamang ng mahigit apat na taon, 100% completed na ito.

Nakapagtanim din ng mga puno sa 1.3 million hectares hanggang December 2016 sa ilalim ng National Greening Program (NGP) at inaasahang aabot ito sa 1.6 million hectares sa pagtatapos ng December 2016. Sabinaga ng dating kalihim, nakapagdagdag ng mahigit bil-



SALAMAT, SECRETARY PAJE! GOOD LUCK, SECRETARY LOPEZ!

yong buhay ang DENR at mga naging katuwang na ahensiya, pribadong sektor, at mga samahan sa pamamagitan ng pagtatanim.

Si Secretary Paje sa ngalan ng 102 million Filipinos ang siyang lumagda sa Paris Agreement sa New York nitong March 2016, ito ang makasaysayang kasunduan na nabuo sa pagtitipon ng mga bansa na nagtatakda ng mga gawain upang hindi mapataas sa 1.50 C ang temperatura ng daigdig. Ang Pilipinas ay nangako na pagdating ng taong 2030 ay 70% na ang kabawasan sa ating green house gases (GHG) emissions bagama't wala pang isang porsiyento ang kontribusyon ng bansa sa buong daigdig.

Pero bilang isa sa pinaka-bulnerableng bansa sa epekto ng climate change, gagawin ng Pilipinas ang malaking pagbabawas sa GHG upang matiyak ang kaligtasan ng bawat Filipino. Nasaksihan ng buong mundo ang matinding hagupit ni Super Typhoon Yolanda noong November 8, 2013, ang pinakamalakas na bagyong tumama sa kalupaan sa kasaysayan ng daigdig.

Sa kanyang huling mensahe, sinabi ni Paje na dapat na ipagpatuloy ng DENR

ang lahat ng naisagawa at nasimulan nito. Malaki rin ang paniniwala niya na magiging maayos ang kagawaran sa ilalim ng administrasyong Duterte lalong-lalo na kay Secretary Lopez na matagal na rin naman niyang kilala at kasama bilang chairperson ng Pasig River Rehabilitation Committee.

Nilinaw ni Secretary Lopez na hindi siya anti-mining advocate. Aniya, isinusulong niya ang responsible mining dahil kinikilala naman niya ang malaking pangangailangan para sa raw materials na siyang minimina. Bilang unang kautusan, inatasan niya ang Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) na magsagawa ng pag-audit sa lahat ng mining companies sa buong bansa upang matiyak ang kanilang pag-sunod sa itinatakda ng batas.

Maraming salamat, Secretary Paje sa ibayong sipag at dedikasyon na ipinamalas mo sa loob ng anim na taong pamamahala, gayundin, hangad nang inyong lingkod ang pagtatagumpay ni Secretary Lopez sa kanyang pangunguna sa DENR.

BusinessMirror

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Responsible mining is doable



Ernesto M. Hilario

ABOUT TOWN

WHAT happens when someone who has made no secret of her dislike for mining is put in charge of the government department that is supposed to promote, as well as regulate, mining?

For one thing, the appointment of Regina Paz L. Lopez as secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) by President Duterte sent mining shares in the stock market into a tailspin for two days before recovering.

Big mining companies lost over P25 billion, combined as a result of the market turmoil triggered by Lopez's DENR appointment.

The two-day Philippine Stock Exchange fall meant a stock value loss of P11 billion for Semirara Mining and Power Corp., P10 billion for Philex Mining and P4 billion for Nickel Asia.

The Social Security System reportedly lost P2 billion because it owns 21 percent, or a fifth, of Philex.

In contrast, at least two energy-related companies of the Lopezes posted a P17-billion increase in stock value on news of her DENR appointment, with First Gen Corp. (FGEN) gaining P9 billion and Energy Development Corp. (EDC) earning P8 billion at the local bourse.

Mining stocks managed to bounce back, however, after Presidential Spokesman Ernesto C. Abella assured the public that the Duterte administration was only against irresponsible and illegal mining, and is "committed to promote a dynamic economy, including responsible mining."

"The fact that she accepted it, it means that she will advocate the position of the President," he added.

"The President is not anti-mining," Abella pointed out. "He actually supports each and every venture that contributes to the health of the Philippine economy."

Amid the negative reception of investors to Lopez's appointment, Abella stressed that "responsible mining plays a

key role in the Philippines," and that "the Duterte administration is committed to promoting a robust and dynamic economy with every sector contributing to its growth."

In other words, responsible mining would be upheld by the Duterte administration, with the mining sector applying the rigid standards in minerals extraction practiced in developed countries, like Australia and Canada.

Apart from taking an antimining stand, Lopez has also inveighed against coal-fired power plants, even as her family controls companies that directly compete with energy firms providing coal power. Among the Lopezes' business interests are EDC, which owns geothermal-, wind- and solar-power facilities; FGEN, which owns natural-gas plants; First Philippine Holdings Corp. (FPH), which controls FGEN; and Lopez Holdings Inc., the parent company of FPH. FGEN is the largest vertically integrated power-generation company in the country through FPH, and EDC is the world's largest integrated geothermal-plant producer.

Lopez's bias against mining imperils an estimated \$17 billion in capital investments by mining firms in Mindanao alone. This figure does not include the multibillion-peso investments in coal-fired power plants that are similarly endangered, along with the collateral businesses dependent on these industries that employ thousands of workers in the South.

President Duterte has emphasized that his administration wants to achieve inclusive growth by dispersing businesses and promoting growth away from the cities toward the countryside. But if Lopez insists on her crusade against

mining and coal-fired power plants, she could well be the single biggest obstacle to the Duterte administration's push for accelerated countryside development.

The mining sector, meanwhile, remains confident that President Duterte would support responsible mining. "President Duterte has made clear his policy in support of responsible mining. All our mining operations are ISO-compliant for environmental managements systems and are world class," said Gerard Brimo, the president of Nickel Asia.

For his part, Jose Bayani Baylon, Nickel Asia's vice president for corporate communications, said Lopez can channel her "passion" to fight illegal and irresponsible mining.

The Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association said it expects Lopez to be fair in her decisions concerning the mining industry.

After all, responsible mining firms are strictly regulated by the government, while irresponsible miners, especially the small-scale ones, use illegal and destructive practices.

Responsible mining is the key to fuel inclusive growth, particularly in the countryside.

Big mining firms undergo a tedious and complicated process of securing approvals and permits from the government to create jobs, and pay not only among the highest taxes, but also royalties, regulatory fees, contributions and mandatory community expenditures.

They also have to spend more to build schools and training centers, hospitals and clinics, housing, roads, drainage and street lighting; conduct livelihood workshops; and implement other projects as part of their corporate social responsibility programs.

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Responsible mining is doable

As a case on point, Benguet Corp. allocated P162 million for a health-care facility in the province of Rizal. Atlas Mining, through its subsidiary Carmen Copper Corp., built a birthing center in Toledo City in Cebu, and implemented various projects that provide access to better health services and facilities, quality education, improved infrastructure and enterprise development.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

LOPEZ TO PLACE MINING, COAL-FIRED POWER PROJECTS
UNDER STRICT SCRUTINY'Coal, mining firms
to go through eye
of a needle'

BY JONATHAN MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

WHEN it comes to mining and coal-fired power projects, the directive of President Duterte to speed up the release of business licenses and permits will not apply.

“Responsible means no one is adversely affected; no one suffers.”

—LOPEZ

Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez told the BUSINESSMIRROR that to protect the country's rich biodiversity from destructive

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development projects, her department would place under strict scrutiny and extensive consultation all mining and coal-fired power investments.

For instance, she said biodiversity experts that were not consulted before would have to be part of assessment of environmental impact of projects. "From now on, we are going to change all that."

An environmental advocate, Lopez said biodiversity conservation would be among her priorities as the country's chief steward of the environment and natural resources.

"I have absolute passion for biodiversity, because *iyan ang kayamdnan natin* [because it's part of our national wealth]. We are the No. 1 endemic country per unit per area

in the planet. This means the flora and fauna is exclusive to us. So why destroy it?" she stressed. "Biodiversity is very important to me. That is our wealth."

A known antimining advocate, Lopez is also expected to give proponents of coal-fired power-plant projects a hard time, consistent with the ongoing review of the country's energy-mix policy being spearheaded by the Climate Change Commission (CCC).

She said mining and coal investments are both environmentally destructive projects, which need to be strictly regulated.

Lopez said renewable energy, such as solar projects, would be prioritized under her watch, adding that the cost of constructing solar plants is now cheaper than coal.

While mining is destructive to forests, coal, she said, causes pollution. Renewable-energy sources, on the other hand, are more environment-friendly and sustainable.

"These are my commitments. When we audit, one, the main discerning thing on what we will do is the people's welfare. If mining adversely affects residents of the mining site, that is not responsible mining. Responsible means no one is adversely affected; no one suffers. Fishermen, farmers, communities should not become ill," she said.

She reiterated President Duterte's pronouncement and warning to

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

'COAL, MINING FIRMS TO GO THROUGH EYE OF A NEEDLE'

large-scale mining companies to shapeup, saying she will not hesitate to stop mining once the people and environment are threatened.

"We have laws. I will enforce those laws," she said, citing an administrative order issued by her predecessor last year requiring all mining companies to secure an International Organization for Standardization 14001. The deadline under Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Administrative Order 2015-07 signed by former Environment Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje lapsed on June 30.

She noted that only about 30 percent of the mining companies have complied with the requirement.

Failure to comply with the order may spell the suspension of mining operation or cancellation of mining contracts.

Lopez, however, assured that there will be no rash decisions that may result in loss of jobs in mining.

"Even if we suspend or close the mine site, I will make sure that the people working there will have work to go to," she said.

Lopez also vowed to help

mining companies become more environment-friendly by introducing mining technologies that will have minimum impact on the environment.

In a separate interview, Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim of the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) pitched the call for a stronger biodiversity-conservation policy in mining.

She suggested that mining companies start integrating biodiversity conservation in their environmental programs.

Mining companies are required by the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 to implement a social development management program. Some companies engage communities in tree-planting activities.

Mining companies are also required by law to rehabilitate mined-out areas; but trees planted are sometimes fast-growing trees or high-value crops, such as cacao and coffee.

Lim cautioned that in rehabilitating degraded forest such as mining areas, native trees that used to grow in the area should be replanted.

Lim said biodiversity conservation should also be integrated in premining activities by requiring mining companies to come up with an inventory of plant and animal species that thrive in areas targeted for mining.

While it is mandated to conserve biodiversity, the DENR-BMB has no part in evaluating the potential impact on biodiversity of major development projects such as mining.

The DENR-BMB is also not being consulted when mining companies conduct plant-rehabilitation activities.

While saying rehabilitation efforts can make mined-out areas productive again, theoretically, whatever biodiversity is lost in an area may no longer be restored or brought back, especially if the species are site-endemic, underscoring again the importance of establishing baseline data before any activity that will disturb or destroy the ecosystem.

She said the Philippines is rich in plant species with a lot of potential pharmaceutical or medicinal value.

"Once these are lost, we also lose

the opportunity of benefiting from these plant species," she said.

She said there are also plant species that grow only in a particular area because of the soil nutrient or microbes in the soil.

"Once these soil are disturbed, we may not be able to grow back or restore these species," she said. According to Lim, some site-endemic species happen to thrive in mineralized areas or areas targeted by mining companies.

The DENR-BMB, she said, is willing to help mining companies plan rehabilitation activities to restore

local vegetation that will bring back the biodiversity that was lost because of mining activities.

However, she said, to better plan biodiversity conservation or restoration activities, there should be a baseline data to start with.

"So we really need to have a baseline data so that we will know what are the species we need to plant to restore biodiversity," she said. "If they want to effectively restore, we need to know first what we stand to lose. We can provide them technical support and expertise on that."

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PAGMIMINA SA ZAMBALES PINATIGIL NA NI GOV. VELOSO

HINDI pa man nag-iinit ang wetpu ni Zambales Gov. Amor Deloso bilang bagong gobernador ng lalawigan ay sinimulan na niyang suspendihin ang walang habas na pagmimina sa kabundukan ng Zambales na umano'y isa sa mga dahilan ng grabeng pagbaha na nararanasan sa lalawigan at ilang kanugnog na lugar.

Katunayan, isang mining moratorium sa lahat ng mining activities sa buong lalawigan ang iniutos ni Gov. Deloso sa bisa ng isang Executive Order.

Ginawa ni Deloso ang kautusan matapos ang kanyang inaugural address at mass oath-taking ng mga bagong halal na opisyal ng probinsya at mga munisipyo ng Zambales.

Ayon sa gobernador, matagal nang panahon daw na pinagsasamantalan ng mga miner ang mga yamang lupa ng Zambales na naging dahilan na rin ng pagkasira ng kalikasan.

Kaya panahon na umano para ipatigil ang pagmimina.

Biruin ninyo, sabi ni Deloso, na 75 taon nang minimina ang chromite sa Sta. Cruz ng Acoje Mines bukod pa sa 50 taon namang hinuhukay ang ginto ng Masinloc ng Coto Mines ngunit ang mga Zambaleño ay hindi naman yumaman o umasenso.

Ang masakit nito, ang kalikasan ng probinsya ang masyadong nasasalanta nang husto.

Kaya ngayon ay tinuldukan na ng nasabing gobernador ang pag-



JUAN DE SABOG

ni JOHNNY MAGALONA

mimina. "Hindi tama na wasakin nila ang ating kalikasan," galit na sabi ni Deloso.

Ang mga lugar na sakop ng EO# 1 ay ang mga bayan ng Sta. Cruz at Candelaria at papayagan lang na makapagmina ang mining companies kung may maipakikita sila na social engineering para sa kalikasan.

Samantala, ang mga animal na mining companies na sumisira ng kalikasan ng ating banasa ay ang Benguet Corp Nickel Mines, Inc. (BNMI); LnL Archipelago Mining Corp. (LAMI); Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. (ZDMC) at Eramen

Minerals, Inc. (EMI).

SI GOB ANG PADRINO

Untouchable ang operasyon ng bookies ng Small Town Lottery (STL) nina Ronel sa Majayjay at Onad sa Magdalena, Liliw, Laguna.

Lantaran ang ginagawang pagpapatayo ng mga kabo ng dalawang bookies operator nito. Palibhasa, walang ipinagmamalaki ang mga kumag na ito kundi si Laguna Gov. Ramir Hernandez.

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MGA PRAYORIDAD SA DOE, DOH

*Audit order ni Lopez sa mga minahan:
Bawal ang late at simangot sa LTFRB*

Nina Armida Rico, Lhean Angeles at Noel Abuel

Pormal nang naupo sa Department of Energy (DOE) si Secretary Alfonso Cusi matapos isalin ni outgoing Secretary Zenaida Monsada sa isinagawang turnover ceremony kahapon ng umaga sa Taguig City.

Sa isang press conference, sinabi ni Cusi na prayoridad niya ngayon ang palakasin ang supply ng kuryente sa bansa lalo sa Mindanao.

Ayon kay Cusi, pinag-aaralan na niya kung paano ikokonekta ang Mindanao grid sa Visayas at Luzon.

Plano rin ng ahensyang pag-aralan kung maaaring i-convert ang Bataan nuclear power plant bilang Liquefied Natural Gas terminal.

Bukod pa rito aniya, paghubutihin din ang operasyon ng Coal Power Plants.

Bilang isang developing country, kailangan ng Pilipinas ang renewable energy.

Rerepasuhin din aniya ng kanyang administrasyon kung tama ang singil sa kuryente at iba pang charges sa konsumer.

Hindi rin aniya kailangang maging energy man para pamunuan ang

ahensya.

Pinagmalaki rin ng kalihim na isa siyang mahusay na manager at ang perspektibo ng isang konsumer ang kanyang pairalin.

*Sa Department of Interior and Local Government (DENR), agad na ipinag-utos ni Secretary Gina Lopez ang pag-audit sa lahat ng minahan sa bansa.

Sa unang araw ng trabaho nito, inilabas ang order para sa lahat ng mga minahan sa buong bansa, batay na rin sa order ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte, na kailangang sundin.

Ipinadala ang department order sa Regional at Central Audit teams ng DENR upang maumpisahan na ang audit ng mga mining area sa Pilipinas.

Kapag nakitaan ng paglabag ang mga minahan, posible umanong ipasara ang mga ito.

Nanindigan si Lopez na kailangan nang baguhin ang paraan ng pagmimina sa bansa para sa kapakanan ng kalikasan.

*Sa Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB), bawal na ang late, nakasimangot at pabong-

gang handaan.

Ito ang mahigpit na utos ni Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) Secretary Arthur Tugade sa kanyang nasasakupan.

Ginawa ni Tugade ang babala sa kanyang talumpati matapos ang flag raising ceremony sa ahensiya kung saan siya ay inimitahan ni LTFRB Chairman Martin Delgra para dumalo.

Ayon kay Tugade, batid niya ang mga alingasngas na isa ang LTFRB sa pinaka-corrupt na ahensiya ng pamahalaan, kaya't bawal aniya ang mga magarbong handaan lalo na sa mga nagdiriwang ng kaarawan.

Sinuman aniya na suway sa kanyang utos ay isasailalim sa lifestyle check.

Mahigpit na rin anyang ipagbabawal ang mga fixers sa ahensiya.

Ayon kay Tugade, kung walang fixers sa loob ng LTFRB ay hindi mamamayagpag ang fixers sa labas ng tanggapan nito.

Bawal na rin anyang makialam ang sinumang opisyal o kawani ng mga dokumento na ipinopro-

mula ang katiwalian.

*Pormal nang isinalin sa puwesto ni Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Janette Garin ang pagiging kalihim ng ahensya kay bagong Secretary Paulyn Jean Ubial.

Sa isinagawang turnover ceremony, iniabot ni Garin ang bandila ng DOH bilang simbolo ng pagsasalin ng kapangyarihan sa bagong kalihim.

Sinabi ni Garin na nasa magandang kamay ang DOH sa ilalim ng pamumuno ni Ubial na bago itinalaga ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte bilang kalihim ay naging assistant secretary na ng kagawaran.

Sa kanyang talumpati, binanggit ni Ubial na sinabihan ito ni Digong na labanan ang droga at kurapsyon sa ahensya.

Dapat din anyang magtipid ang mga kawani ng pamahalaan tulad ng mga biyahe ng mga ito na kahit kayang kumuha ng business class seat sa eroplano ay dapat economy lamang ang kukunin.

Si Secretary Ubial ay nagsimulang magtrabaho sa DOH noong 1988 bilang rural health volunteer sa North Cotabato.

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1908

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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DENR-12 official shot dead in Koronadal

KORONADAL CITY (PNA)
– Unidentified gunmen shot dead Monday an official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Regional Office 12 here while he was driving his motorbike in San Antonio subdivision, Barangay Sta Cruz, Koronadal City.

Supt. Barney Condes, Koronadal City police director, identified the victim as Noel Dunca, DENR-12 human resource management office chief.

Condes said a manhunt has been launched against the suspects.

Dunca was driving his black motorcycle at about 9:30 a.m. Monday, when two men riding on separate motorbike tailed him and opened fire, hitting him in the back of his head. He died instantly.

Investigators recovered live empty shells from a cal.-45 pistol.

A forester by profession, Dunca finished Forestry at the University of the Philippines (UP) Los Baños, Laguna and studied Bioresource Science at Ehime University United Graduate School of Agricultural Sciences in Japan.



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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Forester, 2 DOLE workers killed

KORONADAL CITY – A senior forester and two employees of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) have been killed in separate incidents in this city and in Misamis Oriental.

Noel Dungca of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Soccsksargen was riding his motorcycle on his way to work yesterday when two men on another motorcycle blocked his path and opened fire.

Superintendent Barney Condes, Koronadal City police director, said probers have yet to establish the motive for the killing.

“Let’s give these investigators enough time to identify the suspects and determine their motive,” Condes said.

In Manticao, Misamis Oriental, Daniel Labares and Ulysses Laborte were shot dead in a robbery attempt along the national highway.

The victims had just withdrawn P2.5 million from a bank for the Special Program for the Employment of Students when they were pulled over and shot by unidentified men.

The assailants managed to get one of the bags that the victims were carrying, but it did not contain the money that they withdrew.

– John Unson, Lino de la Cruz

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Opisyal ng DENR, pinabulagta

NORTH COTABATO - Pinabulagta ang isang kawani ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) region 12 makaraang tambangan ng riding-in-tandem assasins sa San Antonio, Phase II, Barangay Sta. Cruz sa Koronadal City, South Cotabato noong Lunes ng umaga. Anim na bala ang baril ang tumapos sa buhay ni Noel Dunca, hepe ng Human Resource Office ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) region 12. Nabatid na nakasakay umano sa motorsiklo ang suspek na may takip na panyo ang kanyang mukha. Napag-alaman na minamaneho ni Dunca ang itim na motorsiklo nang sundan at ratratin bandang alas-9:45 ng umaga. Narekober sa pinangyarihan ng krimen ang 6 basyo ng bala at isang slug ng hindi pa malamang uri ng baril. **Rhoderick Beñez**



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Ex-DENR exec, pinakakasuhan ng Ombudsman sa travel expenses

Makaraang pagtibayin ang kaso, ipinag-utos ni Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales ang pagsasampa ng kaso laban kay dating Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary Mario Roño dahil sa paglabag sa Article 218 (Failure to Render Account) ng Revised Penal Code sa kabiguang ma-account ang kanyang cash advances na aabot sa

P97,954.67.

Ang naturang pondo ay bahagi ng kanyang travel expenses sa China at Sweden noong Disyembre 1999 at Mayo 2000.

Sa imbestigasyon ng Ombudsman, lumabas na nagbigay lang si Roño ng full account sa kanyang travel expenses sa China noong Abril 2014, o 14 na taon matapos mag-lapse ang prescribed

period para rito.

Gayundin, hindi pa naa-account ang P79,738 na ginastos naman ni Roño nang bumiyahé sa Sweden.

Sa ilalim ng Commission on Audit (CoA) Circular No. 96-004, ang cash advances para sa travel expenses ay dapat na ipinali-liquidate agad ng opisyal sa loob ng 60 araw matapos siyang makabalik sa Pilipinas.

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Spy Bits

By BABE G. ROMUALDEZ

Generals on the run

Gina should concentrate on pollution problem

A recent report by the World Health Organization disclosed that of the seven million people worldwide who die from pollution every year, over six million of them are from Asia, particularly China and India — the two countries competing for the dubious honor of most polluted in the world. In 2008, the US Embassy in Beijing started monitoring the air quality data in the polluted Chinese city and while progress has been slow, Beijing has shown improvement in its air quality with strict enforcement of new air pollution regulations. Last year, Beijing recorded a 16 percent drop in the concentration of the most deadly types of air pollutants, according to the Paulson Institute and Greenpeace.

Experts, however, say the Philippines could go the way of India and China if the quality of air, particularly in Metro Manila, does not improve especially with traffic exacerbating the problem since 85 percent of pollution comes from toxic emissions from vehicles. As a result, thousands of Filipinos die every year due to lung-related illnesses as well as cardiovascular diseases due to air pollution.

New Environment Secretary Gina Lopez might want to review her predecessor's comprehensive air pollution management and control program to improve the air quality in Metro Manila. Aside from motor vehicles, major causes of air pollution are industrial plants that resort to burning their waste materials because they have inadequate and inappropriate garbage disposal facilities. There should also be a massive information drive to educate families about the dangers of burning trash.

As for the issue of mining, we're hoping Gina will separate the chaff from the grain, so to speak, and go after irresponsible miners who conduct mining operations with wanton disregard for the environment. Whether anti-mining advocates like it or not, there is really such a thing as responsible mining and they must recognize that it plays a role in national development.

Pro-responsible mining groups including the Engineering Student Council of the UP College of Engineering and the College of Science Student Council have issued a joint statement calling on government to pursue the promotion of responsible mining, regulate all mining operations to include rehabilitation and development efforts, and develop a national industry that is pro-Filipino. Discontinuing all mining operations will entail less jobs and opportunities for the people who rely on the industry, the statement said.

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Villar cautions vs Manila Bay reclamation project

By **MARIO B. CASAYURAN**

Senator Cynthia A. Villar, an environment advocate, appealed yesterday to companies to reconsider their reported interest in reclaiming 26,000 hectares in Manila Bay as reclamation activities have adverse effects on the communities and the livelihood of more than 300,000 fishermen in the area.

The Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) has approved the proposed reclamation project based on a National Reclamation Plan.

"At first glance, development in Manila Bay looks like a lucrative business venture but I appeal to companies interested in these reclamation proj-

ects to also consider the effects on the residents and fishermen depending on the bay for livelihood," Villar said.

Mayor Edwin Olivarez of Parañaque is reviving the proposed \$13-billion Manila Bay international airport project. Under the plan, the proposed airport will make use of 157 hectares of Freedom Island.

Villar emphasized that reclamation of Manila Bay would destroy the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Eco-Tourism Area (LPPCHEA), the Ramsar-listed Wetland of International Importance located South of Manila Bay.

"Instead of reclaiming Manila Bay, we should all support its restoration and rehabilitation and avoid massive

flooding, which experts say could go up to eight meters in Parañaque, Las Piñas and Cavite," she added.

Villar said these adverse effects on the environment and on the safety of residents are the reasons why she filed a petition for Writ of Kalikasan on March 16, 2012 before the Supreme Court along with majority of Las Piñas residents.

She pointed out that the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) had proposed the Sangley Point in Cavite and beyond as a viable site of the airport and not Manila Bay in Parañaque.

President Rodrigo Duterte had mentioned the proposed Sangley Point airport in his speech at Malacañang immediately after he was installed as the country's 16th President of

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the Republic but asked for specifics on whether the government has the finances to push through with the project.

Villar cited the 2002 ruling of the Supreme Court, which struck down the Public Estates Authority (PEA)-Amari deal as unconstitutional. The ruling stated that private companies cannot own reclaimed lands.

"Attracting tourists and investors should not be proposed at the expense of the constitutionally-guaranteed rights of citizens for a safe and secure environment to live in," she added.

LPPCHEA is a declared critical habitat and a protected area by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 1412 and 1412-A in 2007. It is the first critical habitat to be declared in the country. Covering around 175 hectares of wetland ecosystem, LPPCHEA consists of two islands— Freedom Island and Long Island.

In March, 2013, it was also listed as a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention because of the critical role it plays in the survival of threatened and restricted-range bird species. It is the only wetland in Metro Manila and in an urban setting.

LPPCHEA's 35-hectare mangrove forest is the thickest and most diverse within Manila Bay. There are at pres-

ent 11 mangrove species growing in the area. It is the spawning ground of fishes in Manila Bay which gives livelihood to 300,000 poor fishermen and other related livelihood.

The Philippines, being one of the signatories to the Ramsar Convention, is mandated to protect the habitat.

"The reclamation of Manila Bay is dangerous as it can also be seen as a violation of Supreme Court's continuing mandamus since 2008 directing the government to clean up Manila Bay. Reclamation, which will increase

commercial activity, will pollute the water," Villar said.

She also pointed out that Presidential Decree No. 705 or the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines prohibits the cutting of mangrove trees.

She clarified that she is not opposed to the construction of a new international airport but stressed that the plan must be guided by the tenet that the life of the people is paramount over any growth and development.

Villar believes a new and modern airport in Sangley Point and beyond would decongest the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) and improve its image as one of the world's worst airports.

She said the airport at Clark in Angeles city could be improved for passenger traffic at the NAIA.

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China offers PH talks if it snubs UN tribunal ruling

SHANGHAI—China is ready to start negotiations with the Philippines on South China Sea-related issues if Manila ignores an arbitration ruling expected next week on their long-running territorial dispute, the official China Daily reported on Monday.

The Philippines brought the case to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague and a

ruling is expected on July 12.

The case contests China's claims to the bulk of the South China Sea, a body of water through which \$5 trillion in shipborne trade passes every year.

China has said it plans to ignore the court's ruling, which would represent a snub of the international legal order.

The Philippines, Vietnam,

Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have overlapping claims with China in the area.

Beijing has rejected the arbitration case, claiming the court has no jurisdiction and saying it wants to solve the issue bilaterally.

In recent weeks, China has ramped up its propaganda campaign playing down the outcome of the case.

The administration of President Duterte in Manila has said it wants to settle the dispute through negotiations, but no move for talks will be taken until the arbitration court hands down its ruling.

Negotiations between China and the Philippines could cover "issues such as joint development and cooperation in scientific research if the new govern-

ment puts the tribunal's ruling aside before returning to the table for talks," the China Daily said.

China's main, government-run English newspaper did not name its sources but identified them as "close to the issues between the two countries."

China's foreign ministry last month said the two countries agreed in 1995 to settle dis-

putes in the South China Sea "in a peaceful and friendly manner through consultations on the basis of equity and mutual respect."

China and the Philippines have held many rounds of talks on the proper management of maritime disputes, although they have had no negotiations designed to settle the actual disputes in the South China Sea.

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PROPAGANDA BLITZ
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Beijing revs up propaganda blitz on South China Sea row

HONG KONG/LONDON—As an international tribunal prepares to rule on Beijing's territorial claims in the South China Sea, officials in Washington, Tokyo and Southeast Asia are on tenterhooks.

Yet, in the words of one senior Chinese official, Beijing does not care.

On July 12, the Permanent

Court of Arbitration in The Hague will rule on a case brought by the Philippines against China over its territorial claims and actions across the disputed waters and vital global trade route.

Beijing claims some 90 percent of the South China Sea, and the Philippines is challeng-

ing it under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos).

"We do not know, we don't care, in fact, when this arbitration decision will be made, because no matter what kind of decision this tribunal is going to make, we think it is totally

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wrong," China's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Liu Xiaoming, told Reuters at a recent lunch in London.

"It has no impact on China, on China's sovereignty over these reefs, over the islands. And it will set a serious, wrong and bad example. We will not fight this case in court, but we will certainly fight for our sovereignty," Liu said.

Rejection, challenge

Beijing's plans to ignore the ruling would represent both a rejection of the international legal order and a direct challenge to the United States, which believes China is developing islands and reefs for military, as well as civilian purposes in a threat to stability.

It would also significantly raise the stakes over the dispute, according to lawyers, diplomats and security experts.

How Washington handles the aftermath of the ruling is widely seen as a test of its credibility in a region where it has been the dominant security presence since World War II against an increasingly assertive China.

China, in turn, sees this as a matter of defending its territorial and political sovereignty against the United States.

Other nations laying claim to disputed areas of the South China Sea felt emboldened to chal-

lenge China because they felt they had the United States on their side, Liu said.

"They probably believe that they have America [behind them] and they can get a better deal with China. So I'm very suspicious of America's motives," he said.

So while Beijing scoffs at the imminent decision, it is also making an international PR effort to get its view heard.

Beijing has organized meetings with diplomats and journalists and has expressed its views in a slew of editorials and academic papers around the world.

"Manila has no leg to stand on," said one report in the China Daily's inaugural New Zealand edition.

Asian and Western diplomats

said their Chinese peers were raising the issue constantly, and at all levels.

"It's relentless. We haven't seen anything like this in years," said one Asian-based Western envoy.

China says more than 40 countries back its position that such territorial disputes should be handled through bilateral discussions not international arbitration, although only a handful of countries have publicly voiced their support.

Unclos, the law under which the Philippines has made its claim, outlines what can be claimed from different geographic features such as islands and reefs.

China is a signatory of the convention, one of the first international agreements it

helped negotiate after joining the United Nations.

But Beijing says the issue beyond the remit of Unclos and The Hague court because China has undisputable, historical rights and sovereignty over much of the South China Sea.

China's claims are expressed on its maps as the so-called nine-dash line, an ill-defined U-shaped demarcation drawn up after the defeat of Japan in World War II.

Manila's case is based around 15 points that challenge the validity of China's claims and recent reclamations on several disputed reefs in the fishing and energy rich region.

It is also seeking support for the Philippines' right to explore resources within its 370-k



SEA MANEUVERS This photo taken on May 5, 2016, shows crew members of China's South Sea Fleet taking part in a drill in the Xisha Islands, or the Paracel Islands, in the South China Sea.

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meter exclusive economic zone, waters in the South China Sea locally known as West Philippine Sea.

Sources close to Manila's legal team said they were confident of favorable rulings on enough points to create significant pressure on China's future moves in the waterway.

United response?

Ahead of the ruling, the United Kingdom, Australia and Japan are among countries that have joined Washington in stressing the importance of freedom of navigation and respect for the rule of law.

US officials have also been pressing Southeast Asian nations to forge a united front on the issue, with limited success so far.

Vietnam, which has made a submission to the panel that did not rule out taking its own legal action, on Friday called for a "fair and objective" ruling from the tribunal.

The Group of Seven and the European Union have stated that the ruling must be binding, despite China's objections, while Vietnam gave a submission to the court supporting its jurisdiction.

Legal experts say that while the ruling is technically binding, no body exists to enforce UNCLOS rulings.

Concerns are growing among regional military and govern-

ment officials that, regardless of the ruling, Beijing could launch fresh military action and rebuilding efforts to buttress its claims.

China may deploy fighter jets or missiles to its new facilities on the Spratlys, create an air exclusion zone or start fresh reclamation work on shoals occupied within the Philippines, according to US and regional military officials.

China militarization

In Washington, concern is particularly acute over whether China attempts to make permanent its seaborne presence near Panatag Shoal (Scarborough Shoal), in the West Philippine Sea, by building on the reef.

Liu outlined various civilian developments completed and under way in the South China Sea. He said there were also military facilities being built.

The United States has been increasing its own military presence in the region where Malaysian, Vietnam, Brunei and Taiwan also have claims.

France has also proposed to European countries that they take part in joint South China Sea patrols.

US responses could include accelerated freedom-of-navigation patrols by US warships and overflights by US aircraft as well as increased defense aid to Southeast Asian countries, according to US officials speaking on the condition of anonymity. *Reuters*

BusinessMirror

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Energy chief vows to make power rates more affordable

By LENIE LECTURA

✉ @llectura

ENERGY Secretary Afonso G. Cusi said he would form a focus group to zero in on issues related to providing affordable and reliable power rates, particularly in far-flung areas and, hopefully, be able to resolve this during his first 100 days in office.

The members of this focus group have yet to be named, he said. Cusi expects "immediate results" nonetheless.

During a news conference after the turnover ceremony on Monday morning, Cusi said he "will be busy" during the first 100 days. His priorities include the speedy delivery of cheap and reliable electricity to consumers, particularly those in the provinces.

"I am putting special focus to make it happen," Cusi said.

One possible solution, he said, is to provide subsidy. "I am really looking into this."

The Philippines remains among countries with the most expensive electricity prices in Asia. Based on a May 2013 "Global Benchmark Study of Residential Electricity Tariffs" by the Lantau Group, Manila has the third most expensive electricity prices.

According to the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco), the latest overall average electricity rate in its franchise areas is P7.58 per kilowatt hour.

Cusi said he is aware that in other countries, other governments subsidize electricity, while the Philippine government imposes many kinds of taxes.

"Others, they are receiving subsidy. That is one concern that we like to address. This requires a lot of studies," the new Department of Energy (DOE) chief said.

A newbie in the energy sector, Cusi said he "need not be an energy man to be a leader" in order to accomplish his tasks as energy secretary.

"In management, everything is the same. It's the subject that differs. In leading the DOE, I am looking from the prospective of the consumers."

Cusi is a former Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) general manager. He also served as chief of the Philippine Ports Authority and the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines during the Arroyo administration.

He also said that there would be a re-

view on current policies involving energy mix, feed-in tariff (FiT) scheme and renewable energy (RE).

The DOE earlier issued a fuel-mix policy stating the country should source 30 percent of its energy requirements from coal, 30 percent from RE and another 30 percent from natural gas. The remaining 10 percent will come from oil-based power plants.

"I am asking 'What's the rationale?' Why not 40-40-20? I'd like to understand the rationale behind," he said, adding that the DOE should determine the right mix to balance the utilization of RE versus fossil fuels.

He said he is aware of the stand of the Climate Commission against coal-power plants and that of the newly appointed Department on Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez.

"We can't afford not to have coal. If coal is not the solution, what is the alternative? We have to find a balance. If it's RE, why not? But we have to be realistic," Cusi said. "We will discuss that. We have to help one another find the solution."

On concern related to the FiT rate for solar power projects, Cusi said many solar-power providers, whose projects did not make it to the second round of FiT rate, are asking for a meeting with him.

"How are we going to handle this? What are the options? Maybe competitive bidding or bilateral contracts with distribution utilities or through the open market, we don't know. We have to study that."

He said DOE officials have 10 days to closely study this before Cusi can attend to the concerns of the solar-power providers.

"Can solar be feasible without FiT?" he said. "It requires a deeper study and understanding."

On reliability of the power plants, many of which are on unscheduled shutdown from time to time, Cusi said there is a need to revisit the service contracts of the plant operators to determine their compliance.

The DOE chief also said there had been initial discussions with the World Bank to fund a study on a plan to convert the Bataan nuclear power plant into a receiving and distribution facility for liquefied natural gas.