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06 FEB 2017

Monday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

**DENR CHIEF INSISTS
ECONOMY WOULD
GROW SANS MINING**

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

@jonlmayuga

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez said the Philippine economy would flourish even without mining, allaying fears that the closure of 23 operating mines would cause job losses that could affect 1.2 million people and billions of tax losses to both the national and local governments.

235,000

The jobs that the mining industry has created in 2014, according to a government report

Sought for reaction to news stories saying the closure order would affect millions of jobs, Lopez said reports that 1.2 million people would be affected by the closure order are incredible.

A staunch environmental advocate, Lopez said in 2014 the mining industry employs only around 235,000 people.

There are 41 operating mines in the country, she added. "So where are they getting this number [1.2 million]?"

Meanwhile, the Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA) issued a statement affirming its commitment for responsible mining.

However, PMSEA, through its President Louie R. Sarmiento, said it appears that full details of the results of the mining audit has yet to be furnished to the concerned companies.

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"The closures and suspensions, if affirmed, will have far-reaching effect, especially in mining communities that play host to these mines—employees and their dependents, contractors and mine-dependent small businesses will be the biggest losers," Sarmiento said.

"In the spirit of transparency and due process, the PMSEA exhorted the DENR to release the results of the mining audit to clear any doubts and air of suspicions. As

always, as a partner organization, the PMSEA is offering its expertise to the DENR," Sarmiento said.

Lopez, however, is not keen on releasing the findings and recommendations of the 15 audit teams, saying she has no obligation to do so, unless President Duterte asks her to do it.

Lopez said the mine audit was meticulously done.

She said the closure of the listed mines would be for the greater good, as it will prevent destruction caused by mining and protect the community's environment and natural resources.

Lopez was reacting to state-

ments issued by the Chambers of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) about the potential adverse impact of the closure order to jobs and livelihood once this is enforced.

COMP Chairman Artemio Disini said 1.2 million people, which include employees and their families, would be affected by the closure order.

Representing mining industry's big players, COMP will appeal their case to Duterte as they called on the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) to convene and tackle the closure order.

On Friday Finance Secretary

Carlos G. Dominguez III said an emergency employment program is needed to absorb workers who will lose their jobs.

He also expressed concern over the impact of the closure order to local government units that heavily rely on taxes from mining.

Lopez told the BUSINESSMIRROR that, if done properly, area development would allow the local economy to flourish even without mining.

She said ecotourism, for example, has the potential to generate more jobs and more livelihood for the people than mining.

"Mining is not labor intensive. It is capital intensive. In 2014

there was a government report that mining has created 235,000 jobs all over the country, while tourism has generated 4.7 million," she added.

She said the benefits of mining is not enough to allow the majority of the people in the community to suffer while mining companies rake in huge profits from the exploitation of the community's natural resources.

Lopez said that within 18 months, area development will allow communities to earn from ecotourism and social enterprises through agro-forestry and massive tree-planting activities.

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'Green economy' much better than mining – Lopez

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez is optimistic that "green economy" can provide more jobs than "destructive" mining.

"Give me a year and a half, maximum of two years. I will prove that a green economy can create more jobs than mining could ever create," Lopez.

The DENR chief was reacting to claims by the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) that over 1.2 million workers will lose their jobs with the impending closure of mining firms that failed the industry-wide audit conducted by the Department due to serious environmental violations.

Contrary to COMP's assertion, Lopez said that available government data would show that mining produced only 234,000 jobs as against the 4.7 million jobs created by tourism in 2014.

Although she admitted that

mining has indeed created jobs, the industry remains widely regarded as having adverse effects on the environment and communities.

Lopez insisted that sustainable economic development could be achieved without destroying the environment and causing suffering to people, and that inclusive green economy is way better alternative to mining.

Using the sustainable integrated area development approach, Lopez said the DENR would assume the developmental role of providing sustainable livelihood while teaching environmental conservation to affected communities.

"We will create ecological economic zones where there is respect for nature and value adding in resources, and where people benefit from the resources of the place," Lopez said.

She said her decision to close down 23 mining firms was consis-

tent with her non-negotiable stance against irresponsible mining.

"My issue is not about mining, my issue is about social justice," she emphasized.

Lopez had earlier made an assurance that affected mine workers will not end up unemployed as they will be used in the rehabilitation of mine sites, which is one of the conditions imposed on erring mining firms.

She said that she intends to use the mine rehabilitation fund of the closed mining firms in rehabilitating mining sites.

"I would like to work with miners through this fund and use the funds to heal the land," she said.

She noted that the DENR is tapping the services of a team of experts of the Sixto K. Roxas (SKR) Foundation in the rehabilitation of the mining sites. She is also looking at the potential of biochar as a tool for mine rehabilitation.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

'We differed in penalties,' Lopez says of MGB

By Janina C. Lim
Reporter

THERE was no question on whether several miners violated conditions of their permits, Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez said last weekend of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB)-led review that ended with more than three-fifths of the country's 41 metal mines facing either closure or suspension, adding, however, that there was a disagreement on sanctions.

"MGB (Mines and Geosciences Bureau) agreed with the violations, we differed in the penalties. They only wanted to do fines. I opted for suspensions and clo-

sures," Ms. Lopez said in a mobile phone message.

The Environment chief has also given in to appeals that the technical review committee's recommendations be made public.

"I don't find the need, but if you want to see it then go ahead," she said, emphasizing that the committee's report was merely recommendatory.

"At the end, I make the decisions."

During the Feb. 2 press conference, Ms. Lopez announced the decision to shutter 23 mines, saying they operated in watersheds, and suspend five others.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (CoMP) said the absence of members of the review team from the press briefing

"leaves a lot of doubt in the fairness of the entire process."

The industry group has asked Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III to convene the Mining Industry Coordinating Council, which he co-chairs with Ms. Lopez. Mr. Dominguez himself on Friday expressed concern of the employment and local taxation repercussions of the Environment department's ruling.

Miners have said the decision will affect 1.2 million people.

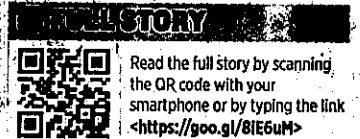
An estimate the department released last weekend showed affected miners — those to be shuttered and those to be suspended — accounted for 40.971% of industry jobs in 2015, as well as 41.425% of taxes collected and 22.463% of investments.

The Environment chief downplayed the sector's contribution.

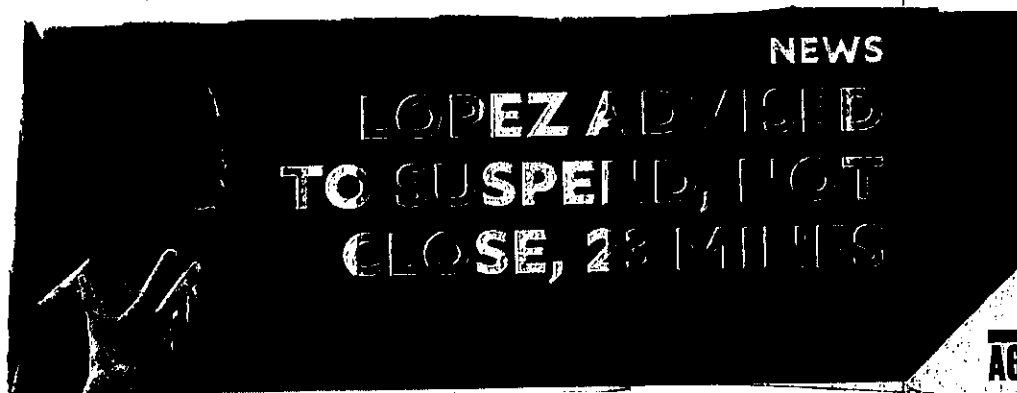
"For whatever they give, when the destruction to the environment and the opportunity lost is calculated, we come out losing big time," Ms. Lopez said.

"If you look at the national figures, the contribution of mining to the economy is minimal," she added, referring to MGB data showing the industry contributed 0.5% to the country's jobs and 0.6% to gross domestic product in last year's first three quarters.

with input from Reuters



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NEWS

**LOPEZ ADVISED
TO SUSPEND, NOT
CLOSE, 23 MINES**

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Lopez advised to suspend, not close, 23 mining areas

A team that reviewed an audit of mines in the country recommended the suspension of operations and payment of fines for environmental violations, not the closure of 23 mines ordered by Environment Secretary Gina Lopez, according to two people with knowledge of the matter.

Lopez on Thursday ordered the 23 mines shut, saying many were operating in watersheds. The mines to be closed account for half of nickel ore output in the Philippines, the world's top supplier of the metal. Another five mines were suspended.

The decision by Lopez has angered the country's mining industry, with miners saying the shutdowns will affect 1.2 million people and some vowing to overturn the ruling.

The review team that advised on the process, however, believed some of the violations, which included insufficient rehabilitation of mined areas, absence of tree-cutting permits and construction of alternate haul roads, were recti-



Environment Secretary Gina Lopez

fiable and did not warrant permanent closure.

"She's the boss. She has all the discretion," one of the sources said. "The only question is what was her basis in her decision?"

Lopez, a longtime environmentalist who took over the Department of Environment and Natural Resources last June when President Duterte came to power, has declined to release the recommendations of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) review team.

"What's important here is the decision I make as a Cabinet secretary, not the recommendations ... Don't try to make things complicated," she told reporters on Thursday. "You cannot have any kind of mining operations in a watershed. Water is life."

Banned from briefing

Damage to watersheds and siltation of coastal waters where the mines are located were the major reasons that led to Lopez's decision to shut them, according to the second person with knowledge of the matter.

"The secretary herself went to the mining sites and she personally reviewed the documents and that led to the decision," the person said.

Lopez launched the environmental audit of the mines in July, initially suspending 10 and saying 20 more were at risk of being halted. The bureau's review team began examining the audit results and the responses from miners last

December.

Members of the review team were banned from Thursday's briefing, according to a mining industry group and one of the sources.

Not allowing the MGB personnel to attend the press conference "leaves a lot of doubt in the fairness of the entire process," Artemio Disini, chair of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, said in a letter to Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III on Friday.

Dominguez had expressed concern over the looming job losses.

"There has to be due process," said Vicente Lao, owner of chromite producer Mt. Sinai Mining Exploration and Development Corp., which was ordered closed.

Australian miner OceanaGold Corp., which was ordered suspended, said it will not rule out commencing proceedings to appeal to a higher authority and seek to stay and overturn the order" once it receives it. —REUTERS

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Surigao solon: Lopez's man in DENR turned blind eye on illegal mining

By Gerry Baldo

The confidant and adviser of Environment Secretary Gina Lopez was not an innocent bystander when illegal mining activities flourished under his term as head of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) of the agency during previous administrations.

According to Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers, Leo Jasareno, who has been designated by Lopez to head a team that would audit mining firms, has been at the helm of the MGB when environmental laws were violated.

Barbers said he was in complete disbelief that Lopez tasked Jasareno to lead the audit team following an order to close 23 and suspend five mining companies for violation of various environmental laws.

"How about those mining companies which were not closed and whose owners are known friends of Jasareno?" Barbers asked.

Jasareno was dismissed from

his post by President Duterte for allegedly favoring some mining firms which may have not been included for closure and suspension for supposed violation of environmental laws.

Deputy Speaker and Batangas Rep. Raneo Abu said that mining firms should be responsible for the environmental degradation as a result of their activities.

Abu stressed that the rich mineral resources of the country could be a big boost to the Philippine economy.

"I am for responsible mining. The Philippines has vast minerals that are still untapped. It has one of the world's largest deposits of gold, nickel, copper and chromite. The government, through the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources), intends to generate more revenues from the extraction of these resources responsibly," Abu said.

Barbers lamented that it was during the time of Jasareno as head of the MGB that alleged

violations of various environmental laws were committed.

Barbers expressed doubts on the regularity of the audit that was conducted by Jasareno.

"Jasareno is not an innocent bystander in this masquerade. He is the protagonist. His MGB was supposed to police the mining activities in the country, but now he is saying that these companies committed environmental violations. Such hypocrisy coming from the one who was supposed to make sure that mining laws are followed and implemented," Barber said.

"Jasareno knew all too well that the violations were happening under his watch - for several years - but he deliberately turned a blind eye on these violations," he added.

Barbers said the DENR should not adopt a color-blind approach on its inquiry on the violations of the mining laws.

"There should be no selective prosecution here. The investigation should cover everything," Barbers

said. He reiterated his call for Lopez to open her eyes if she really wants to reform the agency.

Barbers urged Lopez to be fair and investigate Jasareno with the same zeal and vigor.

While he welcomed the role of Lopez to run after violators in the mining industry, Barbers lamented the fact that Lopez puts the blame entirely on the erring mining companies without looking at the root cause of the problem.

Earlier, Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay sought a congressional investigation into the closure of 23 big mining companies in the country and the suspension of five others for supposedly violating environmental laws for being "illegal and arbitrary."

He reiterated that the decision of Lopez will result to billions of pesos in lost revenues yearly to the national government, adding that at least 10,000 direct workers and 50,000 indirect workers from his district alone will be displaced.

Pichay accused Lopez of

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Surigao solon: Lopez's man in DENR
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violating all pertinent laws about mining, including the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) that the mining firms signed with the government.

He insisted that under the MPSA, once an audit of the mining firm was decided, the government should inform the firm about the intention to audit and the firm is allowed to appoint an official to join the audit team.

After the audit, he said, the team would come up with a report and discuss the findings, including the supposed violations that were committed to allow the firms to "rectify" the violations.

Pichay also argued that mining firms are allowed to contest the findings that would lead to an "arbitration" that would give the firms one year to settle the issue with the government.

Ordered closed were the Benguet Corp. Nickel Mines Inc.; Benguet Corp. in Benguet; Eramen Minerals Inc.; Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. and LNL Archipelago

Minerals Inc., all in Zambales; Mt. Sinai Mining Exploration and Development Corp.; Emir Minerals Corp. and Techiron Mineral Resources Inc., all in Homonhon Island, Eastern Samar; AAMPHIL Natural Resources Exploration; Kromico Inc.; SinoSteel Philippines; H.Y. Mining Corp.; Oriental Synergy Mining Corp.; Wellex Mining Corp.; Libjo Mining Corp.; and Oriental Vision Mining Philippines Corp., all in Dinagat Islands.

ADNAMA Mining Resources Corp.; Claver Mining Development Corp.; Platinum Development Corp.; CTP Construction and Mining Corp.; Carrascal Nickel Corp.; Marcventures Mining and Development Corp.; and Hinatuan Mining Corp., all located in Surigao del Norte.

Suspended were Berong Nickel Corporation; Oceanagold Philippines Inc.; Lepanto Consolidated Mining Corp.; Citinickel Mines and Development Corp.; and Strong Built Mining Development Corp.

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MINING AUDIT RESULTS

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By Rio N. Araja and Anna Leah E. Gonzales

A LAWMAKER on Sunday accused Undersecretary Leo Jasareno of granting special favors to some mining companies that were not ordered closed or suspended for violating environmental laws, while an industry association urged the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources to release the results of its audit.

Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace

Barbers on Sunday challenged DENR Secretary Gina Lopez to justify Jasareno's appointment as the leader of the audit team.

Barbers also questioned Jasareno's findings, which resulted in the closure of 23 big mining companies and the suspension of several others.

"How about those mining companies which were not closed and whose owners were known friends of Mr. Jasareno?" Barbers asked.

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He said supposed violations of the involved mining firms took place when Jasareno was the head of the DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

"I suspect Secretary Lopez could have been fooled by Mr. Jasareno," he said.

"He is not an innocent bystander in this masquerade. He is the protagonist. His MGB was

supposed to police the mining activities in the country, but now he is saying that these companies committed environmental violations. Such hypocrisy coming from the one who was supposed to ensure that mining laws are followed and implemented," Barbers said.

He said Jasareno already knew about the violations of many mining companies under his watch, but deliberately turned a blind eye to these.

"There should be no selective

prosecution here. The investigation should cover everything," he said.

He called on Lopez to investigate Jasareno if she is sincere about reforming the department and wiping out corruption.

Earlier, Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay sought a probe of the closure of 23 mining companies and the suspension of five others for, saying the action was "illegal and arbitrary."

The closures would lose billions of pesos in government revenues, he added.

The Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association on Sunday urged the DENR to disclose the results of the mining audit.

"In the spirit of transparency and due process, the PMSEA exhorts the DENR to release the results of the mining audit to clear any doubts and air of suspicion," said PMSEA president Louie Sarmiento.

Lopez earlier said of the 41 metallic mines in the country, only 12

passed the mining audit. It said 23 would be closed down and five would be suspended.

Mining companies, however, said the government could not just shut down mining operations without due process.

Members of PMSEA noted that the audit review findings were first made known through a press conference.

"It appears that full details of the results of the mining audit have yet to be furnished to the concerned companies," Sarmiento said.

"The closures and suspensions, if affirmed, will have far reaching effect especially in mining communities that plays host to these mines—employees and their dependents, contractors and mine-dependent small businesses will be the biggest losers," said Sarmiento.

Lopez, however, said that due process was observed in the mining audit. The DENR chief said technical experts from different government offices were invited

to conduct the audit and all observed the standards of truth, service and the common good.

"This means they know what they are doing and have followed the due legal process that needs to be done," Lopez said.

"We based the checklist of the criteria for the audit on the items in compliance with the different mining and environmental laws. A cross-audit was also done, which means that the auditors who reviewed one site, have come from a different region," she said.

Lopez said mining companies were given time to respond to the results of the audit.

"My issue here is not about mining. My issue here is social justice," Lopez said.

"We assure the industry and the general public that due process was meticulously observed in the mining audit conducted by the agency and that the results would be always anchored on integrity, social justice and the common good," she said.

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Mining firm bucks DENR closure order

Global Ferronickel Holdings Inc. (FNI) is seeking clarification from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) following news reports of Platinum Group Metals Corp. (PGMC) being included in the list of companies recommended for closure.

PGMC recently passed an audit conducted by DENR in November 2016, thus the closure order from the agency came as a big surprise for the mining firm.

Dante Bravo, president of FNI, strongly denied the accusation, leading it to host a teleconference this afternoon to further air its side.

"There was an alleged siltation in our mine site and that we operate on a watershed, which are not true," Bravo told the *Daily Tribune* when asked what was the most bizarre findings of the DENR in their operations.

When asked if the siltation causes health problems to the people, particularly respiratory problems or cancer, the mining official said "no, it does not."

FNI immediately contacted the office of DENR Secretary Gina Lopez. Her staff sent an email containing the list of

companies recommended for closure and suspension.

PGMC's name was not on the list but that Platinum Development Corp. was there. Platinum Development Corporation is not a subsidiary of FNI and is not related to PGMC.

To date, it also hasn't received an official letter from the DENR.

Any closure of a mine, especially of those operating under valid mineral agreements and permits, entails at least a prior notice of alleged violation, a right to explain, a meaningful investigation and a written decision based on scientific study and empirical proof. These are basic legal requirements before a closure order can be enforced.

"The DENR has not issued any show-cause notice let alone adverse finding against PGMC to warrant the imposition of even the lightest of penalty such as reprimand.

At no time has DENR accused PGMC of destroying the waters in the mine site (with naturally silted water sources owing to its rich laterite deposits) or operating in a watershed area," he added.

Instead, on September 28,

2016, the official website of the DENR announced that PGMC is among those who "passed" the mining audit and whom the audit team "did not find compelling reasons to suspend."

Even more important, in November 2016, PGMC received the written audit findings of the "DENR Mine Audit Team 10 Report for Platinum Group Metals Corporation," which contains a "final" report stating that the "company should continue to operate" because: "(a) the company is ISO 14001 certified;

(b) the company is compliant with the policies, environmental laws, rules and regulations of the Philippine Mining Act and on the issued ECC particularly on the establishment of adequate environmental protection and enhancement measures including safety and housekeeping, and implementation of progressive rehabilitation of mined-out areas; and (c) Social acceptability of the mine operation is high with several social development projects in place which are all well implemented."

PGMC has not received any other written notice since then.

Ed Velasco



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR urged to release mining audit report

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

Mining stakeholders are now pressuring the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to release the audit results after Secretary Gina Lopez vehemently refused to make public the actual documents on the 23 closed and five suspended large-scale mining firms.

Mining companies are wary after reports came out that Lopez made decisions in contrast with the actual recommendations of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), the DENR-attached agency that led the audit.

"At the end of the day, I make the decisions. Their only play here is to recommend but the mining audit was done on July and it took them so long. MGB has been really slow, I'm not happy with them at all," Lopez said.

The Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA) said the full details of the results of the audit has yet to be furnished even to the concerned companies.

"In the spirit of transparency and due process, the PMSEA exhorts the DENR to release the results of the mining audit to clear any doubts and air of suspicions," PMSEA president Louie Sarmiento said.

"A lot of people will be affected and will lose their jobs for decisions that are

arbitrarily done. The President wants reduction in poverty and this is not helping in anyway," he added.

Despite calls for from mining stakeholders to release the results, the Environment chief remained firm on her decision.

"What's important here is the decision I made as Cabinet secretary, not the recommendations. I don't want to show it to you (to the press) whatever it may be," Lopez said referring to the MGB recommendations.

"Just leave it already, I've made my decision. I'm under no obligation to let you know what's happening here," she added.

The MGB has refused to comment on the issue since the audit result announcement.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) said there is an urgent need to look into the basis of the arbitrary closure and suspension of mines.

"The executive branch has been advocating transparency in its policies and programs and on this basis, we feel we have the right to know the process involved and the results of the audit," COMP chairman Artemio Disini said.

Amid issues of lack of due process, the DENR maintained the audit was meticulously observed and the results were anchored on integrity.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Losses from mine closures seen at P77 B annually

BY MADEIRA L. PARRAS

The annual loss from mine closures and suspension orders that the Department of Natural and Environment Resources (DENR) have recently issued could go up as high as P77 billion, a government official said.

Of the total 41 metallic miners, 23 were asked to close down and five were suspended as the result of Environment Secretary Lopez's nationwide audit versus the sector.

Only 12 miners have passed the audit while the decision for one company was left hanging as of now.

Based on the computation provided by a DENR official who refused to be named, the total value of all the mining investments stand at P278.12 billion as of 2016, while the sector paid tax of as much as P10.1 billion in 2015.

Of this, the country is at risk of losing as much as P64.62 billion starting this year if the closure and suspension orders were finally implemented. This could go up to around P77 billion once the DENR decided to suspend the one with "deferred" status.

According to the data the official pro-

vided, companies that were up for closure and suspension account for more than 20 percent of the total mining investments hiring more than 50 percent of the sector's total employment.

Close to 42 percent of the taxes and fees the government collected from the industry also came from them.

This is not far from the estimates provided by Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) last week which stands around the annual losses of P66.6 billion.

As for the taxes paid by large-scale mines, COMP said the government stands to lose as much as P16.7 billion yearly.

In its final list, it turned out that instead of 21 mines like it earlier said, the DENR closed down 23 mining firms and suspended five companies.

Instead of agreeing with the decision of Lopez, another source from the DENR said that Leo Jasareno, the former Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) chief who once led the mining audit and eventually became Lopez's consultant after President Rodrigo Duterte axed him out of the position, should be held accountable for all the issues surrounding the audit and the sector.

This, after Lopez blamed MGB, an agency under the DENR in charge of the

mining sector, for the long-delayed result of the audit.

The silent brawl between the DENR and MGB started when Duterte appointed Mindanao-based Mario Luis Jacinto as Environment Undersecretary and concurrent MGB director to establish a balance within the agency.

As of now, the DENR is yet to provide the recommendation reports of MGB tasked to review the initial reports of the audit for each mining companies that were recommended for suspension.

Lopez declined to provide these documents, saying the MGB report is in contrast with the decision of DENR.

Jasareno led the mining audit at first. Lopez should blame him, not the entire MGB. It was during his term as MGB director when these mining firms start to operate in the first place. Despite the moratorium, former Environment Secretary Ramon Paje let some new mining projects to proceed. Jasareno was there, too, a source from MGB told Business Bulletin.

And if she (Lopez) doesn't think MGB under the new supervision, couldn't perform well, then why did she ask us to review the audit results? It seems to us that she already has her own results even before we

finish reviewing them," she added.

Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA) believes that MGB's report will be crucial in enlightening the sector about the decision of Lopez.

It appears that full details of the result of the Mining Audit have yet to be furnished to the concerned companies. The closures/suspensions, if affirmed, will have far-reaching effect especially in mining communities that plays host to these mines — employees and their dependents, contractors, and mine-dependent small businesses will be the biggest losers, PMSEA President Louie Sarmiento said.

In the spirit of transparency and due process, the PMSEA exhorts the DENR to release the results of the mining audit to clear any doubts and air of suspicions. As always, as a partner organization, the PMSEA is offering its expertise to the DENR, he added.

The Philippines is the world's top nickel ore supplier yet the mining sector still contributes less than 1 percent to the economy.

But Lopez said she doesn't care about the growth of the country's Gross Domestic Product.

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Barbers accuses DENR audit team head of saving some mining companies from closure and suspension

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SOME MINING FIRMS 'FAVORED'

By Ryan
Ponce
Pacpaco

SURIGAO del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers yesterday accused the controversial former executive of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), who was dismissed from his post by President Rodrigo "Rody" Duterte, of allegedly favoring some mining firms which may have not been included for closure and suspension for supposed violation of environmental laws.

Barbers said he was in complete disbelief that Environment Secretary Gina Lopez tasked former DENR Undersecretary Leo Jasareno, who was earlier dismissed by President Duterte, to lead the audit of mining firms, resulting in the closure of 23 big mining companies and the suspension of five others.

"How about those mining companies which were not closed and whose owners are known friends of Mr. Jasareno?" Barbers asked.

He lamented that it was during the time of Jasareno as head of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) of the DENR that alleged violations of various environmental laws were committed.

"Suspect na napaikutan ni Mr. Jasareno si Sec. Lopez," said Barbers who raised serious doubts on the supposed regularity of the audit findings against mining firms. "Mr. Jasareno is not an innocent by-

stander in this masquerade. He is the protagonist. His MGB was supposed to police the mining activities in the country, but now he is saying that these companies committed environmental violations. Such hypocrisy coming from the one who was supposed to make sure that mining laws are followed and implemented.

Barbers said, "Jasareno knew all too well that the violations were happening under his watch - for several years - but he deliberately turned a blind eye on these violations."

Barbers said the DENR should not adopt a color-blind approach to its inquiry on the violations of the mining laws.

"There should be no selective prosecution here. The investigation should cover everything," Barbers said.

He reiterated his call for Lopez to open her eyes if she really wants to reform the graft-laden agency.

Barbers urged Lopez to be fair and investigate Jasareno with the same zeal and vigor.

While he welcomed the role of Lopez to run after violators in the mining industry, Barbers lamented the fact that Lopez puts the blame entirely on the erring mining companies without looking at the root cause of the problem.

Closure order 'arbitrary': COMP

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) is contesting the order of the department of Environment and Natural Resources to close 23 mines, calling the order "arbitrary and done without due process".

The group has written to Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez, who is also the co-chairman of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council to convene the council.

"The executive branch has been advocating transparency in its policies and programs and on this basis, we feel we have the right to know the process involved and the results of the audit," Artemio Disini, COMP chairman, said in the letter.

"Why the personnel of MGB (Mines and Geosciences Bureau) were banned in attending the press conference considering that it is the agency directly regulating mining activities in the country was not justifiably answered during the press conference and this leaves a lot of doubt in the fairness of the entire process," added Disini.

Regina Lopez, DENR secretary, had said the decision to close down the mines is not unified with the recommendation of the MGB and was entirely made in her power as Cabinet secretary.

"We know you are busy with your tax reform measures which we fully support but we feel that being one of the members of the economic team of the president, you will be more in a position to see the likely implications of the closure and suspension of 28 mining operations and the impacts it will bring about in the basic services and livelihood programs provided by companies in their communities in the rural areas," Disini said.

Nelia Halcon, COMP executive vice president, said in a briefing last Friday the incident will not only affect the local stock exchange but also international bourses, and will "not bring a good impression about how we invite investors in the country."

"When you look into the advocacy, Gina is a crusader just like the president and in that instance, they see eye to eye when Gina talks of social justice, whatever that

Lopez said the closure order does not jive with the recommendation of the MGB and was made in her power as Cabinet secretary.



means... You're like looking at a fairy tale situation which never happens even in an industrialized country," Halcon said.

According to Lopez, the erring mining firms may file their appeal against the decision but President Duterte has the final say on the matter.

In a separate event, President Duterte has expressed support for DENR's clamp down but COMP noted the president, being a lawyer, knows the law and legalities behind the closure and suspension orders and would only support the decision if deemed fair.

In a separate statement, Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA) president, Louie Sarmiento said that his group remains firm in its commitment for responsible mining notwithstanding the announcement of the DENR on the possible closure and suspension of mining operations.

"The closures/suspensions, if affirmed, will have far reaching effect especially in mining communities that plays host to these mines' employees and their dependents, contractors, and mine-dependent small businesses will be the biggest losers. In the spirit of transparency and due process, the PMSEA exhorts the DENR to release the results of the mining audit to clear any doubts and air of suspicions. As always, as a partner organization, the PMSEA is offering its expertise to the DENR," he said in a text message.

Malaya

Business Insight

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Miners say 1.2M affected by closures

THE planned closure of 23 Philippine mines, mostly nickel producers, and the suspension of five others will affect about 1.2 million people, miners said, as some vowed to take legal action to contest the decision.

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Regina Lopez ordered the closures and suspensions last week as she announced the results of a months-long audit on the country's 41 mines aimed at halting mining operations judged to have harmed the environment.

Artemio Disini, chairman of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, told a briefing that the first option for affected miners would be to appeal to President Rodrigo Duterte "before going to the courts".

"We have a total 1.2 million people affected including family members," Disini said.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez said he would meet shortly with other cabinet members to check if they have "emergency employment programs" that could absorb workers who will lose jobs.

"My next concern is the impact on local government finances because (miners) pay a lot of taxes to local governments," Dominguez told reporters.

Enrique Fernandez, president of suspended nickel miner Eramen Minerals Inc, which has now been ordered to close, said staff levels had already fallen to 150 from more than 1,000 previously and more workers could go by the end of the month.

"The problem is the relationship between the government and the industry. The government is more of a regulator rather than a partner in development," Fernandez told Reuters.

Still largely unexplored, the Philippines is the world's top nickel ore supplier, but the mining sector contributes less than 1 percent to the overall economy.

Only 3 percent of 9 million hectares (22 million acres) identified by the state as having high mineral reserves is currently being mined, according to government data.

Ronald Recidoro from the Chamber of Mines said that affected miners would "definitely" seek legal action if President Rodrigo Duterte denied their appeal to overturn Lopez's orders.

Duterte, who last year said the Philippines could survive without a mining industry, on Thursday threw his support behind Lopez's latest action.

Lopez "took it upon herself to be the judge and the executioner of the mining industry," said Vicente Lao who owns chromite producer Mt. Sinai Mining Exploration and Development Corp, which has also been ordered to close.

Most of the miners say they have yet to receive any official instruction from Lopez's agency.

"Accordingly, our mining operations continue," gold miner Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co which was ordered suspended, told the stock exchange. Lepanto said it "has not violated

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**TRADE SECRETARY SAYS****Miners need only to correct 'deficiencies'**

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is optimistic that companies whose mining operations have been closed would be able to bounce back and return to normal soon, since most of them will simply have to do minor adjustments.

Ramon Lopez, DTI secretary, in a chance interview said the key here is for the miners to "correct their deficiencies."

When asked of the possible impact of the closure of the 23 mines, Lopez said: "We have to count the details, how much capacity would be lost. We are collating the numbers especially on employment."

The DTI is helping to find employment options for those dislocated by the closure by getting rehired by other industries or giving them livelihood assistance.

The Philippines has not been getting any new investments in mining and Lopez said since the start of this administration, the thrust has always been to encourage existing mining companies here to do processing for more value-added operations instead of just exporting the ore.

"That also includes the (requirement) for these mines to bring their operations up to standards," he added.

"If they would correct their operations (and make them) within standards, they will be back. Other companies have big investments. Based on what I saw, they are within standards, other mines are modern. But I don't know what the DENR saw in the audit. They only have to do little adjustment especially the big ones. I don't have basis for the others..." Lopez said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

MONDAY / FEBRUARY 6, 2017
WWW.INQUIRER.NET

OPINION

Let our land heal



BREW POINT

MARTIN ANDANAR

There is a reason why our mining sites do not feature on postcards. They are not pretty.

From the air, open pit mining sites resemble ugly gashes on the land. Forests are denuded. Erosion is wholesale. Mine tailings trickle down the rivers and the sea, bringing down toxic mud that exterminates wildlife.

The costs that mining inflicts on our environment are large. The benefits brought to the poor communities are meager. The benefits brought to our economy, according to antimining critics, are negligible.

Our business community frets over the consequences of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' action on the mines. Operations of over two dozen large mines were ordered to halt. Licenses were either suspended or cancelled. Businessmen estimate that from one to two million jobs will be wiped out by the DENR's action. There will be misery and, maybe, even starvation in communities dependent on mining jobs.

The mining companies affected by the DENR's dramatic action made it known they will appeal the case. The audit process, they claim, was not transparent. The dramatic action was unjust. The sanctity of contracts was violated. Billions in mining investments will be flushed down the drain. Billions in potential public revenues will be wiped off the balance sheet.

But the DENR says the apparent business losses are nothing compared to the irreparable damage the mining industry deals our environment. Our people will suffer the consequences of environmental damage for

generations. In the DENR's ledger, there are no upsides for mining. There are only downsides for our land and our people.

We are bound to see a flare-up in a lingering debate. Opinions are deeply divided over the mining question. There are those who see mining as a patently bad thing. Others see mining as a boon to our economy.

Since Republic Act No. 7942 (Mining Act) was passed 22 years ago the debate has been intense. Mining advocates tout the Mining Act as an enlightened piece of legislation, incorporating best practices around the world. It requires mining companies to exercise care for the environment and perform remediation of the land after the mining is done. Antimining militants say it is an irredeemable disaster.

As soon as the Mining Act was passed, it was taken to court. It took the Supreme Court a whole decade to rule on the constitutionality of this act. When it did, the mining industry experienced a boom of sorts. Billions of dollars

in mining investments flowed into our economy. But environmental activists continue the fight in other ways, bringing forth examples of wanton destruction and dislocation of poor communities.

Our archipelago is highly mineralized. We are, in fact, the biggest producer of nickel in the world. Nickel is a mineral that can only be accessed through open pit mining. The abundance of minerals in our islands has been both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because of the wealth it could create; a curse because it is an invitation to rape the land.

Too, mining deepens disparities in our societies. It makes the rich richer and pushes poor communities, especially those of indigenous peoples, to the extremes. Those who take the side of dislocated communities oppose mining. Those in the business of creating corporate wealth support growing this industry. There is hardly any middle ground.

Although it was the DENR chief who decreed the closures, and the President expressed support for his environment secretary, the debate over mining is not bound to end anytime soon. The mining companies will, no doubt, seek every legal recourse available. This will include seeking relief from the Supreme Court that ruled the Mining Act constitutional in 2005.

In the meantime, the mine closures are expected to be enforced immediately. Those closures will, at the very least, allow time to heal the damaged land. The DENR's decision can never be fully reversed in practice. Even if the courts intervene on behalf of the mining companies, this will only pave the way for stricter regulations on mining activities.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Gina and political will

We may not always totally agree with her perspective of how her job ought to be done, but there is no doubt Gina Lopez is one of a few Duterte Cabinet members with the political will to get things done.

To those who say she is too extreme, I would say she has even mellowed. I have known Gina for over 20 years now, have worked with her and I have always admired her focus on getting seemingly impossible projects done.

In a way, Gina seems extreme to those affected, but only because the damage done to the environment by many mining operations has also been very extreme.

The aerial view of ugly open pit mines and the very visible contamination of rivers we saw on television news strongly prove Gina's case against the socially irresponsible mines.

Indeed, no right thinking Filipino can avoid feeling anger upon seeing how some of our parasitical economic elite have spoiled our environment through the years. It is painful to see our bald mountains whose forest cover has been cleared by loggers, legal and illegal.

Now miners have scarred our mountains in their lustful desire to earn billions of dollars in metal ore exports at the expense not just of our environment, but also of our people. Gina is right. They have no sense of social justice.

The miners may dole out temporary jobs and even provide some social services, but after they are done, people are left worse off. Their poverty worsens as they also lose the ability to make a living in a spoiled environment.

Dealing with the mining industry is just one example of Gina's political will. How she carried out the order of President Duterte to clear Laguna de Bay of fish pens is another. Former presidents made some noise about do-

ing that but nothing happened. Gina made it happen on the 6th month of President Duterte's watch.

She knew she couldn't depend on the PNP to help her, so she enlisted the AFP and the Coast Guard. It is said that powerful people own those fish pens, but that didn't scare Gina. Now residents along the lake can fish there again and the lake's slow death through pollution from the fish pens can be stopped.

In Aklan, Gina stopped a Chinese boat from dredging Aklan River without proper permits. The Chinese operation, suspected to be black sand mining, had been the subject of complaints from residents who fear the river bank may suffer further erosion. But the local police and authorities did nothing.

Again, Gina brought in law enforcement units from

the AFP, Coast Guard and the NBI. They found out that not only was the Chinese operation not cleared by DENR, the Chinese workers did not have passports, much less proper work permits from the Bureau of Immigration.

In Palawan, Gina stopped a subdivision developer from continuing to strip a shore area of mangrove trees. Again, she found local officials and local police conspiring with the developer in total disregard of environmental laws.

Gina's DENR team removed fences and other structures in the area, including at least 100 houses. There is an existing special proclamation that has declared Palawan as a mangrove reservation. That means any type of development or conversion of mangrove areas is illegal.

Any Filipino who loves this country and is capable of thinking beyond his self interest should be happy we have a public official like Gina Lopez doing what should have been done decades ago. If we had someone like her even as late as the People Power era, our environmental situation would not be

as dire.

Of course it is possible to be protective of the environment while exploiting some of our natural resources. It is called responsible mining. Philex has shown it can be done.

Responsible mining may cost some amount of money, but it is money well spent. When Philex had an unfortunate accident, they painstakingly instituted remedial measures to mitigate the accident's negative impact. They started operations only after making sure the environment is protected.

That is something many of those mines closed down by Gina are obviously not doing. The news film footage showed the amount of environmental degradation in Surigao and Dinagat Island. There is no way such massive damage can be justified.

Indeed, those mining companies and their owners should be forced to make remediation measures right away. Government should require them to put up sufficient money in an escrow fund to ensure remediation efforts would be carried out.

It is encouraging that President Duterte has said he is standing by Gina's actions. But Gina should also heed the President's advice to be fair and legal. Gina is known to be emotional about matters close to her heart like social justice and the environment. She must make sure she doesn't get carried away by such a strong sense of righteousness so as to make her look rather extreme.

And Gina has to be transparent. It was not good for her to deny media details of her decision to close down 23 mining operations. The public has a right to know what criteria were used and how the mines failed based on those criteria. The science behind her decision is very important to her credibility.

Gina cannot assume that just because she is 100 percent sure she is doing something good that all stakeholders will agree. Whether she likes it or not, her job is very political and politics is the art of compromise.

I am not saying she should compromise the public good. There must be

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Demand... From B-2

ways of making human activities like the development of natural resources happen without causing the kind of environmental damage we now see. Her work is not as black and white as she may think.

Dr. Carlo Arcilla, a respected UP professor of geosciences and head of the Earth Materials Science Laboratory of the National Institute of Geological Sciences has a strong point in an e-mail he sent me.

"We are interested to know what the bases are for closing mines – we have to teach future geologists and engineers the correct and scientific ways to mine so as not to endanger the environment.

"The people who can clean up the mess in mining are engineers and scientists, who spend time studying these phenomena. Those who claim they are the ONLY people who can clean the environment and the ONLY people who love the environment and this country, without adequate training are seriously misguided."

I doubt Gina will get confirmation of her appointment by the Commission of Appointments any time soon, or at all. But for so long as she has the support of President Duterte, her lack of confirmation shouldn't matter.

Gina should remember that even President Duterte is a political creature and subject to all sorts of political pressure. It is good the President is willing to spend political capital

on her thus far. For this reason she should always keep the President in the loop and never make momentous announcements like the closure of a large number of mines without his knowledge.

President Duterte said during the campaign that his heart bleeds and his blood boils when he sees how our environment has been badly abused. In a sense, it seems protecting the environment, like the anti drug war, is also an important priority for President Duterte.

And as is the case in the anti drug war, the President realizes that protecting the environment requires strong measures, even if controversial. Perhaps, he can understand why Gina must do her version of EJK to attain her objective.

I guess the reason President Duterte is protective of her is because they are of the same mold. They speak their minds with no regard to political repercussions. They both strongly stand by what they believe in.

And the President can sleep knowing that Gina will not cause him embarrassment through some corrupt act. There are very few Cabinet members I know who, like Gina, cannot be corrupted. I am sure that means a lot to President Duterte.

So again I say, Go Gina, Go but be more careful. Be fair and legal and not be emotionally impulsive.

Boo Chanco's e-mail address is bchanco@gmail.com. Follow him on Twitter @boochanco

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Environmental Waco

MAYBE it's because of the coincidence of the month, but I don't know why I equate the press conference last week of the DENR secretary-designate (that is and should be how she should be referred to unless and until she is confirmed) with the FBI siege on the Branch Dravidians in Waco, Texas in 1998. Maybe it's because both occurred in February. Maybe also it's because just as the Waco siege was drawn out, ending only in April of the same year, this whole issue about mines being closed and others remaining open will also be a long-drawn out issue.

Or maybe because there is some madness in both?

Some time back I was gently asked by one of my big bosses to stop writing about the Madam. We didn't want to alienate her, or get her on our backs. And I complied. Anyway I was still grieving from the death of my father and my Cleo.

But after this last press con I cannot hold back any longer.

So again I have a piece that could get me fired.

Then again I take comfort in an exchange I overheard between my mother and her mother, years ago in the 1970s when we all used to live within the same compound in Cubao. My Lola had summoned my mother, and believe it or not I eavesdropped on their conversation. Said my Lola "Josie, Bakit mo pinapayagang sagutin ka ng mga anak mo?" ("Josie, why do you allow your sons to answer back?"). To which my mother gave a reply I never forgot: "Mama, Hindi ko Sila pinaparaal sa UP para Lang tumahimik at Hindi mag-isip" (Mother, I didn't send them to UP for them to shut up and not think.).

So there.

I first have to commend the Secretary-designate for a pro-

JOSE BAYANI BAYLON



'Overnight, ISO14001 was no longer enough. There was to be a new audit. To be conducted by locals - including anti mining NGOs - using a standard or standards only God or Buddha knows.'

fessionally crafted PR-campaign launched just in time for her confirmation hearings. The use of videos in social media is excellent, the messaging masterful, and the timing of the announcement of the suspensions and closures a work of Trump-like genius. In her wake she has left the mining industry scrambling for a response, as her true believers cheer and hail her an environmental Joan of Arc.

Meanwhile, affected communities are in limbo.

I however am not taken by the campaign to paint this effort as "heroic" and historic (doesn't a social message message say that the DENR will do something historic on Valentines Day?). Instead what I see is a continuing effort to push an agenda that was very clear from the very beginning - which is to clear the Philippines of mining and convert the country into one giant ecotourism center.

When she was still outside of government the Madam was very clear: there is no such thing as responsible mining and mining is bad and should be ended.

When she was appointed DENR secretary however she received a number of remind-

ers from the President - we have a law (the Philippine Mining Act of 1995) and for as long as you follow the law, preferably meeting Canadian or Australian standards, you're okay.

And so she launched an audit of all mines.

But wait: actually on her first day in office she held a briefing for the DENR leadership to introduce herself. In that July 1 event, she was advised by then MGB director Leo Jasareno that the mining firms had been made subject to ISO 14001, a stringent international standard on environmental management that would determine which operations were deserving of their permit and which weren't.

Jasareno, who early on was turning out to be Madam's favorite, knew what he was talking about as it was he who implemented the requirement imposed by the previous DENR secretary. With her standing above him on the stage, he explained the process to his new boss, calling ISO 14001 "the highest, most acceptable level of efficiency in terms of extracting the minerals while at the same time insuring that the environment is not compromised."

He even added: "If a mine

will have an ISO certification, 14001, it will mean that its basic operation will be at par with international standards."

Excited at the idea of the existence of such an audit the Secretary-designate then took the microphone said these words: "ISO 14001 is just another way of saying responsible mining. If you are really really responsible, like really responsible, then you have to have the highest standards and the standards we want for our beloved country is ISO 14001."

She even added "They have to do that. That's the law. That's what the President said. You follow the law."

But then she had a big problem. You see when then-Secretary Ramon Paje required mining operations to get ISO certified, they did. They underwent one full year of rigid audit based on "the highest" standards.

And, what do you know, they passed.

The Madam must have been horrified!

Overnight, ISO14001 was no longer enough. There was to be a new audit. To be conducted by locals - including anti mining NGOs - using a standard or standards only God or Buddha knows. It is this audit that has now become the basis for the closures and suspensions. It is this audit that has now left hundreds of thousands of poor Filipinos in limbo.

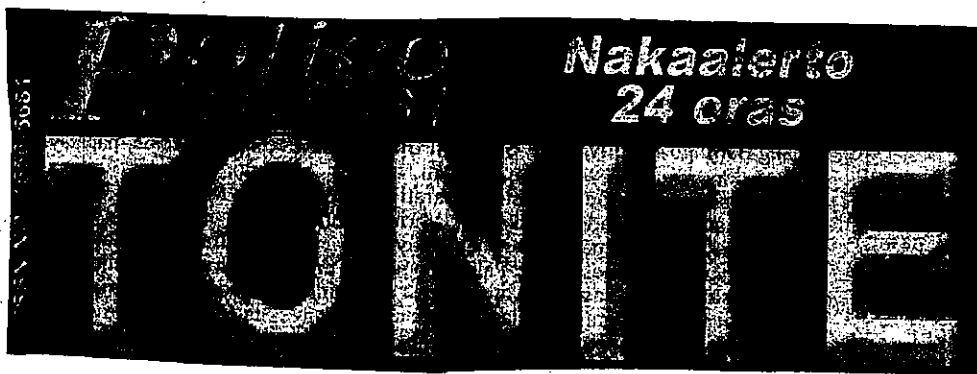
An audit conducted over four days.

Think about it: the ISO certification required a year-long audit by an international organization. The Madam Audit was conducted over four days by an audit team with anti mining NGOs.

Waco.

That's no Joan of Arc if you ask me. That's the Inquisition.

Now to make my CV.....



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



CRIS A. IBON

DOUBLE STANDARD DAW ANG PAGPAPATUPAD NG BATAS NG DENR!

PATULOY na napapanatili ang mga kabundukan, natitibag ang mga burol, dahil, lambak at maging kapatagan at hitgit sa lahat ay

nagbubuwis pa ng buhay ang mga mamamayan dahil sa ibat-ibang uri ng delubiyong likha ng pagkawasak ng kalikasan at sa pagkalason mula sa mga kemikong gamit sa ilegal at maging sa government-regulated na pagmimina.

Ito ang mukha ng marami at malalaking kabundukan at mga kanayunan sa CALABARZON, lalo na sa lalawigan ng Batangas na nauna nang pinagpistahan ng mga mamamahayag sa panahong kumikilos ang noon ay dating ordinaryong concerned environmentalist - ngayon ay Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Secretary Gina P. Lopez.

Si Madam Secretary ay nanguna para labanan noon ang mapamertwisyo bagamat government-regulated mining sa bayan ng Lobo kasama ang relihiyosong sektor, ngunit kapuna-punang hindi naman inaakusahan niya Lopez at ng mga kasama nitong grupo ang operasyon ng mga ilegal na pagmimina sa kanugnog na bayan ng Taysan.

Naisip tuloy ng mga taga-Batangas na nagpakitang gilad lamang si Madam Lopez upang magkaroon ng media mileages ang kanyang adbokasya para sa kalikasan, mapag-usapan ito ng husto at mapuna ng mga namiminuno sa pamahalaan.

Hindi naman nagkamali ng pagtataya ang mga na-

kararami na ang hakbang ni Lopez ay pangtawag pansin lamang pagkat nahirang nga itong DENR Secretary ng administrasyon ni Pangulong Rodrigo "Digong" Duterte.

Sa awa ng Diyos, ilang buwan nang nakapwesto si Lopez ngunit tuloy pa rin ang mapaminsalang pagmimina at maging ang government sponsored mining sa bayan ng Lobo, gayundin ang katulad nitong mga aktibidad sa kanugnog na bayan ng Taysan, Balayan, Calaca, Calatagan, Nasugbu, Mabini at maging sa Batangas City atbpa.

Sa quarry operations sa Brgy. San Marcelino sa bayan ng Taysan iniulat na dati nang humahakot daw ng panambak ang First Balfour, ang kompanyang isa sa mga pag-aari ng mga Lopez at nagsusupply nito (panambak) sa Port Construction Project sa Batangas City.

Baka naman kaya hindi nga ito inaakusahan ni Madam Gina, totoo po ba ito mam, hek,hek, hek, nagtatanong lang naman?

Sa pinakahuling kaganapan naman ay may 23 mining firms ang sinasabi sa ulat na naipasara o kaya ay pinasuspinde ni Lopez ang operasyon at ang mga ito ay nasa mga lalawigan ng Benguet, Bulacan, Zambales, Homonhon, Dinagat Island at Surigao del Norte.

Ngunit kahit isa man lamang sa humigit-kumulang ay may 50 minahan at quarry, karamihan nito ay ilegal ang operasyon sa lalawigan ng Batangas ay walang naipasara o naipapahinto ang operasyon ng DENR sa lalim ng pamamahala ni Lopez.

Kung papalarin ang SIKRETA at makikipagtitulungan lamang sa atin ang Batangas Provincial Environment Offices (PENRO) ay iisa-isahin natin ang mga pangalan ng mga mining firms na ito, nakalalamang ang bilang ay wala pa ding Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) mula sa DENR para mag-operate ng mining at quarrying

sa lalawigan ng Batangas sa ating mga susunod na kolum, abangan...

REKLAMO VS PAIHIAN NINA NANAY LOLIT AT ROY SA PADRE ARCIA

NAPAKALAKI daw pala

ng lingguhang "timbre"

ang tinatanggap ng opisina

ni Padre Garcia, Police

Chief, Sr. Inspector Fernan-

do Fernando mula sa oper-

ators ng magnananakaw ng

petroleum products na

nagkukuta sa Brgy. Bawi,

bayang ng Padre Garcia, Ba-

tangas.

Ang mga kargamentong petrolyo at liquefied petro-

leum gas (lpg) ng mga tanker trucks at capsule mula sa

Shell Refinery, Batangas City ay doon ipinasisipsip nina

Roy Florez at Nanay Lolit sa nasabing barangay.

Ikinakanta na bilas daw ni Padre Garcia Mayor Micha-

el Angelo Rivera na isang alias Nonit at ang sidekick

nitong si Kap Tisoy ang godfathers ng mga buriki king na

si Roy at ng Reyna ng buriki na si Nanay Lolit na kamag-

anakan pa mandin daw ni Mayor Rivera, naku po!!!

Kaya naman pala hindi matatag ang operasyon ng mga

ito, e Batangas PNP Provincial Commander, SSupt. Le-

opoldo Cabanag, talasan po lang ninyo sir ang yong pa-

kirandam may nagbabalita kasi na ating mga KASIKRE-

TA na may Php 20K kada weekly na kinokolekta ang

mga kolektor para sa iyong pangalan?

Para sa komento: Cpf 09174949733, email:

cris_ibon@yahoo.com

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Gov't. eyes stakeholders' help to 'revive'
Laguna de Bay

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA jonlmayuga

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) are eyeing to tap various stakeholders within the Laguna de Bay region to help revive the country's largest freshwater lake.

Environment Undersecretary Arturo T. Valdez, also the National Anti-Environmental Crime Task Force (NAECTF) head, said reviving the lake to make it productive once more begins with clearing the lake of illegal fish pens and fish cages. He said the ambitious target to clear the lake's surface by June 2017 is possible only with the help of various stakeholders.

Disappointed by the progress of the ongoing demolition of the illegal structures in Laguna de Bay, which started on January 26, the official said they are now looking at tapping people living in communities near the Laguna de Bay.

He said the DENR and LLDA, led by newly appointed General Manager Jaime Medina, will meet this week to work out a plan that will hasten the on-going demolition of fish pens and fish cages within the Laguna de Bay.

Medina, who took over as general manager of the LLDA on Monday last week, said they target to clear the lake's 2,000 hectares by the end of year.

2,000 ha

The area of Laguna de Bay that the Laguna Lake Development Authority is targeting to clear

Valdez said that, while LLDA's target is realistic, the NAECTF's goal is to clear the lake of all illegal fish pens and cages by June 2017.

"It, [demolition] is too slow. I am disappointed. We need to [hasten] the demolition to meet our target to clear [the lake of] all illegal structures by June this year," Valdez said.

He said the demolition crew has been removing fish pens and fish cages since January 26, but said the job will be a lot faster with small fishermen helping in the operation. According to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) data, there are 23,678 registered fishermen who regularly catch fish within Laguna

de Bay as of 2016.

During the first day of the dismantling of illegal structures, the LLDA was able to remove two fish pens only, effectively clearing 100 hectares of the lake's surface.

"We still need to meet [Medina] to work things out. But definitely, fishermen who will take part will receive something for helping demolish fish pens and fish cages," Valdez said.

He also said he has also reached out to at least five bishops in the dioceses around the Laguna de Bay region to help accomplish the task.

Valdez said the only way to revive the Laguna de Bay is by stopping the operation of fish pens and fish cages. That way, he said, small fishermen would have more areas to cover to fish.

"If the community will help us, the demolition will be a lot faster," he said. He added that abandoned fish cages and fish pens would be the first to go.

Valdez said operators of fish cages and fish pens are welcome to voluntarily demolish their fish pens and fish cages after harvesting their stocks. He, however, warned that all fish-cage operations must abide by the fish-cage operation moratorium ordered by Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez.

The Laguna de Bay, the country's largest freshwater lake, is also the biggest aquaculture hub in the country, with over 13,000 hectares of its 90,000 hectares surface area being utilized to raise *bangus* (Milk fish) and tilapia.

The estimated annual fish output from fish-cage and fish-

corda (MT), according to the National Statistics Authority, is twice the 36,185.25 caught in open waters during the same period.

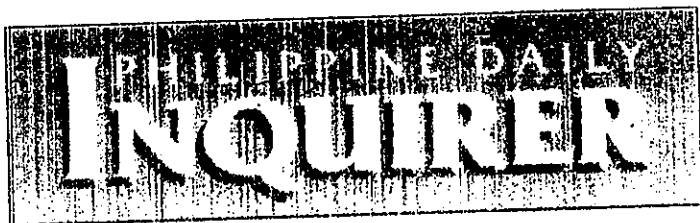
Most *bangus* and tilapia supplies in the local market in Metro Manila and around the Laguna de Bay came from the bay, fanning fears that the price of the two most common and affordable fish in the market will go up in the ensuing months as supply might go down. The number of fish cages and fish pens within the Laguna de Bay swelled since the 1970s because of its popularity among businessmen, who took advantage of the government's policy to promote food security.

According to LLDA, only municipal fishing is allowed in Laguna de Bay, but commercial fishing in deep sea, where the depth is beyond 7 meters, is also allowed.

Last December, taking the cue from President Duterte, Lopez ordered a one-year moratorium in the building of fish pens and fish cages in the area. Since last December, the DENR has not renewed the permits of fish-cage and fish-pen operators, making the operation illegal.

This effectively stopped the operation of 223 fishing companies, 14 cooperatives and 117 individuals with permits to operate prior to the moratorium.

The DENR, through the NAECTF chief, vowed to spare fish traps, or *baklad*, built by small fishermen to boost their daily fish catch. However, Valdez said he would have to meet with *baklad* operators for regulatory purposes.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

NEWS BRIEFS

Zambales mayor charged for not issuing business permits
State prosecutors have formally charged a Zambales mayor before the Sandiganbayan for refusing to issue a business permit to two mining firms in 2011, even as they complied with the requirements. Santa Cruz Mayor Luisito Marty faces two counts of violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and one count of usurpation of legislative powers under the Revised Penal Code. Marty allegedly had no legal basis in refusing to grant a business permit to DMCI's Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. as well as Zambales Chromite Mining Company Inc. in April 2011, according to the Ombudsman. His actions allegedly caused undue injury to the two firms, which were prevented from conducting operations in the area. —VINCE F. NONATO

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Mining concerns to affect market

By Jenniffer B. Austria

TRADING at the Philippine Stock Exchange is expected to remain volatile this week, as investors watch the new policies of US President Donald Trump and weigh the impact of the Environment Department's closure and suspension orders against 28 mining companies.

Analysts said investors would likely focus on political developments overseas, particularly on how Trump would address US economic growth through his fiscal expenditure program and other matters that could affect trade and fund flows.

"Political headlines are likely to drive events this week, espe-

cially sequel pronouncements from US President Trump," 2TradeAsia.com said.

Analysts said on the domestic front, investors would monitor developments in the mining sector as the closure and suspension orders against mining companies were expected to have a significant impact on employment

numbers and foreign direct investments.

Trading is expected within a range of 7,000 to 7,400 points this week, analysts said.

The Philippine Stock Exchange index, the 30-company benchmark, dropped 1.5 percent last week to close at 7,226.70 on Feb. 3, while the broader all-share index went down 0.9 percent to 4,375.03.

All major sub-indices ended in the red, led by mining and oil index which plunged 2.3 percent after the Environment Department issued closure and suspension orders against a number of mining firms.

Holdings firms also dipped 2.2 percent while services and property went down 1.7 percent and 0.4 percent, respectively.

Foreign investors were net

sellers last week by P674 million, while average daily turnover declined to P5.2 billion from the previous week's average of P6.2 billion.

Top gainers last week were Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp. which surged 65 percent to P0.66, Arthaland Corp. which jumped 45.6 percent to P1.15 and Phoenix Petroleum Philippines Inc. which advanced 14 percent to P6.83.

Heavy losers were mostly mining firms that were affected by the closure and suspension orders by the Environment Department.

Marcventures Holdings Inc. and Global Ferronickel Holdings Inc. requested for voluntary trading halt on their shares last week as they sought additional information about the orders issued by the Environment Department.

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STOCK MARKET

PSEI TO TREAD SLOWLY AFTER TRUMP, MINING WOES

The local stock barometer would remain lackluster this week while awaiting fresh leads such as the local inflation trajectory and the start of the fourth quarter corporate earnings season, analysts said.

Last week, the Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) lost 106.97 points or 1.46 percent to close at 7,226.70 as investors as-

sessed US president Donald Trump's policies while local investors monitored the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' order to stop the operations of several mines.

BDO Unibank strategist Jonathan Ravelas sees the PSEi moving between 7,000 to 7,400 this week, with investors taking

cue from the latest stream of fourth quarter corporate earnings. Another key macroeconomic data to watch out for would be the February local inflation report and what tone the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas would adopt thereafter.

"If inflation trends higher than 3 percent, then the BSP may have to act faster in the

first half," Ravelas said.

Jose Mari Lacson, head of research at ATR Asset Management, said the market seemed to be facing resistance at current levels. This week through next week, he said the market may have a downside risk to the extent of 100 index points.

—DORIS DUMLAO-ABADILLA, INQ

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Biodiversity office calls: Protect Tañon Strait

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), called for the protection of Tañon Strait against commercial fishers, and emphasized that overfishing could lead to ecosystem collapse.

"We believe that commercial fishing in an unsustainable manner is one of the major threats to our marine environment. Overfishing, as one of the many negative environmental consequences, is a primary cause of species extinction and ecosystem collapse," DENR-BMB Director Mundita G. Lim said in a letter addressed to Oceana.

The bureau expressed concern over the proposed moratorium on commercial fishing ban in the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape, one of the largest marine protected areas in the Philippines.

Some local government officials in Cebu initiated the proposal, which, if approved, will allow commercial fishing within municipal waters, beginning at 10.1 kilometers from the coast.

Municipal waters include biologically important near-shore areas, where mangroves, seagrass and coral reefs thrive. Near-shore areas serve as the nesting and breeding ground for fish and other marine organisms. "As managers of the seascape, our positions and decisions will always consider sustainable management of the area, wherein the overall health of the vulnerable marine resources should not be jeopardized and the community benefits will be ensured," Lim said.

Tañon Strait is a critical marine habitat and important migratory path for 14 of the 27 species of whales and dolphins in the Philippines. It boasts of at least 90 species of fish, 20 species of crustaceans, 26 species of mangroves and 18,830 hectares of coral reef.

The rare chambered nautilus, giant diamond-backed squid and critically endangered dugong can also be found in its waters. It is also a rich fishing ground for artisanal or municipal fishers who live along the coastal areas within the 42 cities and municipalities in the provinces of Cebu, Negros Oriental and Negros Occidental.

"Oceana is firm in its stand that commercial-fishing activity is prohibited in marine protected areas. It is clearly defined in the National Integrated Protected Area System (NIPAS) Act, in the Amended Fisheries

Code, and supported by the Tañon Strait General Management Plan," said lawyer Gloria Estenzo Ramos, vice president for Oceana Philippines.

Ramos said commercial fishers continue to enter and illegally fish in municipal waters in a top-slided competition with the municipal fisherfolk for the declining fish stock—marginalizing them further, the fisherfolk being among the poorest of the poor in the Philippines.

"Allowing the commercial fishing activity is not only unlawful, it also violates and is, in fact, an abdication of the mandates of the various agencies, including local government units (LGUs), of the shared responsibility to maintain a healthful and balanced ecology, protect our marine wealth and ensure that the livelihood of our suffering small fisherfolk will not be impaired further," Ramos added.

The DENR-BMB also echoed the need to give preferential access to municipal fisherfolk, who are allowed to use passive or nondestructive fishing gears—such as hook and lines, fish traps and crab pots—within municipal waters and consider Tañon Strait their fishing areas for decades.

"The marginalized fishermen should be given preferential access to their traditional fishing grounds and should not be limited by the technological capacities of the commercial fishers," Lim said.

She also said the DENR-BMB, through the Protected Area Office (PAO) of Tañon Strait, would closely coordinate with LGUs to address the issue on commercial fishing.

The PAO of Tañon Strait, along with LGUs, fisheries bureau and other national enforcement agencies, are collaborating in the seaborne patrol operations and apprehension of commercial fishers as part of the strengthened enforcement measures to deter illegal and destructive fishing within the protected seascape.

The Department of Agriculture (DA), likewise, is strengthening the fight against illegal fishing. Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol committed to recommend to President Duterte the suspension of local government officials who fail to stop illegal fishing in their areas within six months.

Duterte will award the country's outstanding coastal communities, which search the DA launched last year. It includes a successful campaign against illegal fishing among the criteria.

WOUNDED EAGLE PUTS FOREST PROTECTION IN SPOTLIGHT

Philippine eagle Sarangani Pride flies to its freedom in Mt. Busa after recuperating from a pellet wound in the stomach. —PHOTO FROM SARANGANI INFORMATION OFFICE

MAITUM, SARANGANI—It took a Philippine eagle that had recovered from its wound to show the need to protect the forests of a mountain in the province that is not only home to the endangered bird but other species of animals as well.

When the eagle, christened Sarangani Pride by Sen. Manny Pacquiao, was released back to the wild on Jan. 31, a local official said it showed the need to protect Mt. Busa, home to the eagle and other endangered species.

When it was time to release Sarangani Pride, the bird just stayed in its cage for at least 15 minutes, according to Beth Ramos, municipal information officer who witnessed the eagle's release.

The bird, estimated to be a year old and technically still an eaglet, had to be coaxed to leave the confines of its cage and enjoy its freedom in the mountain, its natural habitat, Ramos said.

Ramos said the bird finally flew out of the cage around 8 a.m., perching on a tree a few meters away and staying there briefly, adjusting its

A few minutes later, Sarangani Pride disappeared into the wild.

Bird's ordeal

Sarangani Pride had been wounded and found limping on Jan. 2 by a farmer, who reported his discovery to local officials.

The officials immediately called for help from the Philippine Eagle Center (PEC) in Davao City, which sent veterinarians over.

The vets found the bird severely dehydrated and malnourished. X-ray results showed a pellet embedded in its stomach.

PEC vets found the wound already healing, however, and

the bird needed just food and water to fully recover.

Sarangani Pride spent a month at PEC to fully heal.

Dennis Salvador, PEC director, said PEC personnel decided to release the eagle back into the wild when it was well enough to fly.

"We released it on the basis of its health and physical conditions," Salvador said. "It is basically doing okay."

Awareness

But a team of biologists was tasked with monitoring the bird's health for 10 days to help ensure that it survives.

Emma Nebran, executive director of the Environmental Conservation and Protection

Center, said the area in Tuana-datu, Sitio Lahac, where the bird was found, already forms part of Mt. Busa, a known biodiversity area in Sarangani province.

Mt. Busa covers an area of 114,000 hectares, straddling the towns of Kiamba, Maitum and Maasim.

"To protect this eaglet and its parents, the local government has to make people aware of the need to protect the eagles and the environment," Salvador said.

"(The local government should also) show that it has the political will to enforce the laws of the land," he added.

Gov. Steve Chiongblan pledged funds for the protection of Mt. Busa, where other endangered species, such as tarsiers, wild deer, pigs, monkeys, bats and civets, thrive.

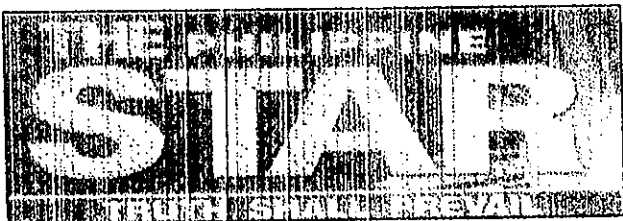
Despite reports of rampant illegal logging, the presence of an eagle showed a thriving wildlife here, said Mayor Alexander Reganit.

"This only proves that Maitum still has a thick forest that we ought to preserve and protect," Reganit said. —ALLAN NAWAL INQ

This only proves that Maitum still has a thick forest that we ought to preserve and protect

Alexander Reganit

Maitum town mayor



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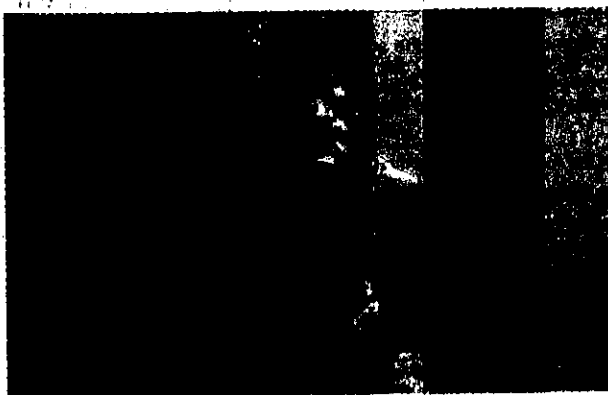
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Pioneer helps restore reefs, plant mangroves in Hundred Islands



A diver carries coral fragments for transplantation.



Diver applies Pioneer Epoxy Clay Aqua to attach coral fragment.

The Pioneer Adhesives Foundation Inc. (PAFI/ The Pioneer Foundation) recently partnered with Alaminos City in Pangasinan to bring its environmental campaign, "Our Earth, Our Responsibility" to The Hundred Islands.

The collaboration, a three-day event comprising underwater coral transplantation and mangrove planting activities, is in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development and the Pangasinan State University.

The campaign began with PAFI's project entitled Reef Fix, or what the foundation calls its coral restoration program. Reef Fix aims to support and strengthen local reef rehabilitation efforts through coral transplantation with the use of the product Pioneer Epoxy Clay Aqua.

A total of 30 certified scuba divers descended into the water off Mayor's Island at the Hundred Islands National Park last Dec. 13 to begin coral transplantation. Each member of five teams had a task to accomplish while underwater, such as brushing the hard substrate (rock), hammering concrete nails, attaching coral fragments to the nails via cable ties, and applying Pioneer Epoxy Clay Aqua to the base of each fragment to secure it to the hard substrate.

Proper execution of each step is essential to the survival of the transplanted corals, and through great underwater efficiency, the teams were able to transplant approximately 2,500 coral fragments to the reef with an average dive time of over one hour.

The following day, a team of almost 1,000 volunteers dispersed to assigned locations to plant 10 mangrove propagules each. By the end of the day, 10,000 mangrove propagules were planted in five different locations: three coastal barangays and two islands within the



Volunteer students carry mangrove propagules to their assigned planting area in Bay, Telbang.

national park. This simultaneous mangrove planting yielded the most number of mangroves planted in a day in the history of Alaminos City.

PAFI returned to Alaminos last month to fulfill its commitment of 5,000 coral transplants. During the visit, the foundation also donated two buoys with solar-powered lights to help mark the coral transplantation site and the nearby coral nursery. The deployment of the buoys help prevent the destruction of the reef caused by anchors dropping into the water and crashing into corals.

Reef Fix and the mangrove planting activity are all under the Pioneer Foundation's environmental campaign Our Earth, Our Responsibility.

Climate change is a global problem, but PAFI firmly believes that every individual effort against it brings us closer to a healthier planet. Pangasinan is the third location the campaign has reached, and PAFI is eager to bring it to other parts of the country.

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PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS

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BusinessMirror

Gov't, green groups clash on WTE deals

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

WHILE pursuing the strict implementation of Republic Act (RA) 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, the government is also looking at a quick-fix solution—by converting garbage into energy—to address the looming garbage and energy crisis in the Philippines.

Environmental groups, however, said the waste-to-energy (WTE) scheme is not the way to go. They said WTE would neither address the environmental and health problems caused by garbage, nor will it provide sustainable energy supply, like solar or hydroelectric power.

With its population of 105 million, the Philippines produces 40,000 tons of garbage a day, equivalent to 14.6 million tons of garbage a year.

With the huge volume of garbage produced every day and the failure of concerned local government units (LGUs) to enforce RA 9003, a senior official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) considers garbage as potential source of methane fuel or electricity using various WTE technologies.

While environmental advocates are strongly opposed to WTE, the DENR and the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC), through its secretariat are finding a common ground to avoid conflict, particularly on the use of waste incinerators, which is prohibited under RA 8749, or the Clean Air Act.

PHL-Japan WTE partnership

AS early as October 2016, DENR officials, led by Undersecretary for Foreign Assisted and Special Projects Jonas Leones and counterpart officials from the Japanese government, were discussing the potential of WTE in the Philippines.

During a visit in the Philippines last November, Japan's Ministry of Environment, led by Shigemoto Kajihara, vice minister for global environmental affairs, met with Leones to strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries on waste management, especially on WTE.

The two countries are eyeing Quezon City and Davao City as potential pilot sites. They are mulling over to start this year at least eight more similar projects in various parts of the country.

The partnership involves support from Japan cities and private companies.

Finding a common ground

AS the use of incineration is the biggest hurdle in the implementation of WTE projects, officials of the DENR and NSWMC backing WTE insisted that not all incineration, are bad and will cause adverse impact to the environment.

They also insisted that there are now advance WTE technologies that do not require the use of incinerators.

According to Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez, she is keen on allowing WTE under her watch on the condition that the technology will not use waste incinerators.

"As long as it is not incineration, because that [incinerators] pollute. But there are [advance] technologies," Lopez said.

Chuck Bacalagon of 350.org said as long as WTE will not involve

combustion or incineration technology, the government and his group will find a common ground.

He said that for 350.org, the anaerobic biodegradation-type technology is acceptable.

The technology uses micro-organisms to hasten decomposition to allow faster recovery or harvest of methane.

"It has no emission unlike incineration," he said. While passionate about waste reduction through recycling, Lopez added that, if properly implemented, WTE has the potential to address the country's garbage problem.

Lopez recently ordered Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista and Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña to permanently close their respective city's sanitary landfills to prevent water pollution.

The Payatas Sanitary Landfill is near the La Mesa Watershed, where water from Angat and Ipo dams are stored for treatment before distribution as tap water for 12 million people living in Metro Manila.

Situated in a reclaimed area, the Inayawan Sanitary Landfill in Cebu City was the subject of a Court of Appeals Special 19th Division closure order.

Legal basis

NSWMC Resolution 669, adopted on June 9, 2016, provides for the "Guidelines Governing the Establishment and Operation of WTE Technologies for Municipal Solid Wastes," paving the way for the use of WTE.

Among the WTE technologies allowed under the guideline are gasification, pyrolysis, bioreactor, biomethanation, hydrolysis, pyrolytic gasification, plasma and other thermal processes.

"These technologies do not use incinerators. There are a number of waste-to-energy technologies that we can adopt to reduce GHG [greenhouse gases] and convert garbage into energy," NSWMC Executive Director Ely Ildelfonso said.

On the other hand, Leones, a lawyer, said there is already a legal basis for the application of WTE, even with the use of incinerators.

Citing the case of *Metropoli-*

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Gov't., green groups clash on WTE deals

tan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) v. JanCom Environmental Corp. (SC), wherein the Supreme Court said "not all incineration violate the law," Leones had insisted that not all incineration technology is illegal.

"Incineration [technology] that complies with emission standard is allowed," Leones said.

He added that over the years, the DENR has been investing on capacity-building by training Environment Management Bureau (EMB) employees in the use of the most sophisticated laboratory equipment to measure dioxin and furans.

The dioxins/furans laboratory at the DENR-EMB is currently being calibrated and will be ready for use by March. Paeng Lopez of Campaigner for Healthy Energy Initiative of Health Care Without Harm Asia, a member of Stop WTE Alliance, debunked the claims of the DENR and NSWMC that there is a SC order "legalizing" incinerators in the application of WTE technologies.

Lopez said Leones and Ildelfonso use WTEs and incinerators interchangeably. He said the WTE guideline was approved in a haste to "legitimize waste burning."

Quoting the SC order regarding the case *MMDA v. JanCom*, Lopez said Section 20 does not absolutely prohibit incineration as a mode of waste disposal; rather, only those burning processes which emit poisonous and toxic fumes are banned.

"If I remember it right, the World Health Organization US EPA [Environment Protection Agency] and EU consider every WTE burn process that NSWMC peddles such as pyrolysis, gasification, and plasma arc, as waste incineration. There is no waste burning process anywhere in the world that does not absolutely emit poisonous and toxic fumes," he said.

Silver bullet?

WITH the failure of most LGUs to fully enforce the solid waste management law, Leones and Ildelfonso are one in saying that WTE is the country's best option to address the looming garbage crisis.

Leones likened WTE to "hitting two birds with one stone" because it will not only address the garbage problem, it will also help "energize" the country and lessen the country's dependence on coal-fired power plants.

Ildelfonso said the government has been relentless in pushing for the implementation of the garbage law, but with little very little success.

He said proper waste segregation, recycling and composting has the potential of reducing waste by 75 percent, leaving 25 percent residual waste. On the other hand, WTE, which uses incineration, he said, can eliminate garbage by up to 95 percent.

Poor implementation, law enforcement

NEVERTHELESS, the NSWMC is not giving up on its mandate to oversee the implementation of RA 9003.

Last year a total of 600 local officials from 50 LGUs were slapped with criminal and administrative complaint by the Office of the Ombudsman for failing to enforce RA 9003, mostly for failing to close open dumps and controlled dumps in their respective localities.

Around 3,000 local officials belonging to 300 LGUs failed to enforce the law are facing the same fate. Most of those facing charges also failed in proper waste collection, segregation, recycling and disposal. Ildelfonso said uncollected wastes are either burned in backyards, or dumped in vacant lots and unused lands. A huge chunk of garbage end up being swept away during floods, clogging esteros and rivers in the process.

Aguilar of Greenpeace said green groups are one in opposing WTE. She said various studies suggest that WTE is not a solution to garbage problem.

"There are many WTE proponents coming in. This is alarming. During the Zero Waste Month celebration, we were told that some WTE companies were there, and even had booths," she said.

Real solution

WASTE and pollution watchdogs

opposed to WTE and Abigail Aguilar, Greenpeace's toxic and waste campaigner, expressed alarm over the government's plan to promote WTE.

"Properly implemented, waste segregation, recycling and composting will address the garbage problem," Aguilar said.

She insisted that the DENR, NSWMC and LGUs should enforce Republic Act 9003 to the letter and the problem on waste will go away.

A member of Stop WTE Alliance agreed with Aguilar that WTE is not the solution or the silver bullet that will kill the monster created by human apathy.

"We cannot win our perpetual battle with trash unless we temper the sinister buy-and-throw-away culture in our midst. WTE technologies that burn resources, which are better recycled in a nontoxic way, will only lead to the further exploitation of the ecosystems and the generation of more waste to keep these facilities profitably running," the Stop WTE Alliance said.

The alliance wants NSWMC's guidelines for the establishment and operation of WTE technologies repealed and, instead, have sustainable zero waste strategies mainstreamed.

Citing the opinion of environmental scientist Dr. Jorge Emmanuel, adjunct professor at Siliman University, the alliance believes that there is no such thing as "clean incineration."

Emmanuel had said all incinerators release toxic particulates; toxic gases, such as carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide; toxic metals, like lead and mercury; and other pollutants in addition to dioxins.

In lieu of WTE technologies that terminally destroy resources and release toxic environmental pollutants, Stop WTE Alliance said the government and the private sector should invest in "real solutions," such as intensive segregation at source, composting and recycling, extended producer responsibility, and clean production to prevent and reduce garbage volume and toxicity.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Carbon emission tax eyed

By Rio Araja

A CONGRESSMAN from Bicol region is batting for the passage of a climate tax on carbon dioxide emission from electricity under his proposed "Piso Para sa Kalikasan Act."

Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Ray Villafuerte seeks to impose a tax of P1 for every kilo of CO2 emission on the monthly power bills of residential or household consumers.

Villafuerte, House committee on appropriations vice chairman, said the proceeds of House Bill No. 4939, if passed, would be used exclusively for programs designed to help the most vulnerable communities better adapt to erratic weather patterns and other disastrous effects of global warming.

A consumer shall be exempt from the payment of the climate tax if the monthly consumption would not exceed 60 kilowatt hours or if the power is generated from renewable energy sources, he said.

"This bill's purpose is two-pronged: Generating revenues and at the same time, protect and preserve the environment," he said. "The bill is the first of its kind in the country."

Proceeds of the fund shall also be used to explore alternative and cleaner sources of energy, provide better public transportation and raise climate change awareness, he added.

The Philippines is "ground zero for climate disaster" and has been classified by the World Bank as one of the countries most vulnerable to natural disasters caused by climate change, the Camarines Sur lawmaker said.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Better health a must to cope with climate change, kids told

One chilly January morning, the classrooms of the General Roxas Elementary School in Quezon City was abuzz with the chitter-chatter of nearly 100 students, discussing ideas and listening to WWF-Philippines national ambassadors Marc Nelson, Rovilson Fernandez plus a team of environmental educators from WWF-Philippines and Pascual Laboratories.

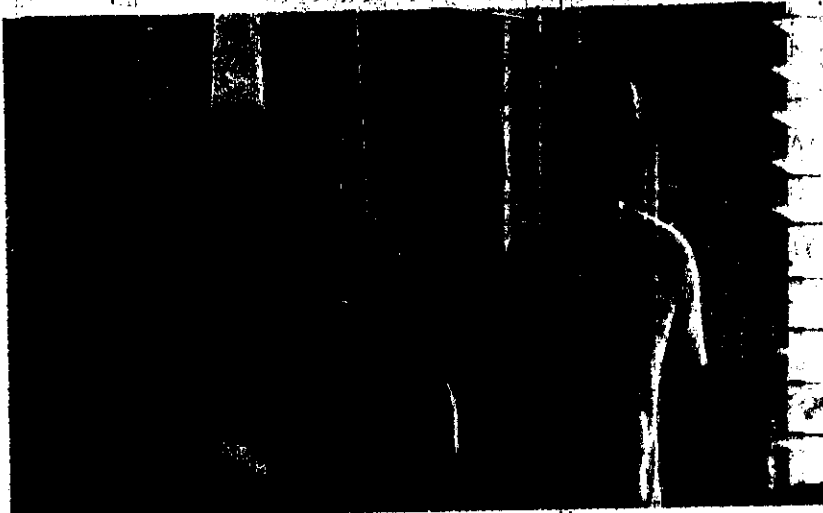
The duo recently participated in WWF and Pascual Laboratories' SEED (Sowing to Empower, Educate and Develop) Program, which aims to enhance local communities' resilience to climate change by eliminating diseases and switching to healthier lifestyles through proper diet, exercise, vitamins and good hygiene.

For the past five years, the program has taught thousands of elementary school students about the vital link between climate change and health. Health conditions and diseases like asthma, heatstroke, leptospirosis, typhoid fever, cholera and so forth are spurred by climate change.

"Floods caused by rains or the incessant summer heat can drive up incidences of leptospirosis or heat stroke," explains WWF-Philippines environmental educator Dino Calderon. "By simply washing our hands or remembering to hydrate before we go out of our homes, we can bolster our resilience to climate change. Our aim is simple – to promote better health via a better environment."

The education sessions were held for nearly 200 grade schoolers and parents from the General Roxas Elementary School.

Pascual Laboratories' Mia Pascual-Cenzon added, "We cannot overemphasize the role of education in improving people's lives. We are very vulnerable to climate change. By educating the next generation of kids, we can inculcate the right values to allow them to adapt and help stop climate change. We've been doing this for five years and we hope that our partnership will have an impact on the lives of our students."



A Pascual Laboratories teacher discusses the SEED program, which since 2012 has been building healthy, climate-resilient Pinoy communities. WWF-Philippines environmental education program head Ruel Bate looks on.

Photos by GREGG YAN / WWF



WWF-Philippines national ambassadors Marc Nelson (upper photo) and Rovilson Fernandez (above) encourage children to switch to healthier lifestyles through proper diet, exercise, vitamins and good hygiene.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

'RESPONSIBLE' LOGGING SHOULD BE ALLOWED IN SELECT AREAS—NEDA

By CAT U. ORDINARIO

@cuo-bm

THE National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said it is more partial to "responsible" logging in select areas, saying a total log ban would hurt the local furniture industry.

In a recent briefing, Neda Director General Ernesto M. Pernia told reporters that logging should only stop in places that have already been denuded.

Pernia also said the President may have just been "thinking out loud" when he was quoted as saying that there should be a total log ban.

"The president did not declare [a total log ban] but he was thinking out loud 'maybe you should impose a total log ban,'" Pernia said. "There are areas where trees should not be cut and areas where it can be allowed."

Neda Assistant Secretary Mercedita A. Sombilla told the **BUSINESSMIRROR** that the oversight agency was not consulted regarding the President's plan to impose a log ban.

Sombilla said, however, the agency expects to be included in a technical working group (TWG) that will discuss the log ban and the map that will be created.

Last Thursday Presidential Spokesman Ernesto C. Corpuz said the tripartite convergence committee was tasked to study logging permits.

The committee was also tasked to create a map of areas that should have a total log ban and where logging can continue.

Areas where logging can continue, Abella said, include industrial farms, where trees are cultured to support furniture and other wood-based industries. He also said the President has expressed concern for farmers who use wood in their households.

Based on the final results of the 2013 Annual Survey of Philippine Business and Industry-Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Sector, there were seven firms involved in growing timber forests.

These firms were engaged in growing timber forest species such as gemelina and eucalyptus, planting, replanting, transplanting, thinning, and conserving of forest and timber tracts.

These firms employed 676 employees, but only 672 were considered paid employees. The companies booked an income of P198.5 million and expenses amounting to P128.88 million in 2013.

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The Manila Times

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SER

Lawmaker urges DENR chief to probe ex-official

A lawmaker has urged Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Regina Lopez to investigate former Undersecretary Leo Jasareno for alleged corruption in the department.

In a statement, Rep. Robert Barbers of Surigao del Norte (2nd District) Barbers accused Jasareno, former head of the DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), of being "corrupt."

He claimed that the former bureau chief had been dismissed by President Rodrigo Duterte himself.

"It is very sad and unfortunate for the country that despite being dismissed by no less than the President, [Lopez] still retained Jasareno as her confidante and consultant," Barbers said.

"Equally disturbing is the fact that she appointed Jasareno to head the audit of these mining firms, when Jasareno knew all too well that the violations were [happening] under his watch - for several years - but he deliberately turned a blind eye to these violations," he added.

Barbers questioned the audit results concerning the other mining companies as the DENR's auditing team was also headed by the sacked official.

He said some of the mining companies that were not closed by Lopez were "known friends" of Jasareno, describing it as a form of "hypocrisy."

"[H]ow about those mining companies which were not closed and whose owners are known friends of Mr. Jasareno?" Barbers asked.

"His MGB was supposed to police the mining activities in the country, but now he is saying that these companies committed environmental violations," he said.

Barbers added that the DENR chief should "open her eyes if she really wants to reform the graft-laden agency" and calls her "to be fair" and investigate her confidante "with the same zeal and vigor."

In August 2016, Jasareno tendered his resignation amid calls of several anti-mining groups for him to do so.

He also led the audit teams that recommended the suspension of 20 mining operators and has been with the DENR even before Lopez assumed office.

DEMPSEY REYES

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

EU, Palawan IPs discuss investment, environment issues

A MISSION from the European Union (EU) recently met with some indigenous people (IP) groups in Palawan to discuss the current issues related to investment and environment in the province.

The EU mission said investment and environment should go hand in hand.

As the largest investor in the Philippines, the delegation said they are happy that EU companies respect the IPs land tenure, working conditions, right to associate and dialogue.

A consultation with the NATRIPAL, a group of unified tribes in Palawan, helped to understand and focus on where EU can focus its attention when discussing with the government.

EU also support these efforts through cooperation programs and has provided support over the last four years to improve access to culturally sensitive health care services of selected IP groups.

Grants are provided to improve capacity of indigenous people in governance, natural resources management and provision of community based livelihoods.

"EU trade and investment should benefit indigenous people through jobs and income.

"It should not destroy their land rights or livelihood," the EU mission stressed.

Cristina Lee-Pleco

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Where are the trees? Not in Paris, Treepedia finds

BOSTON—Where are the trees? More important, where aren't the trees? A lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is helping some of the world's cities answer both questions in an attempt to make them more pleasant places to live and work.

In an effort to enhance the critical role trees play in urban environments—providing cooling shade, alleviating air and noise pollution and easing the effects of climate change—the school's Senseable City Lab has developed an online platform that maps out the canopy in some major cities to make it easier for urban planners and ordinary citizens to see where more are needed.

The project, called Treepedia, uses Google Street View to create what the MIT team calls the Green View Index.

Trees block shortwave radiation and increase water evaporation, creating more comfortable microclimates and mitigating air pollution, lab Director Carlo Ratti said. But they also just make people feel better, Ratti said, channeling Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson's biophilia theory that humans innately seek out connections with nature.

"We, as humans, have a natural willingness and desire to be in green spaces," he said.

The interactive web site gives bird's eye views of 15 cities, with trees represented by green dots. Users can zoom into a particular neighborhood or individual street to see ground-level images. The City of Lights apparently isn't the city of trees. Of the cities mapped so far, Paris scores lowest with a Green View Index score of 8.8 percent.

North American cities tend to score higher than European cities. Singapore,

however, ranks the highest with a 29.3-percent score, slightly ahead of Vancouver, British Columbia.

The other cities mapped so far are Amsterdam; Boston; Frankfurt, Germany; Geneva, Switzerland; London; Los Angeles; New York; Sacramento, California; Seattle; Tel Aviv, Israel; Toronto; and Turin, Italy.

More cities are being added.

"In the future, the goal of this project is to start a conversation, so that cities can see how they compare with one another and how they can learn from each other," Ratti said.

He also hopes ordinary citizens will use the web site to check out their own homes, and advocate with municipal officials for more trees in their neighborhoods.

The project was inspired by the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on the Future of Cities, which included increasing tree canopy cover on a list of top 10 urban innovations.

"We hope that this endeavor will give citizens a greater appreciation of their city's green canopy and appreciate that the green canopy can assist in responding to climate change," Council Manager Alice Charles said in a statement.

The project's maps aren't perfect. It appears as if there are no trees in some of the world's most famous parks. New York's Central Park, Boston Common and London's Hyde Park appear as large black swaths of nothing—probably because Google Street View vehicles can't get into those areas.

Ratti hopes to eventually fill those gaps using satellite data, but adds that cataloging street trees is the project's primary goal.

"Streets are important, because that's where we spend most of our time," he said. **AP**

PEOPLES JOURNALS

Everybody's Newspaper

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DENR HIT FOR SELECTIVE PROSECUTION

By RYAN PONCE PACPACO

Solon accuses sacked DENR Usec of favoring some mining firms

URIGAO del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers yesterday accused a Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) executive who had been dismissed from his post by President Rodrigo "Rody" Duterte of allegedly favoring mining firms which may have violated environmental laws but were not ordered closed and suspended. Page 1

DENR...

From Page 1

Barbers said he was in complete disbelief that Environment Sec. Gina Lopez tasked former DENR Undersecretary Leo Jasareno, who was earlier dismissed by President Duterte, to lead the audit for the mining firms, resulting to the closure of big mining companies in the country and the suspension of 5 others.

"How about those mining companies which were not closed and whose owners are known friends of Mr. Jasareno?" Barbers asked regarding Jasareno who was tapped by Lopez as her confidante and consultant despite President Duterte's decision removing him from his post.

He lamented that it was during the time of Jasareno as head of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) of the DENR that alleged violations of various environmental laws were committed.

"I suspect na napaikutan ni Mr. Jasareno si S. Lopez," Barbers stressed who raised serious doubts on the supposed regularity of the audit findings against mining firms. "Mr. Jasareno is not an innocent bystander in this masquerade. He is the protagonist. His MGB was supposed to police the mining activities in the country, but now he is saying that these companies committed environmental violations. Such hypocrisy coming from the one who was supposed to make sure that mining laws are followed and implemented."

Barbers said: "Jasareno knew all too well that the violations were happening under his watch — for several years — but he deliberately turned a blind eye to these violations."

Barbers said the DENR should not adopt a blind approach on its inquiry on the violations of the mining law. "There should be no selective prosecution here. The investigation should cover everything," Barbers said.

He reiterated his call for Lopez to open her eyes. "She really wants to reform the graft-laden agency," Barbers urged Lopez to be fair and investigate Jasareno with the same zeal and vigor.

While he welcomed the role of Lopez to run after violators in the mining industry, Barbers lamented the fact that Lopez puts the blame entirely on the erring mining companies without looking at the root cause of the problem.

Earlier, Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Butch Pichay sought a congressional investigation on the closure of 28 big mining companies and the suspension of five others for being "illegal and arbitrary."

He reiterated that the decision of Lopez will result to billions of pesos in lost revenues yearly to the national government, adding that at least 10,000 direct workers and 50,000 indirect workers from his district alone will be displaced.

Pichay accused Lopez of violating all pertinent laws about mining, including the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) that the mining firms signed with the government.

He insisted that under the MPSA, once an audit of the mining firm was decided, the government should inform the firm about the intention to audit and the firm is allowed to appoint an official to join the audit team.

After the audit, he said, the team would come up with a report and discuss the findings, including the supposed violations that were committed to allow the firms to rectify the violations.

Pichay also argued that mining firms are allowed to contest the findings that would lead to an "arbitration" that would give the firms one year to settle the issue with the government.

Ordered closed were the Benguet Corp. Nickel Mines, Inc.; Benguet Corporation in Benguet; Eramen Minerals Inc.; Zambales Diversified Metals Corporation and LNL Archipelago Minerals Inc., all in Zambales; Mt. Sinai Mining Exploration and Development Corp.; Emir Minerals Corp. and Techiron Mineral Resources Inc., all in Homonhon Island, Eastern Samar.



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PAHINA SIYETE

Clemen Bautista

NAGSULPUTANG parang mga kabute sa Laguna de Bay ang malalaking fish pen. Ang mga may-ari o operator nito ay mga retiradong opisyal ng militar, mga sirkero at payaso sa pulitika, mga mayaman at maimpluwensiyang negosyante, mga mayor sa Rizal at Laguna.

Nang lumaon, nagtayo na rin ng fish pen ang mga negosyanteng Koreano at Taiwanese. Hindi naman nagtagal ang nasabing mga dayuhang negosyante sapagkat sila'y nalugi nang hagupitin ng bagyo ang kanilang mga fish pen, gayundin ang mga fish pen ng mga Pilipino. Nawasak ang mga fish pen at sila'y niloko rin ng kanilang

mga katiwala. Ang ibang fish pen operator ay muling nagtayo ng fish pen upang makabawi sa pagkalugi.

Kapag bumagyo at nawasak ang mga fish pen sa Laguna de Bay, masaya ang maliliit na mangingisda sapagkat sila'y maraming nahuhuling bangus mula sa mga nasirang fish pen. May nagdadalawang balik sa lawa upang mangisda. Bagsak naman ang presyo ng bangus.

Nang bumagsak ang rehimen at diktaduryang Marcos noong Pebrero 25, 1986 dahil sa EDSA People Power Revolution, nagkaroon ng bagong pag-asa ang mga mangingisda sa Laguna de Bay. Umasang tutulungan sila ni dating Pangulong Cory Aquino. Naging katotohanan naman ang

pag-asa ng mga mangingisda sa lawa sapagkat kumilos si Pangulong Cory Aquino. Isang task force ang binuo ng Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) upang manguna sa paglutas sa problema sa lawa.

Sa nilagdaan na Memorandum No. 7, inatasan ang task force na suriin at lutasin ang problema sa Laguna de Bay. At noong Mayo 5-15, 1986, inatasan ng LLDA ang lahat ng may-ari ng fish pen na magparehistro. Natuklasan na isa sa mga matinding problema sa lawa ay ang tinatawag na "Inter-Locking Corporation". Ito ay ang may-ari ng mga fish pen na nasa kamay ng iisang tao na gumagamit lamang ng "dummy" nang karamihay kanilang kamag-anak, asawa, kaibigan at iba pang kaalyado.

Natuklasan din na sa Laguna de Bay ay umaabot sa 1,288 ang fish pen. Ngunit ang mga nagparehistro lamang ay 639 na katao na binubuo ng mga dating sirkero at payaso sa pulitika, mga retiradong heneral ng militar at iba pang maimpluwensiyang negosyante.

Bilang sagot sa problema sa mga fish pen sa Laguna de Bay, binaklas ng LLDA ang mga fish pen na sobra-sobra ang sukat. Ang pagbuwag ay tinawag na "Kalayaan sa Lawa, Kalayaan ng mga Mangingisda".

Sa hangarin ng LLDA na maisaayos ang industriya ng fish pen, nagpatupad ng Fishing Zoning and Management Plan (ZOMAP). Dito ay natutukoy ang mga lugar...

Sundan sa pahinang...

na dapat pangisdaan at ang navigational lane o daanan sa lawa. At sa pamumuno ni dating LLDA General Manager at Secretary for Environmental Protection Neric Acosta, bukod sa ZOMAP ay nilagyan din ng LLDA ng belt demarcation marker ang mga fish pen at fish cage sa Laguna de Bay. Sa nasabing paraan, mapapaalalahanan na doon lamang dapat itayo ang mga palaisdaan at mga aquatic structure.

Sa ngayon na panahon ng rehimen ng Duterte, ipinagigiba na ang mga fish pen sa Laguna de Bay na ang isa pang unahing layunin ay maibalik ang kalayaan at pagkakataon na makapangisda ang maliliit na mangingisda. Sa pagbuwag sa mga fish pen sa lawa, hindi maiiwasan na may mabuti at masamang epekto ito sa mga mamamayan na nabubuhay at umaasa sa mga biyaya ng Laguna de Bay.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

PRA highlights PPPs and G2G for Legacy Islands on Water



By Alberto Agra

PPP LEAD

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PR.A. hopes to sign similar collaborative agreements with the cities of Manila (for another project), Mandaue, Catbalogan, Naga (Cebu), Masbate, Sorsogon, Baybay, Ormoc, Samar and Panabo, and the municipalities of Consolacion and Tuburan (Cebu).

PRA is set to sign an Expression of Partnership with the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority for a possible "green island" or solid waste-management facility. PRA plans to initiate discussions with the Department of Public Works and Highways, Laguna Lake Development Authority, Philippine Fisheries

Development Authority, Philippine Ports Authority, National Housing Authority, Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines, Bases Conversion and Development Authority, Tourism Infrastructure, Philippine Retirement Authority, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, Philippine Veterans Investment Development

Corp., National Power Corp. and Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, among others, for possible partnerships.

All future LIoWs, which includes the 96 reclamation projects in the pipeline, must be liveable, resilient, safe, sustainable, green, generative, pro-people, future-proofed and innovative, and a smart community. On LIoWs and related developments, built with nature, PRA envisions the integration or combination of economic zones, smart-community infrastructure, mangroves, flora and fauna ecosystems, renewable-energy facilities, coastal protection structures, green landscapes and blue water, socialized housing units, water collection systems, waste management methodologies, public access networks and mixed-used development, even sports facilities on LIoWs.

All the possible LIoWs that are being eyed or will be considered by PRA cannot be built or funded by

PRA alone. It needs partners and co-champions—other government agencies, private-sector proponents, contractors, local and foreign, and civil-society organizations. PRA is poised to issue its PPP guidelines. The guidelines will outline the modalities and procedures for engaging with the private sector.

PRA is open to unsolicited proposals. To date, it has received proposals for its new office, the operations and maintenance of Manila

Cavite Toll Expressway Project, and two long-term lease arrangements in Naic, Cavite, and Panglao, Bohol.

We aim to "grow our land" through partnerships and be a "much larger, more vital agency in the years to come," a challenge posed by Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III, PRA's guest speaker last Friday.

PRA is walking the talk and talking the walk. The grand life of PRA and the people it serves begins today. Happy 40th anniversary to PRA.

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Sandiganbayan arrest, trial

By Vince F. Nonato
@VinceNonatoINO

The Sandiganbayan has found probable cause to go ahead with the graft trial of Ozamiz City Mayor Reynaldo Parojinog Sr. and Vice Mayor Nova Princess Parojinog.

In a seven-page resolution, the court's Fifth Division ordered the Parojinogs' arrest after it denied their motions to throw out the graft case against them for lack of probable cause.

The court is convinced that the prosecution presented ample evidence to support a finding of probable cause, hence the accused must be arrested and brought to trial, read the resolution, penned by Justice Maria

Theresa V. Mendoza-Arcega.

The Parojinogs, who were among those linked by President Duterte to narco-politics, were accused of graft after the father awarded a gymnasium renovation project to his children's Parojinog & Sons Construction Company (PSCC) in 2008.

Based on preliminary evidence, the court stated that PSCC should have been disqualified from bidding since the elder Parojinog disclosed his interest in the firm in his 2001 Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth. It also cited "common knowledge" that the PSCC managing partner was her daughter.

In seeking the dismissal of the charge, the Parojinogs argued that

MORE REFORMS IN THE ES

By Ben O. de Vera
@bendeveraNO

Sen. Sonny Angara on Sunday said the planned estate tax amnesty gaining traction in the Lower House should be coupled with reforms in the estate tax regime, including an increase in deductions for the grieving families.

In a statement, Angara said the Senate ways and means committee, which he chairs, will immediately act on the House

bill aimed at granting amnesty on unpaid estate taxes upon passage and transmission to the Upper House.

The Senate, for its part, will likewise "lighten the tax burden on a deceased's assets in order to lighten the grief of the heirs," he said.

"We want our grieving families to be spared from further anguish in paying high estate taxes which often delay the distribution of the assets to the heirs," Angara said.

The Climate
Reality Project



TRAVELERS CHOICE CORP

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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LET'S TALK
CLEANER
ENERGY

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The Climate
Reality Project

No child should be made sick by dirty types of energy contribution that make us break up! Wear masks and chronic respiratory diseases. Let's discuss. Let's talk out ideas.



THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

**ANGELS WALK FOR
AUTISM** - Around
20,000 children
with autism and
their families join
yesterday's Angels
Walk for Autism, an
annual advocacy
event which kicks
off Philippine
National Autism
Consciousness
Week. The event,
held at the Mall of
Asia Arena, was
led by SM Prime
Holdings Director
Hans Sy, Persons
with Disabilities
(PWD) advocate
Martin Romualdez,
and Lito Rep.
Yedda Marie
Romualdez. (All
Vicoy)



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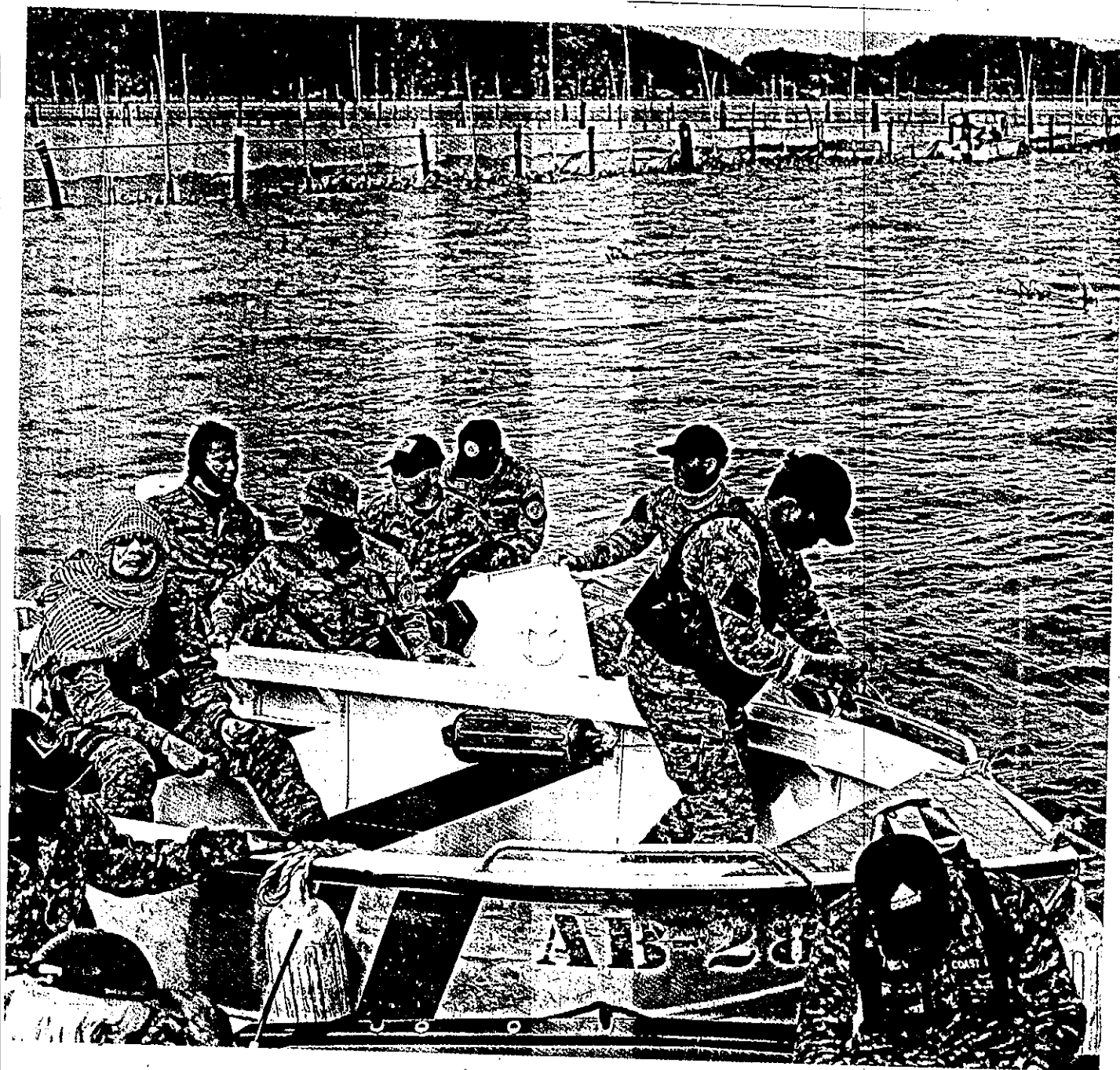
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Govt eyes stakeholders' help to 'revive' Laguna de Bay

Department of Environment and Natural Resources

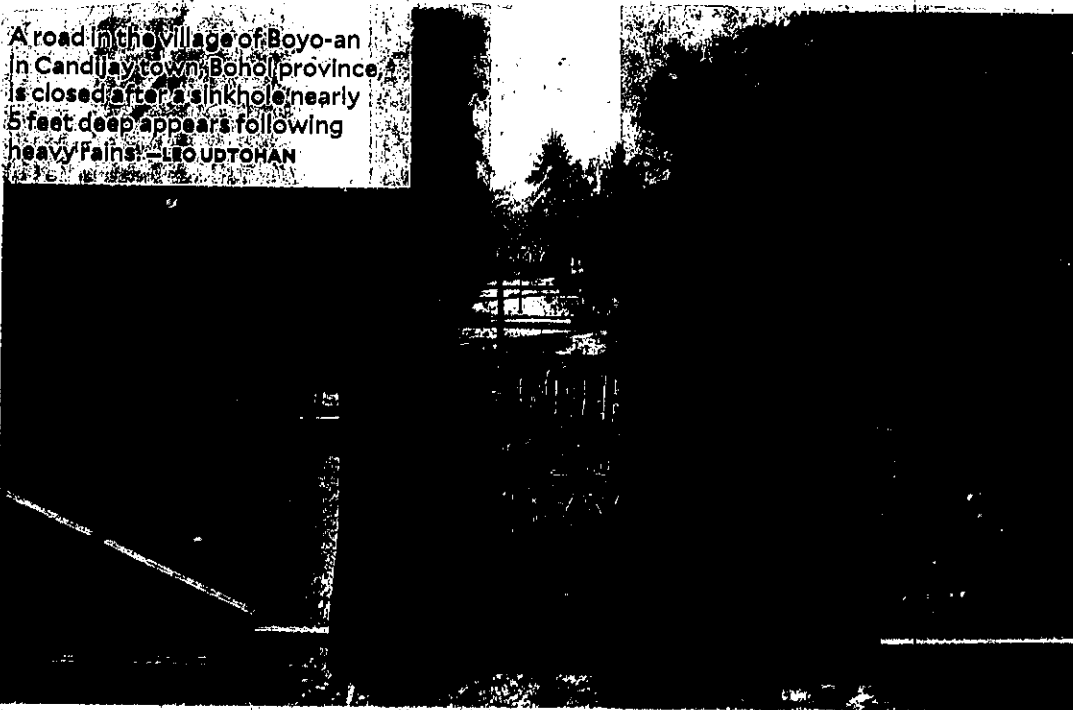
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

A road in the village of Boyo-an in Candijay town, Bohol province, is closed after a sinkhole nearly 5 feet deep appears following heavy rains. —LEO UDTOHAN



Bohol town sinkhole brings village jitters

By Leo Udtohan
@leoudtohanINQ

CANDIJAY, BOHOL—A sinkhole nearly 5 feet (1.52 meters) deep appeared in the village of Boyo-an in this town following relentless rains last week, prompting town officials to cordon off the area as townsfolk started to take a closer look.

Rain washing away soil underneath the ground is believed to have caused the forming of the hole, which is more than 4 ft (1.22 meters) wide.

A sinkhole is a vacuum or cavern beneath the ground or topsoil that usually appears after a quake or heavy rain.

Residents said the sinkhole first appeared in December last year the size of a small ball when the rains started. It widened to more than 4 ft last week.

Local officials cordoned off

the area after people started flocking to the hole to check.

At least 12 families are living near it, though.

Vicenta Licong, 62, whose house is just a meter from the sinkhole, said she could not sleep well since it widened last week. Her daughter, Teresa, worried for the safety of her daughter, Anna, 2.

Teresa said when it rains at night, her family would move out and seek shelter at a relative's house.

Jeryl Lacang-Fuentes, municipal disaster risk reduction and management officer, said a team from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) is checking if the sinkhole is a threat to public safety.

Fuentes said the MGB classified the sinkhole as a "cover

collapse type," which means it had been there all along but has not been seen until the topsoil collapsed.

She said the MGB would further inspect the sinkhole next week using sophisticated gadgets, like ground-penetrating radar.

At least 11 families had been evacuated last week to Boyo-an Elementary School as a precaution, according to Fuentes.

The Licong family, however, refused to leave.

The sinkhole rendered portion of a village road impassable to motorists.

Fuentes said the road would remain closed to motorists until it is safe to be used again.

Several sinkholes started appearing after a 7.2-magnitude quake hit Bohol in October 2013. INQ



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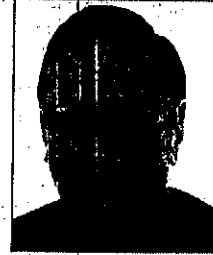
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Introspective

By TONY KATIGBAK

**Peace talks are
a waste of time**

The new Department of Environmental and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez from the Lopez Group of Companies has certainly hit the ground running after her appointment by the President. She is a well-known environmental activist and we knew that she would come into the position strong and she has lived up to all expectations. For the majority of it, her staunch love of the environment is a positive in her position. But at the same time it can be a hindrance as well because it may prevent her from being open-minded.

Even before joining the government in this capacity, Lopez has been known for her environmental activism and her continuing fight – especially against mining in the country. It comes as no surprise that her initial official actions would be against the mining industry. She shared that the DENR has ordered the closure of 21 mining firms and the suspension of five others that are breaching environmental standards.

I have always been a proponent of environmental responsibility so I can certainly see where Lopez is coming from, but at the same time I have also worked in the mining industry in the past and I have more of an open mind to understand what the mining community is doing and how they are doing it. I remain a bit wary because I know how against mining Gina Lopez has been in the past, being openly vocal on her opinions long before she had the chance to deliver them in an official capacity.

When I was in the private sector we crafted the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 alongside Congress and the Chamber of Mines in the Philippines (CMP). This act was admired by countries like Australia, Chile, and several more and became the basis of responsible mining in several other nations. I think responsible mining is absolutely possible and even essential to progress and I hope the DENR does is open-minded to working together with the mining industry to reach the best possible solution for everyone.

After all, these closures will affect an estimated 1.3 million people, the miners, their families, and the communities in which these mining companies operate. Don't get me wrong – I am not saying companies that violate the Responsible Mining Act should get away with these infractions, but I also think that a good neutral view should be considered as well. Artemio Disini, the chair of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, mentioned that there were inconsistencies in the mining reports and that it was "compromised" in several ways because members of the audit team included anti-mining activists.

At this point it seems it's hard to get a fair assessment on either side since both have a personal gain the outcome. I hope that Secretary Gina Lopez and the officials in the mining industry can reach a "win-win" solution that will be beneficial to both parties. If it's only one way all the way I believe we will all lose in the long run.

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Daily Tribune

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Estrada foresees 'Solar City' reclamation project to make Manila regain its old glory

The soon-to-be-built Solar City urban center in Manila Bay will be the first multi-billion-peso project in the country to utilize the latest technology in energy generation, solid waste management and environmental conservation.

The project's proponent, Manila Goldcoast Development Corp. (MGDC), made this assurance as Manila Mayor Joseph "Erap" Estrada reiterated his support to big-ticket infrastructure projects in Manila such as Solar City which, he said, would help bring back the city's old glory.

"We need these new developments, not only because of its positive economic impact. It will certainly beautify Manila without destroying our environment, especially our historic Manila Bay," Estrada said.

Upon assuming office in 2013, Estrada embarked on his Urban Renewal Program aimed at reviving what he said was the capital city's lost glory.

MGDC vice chairman Edmundo Lim said Solar City, compared to other existing commercial districts such as the Bonifacio Global City (BGC) in Taguig, will use cutting-edge technology that is available only in Europe, US and Canada.

"We will be much better because we're putting the best technology in the world: power generation through solar wind and biomass, state-of-the-art waste collection systems and environment protection measures," he said.

"This will be the first project

in the country to incorporate all these technologies," Lim pointed out amid fears the construction of Solar City will only further pollute Manila Bay.

MGDC won the contract to build Solar City way back 1991. In 2012, the City Council of Manila finally ratified the consortium agreement and Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) it entered into with the city government.

Solar City is a 148-hectare, state-of-the-art, tourism, commercial and residential district that will be put up in Manila Bay to host business centers, residential and commercial properties and tourism facilities, including an international cruise ship terminal.

Lim said this ultra-modern commercial and business hub will have huge cisterns that will collect rainwater which can then be processed to usable water.

To reduce food waste, every office building, business establishment and residential unit will be equipped with garburators — a device that shreds food leftovers into small pieces, Lim said.

"We produce tons and tons of food waste every year but if you have a system wherein you throw away your organic food to a garburator, when you throw your garbage there, it just grinds it into a slurry and then there's a special pipe, that slurry is bio-digested, so you transform organic matter to methane gas and compost," Lim explained.

The produced methane gas and compost, he said, will be used to

generate energy that will power the entire business center.

"Since an organic matter or food waste consists more than 50 percent of your daily waste, 50 percent of the waste is already removed through this garburator.

So what is left? Dry waste, your paper, your plastic, your bottle, *'yung mga hindi puede i-recycle* like batteries, napkins, *so konti na lang 'yun*, 5 to 10 percent *na lang*," Lim pointed out.

If this system is widely used in Metro Manila, Lim said, it will cause a huge reduction in the volume of garbage that is disposed in dumps and landfills.

Contrary to the apprehensions of environmental groups, Lim said Solar City will not further pollute Manila Bay because it will be using these sophisticated waste reduction technology.

"Solar City will beautify it (Manila Bay) and we'll make sure we are not surrounded by *basura* because otherwise our project will not be high-end," the MGDC official stressed.

Solar City will also be designed as the country's first urban farming center where every glass-made building facing the sun will have layers of boxes where vegetable and ornamental plants can be cultivated, according to Lim.

"You can just imagine, you have access to the sun, and you'll have plants inside the buildings that are maintained not by janitors but by farmers," he said.

"Top of the building to the

ground, it's all green *kasi mga pillars lang sila*, so we're going to make sure all the plants we plant there are edible — fruit trees, *gulay* so that you produce all these food inside...plus we're going to put up a huge, huge aquarium not for viewing but for raising food — we can raise shrimps, crabs, fish, all kinds of culture," Lim added.

Estrada earlier had said Solar City will be a rich revenue source for the city government as it is projected to generate up to P17 billion in taxes every year on top of the P10 billion in real property taxes.

Councilor Laris Borromeo, chairman of the committee on tourism, said big-ticket projects such as Solar City are of strategic importance to the city government in terms of economic development, business growth and job generation.

For his part, Majority Floor Leader Casimiro Sison said the City of Manila stands to regain its lost image as the country's "Pearl of the Orient" and center of economic activities once the three major reclamation projects that are under way in Manila Bay, particularly the multibillion-peso Solar City urban center, have been completed.

The two other reclamation projects — the P7.4-billion expansion of the Manila Harbour Centre of R-II Builders Inc. and the UAA Kinming Group Development Corp.'s 562-hectare mixed-use commercial and business district in the central area of Manila Bay — also have the go-signal of the city council, he added.