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# **DENR**

## **IN THE NEWS**

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# Palace assures miners of due process

By Marlon Ramos  
and Ronnel W. Domingo  
@InquirerBiz

President Duterte and members of his Cabinet assured mining firms that they would be afforded due process in the mining audit being conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

"This means companies affected by mining closures for violations of environmental laws and regulations will be given the opportunity to respond or dispute the audit, or make the necessary remedies to ensure compliance with government standards," presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abel-

la said in a statement.

He said the issue over the decision of Environment Secretary Gina Lopez to shut down mining firms over violations of environment laws was discussed during the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

The Palace official said Department of Finance officials would be meeting with their counterparts in the DENR as members of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC).

Yesterday, Lopez said she would sign and release within the day orders for the suspension of 23 mines and closure of five others after the affected companies said they received

neither any notice nor results of the mine audit.

"When the press conference was done (last Feb. 2), the evaluations have been completed days before," Lopez said in a statement. "What happened was an omnibus directive. It was prepared for all mining companies (but) our lawyers have decided it should be issued to individual mining companies. That's why there's been a delay."

Lopez insisted that the mine audit was "fair and within the law," claiming that she did it "to protect the present and future generations as enshrined in the mining law and the Philippine constitution."

Large-scale miners through the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines have engaged the inter-agency MICC to review and "hopefully reverse" Lopez's actions.

Output from metallic mines had dropped in value by 8 percent to P100.6 billion in 2016 from P109.8 billion in 2015 partly due to similar announcements on the suspension of mines made last year, according to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

Gold production maintained the biggest share with P44.8 billion or 44 percent of total metal output in 2016. This meant an increase of 31 percent by value. Copper represented P17.8 bil-

lion in output value (a decrease of 6 percent) while the rest — silver, chromite and iron ore — rang up about P1 billion.

Nickel accounted for P36.8 billion or 37 percent. The value of nickel ore directly shipped out and of nickel sulfides fell by 41 percent to P21.8 billion and 21 percent to P15 billion, respectively. In terms of volume, production of nickel ores plunged by 23 percent to 24.7 million dry metric tons (DMT).

The MGB had noted that in a worst-case scenario where operating mines recommended for suspension are finally suspended, the immediate impact on the economy in terms of investment, employment and

production would be as follows:

- about a quarter or \$1.69 billion of the expected additional investments on the country's operating mines—pegged at \$4.45 billion—may not proceed.

- 19,674 people or 43 percent of the mining industry's current workforce stand to lose their jobs. Add to these the indirect jobs that mining creates, with at least four additional jobs in related industries on top of every direct employment.

- gold output may be slashed by 45 percent while production of nickel and copper may be cut by 67 percent and 26 percent, respectively. INQ

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

"MINE CLOSURES"

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# Malacañang vows to observe due process in mine closures

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA ✉ @jonlmayuga

**P**RESIDENT Duterte and his Cabinet have agreed to allow companies affected by mining closures to air their side, Palace Spokesman Ernesto C. Abella said on Wednesday.

During the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, Abella said one of the agenda of the Cabinet meeting was the evaluation of the environment and natural-resources sector "in the context of social justice".

"The President and his Cabinet collectively decided to observe due process with regard to the mining issue," he said in a statement.

"This means companies affected by mining closures for violations of environmental laws and regulations will be given the opportunity to respond or dispute with the audit, or make the necessary remedies

to ensure compliance with government standards," Abella added.

He said the Department of Finance (DOF) will have further discussions with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in their capacities as concerned government agencies of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC).

Abella made the pronouncement on the day Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez declared that the closure and suspension orders for 28 mining companies that failed the mine audit

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The number of large-scale mines that were shuttered by the DENR

have been released.

"It was an omnibus directive. It was prepared for all mining companies, and our lawyers have decided it should be issued to individual mining companies. That's why there's been a delay in its release," Lopez said on Wednesday.

She added the audit conducted by the DENR was "fair", and "within the bounds of the law". Lopez said the audit was undertaken "to protect the present and future generations as enshrined in the mining law and the Philippine Constitution."

On February 2 the DENR ordered the closure of the iron-ore mine of Ore Asia Mining and Development Corp. in Bulacan; gold and nickel

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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mine of Benguet Corp. in Benguet; and the nickel mine of Benguet-Corp., Nickel Mines Inc., Eramen Minerals Inc., Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. and LNL Archipelago Minerals Inc. in Zambales. On Homonhon Island in Eastern Samar three mining companies were issued closure orders—Mount Sinai Mining Exploration and Development Corp. and Techtron Mineral Resources Inc.

On Dinagat Islands, an island-province in Mindanao, seven of the nine mines were covered by the closure order. They are 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. In Surigao del Norte the DENR ordered the closure of seven operating mines. They are the Adnama Mining Resources Corp., Claver Mineral Development Corp., Platinum Development Corp., CTP Construction and Mining Corp., Carrascal Nickel Corp., Marcventures Mining and Development

Corp. and Hinatuan Mining Corp.

The DENR also issued suspension orders against five mining firms—Berong Nickel Corp., Citinickel Mines and Development Corp., Lepanto Consolidated Mining Corp., Oceana Gold Phils. and Strong Built Mining Development Corp.

Of the 41 large-scale mines, only 12 passed the mine audit based on Lopez's set of criteria, which is anchored on social justice. The audit criteria included the environmental, biodiversity and social aspects of mining.

### 'Initial victory'

THE Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) hailed President Duterte's decision, saying it is an "initial victory" for the stakeholders in the mining industry, as it meant that the "arbitrary" closure and suspension orders issued by Lopez are not final.

Ronald S. Recidoro, vice president for legal and policy of COMP, said Malacañang's statement only means Duterte and the members of his Cabinet recognize the gravity of the situation.

Mining companies, Recidoro added, will finally have legal remedies to contest the closure and suspension order.

"We are relieved that finally the government, somebody in the administration, is taking charge of this whole affair. The statement of the Palace said that they will be reviewing the actions of Lopez," he said. According to Recidoro, the mining industry will rely on Malacañang's statement that the Duterte administration will review the decisions of Lopez.

"We are hoping that the Cabinet will reverse the decision of Lopez."

"The game is not over. We will not take this lightly. This is about the livelihood of thousands of Filipinos. Not just for the companies, but for the men and women who rely on mining, because the immediate impact will be on them," he added.

COMP said Lopez's "arbitrary" decision to close the 23 operating mines and suspend the operations of five other mines "will condemn 1.2 million miners and their family to hunger and poverty".

## Malacañang says due process to be observed on closures

THE government is giving mining companies affected by a recent closure order by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources a chance to respond to the order, dispute the audit and make the necessary remedies to ensure compliance with regulatory standards, presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said yesterday.

Abella said the Cabinet, at its meeting in Malacañang on Tuesday, agreed due process should be observed by giving the mining companies a chance to explain or air their side.

Environment secretary Regina Lopez said yesterday all suspension and cancellation orders for 28 mining companies were signed and released yesterday (Feb 8). Lopez also said she will release to the mining industry the committee recommendations earlier submitted to her.

"The President and his Cabinet collectively decided to observe due process with regard to the min-

ing issue. This means companies affected by mining closures for violations of environmental laws and regulations will be given the opportunity to respond or dispute with the audit, or make the necessary remedies to ensure compliance with government standards," Abella said.

He added the Department of Finance (DOF) will also have further discussions with the DENR on the issue, including its role as the government's representative in the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC).

The DENR last week ordered the closure of 23 mining firms and the suspension of the licenses of five others.

Mining companies and other stakeholders appealed for reconsideration.

The DOF specifically raised concerns on the impact of the closure and the suspension on employment, the finances of local government units and the country's economic growth in general.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Palace gives suspended mining firms chance to explain

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Suspended mining firms would be given the opportunity to present their side and to dispute the audit findings of the environment department, Malacañang said yesterday.

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said the evaluation of the environment and natural resources sector was discussed during the Cabinet meeting last Tuesday.

"The President and his Cabinet collectively decided to observe due process with regard to the mining issue," Abella said in a statement.

"This means companies affected by mining closures for violations of environmental laws and regulations will be given the opportunity to respond to or dispute the audit, or make the necessary

remedies to ensure compliance with government standards," he added.

Abella said the Department of Finance would have further discussions with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as concerned state agencies of the Minding Industry Coordinating Council.

Early this month, Environment Secretary Gina Lopez ordered the closure of 23 metallic mines and suspended five others for serious environmental violations.

The closure orders against the 23 mining firms were based on the final results and recommendations of the multi-sectoral audit teams formed to look into the compliance of mining operators with existing environmental laws and regulations.

## DENR chief releases mining audit reports

After several calls from stakeholders, Lopez has decided to release the audit results of the 23 closed and five suspended large-scale mining firms.

In a statement, Lopez said all suspension and cancellation orders for the 28 mining companies were signed and released yesterday.

She released to the mining industry the committee recommendations submitted to her by the technical committee.

"When the press con was done, the evaluations have been completed days before. What happened was an omnibus directive. It was prepared for all mining companies and our lawyers have decided it should be issued to individual

mining companies. That's why there's been a delay," Lopez said.

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.

Lopez earlier refused to make public the actual documents on the 28 mining firms involved.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) on Tuesday announced that stakeholders are invoking the Freedom of Information bill as they finalized and submitted before the DENR the request for the copy of the industry-wide audit recommendations.

The mining firms who were slapped with closure orders

were BenguetCorp Nickel Mines Inc., Eramen Minerals Inc., Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. and LNL Archipelago Minerals Inc., all in Zambales province, mainly because of siltation of rivers, destruction of a functional watershed and illegal tree-cutting.

Also closed were Mt. Sinai Mining Exploration and Development Corp., Emir Minerals Corp. and TechIron Mineral Resources Inc. in Homonhon mainly for siltation of coastal waters and destruction of functional watershed; and AAMPHIL Natural Resources Exploration, Kromico Inc., SinoSteel Philippines H.Y. Mining Corp., Oriental Synergy Mining Corp., Wellex Mining Corp., Libjo Mining Corp., Oriental Vision Mining Phils. Corp., in Dinagat Islands mainly for siltation of coastal waters.

ADNAMA Mining Resources Corp., Claver Mineral Development Corp., Platinum Group Metals Corp., CTP Construction and Mining Corp., Carrascal Nickel Corp., Marcventures Mining and Development Corp., and Hinatuan Mining Corp. in Surigao del Norte were also closed for siltation of coastal waters and mining in functional watersheds.

The five mining companies suspended were Berong Nickel Corp., OceanaGold Phils., Lepanto Consolidated Mining Corp., Citinickel Mines and Development Corp. and Strong Built Mining Development Corp.

Lopez also suspended Benguet Corp. in Itogon, Benguet and Ore Asia Mining and Development Corp. in Bulacan.

— With Louise Maureen Simeon

# THE STANDARD

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## House to dig deep into mining order

Maricel V. Cruz

Lawmakers have filed a resolution seeking a congressional probe into Environment Secretary Gina Lopez's order to close 23 mining companies and suspend five others, saying the order was selective and taken in the absence of due process. Iloilo Rep. Allen Jesse Mangaoang and Coop-Natcco party-leader Anthony Bravo, in filing House Resolution 756, sought the investigation in aid of legislation to protect the mining industry, which contributes significantly to

the national economy.

"Some sources revealed that the announcement of these closure and suspension came on the heels of allegations that personal prejudices of her office mirrored the mining audit process and the choices of who or what company gets to be closed and suspended," Mangaoang and Bravo alleged.

"The apparent whimsical acts of closing and suspending these mining companies, if made arbitrarily and oppressively, constitute [a] violation of substantive due process," they said. *Next page*

## House...

From A1

Mangaoang and Bravo argued that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources should instead allow the mining firms affected by the order to correct the supposed mistakes in their operations.

"Secretary Lopez decided to immediately close and suspend these mining companies instead of giving them other corrective measures or penalties," Mangaoang and Bravo said.

The two lawmakers said the immediate closure and suspension were announced without giving these mining companies the opportunity to even respond or answer for the alleged finding of irregularities and violations of various environmental laws by the DENR.

Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers earlier slammed Lopez for her decision, saying many of the companies affected by her ruling were legitimate and responsible in their operations.

Barbers also said Lopez could have been misled by one of her consultants, former Environment Undersecretary and chief of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, Leo Jasareno, who headed the audit team but was later sacked by President Rodrigo Duterte.

"When Secretary Lopez was appointed as DENR chief, she ordered the audit of all mining firms nation-

wide. Unfortunately, despite his dismissal, Jasareno was retained as the head of the audit team," Barbers said.

The Palace on Wednesday said mining companies affected by the order would be given a chance to respond.

"The President and his Cabinet collectively decided to observe due process with regard to the mining issue," Presidential Spokesman Ernesto Abella said, referring to Tuesday's Cabinet meeting.

"This means companies affected by mining closures for violations of environmental laws and regulations will be given the opportunity to respond or dispute the audit, or make the necessary remedies to ensure compliance with government standards," he added.

Abella said that the Finance Department will have further discussions with the DENR to convene the Mining Industry Coordinating Council meeting soon.

Also on Wednesday, the Chamber of Mines thanked Duterte for deciding to observe due process.

"We welcome the decision as this gives hope to our mining communities comprised of the many women and men who rely on the industry for their living," the group said in a statement.

"We commit to work closely with government and the Minerals Industry Coordinating Council regarding issues raised to ensure that a fair and just conclusion to the mines audit is reached."

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Mine workers' fate in limbo, Senate finds

By Bernadette E. Tamayo

IT appears that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has no specific "transition plan" for the over 236,000 mining workers displaced by its order to shut down 23 mining firms nationwide.

Senator Joel Villanueva stressed this point after conducting the first public hearing on the government's "readiness" to help workers to be affected by the closure of mining firms.

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez made a video presentation during the hearing to justify the closure of the mines. She emphasized protecting the environment as she promoted "green economy." She said that green economy creates jobs "every year."

Asked whether the DENR was able to present a specific transition program for the workers directly affected by the mine closure, Villanueva said: "That's what we wanted to get out of the committee hearing. It appears that there's none."

"It appears that until now they are, they have yet to convene and come up with a framework on how they are going to do it. As we speak right now we don't know what they were doing for these un-

employed individuals. There's so many mouths to feed. Hindi ito biro na hindi dapat balewalain ng ating pamahalaan," he said in a chance interview.

He added: "I was told na yesterday tumawag ng meeting ang ating Pangulo (Duterte) para pag-usapan ito. I'm not privy to the meeting. I'm glad na nangyari 'yung meeting dahil siguro sa meeting na 'yun nagulat din sila na wala po ito (job placement program)."

Villanueva, chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor, conducted the inquiry after Lopez last February 2, ordered the closure of 23 large-scale mining firms and the suspension of five others in Benguet, Bulacan, Zambales, Homonhon, Dinagat Islands and Surigao del Norte.

Former Mines and Geosciences Bureau Director Leo Jasareno reported that the order will affect about 20,000 workers. On the other hand, Chamber of Mines Chairman Artemio Disini estimated that over 1.2 million workers will lose their jobs because of the closure order.

"This committee concerns itself with matters relating to the displacement of workers. Personally, I am deeply concerned that a huge num-

ber of the labor force would end up unemployed because of the closure order," said Villanueva.

"Nakita natin ngayon hindi ganun kahanda (ang DENR). Wala talagang klaro na transition plan. May klaro na gusto silang puntahan--to green economy. So kailangan hindi lang sa mining industry kundi sa ibat ibang industriya maging ready tayo dito dahil kapakanan ng manggagawa ang nakasalalay dito," he said.

He added: "Maganda naman ang presentation niya butagayin without the transition program na masisiguro natin na pupunta duonsa green economy, sa green jobs na tinatawag, kagaya nung nakita natin sa presentation eh parang ngayon pa lang tinatahi 'yung mga bagay na ito."

"I have to say this -- nakita natin parang nagulat 'yung ibang ahen-sya ng pamahalaan dun sa sinasabi ng DENR. Parang DENR lang ang nakakaalam nung ginagawa nila and nakakalungkot lang na medyo kulang sa coordination 'yung bawat ahen-siya natin. Ang panawagan ko sa ating administrasyon: get your act together dahil hindi biro ito," Villanueva said.



THURSDAY  
February 9, 2017

The Manila Times  
**Business**

## Closure, suspension orders to be released to miners – Lopez

BY JAMES GALVEZ

**E**NVIRONMENT and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez on Wednesday said all the closure and suspension orders on 28 mining companies will be signed and released to them individually.

This development comes on the heels of a strong lobby by mining companies for the government to produce the results of the recently concluded mining audit.

In a statement, Lopez said the recommendations submitted to her by the technical committee will be released to the mining industry.

"What happened was an omnibus directive. It was prepared for all mining companies and our lawyers have decided it should be issued to individual mining companies. That's why there's been a

delay," Lopez said.

The mining audit conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was fair and within the law, she said.

The industry audit was done to protect the present and future generations as enshrined in the Mining Law and the Philippine Constitution, the Cabinet official noted.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines has criticized the audit and the recommendations, claiming the audit lacked due

process and would lead to loss of employment and livelihood in affected communities. The chamber as the industry lobby group noted the closures would result in tax revenue loss for local governments hosting large-scale mining operations and the national coffers.

Lopez has vowed that within two years she will prove that a green economy can create more jobs than mining could ever create.

While the mining industry has created jobs, Lopez is standing pat on her position that sustainable economic development could be achieved without destroying the environment and causing suffering to people and that inclusive green economy is way better an alternative to mining.

The DENR chief noted the issue is social justice and not mining. At the end of the day, she said she had "to

make the decisions based on truth, service and the common good."

Lopez earlier admitted that she lacked the technical know-how in mining, but emphasized that the closure and suspension orders were done "to protect the present and future generations."

In an interview with ANC's Headstart, Lopez said she has to rely on "someone who has the common good in his heart," who happens to be former Mines and Geosciences Bureau Director Leo Jasareno.

"I'm having him as a consultant because I trust him. My experience with him has been a man with unquestionable integrity," Lopez said, citing Jasareno's 38-year experience with the MGB.

"He's really, really clean. In fact, during his term, there have been more suspensions in the mining industry," she added.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# MINES ORDER PROBE PRESSED

Two solons want DENR chief to explain  
'selective' order against mining firms P.2

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# MINES ORDER QUIZ PRESSED

By Ryan Ponce Pacpaco

TWO lawmakers want Environment Secretary Gina Lopez to explain her alleged selective order and absence of due process in closing 23 companies and suspending five others which could affect the country's economy.

Kalinga Rep. Allen Jesse Mangaoang and Coop-Natcco party-list Rep. Anthony Bravo filed House Resolution (HR) No. 756 seeking a congressional inquiry aimed at protecting the mining industry which is a great partner in the country's economic development.

"Some sources revealed that the announcement of these closure and suspension came on the heels of allegations that personal prejudices of her office marked the mining audit process and the choices of who or what company gets to be closed and suspended," Mangaoang and Bravo alleged.

"The apparent whimsical acts of closing and suspending these mining companies, if made arbitrarily and oppressively, constitute violation of substantive due process," they said.

Mangaoang and Bravo argued that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) should instead allow the mining firms affected by the order to correct the supposed mistakes in their operations.

"Secretary Lopez decided to immediately close and suspend these mining companies instead of giving them corrective measures or penalties," Mangaoang and Bravo stressed.

"The immediate closure and suspension were announced without giving these mining companies the opportunity to even respond or answer for the al-

leged finding of irregularities and violations of various environmental laws by the DENR," the two lawmakers said.

They cited the Constitutional guarantee of the right to due process of everyone and the Supreme Court ruling that protects livelihood and work of the people.

"Our Constitution mandates that 'no person shall be deprived of property without due process' and the Supreme Court has consistently ruled in several cases that 'A profession, trade or calling is a property right within the meaning of our constitutional guarantees."

"One cannot be deprived of the right to work and the right to make a living because these rights are property rights, the arbitrary and unwarranted deprivation of which normally constitutes an actionable wrong," they said.

"The Supreme Court ruled that the deprivation must be done with due process. Substantive due process requires that the means employed in depriving person of property must not be unduly oppressive," they said.

Earlier, Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers assailed Lopez for her decision, saying the audit was purportedly made secretly and many of the firms affected by the ruling are legitimate and responsible in their operations.

Barbers, who chairs the House Committee on Dangerous Drugs, said Lopez could have been misled by one of her alleged consultants, former Environment Undersecretary and Chief of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) head Lco Jasareno, who headed the audit team but was later on sacked by President Rodrigo "Rody" Duterte.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# HOUSE ASKED TO PROBE LOPEZ

By RYAN  
PONCE  
PACPACO

## For selective order, absence of due process in 23 mining firms' closure, suspension

TWO lawmakers are seeking a congressional investigation to make Environment Sec. Gina Lopez explain her alleged selective order and absence of due process in closing 23 companies and suspending five others, as they stressed that her questionable decision could affect the country's economy. /Page 6

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Kalinga Rep. Allen Jesse Mangaoang and Coop-Natcco party-list Rep. Anthony Bravo filed House Resolution (HR) No. 756 to inquire on the matter aimed at protecting the mining industry which is a great partner towards the country's economic development.

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"The immediate closure and suspension were announced without giving these mining companies the opportunity to even respond or answer for the alleged finding of

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## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

House asked to probe Lopez

tary and Chief of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) head Leo Jasareno, who headed the audit team but was later on sacked by President Rodrigo "Rody" Duterte.

"When Secretary Lopez was appointed as DENR chief, she ordered the audit of all mining firms nationwide. Unfortunately, despite his dismissal, Jasareno was retained as the head of the audit team," Barbers said.

According to Barbers, the so-called environmental violations, if true, could be the result of years of alleged neglect or tolerance of former Environment Sec. Ramon Paje and the Jasareno-led MGB.

Ako Bicol Rep. Rodel Batocabe, president of the Party List Coalition (PLC), urged Congress to exercise its oversight

powers to determine the bases of the order issued by Lopez, stressing the crackdown on the mining industry may affect the country's economy.

Earlier, Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay had already sought a congressional investigation on the DENR ruling 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 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.

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"LIFELINE TO MINERS"

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# Cabinet throws lifeline to miners

By Janina C. Lim  
with Ian Nicolas P. Cigara *Reporters*

BELEAGUERED miners reeling from last week's move by the Environment department to shut them down may have gotten a reprieve when the Cabinet on Tuesday decided to allow them to dispute audit findings and rectify project deficiencies.

Subsequent official steps will be threshed out in the meeting of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) scheduled this afternoon, Cabinet officials said yesterday.

Presidential Spokesperson Ernesto C. Abella said the Cabinet, led by President Rodrigo R. Duterte who had voiced support for the decision last week of Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez to shutter 23 of the country's 41 metal mines and to suspend five others, discussed the issue "in the context of social justice."

"The President and his Cabinet collectively decided to observe due process with regard to the mining issue," Mr. Abella said in a mobile phone message yesterday.

"This means companies affected by mining closures for violations of environmental laws will be given the opportunity to respond to or dispute the audit, or make

the necessary remedies to ensure compliance with environmental standards."

Tuesday's Cabinet meeting, Mr. Abella said, ended at 8 p.m., adding that "the Department of Finance (DoF) shall have further discussions with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in their capacities as concerned government agencies of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council."

In a separate text message, Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III confirmed that the MICC is scheduled to meet today which Ms. Lopez said will convene at 3 p.m.

The Environment chief told reporters separately yesterday that "there was discussion" on the issue in Tuesday's Cabinet meeting, but said she was standing by her decision.

"The President," she said, "was on the side of the common good."

"They wanted to make sure that I was following procedure and I have and I met with (Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador 'Sal' (S.) Panelo who's the legal counsel... and I explained everything, every step of the way I followed the law," the Environment

chief recalled at the sidelines of a public hearing in the Senate.

"The President saw that I followed the law e. I followed the law. That's the President's order. I followed the law."

*Miners, S1/3*



Read DENR's mine audit report summary by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link <goo.gl/qNkNR8>

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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

"LIFELINE TO MINERS"

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**Miners,**  
from SI/1

Ms. Lopez said the MICC cannot change her decision on sanctions to be meted erring miners.

"The MICC is recommendatory. I still call the shots. I'm totally within my rights to make decisions on closure, on suspension, that is in full swing of the authority of the Secretary of DENR. So I'm not breaking the law there," she said, recalling that Finance Secretary "Sonny Dominguez asked me to go and I said, 'sure' because I co-chair that with him."

The MICC — formed under Executive Order No. 79 signed by former president Benigno S.C. Aquino III on July 6, 2012 to oversee reforms to make miners more socially and environmentally responsible while giving the state a bigger share in industry revenues — is co-chaired by Mr. Dominguez and Ms. Lopez who head the Cabinet clusters on Economic Development and on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation, respectively.

"They're (MICC) recommendatory, you know," Ms. Lopez said.

"And as far as I'm concerned you really can't have mining on watersheds. And I don't see anyone who can convince me that you can mine in watersheds. *Yun* (That's it)."

EO 79 also indefinitely extended a moratorium on new mining permits that was put in place the preceding year until a new revenue-sharing arrangement is enacted into law.

The DENR on Thursday last week announced its decision to either shutter or suspend more than three-fifths of the country's metal mines on environmental grounds — including operating in a watershed and causing siltation in adjacent bodies of water — even as the technical review committee which DENR formed in November last year to review their cases recommended as sanctions suspension of operation, suspension of environmental compliance certificate, non-issuance of ore transport permit, and/or payment of fines.

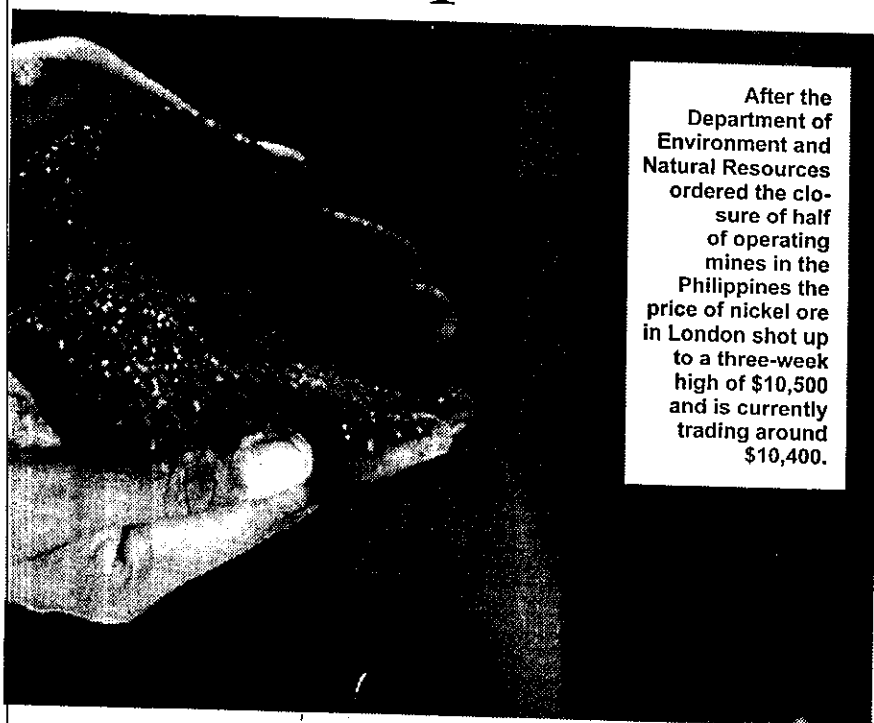
The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (CoMP) yesterday issued a statement thanking Mr. Duterte and his Cabinet "for deciding to observe due process with regard to the mining issue," adding that its members will "work closely" with the MICC "regarding issues raised to ensure that a fair and just conclusion to the mines audit is reached."

"We're relieved that, finally, the DoF will get involved. We hope to get a review process going," Ronald S. Recidoro, CoMP's vice-president for Legal and Policy, said by phone.

The DENR said last week that mines 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 that same year, while its Mines and Geosciences Bureau estimates that the entire mining industry contributed 0.5% to the country's jobs and 0.6% to gross domestic product in last year's first three quarters.

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Nickel market doubles up on political uncertainty



After the Department of Environment and Natural Resources ordered the closure of half of operating mines in the Philippines the price of nickel ore in London shot up to a three-week high of \$10,500 and is currently trading around \$10,400.

LONDON- Last month Indonesia rocked the nickel market. This month it is the turn of the Philippines.

Indonesia's decision to allow the partial resumption of exports of nickel ore sent the London Metal Exchange (LME) nickel price spiralling to a six-month low of \$9,350 per tonne.

What Indonesia giveth, the Philippines apparently taketh away.

The country's eco-warrior-turned-mining-minister Regina Lopez has ordered the closure of 23 mines and the suspension of five others, most of them nickel producers.

In London the price shot up to a three-week high of \$10,500 on the news and is currently trading around \$10,400.

Over the coming weeks nickel's fortunes are likely to be beholden to the uncertain implications of government policy in both countries.

Volatility is assured but it will be at least partly mitigated by high stocks of the alloying metal.

This, after all, is a market that is struggling to emerge from years of over-supply and resulting inventory build. And while events in both Indonesia and the Philippines are going to be key price drivers for the foreseeable future, they will impact only the most upstream part of a supply chain which is still amply filled at the refined metal stage.

## MORE UNCERTAINTY

Last month's part reversal of Indonesia's 2014 ban on the export of unprocessed nickel ore was not what the market was expecting.

And it appears to have been wrong-footed again by the severity of the Philippines' proposed action on its mining sector.

Most assumed the environmental audit of the country's mines would punish only a small handful of operators.

But, according to research by Goldman Sachs, the closures would represent around 139,000 tonnes and the suspensions another 34,000 tonnes of annual capacity, equivalent to 7.0 percent and 1.7 percent of world supply respectively.

"The potential production losses from these suspensions and closures is substantially higher than our prior expectations, not just owing to the size of mines affected (...) but also in the length of time that these mines may not be producing."

Of course, it remains to be seen whether policy becomes reality.

Lopez's aggressive campaign against the mining sector is already generating an equally aggressive reaction. Expect weeks if not months of political push-and-shove and court action as operators fight back.

It amounts to a doubling-up of political uncertainty because everyone's still trying to work out what are the implications of Indonesia's decision to roll back its ban on nickel ore exports.

The details are still confused and confusing.

Not all miners will qualify for export shipments. It will depend on whether they are committed to investing in downstream processing capacity, the nature of the ore they generate and on how much of that ore is used within Indonesia itself.

But there are tangible signs that some are gearing up to restart production.

China Hanking said its Indonesian subsidiary is preparing the ground at its site in Sulawesi and has signed a sales agreement covering "at least 1.5 million wet tonnes of nickel ore containing 1.9 percent or above nickel".

Others will surely follow.



## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Nickel market doubles up on  
political uncertainty

### ORE NOT METAL

What will be the net impact on nickel supply of Indonesia's (part) return to the market and the Philippines' mine clamp down?

Answers on a postcard. That is precisely what every nickel analyst is trying to calculate right now.

But it's important to remember that we're just talking about ore and the flow of ore to China's nickel pig iron (NPI) sector, which converts that ore into feedstock for stainless steel mills.

NPI production has fallen from its heights but the sector is still not only operating but starting to be offshored in Indonesia itself.

Those with a long memory will remember a time when the consensus thinking was that NPI operators would be out of business at a price below \$20,000 per tonne.

But they have reduced costs, diversified their ore sourcing to countries such as New Caledonia and experimented with supplementing ore with other forms of nickel.

The NPI sector is still in its relative infancy having been born out of nickel's stratospheric climb to above \$50,000 per ton back in 2007 and it is not going to go away any time soon.

Its resilience has been a key factor in the global market's excess supply of recent years.

The International Nickel Study Group (INSG) estimates a cumulative global supply surplus of 468,000 tonnes over the 2012-2015 period.

Much of that surplus is sitting in warehouses registered with the London Metal Exchange and the Shanghai Futures Exchange. Right now the two exchanges are holding just over 472,000 tons of metal between them.

### TRANSITION NARRATIVE

Nickel is a market that is still in transition from chronic supply surplus to deficit.

The process started gaining momentum last year. The INSG estimates a global deficit of around 64,000 tonnes over the first 11 months of 2016.

But as ever with such transitions, it's a stop-start, slow-fuse process and it's worth noting that LME nickel stocks are once again rising, up by over 11,000 tonnes since the start of January.

The double conundrum represented by government action in Indonesia and the Philippines will affect the timing of this transition but only at the margins.

At least as important in terms of all that metal sitting in exchange warehouses will be demand.

Stainless steel is the primary determinant of nickel demand growth and global output rose strongly by 7.0 percent in the first nine months of last year, according to the International Stainless Steel Forum.

Can it maintain that pace this year? And, in particular, can Chinese production keep rising at the same rate, 11.4 percent, it recorded in the first three quarters of 2016?

The answer to that question may turn out to have bigger medium-term impact on the nickel price than events in south-east Asia.

Because this is not a story of scarcity and looming supply crunch. If it were, the whipsaw price action seen so far this year would look mild by comparison.

And the nickel price wouldn't still be gyrating either side of the \$10,000 level. — Reuters

# THE STANDARD

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## PH nickel miners also slam Lopez's decision

THE Philippine Nickel Industry Association Inc. expressed disappointment over the decision of Secretary Gina Lopez of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to suspend and shut down the operations of 28 mining companies in the Philippines.

"We believe that the Secretary's action is not only bereft of transparency, due process and factual basis, but likewise detrimental to the mining industry and the Philippine economy as a whole and a serious threat to the livelihood and economic well-being of the affected communities," the group said in a statement.

Lopez announced the suspension and closure of the 28 mines in a press conference last week, claiming that they did not comply with laws and regulations. The DENR chief made the announcement after ignoring the results of a government audit showing many of those meted with suspensions and closure of operation passed the test.

"We find it highly irregular that no official of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau was present during the announcement. MGB, being the lead agency in the mining audit, should have been present to discuss and explain the results of the audit," PNIAI said.

"Mining operations are highly technical and scientific, and should not be based merely on a lay person's visual appreciation. Yet, vague, unauthenticated aerial videos of the mine sites and its surrounding areas were presented to support the Secretary's decision. No scientific data was presented. Actual studies and data from technical experts who took part in the audit were withheld," it said.

# Daily Tribune

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR

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## Closure of mining sites to hurt LGUs

The directive of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to shut down or suspend the operations of mining sites across the country will cost the affected local government units (LGUs) in 10 provinces over P650 million yearly in foregone revenues, according to initial assessments by the Department of Finance (DoF) based on 2015 data.

In a preliminary report to Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez, the Bureau of Local Government Finance (BLGF) said that losses as taxes, fees and other charges directly collected by the local governments from mining sites are estimated at P441.92 million, while LGUs' share from mining taxes collected by the national government account for another P172 million.

"The total estimated potential revenue loss of the affected LGUs from all sources, based on 2015 data, amount to P653.64 million," BLGF executive director Nino Alvina said in his

preliminary report to Dominguez.

The BLGF said the provinces affected either by the closure or suspension order are Benguet, Nueva Vizcaya, Palawan, Cebu, Bulacan, Zambales, Eastern Samar, Dinagat Islands, Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur.

Alvina said the BLGF based its initial report to the Finance secretary on 2015 data because reports for 2016 will come in by the end of the first quarter (March 31).

He said the BLGF had sourced its data from the preliminary estimates of local treasurers and their electronically submitted Statements of Receipts and Expenditures that now cover reports on earnings from mining and other extractive industries.

The preliminary reports would still have to be reviewed because some LGUs are hosting two to five mining projects, Alvina said.

Dominguez last week instructed city and municipal treasurers in areas hosting mine sites to submit their respective reports on the final and complete revenue impact of the DENR directive by the end of this work week or by February 10.

According to Alvina, LGUs directly collect from mining firms operating in their municipalities and cities the following taxes and fees: Real Property Tax (RPT), Local Business Tax, Mayor's Permit Fee, Regulatory and Administrative Fees and Occupation Fees.

"The provinces of the affected component municipalities are also imposing governor's clearance, verification fee, environmental fees, soil depletion tax and processing permits for vessel," Alvina said.

He said that for the RPTs imposed by cities, the LGU gets a 70 percent share while the remaining 30 percent is shared with the barangays, of which half goes to the barangay directly affected, and the other half shared equally by component barangays.

For the RPTs collected by provinces, the province receives a 35 percent share, while 40 percent goes to the municipality, and the remaining 25 percent to barangays where the mining site is located.

Alvina said that RPTs account for some P43.97 million of the estimated revenues that LGUs will lose from the closure and suspension of mining operations while business taxes and

other fees and charges account for P358.56 million, and provincial revenues, P39.9 million.

As for their share in mining taxes imposed by the national government, Alvina said the estimated losses of P211 million of the affected LGUs comprise 43 percent of their total share from national tax collections.

Dominguez has given a short one-week deadline for local treasurers in LGUs affected by the mining closure and suspension orders to submit their respective reports as they could already quickly access data through the web-based Environment and Natural Resources Data Management Tool (ENRDMT).

In Department Order 049-2016 issued in September last year, Dominguez instructed local treasurers to include in their quarterly and annual financial reports to the DoF all environment and natural resources revenues and expenditures, particularly the payments made by the mining and other extractive industries to their respective LGUs.

Municipal and city treasurers have been forwarding their Statements of Receipts and Expenditures electronically since 2011 and are now required to submit them through the ENRDMT.

Dominguez had asked for the impact assessment reports because alongside the massive loss of jobs and its effect on the national economy, the DENR's move might imperil the fiscal state of the affected LGUs, given that mining companies account for a hefty part of the tax revenues collected by local governments in municipalities hosting mine sites.

Dominguez said last weekend that these assessment reports will aid the government in coming up with a comprehensive strategy to address the impact of the DENR move on the employment and fiscal situations in the communities where the concerned mining sites are located.

Dominguez said he has already called for a meeting of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC), which he co-chairs, to assess the impact of the DENR directive.

"We're just waiting for the response of the other members of the MICC. So we want to have it next week as soon as possible," Dominguez said.

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# LGUs to suffer from mine closures

By Jun I. Legaspi

THE shutdown or suspension of 28 mines across the country will cost the affected local government units (LGUs) in 10 provinces over P650 million yearly in foregone revenues, according to initial assessments made by the Department of Finance (DoF) based on 2015 data.

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The Manila Times

News

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## DOLE to help displaced workers in 23 closed mines

BY MICAH VARDELEON

THE Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) will provide assistance to displaced workers affected by the closure of 23 mining companies in national watersheds.

To deliver this promise, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello 3rd has ordered four regional offices to assess the situation of the affected workers. DOLE offices in Regions 3, 6 and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) will also

conduct profiling of workers for their inclusion in the government's Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers Program (Tupad).

The "workers who want to have temporary work will be given

emergency employment while those who want to have other means of income will also be provided with livelihood assistance," Bello said.

The regional offices will partner with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority to provide training for workers who want to upgrade their skills.

Hired Tupad workers will be paid with the regional minimum wage and will be working for minimum of 15 days and maximum of 30 days.

They will be given social pro-

tection under the Government Service Insurance System and provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like safety boots, sweatshirt, hat, gloves and other equipment fitted to their assigned work and/or project.

Meanwhile, an orientation on Occupational Safety and Health will be conducted before the start of project implementation for the workers to be aware of the basic safety and health practices including different unsafe acts and unsafe conditions to prevent work-related accidents.



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D'YARYO NG BAYAN

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

**DENR Secretary Gina Lopez:**

# MINING COMPANIES HINDI NAKATUTULONG SA EKONOMIYA NG BANSA

pa yata tayong nakitang matapang na kalihim ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) kung hindi si Secretary Gina

ng ang tingin ng mamamayan kay Secretary Lopez ay isang social na paboran ng administrasyong Duterte para itaaga bilang kalihim ng DENR at proteksiyonang interes ng kanilang pamilya, puwes, ng pruweba na marami ang nagkamali sa pagtingin sa kanya dahil sa kanya ay isa siyang performing asset ng administrasyong ito.

hasang inihayag ni Secretary Lopez na ang investment ng mining companies na nasa bansa ay hindi nakatutulong sa ating ekonomiya ang kanilang ganansiya ay iniuwi rin nila sa kanilang bansa. sa mga bansang gaya ng Switzerland na ang umiiral na banking ay Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA) na hinuhurirang ang kanilang bank account kahit ng International Money-lending Information Network.

Wala siguro ng mga mapagsamantalang mining companies kumbra si Secretary Gina nang sabihin nilang P1 trilyong investment ang mawawala sa bansa sa pagpapatupad niya ng closure at reclamation orders laban sa kanila.

Sabi nga ni Madam Gina, sila lang ang nakinabang sa investment nila. Iyon silang pitong-taon na tax-holiday at kapag natapos na silang mining, naipagbibili pa nila ang lahat ng mining equipment na ginamit nila kaya bumabalik din sa kanila ang puhunan nila.

Pinagahasa nila ang bansa at ang kinikita nila ay lumalabas sa bankang kukuha nila ang 82 percent ng net income at 95 percent nito ay ginagamit sa nakatutulong ng local economy, "yan ang mariling pahayag ng kalihim.

Narinig ba natin sa ibang naging kalihim ng DENR ang katotohanang walang tayong narinig sa kanila at hindi nila sinasabi na ang pagmamamamayan ay isang prehuwiso sa buong lipunan at sa ating ekonomiya. Ang iniwala tayo sa sinasabi ni Madam Gina.

'Yang mga Chinese and Taiwanese mining company na namumunini sa black sand mining 'e walang pakinabang ang ating bansa.

Sabi nang sabi lang sila na malaki ang na-iaambag nila sa ekonomiya ng bansa pero sa totoo lang kahit 'yung obligasyon nila pagkatapos magmina ay hindi nila ginagawa.

Ang katotohanan, hindi na tayo kumikita sa mining companies na 'yan, nalulugi pa tayo nang daan-daang milyones dahil sa irresponsible mining practices.

Ilang halimbawa umano ang mga open pit mining na malapit sa mga ilog at talon, na financial liability ng gobyerno sa buong buhay.

Pagkatapos magmina, mayroong obligasyon ang mining companies na magsagawa ng rehabilitation o maglaan ng pondo para sa rehabilitation ng komunidad pero hindi nila ginagawa.

Ang pangako ng rehabilitation kinalimutan na.

Sila ang yumaman pero winasak ang yaman ng ating bansa.

Narito ang isang DENR Secretary, isang babae na hindi nagpapasindak sa banta at pananakot ng malalaking mining companies.

Suportahan po natin ang mga programa ni DENR Secretary Gina Lopez.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### CoMP cites Fol vs DENR report

THE Chamber of Mines of the Philippines on Tuesday cited its right-to-know under the Freedom of Information to compel the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to make public the audit report which was the basis for the closure of 23 mining firms and suspension of operation of five others.

In a press conference held at the Discovery Suites in Pasig City, former Mines and Geosciences Bureau chief Horacio Ramos said there should be transparency in the report and that it should be based on scientific process.

"There should be transparency in all the reports you prepare, especially if the reports would lead to the suspension or closure of a mining company," he said.

For his part, CoMP Vice President for Legal and Policy Ronald Recidoro said it was the duty of the DENR Secretary to make public the mining audit report.

"If she refuses, clearly she's going against the Duterte administration's mandate on transparency," he said.

"Every person accused of an offense must know the precise details of the offense you are being charged with," he added.

The DENR has ordered the closure of 23 mining firms and the sus-

pension of five others for breaching environmental standards.

CoMP said while Lopez reiterated her purpose to "heal" the sector, the closure order had grave repercussions on the industry and the country as well.

"This is not the way to 'heal the hurt'. This is not the way to harness the mineral industry's potential as a contributor to the country's progress," said CoMP chairman Artemio Disini.

Disini said the closure order would affect more than 1.2 million Filipinos and cripple local government units and communities that benefit from tax payments of mining firms.

"She (Lopez) is creating an unstable policy environment resulting in threatening the economic growth momentum under the Duterte administration and putting in limbo USD 22 billion worth of investments," he said.

According to the MGB, the projected actual mining investment for 2016 is USD 619.5 million.

But with the closure, as estimated P62.5 billion on investment and P 4.1 billion in taxes will be lost.

"Lopez is slowly killing an industry that has paid billions in taxes and fees annually," Disini said.

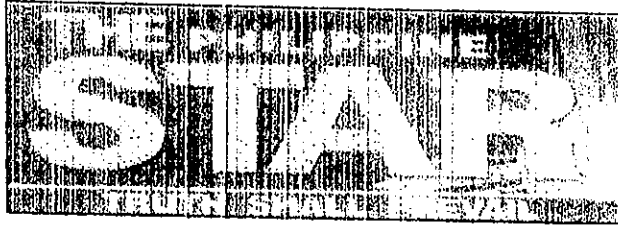
The affected mining firms account

for half of the nickel ore output by the world's top supplier of the metal.

Dr. Carlos Arcilla, director of the University of the Philippines' National Institute of Geological Sciences, in a statement, has said while he agreed with the DENR chief that irresponsible mining operations should be shut down, he was puzzled as to why Lopez had not furnished the mining firms and even the media copies of the mining audit, which should have been the basis for ordering their closure and suspension.

"We are in agreement that the irresponsible mines should be closed. No argument on that. That is the purpose of the audit -- technical people checking whether the mines are fulfilling the obligations under law to protect the environment," Arcilla said.

"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," he added.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

**Shooting Straight**

By BOBIT S. AVILA

**What's up with the mining industry?**

The other day, Karen Davila's Headstart on ANC and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez as her guest where she gave a video presentation of the alleged violations of 23 mining companies all over the country. She gave a video or a PowerPoint presentation of those alleged violations by the mining companies. But that was only from the DENR side.

In fairness to Karen Davila, yesterday morning she had Mr. Ronald Recidoro, vice president of the Chamber of Mines as her guest to give the side of the mining industry and it was quite surprising to hear that as of yesterday the Chamber of Mines members have not yet received the DENR closure or suspension order. Or did any of the mining companies get a copy of the DENR audit documents. I find this quite strange because before you close a company the owners should be given the closure order and the reasons why you are being shut down by the government.

What is even more serious are the accusations against Mr. Recidoro that the audit team of the DENR is "bribe-riddled" with anti-mining activists? Is this true Sec. Gina? I know for a fact that there are just too many people who are against mining. Many of them are members of the Catholic Church and leftist groups in the guise of "protecting the environment." But I dare say that the Duterte administration must strike the right balance in the mining industry. Shutting down mining operations like in the Caraga Region because the mining industry has not improved the poverty in the area is a very simplistic reason to shut down mining operations.

Let me say it here, mining companies can provide jobs in the most remote areas of the country, but getting the people out of poverty is not the job of these mining companies. Sec. Gina Lopez also came up with a comparison with the mining industry and the tourism industry. This for me is comparing apples with oranges. Mining companies are attracted to the minerals found in a remote area...but these are areas that tourists would never dare come for a visit. So this comparison is faulty to say the least.

During that interview with Karen Davila, Mr. Recidoro showed areas where the rivers turned brown due to siltation. Karen reacted that she never knew of rivers turning brown without a mining operations nearby. Let me tell Karen Davila that in the town of Liloan, some 18 kilometers north of Cebu City after a strong rain, our beaches turn brown because the river washes into the sea. But there are no mining operations in the area. Siltation of our rivers is commonplace all over the country.

Again, we are keenly interested in following up the issues surrounding the mining industry. We in Cebu have lived with Asia's largest copper mine, the Atlas Mining and Development Company that turned Toledo City from a first class town into a city. But when copper prices plunged and Atlas Mines suffered crippling strikes, it resulted in an economic downturn for Toledo City. So whether you like it or not, the mining industry is vital to the economy of the country. Which is why the Duterte administration should seriously look into this issue and not just look at the side of the DENR.

\* \* \*

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### mining industry gasps for breath

The resolution said Ebdane's action constitutes a violation of Section 3 (e) of Republic Act (RA) 3019, which prohibits government officials from using their positions to give unwarranted benefits, advantage or preference to private party, as well as Usurpation of Official Functions under Article 177 of the Revised Penal Code. Aside from Ebdane, also indicted for Theft of Minerals under Section 103 of RA 7942 or the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 were four individuals from Geoking.

What's even more puzzling is the closure of OceanaGold's Didipio operations in Nueva Vizcaya. The company is a "poster boy" for responsible mining, with no less than President Duterte conferring on it the award of being a model company in the extraction industry.

OceanaGold Philippines Inc. Chairman Joey P. Leviste Jr. told BusinessWise in an interview that he was shocked upon learning that his company was one of those ordered closed, saying that such order has no legal leg to stand on.

Leviste told BusinessWise that the Didipio operation is not in violation of any laws, rules or regulations, and does not pose any threat to public health and safety.

**To be continued**

For comments and suggestions, e-mail me at  
mvala.v@gmail.com

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Mining industry gasps for breath



Val A. Villanueva

## BUSINESSWISE

**W**ITH over \$1.4 trillion worth of minerals waiting to be excavated from identified mining areas, who could fault those who compare the Philippines to a poor man sitting on a pot of gold?

But that pot of gold is looking more like wishful thinking or an unfulfilled dream with what I believe is a reckless move by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources's (DENR) head, Regina Paz L. Lopez, to shut down 23 and suspend five mining operations in what was described in the industry as coming from an emotional, rather than a rational, mind.

Lopez, who has yet to be confirmed as DENR secretary by the Senate's powerful Commission on Appointments, apparently made the move on her own, ignoring the recommendations of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB). Her basis: these mining companies operate in "functional watersheds".

In fact, the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) believes that the closure of the 23 mining operations "may not have been based on the review conducted by the MGB."

According to Neila Halcon, COMP executive vice president, reports that reached them "said MGB personnel were even banned from her [Lopez's] press conference," where she announced her decision.

Lopez said the Philippines could live without the expected revenues from the industry. She also refused to reveal the MGB recommendations, but said she would be willing to share them with President Duterte if asked.

Thus, with one fell swoop, Lopez has put at risk 67,000 jobs and ignored the potential for the industry to generate about P66.6 billion worth of annual production. By disregarding a thorough vetting process, she has cost the government some P16.7 billion in tax revenues.

Of the mines facing closure, 17 are involved in nickel production. These firms represent about half of the country's annual nickel output, with the country being the world's

biggest supplier of nickel since 2012, in the aftermath of Indonesia's ban on mineral exports.

Most of these nickel miners are located in Zambales. Documents show, however, that those responsible for environmental degradation in Zambales are seven Chinese companies that had gouged out the area, using nickel mining as pretext. Apparently, the responsible mining companies that have been shut down were not the cause of the large-scale environmental ruin in that province.

Last year the Office of the Ombudsman has found probable cause to charge Zambales Gov. Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. with graft and usurpation of duty in connection with the alleged anomalous issuance of permits to a small-scale mining firm. The permits allegedly paved the way for the illegal hauling and shipping of chromite, valued at more than P211 million, from the province.

In a 32-page resolution, the Ombudsman Special Panel for the Environment concluded that Ebdane had usurped the functions of the Provincial Mining Regulatory Board by issuing several small-scale mining permits to Geoking Asia Mining Corp. to haul chromite from the site of the Coto Chromite Project in Sitio Coto in Masinloc, Zambales, despite the existing agreement between the provincial government and large-scale mining company Consolidated Mines Inc.

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### EDITORIAL

Para sa inyong reaksiyon: I-type ABANTE <space> EDITORIAL  
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## Hindi napapalitan ang kalikasan!

Isa sa maraming bagay na sinusuportahan ng Simbahang Katolika sa mga polisiya ni Pangulong Digong Duterte – bukod sa ‘bloodless’ na war on drugs at pagsugpo sa kriminalidad at kahirapan – ay ang puso nito para sa kalikasan.

Panahon pa lamang ng kampanya noon ay pumapalakpak na ang Simbahan, lalo na ang mga ‘green’ advocates, sa mga pahayag ni noo’y kandidatong Duterte na ilulunsad niya ang giyera sa mga mapaminsalang minahan.

Hindi naman niya nilahat. Pero malinaw ang binitiwang salita noon na walang puwang ang mga minahan na lumalabag sa umiiral na batas at higit sa lahat ay ang hindi sumusunod sa batas ng kalikasan.

Nang iupo ni Pangulong Digong si ABS-CBN executive Gina Lopez bilang kalihim ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), muling pumalakpak ang mga environmentalists at ang Simbahan at iba pang religious sect dahil ang kalikasan ay regalo ng Diyos sa tao na mahalagang mahalalin at pangalagaan.

Lumagpas man ang anim na buwan bago nakarinig ng matigas na desisyon ang sambayanan kay Sec. Lopez, tila sulit naman. Umabot sa 23 minahan o mining operations ang ikinandado nito.

Kamakalawa ay inamin ni Sec. Lopez na ang rekomendasyon sa kanya ng audit team, na inatasan niyang kumalikot sa mga dokumento o papeles ng lahat ng minahan sa bansa at aktuwal na sumilip sa kanilang operasyon, ay pagmultahin lang ang mga minahang ito na mayroong violations o mga paglabag.

Pero matigas ang naging posisyon ng kalihim na ipasara ang mga ito.

Ang kanyang rason: walang katapat na pera ang pinsalang idinudulot ng mga minahang ito na hindi sumusunod sa mga pamantayang itinakda, una sa kalikasan at pangalawa sa buhay at kalusugan ng mga tao sa lugar ng kanilang operasyon.

Hindi na nga naman kuwestyon kung kumikita ang gobyerno, na ang lotoo nga ay barya lang ang napupunta sa pamahalaan habang humihiga sa pera ang mga kumpanyang humihigop ng mina, lalo na ng nickel kung saan numero unong supplier ang Pilipinas sa buong mundo. Hindi na pinag-uusapan kung malaking multa ang pwedeng masingil sana! Ang posisyon ni Sec. Lopez ay “hindi napapalitan ang kalikasan” at “walang katapat na presyo ang nasisirang buhay at kabuhayan ng mga taong napipinsala ng mga minahan na ito.”

Sa paglalarawan pa ni Sec. Lopez, pumupula ang katubigan (dagat man ‘yan o ilog), dumudumi at nalalason ang mga watershed na siyang pinanggagalingan ng tubig na tumutulo sa gripo ng bawat kabahayan.

Ang tanong: nagsalita na si Pangulong Digong na sinusuportahan niya ang kampanya at mga desisyon ni Sec. Lopez, bakit gusto pang umeksena ng Mababang Kapulungan at pumupormang imbestigahan ang ‘closure order’ ni Sec. Lopez?



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# BusinessMirror

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



UPLAND vegetable trader Lusviminda Nginhena entices motorists with a tray of organically grown vegetables from Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya, right in her backyard along the OceanaGold (Philippines) Inc. access road.

## OceanaGold institutionalized as 'green' mining company

STORY AND PHOTO  
BY LEONARDO PERANTE II

**T**HE first Financial Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) signed by former President Fidel V. Ramos issued all the preconditions and terms governing large-scale mining operations in the country.

It allowed Australian mining company OceanaGold (Philippines) Inc. (OGPI) to explore in the mining village of Didipio in Nueva Vizcaya. The Partial Declaration of Mining Feasibility area of 975 hectares has been classified as mineral land. Residents of impacted areas were compensated under the Surface Rights Acquisition Scheme.

The old road to the mining village was merely an abandoned logging trail. It is of this reason the company prioritized

a road network and bridges connected to nearby villages approximately a total 107 kilometers, including a well-paved 22-kilometer mining-access highway as part of its Social Development Program, dubbed We Care. Hillside farmers at the mining village are now into large-scale vegetable farming. What used to be idle mountainside contours have been converted into productive vegetable gardens planted with organically grown vegetables. With rolling terrain, the contour-farming villages of Tucod and Dingasan in Quirino, are also known for bananas, cassava, citrus and corn crops in enormous volumes.

Many see the substantial daily food requirements of Didipio operations a potential prospect that encouraged a number of local farmers to shift from

traditional-rice farming to organic vegetable production.

Mang Cornelio, who cultivates plots of high-value vegetables in Barangay Tucod, claims the favorable climate and paved road network provided by the mining company also serve a steady market for his crops.

"With all of these promising potentials, farmers like us could also grow 'edible gold' in our farms," the enterprising farmer said.

Dr. Pio Javier, an entomologist from the University of the Philippines, was commissioned by the Australian mining firm to conduct on-site investigative study to come up with real score what caused the devastation and, finally, answer problems now confronting the citrus industry in town. Decline in citrus production was documented since the 1970s, even before Didipio Mine started operations.

"It is exactly of the same reason we initiated citrus forum among our local farmers to educate them further on proper production and postharvest management. Citrus is a nutritious, high-value fruit, which is incidentally grown in many upland villages, a hand-reach away to our dining tables, where we feed more than 1,800 mining employees three times a day," OGPI SVP for Communications and External Affairs Chito Gozar said.

OceanaGold Sustainable Agroforestry Inc. (OGSAI), an affiliate of OGPI, runs a 100-hectare commercial-tree plantation at Dibibi Village in Cabarroguis, Quirino.

In a technical services agreement with OGPI as a service provider, OGSAI shall manage and operate a central nursery for the production of various agro-forest tree seedlings needed in the commercial-tree plantation and implement reforestation projects of the Australian mining firm. The tree-seedling production has reached 1 million in the past three years.

As part of its advocacy, organic agriculture is highly encouraged, as demonstrated at the OGSAI farm for pesticide-free and safe-to-eat veggies.

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Suportahan si DENR chief Gina Lopez

BILIB ang madlang pinoy sa diskarte ni Gina na isara ang mga minahan sa iba't-ibang lugar sa Philippines my Philippines dahil sinisira lamang nito ang kapaligiran at kalikasan.

Ika nga, tumpak!

Ayon sa mga asset ng mga kuwago ng ORA MISMO, totoong kaunti lamang ang nakikinabang at maliit din ang kinikita ng mga minero na pinagta-trabaho sa mga minahan samantala ang sinisira ng mga ito ay hindi biro.

Sabi nga, nakakasuka!

Ayon sa mga asset ng mga kuwago ng ORA MISMO, na hindi dapat magpatalo si Gina sa gusto ng mga bilyonaryong may-ari ng mga minahan dapat palagan niya ang mga ito.

Ika nga, huwag siyang bibigay!

Abangan.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## ARScience

## Saving Laguna de Bay 2

By MACRINA TAMAYO-ZAFARALLA, PhD

## (Conclusion)

Bay had the best rated quality with a score of 77 percent. All water quality parameters were rated A except *hyll a* which was rated B. But the apparent water quality did not reflect in the fisheries which were at 28 percent, and a mere three percent. The ground allocation was small at one fisher per 28 hectares. Fisheries suffer most from predation pressure coming from the clown fish. Usually, the clown fish is fed by the good water quality. This fish gains a kilo out of every seven kilos of fish.

Bay water quality here was the second best at 77 percent, a passing mark. All quality indicators were at stable levels except *ate* (63 percent), and *hyll a* (zero percent). The score was second at 43 percent owing to the presence of native fish species (37 percent). This is the present site of a fish sanctuary. A number of factors influences the water quality, but many of these are included in the assessment to come up with a conclusion. Knowledge is still lacking as to how strongly these might have contributed to a poor performance of the fisheries. The ratios of zooplankton are high, indicating that organisms are being ignored over others. The prey-predator relationship of the microconsumers

level may now be mirrored at the macroconsumers level. For instance, how come the knife fish seems unaffected by the extant pollution, while tilapia and bangus are dwindling in number and diminishing in size?

The BFAR has chosen *ayungin* (*Leipotherapon plumbeus*) as indicator fish to signal the return of favorable water of Laguna de Bay. In 2013, the highest total catch of this species was in Central Bay, while the lowest was in East Bay.

## Recommendations

The EHRC asserts "people can make a difference." Government agencies and local communities must work together. An interagency technical working group has been formed to harmonize efforts for the implementation of projects and strategies for the containment and prevention of the spread of clown knife fish (*Notopterus chitala*), which now causes biological pollution in the lake. There must be a sustained mobilization of communities to participate in the massive retrieval of the knife fish. More efforts must be made of providing livelihood opportunities through development of value adding technology for the economic utilization of the knife fish. There should be a more energized operation of the BFAR interactive invasive fishes webpage for information dissemination and participatory citizen science.

This writer supports President Duterte's move to dismantle the illegally installed fishpens and cages in the lake which continue to limit the breathing space

of the fish which obviously need a wide space for growth, mobility and foraging.

The illegally installed fishpens should be dismantled gradually and systematically to ensure that the fish supply will not be abruptly brought to a critically low level. And the action of dismantling should tend towards the production of high quality fish. The entire effort of lake rehabilitation should be holistic for the sake of people and the environment.

The EHRC points to a new technology that helps restore water quality, namely the UPLB Aquatic Macrophyte Biosorption System (AMBS). A simple low-cost phytoremediation system developed at UPLB, the AMBS uses bamboo and native aquatic plants (water hyacinth or kangkong), and is applicable in shallow

streams and rivers. It can serve as an intervention that makes for a holistic approach to habitat restoration not only of the streams in which it is installed, but also, and ultimately, the Laguna de Bay, the final destination of the lake's tributary streams. Over the last seven years that the AMBS has been operational in the Molawin Biopark, Tanay River and Pangao River of Lipa City, native fishes in tremendous numbers have come back – evidence of habitat restoration. As the technology cited in the EHRC that can help restore water quality, this low-cost phytoremediation technology may yet be the system to give hope for a much needed attitudinal change among riverside and lakeside communities owing to the return of aquatic life as a visible evidence of a successful habitat restoration.

## About the author:

A professor emeritus at the Institute of Biological Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, UPLB, Macrina Tamayo-Zafaralla conceptualized the Biopark Strategy and the AMBS.



Aquatic macrophyte biosorption system (AMBS)

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# The passion of Sen. Legarda

**L**ast February 6, Senate climate change committee chair Loren Legarda delivered a passionate speech on water.

She gave alarming statistics, citing [www.water.org](http://www.water.org): "There are still 8 million Filipinos who lack access to safe water, and 25 million lack access to improved sanitation. Eighteen Filipinos die daily from diarrhea and water-borne diseases, while 55 Filipinos die daily from diseases caused by lack of proper sewage and adequate sanitation facilities."

**Analysis.** Our agriculture uses 80 percent of water. When there are floods caused largely by 5.7-million denuded hectares of former forest lands, water is everywhere. In this case, water destroys our crops. When drought hits, which is becoming more often because of climate change, water is nowhere.

The National Irrigation Authority (NIA) has an annual budget of more than P25 billion. The money allows it to cover thousands of hectares for irrigation, yet wrong priorities sometimes kick in.

Furthermore, sans any integrated water program, we collect only 4 percent of our rainwater.

The Asian Water Development Output, a joint effort of the Asian Development Bank and Asia-Pacific Water Forum, states: "These water problems are caused primarily by inappropriate management practices, rather than physical scarcity of water."

In the National Water Security Index (NWSI) covering 48 countries, the Philippines is at 38, much lower than Indonesia's 27 and Malaysia's 8. What should be done?

Legarda's answer: "We need to craft a roadmap for sustainable water use, and consolidate all water agencies to address issues such as overlapping and fragmented regulation of water supply and services."

## COMMENTARY

ERNESTO M. ORDOÑEZ

Today, there is no roadmap to speak of. Furthermore, there is no entity that can consolidate the more than 30 water-related agencies that hardly talk to each other.

**Action.** We suggest four recommendations that will translate Legarda's rhetoric into reality with effective implementation.

First, with the magnitude of the water problem, President Rodrigo Duterte himself must lead in addressing the crisis. He should do this in the same way he has been taking the drug problem by the horns.

During the Senate interpellation, Sen. Vicente Sotto III commented that the number of people who died from the water crisis far exceeded the number of extrajudicial killings.

Senator Franklin Drilon lamented that water has not been given the priority attention it deserves. Senators Cynthia Villar and Richard Gordon explained the initiatives they did for organizations like the Red Cross. These can be easily replicated, but are woefully lacking in terms of national scale.

Fortunately, at a January 20 meeting in Malacañang, the President's role started to become clear. The Cabinet Secretary and the chiefs of the departments of Environment, Agriculture, Local Government and the National Economic and Development Authority gave their strong commitment to the formulation of a water roadmap and a National Water Summit this coming June.

Second, directions should now be translated for the sake of accountable entities and the proper budget support must be given. The proposals must be submitted by each relevant

government agency to the Department of Budget and Management by April this year, in time for the drafting of the 2018 budget.

Third, and most important, indicators for success or failure in 2017 should be specified, using 2016 as baseline.

For example, a UP Los Baños recommendation that Small Water Impounding Projects (SWIPs) should be promoted is laudable. But these should be translated into specific SWIP targets that show a significant increase from the 2016 baseline. In addition, increased targets should also be made for repairing the currently defective and neglected SWIPs being used per province.

Fourth, since Einstein has defined insanity as expecting something different from the same things being done, each government water-related agency should immediately submit different initiatives to show their commitment to addressing the water crisis.

With no less than the President's political will and guidance, crystallized by the Cabinet Secretary's specific directions and monitoring mechanisms, Legarda's passion to address the crisis will result in an action-oriented remedy to the sad state of water in our country. INQ.



The author is Agriwatch chair, former Secretary of Presidential Programs and Projects, and former undersecretary at the Department of Agriculture and Department of Trade and Industry. Contact the author via [agriwatch\\_phil@yahoo.com](mailto:agriwatch_phil@yahoo.com).

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Water crisis 'by 2040' places management practices in focus

ated water code needs a major in the face of a severe water might creep in sooner than expected, a legislator and representative of a contractor overseeing a water security project said. Philippines will likely encounter water shortage by 2040," Loren B. Legarda said. "But I actually worse than that because we're already experiencing severe shortage."

Legarda blamed the impending the "combined impact of rapid on growth and the negative climate change." She issued during the launch of a book that aims to guide journalists to cover water issues.

Book is part of an initiative led by the Agency for International Development (USAID), which tapped firm Aecom International to handle its "Be Secure" project in the Philippines. The project is good governance and boosts the country's capability for long-term security and resiliency amid change.

"I'm not sure if it should be a new department but we should review and rationalize the performance, the mandate of the 30 water agencies lodged under different departments of government to see why despite the proliferation of so many agencies we are still waterless," Ms. Legarda said on the sidelines of the event.

Citing government statistics, USAID said more than 14 million Filipinos had no access to safe water in 2013, and 3.3 million in 2014. It said even those with access to water were still experiencing some form of water shortage.

"*Ang dami nang magagandang batas* (We have plenty of good laws)."

Ms. Legarda said she was pinning her hopes on a national water summit in the coming months, which will be convened by former Trade Undersecretary Ernesto M. Ordoñez, who is now in the private sector. The summit will also involve the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Climate Change Commission.

"It will have recommendations on how to solve the water crisis. I think it's

appropriate to say that there is a water crisis already," she said.

Elisea G. Gozun, climate resiliency team leader for the USAID project, said the summit aims to put together a road map for water security.

"And if part of that road map shows that there are critical policy reforms and institutional reforms, [that's the] next step," she said.

"We just have to update the water code ... it's circa 1970s and the conditions in the Philippines have substantially changed, not just in terms of water but also the demand on water itself," she said.

Ms. Gozun, a former environment secretary, said the concept of water resource management is not yet in the code, and neither are concepts on proper pricing of water, demand management, efficiency and conservation. She said the USAID project had funded a study that will offer recommendations on how to update the water code.

"It's going through consultations now under the new administration and hopefully it will feed into a policy reform in government," she said. — **Victor V. Saulon**



BW FILE PHOTO

**THE outdated water code needs a major overhaul in the face of a severe water crisis that might creep in sooner than many expected**



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

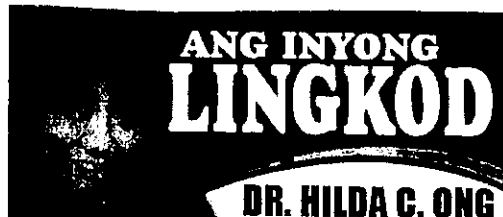
NOONG ika-15 ng Enero, 2017, tinanggap ng Pilipinas ang opisyal na tungkulin bilang ASEAN chairmanship sa Davao City mula sa dating host country, Laos.

Nilikha ang ASEAN noong 1967 na may lima inisyal na miyembro, kung saan kasama ang Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore at Thailand. Sa taong ito, ipagdiriwang ng sampung miyembro ng ASEAN's - Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand at Vietnam ang ika-50 "golden" anniversary.

Pinangunahan ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) ang pagbubukas ng ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Pillar sa Marquee Mall sa Angeles City, Pampanga bilang bahagi ng pagiging punong-abala o host ng Association of South East Asian Nations o ASEAN ngayong taon.

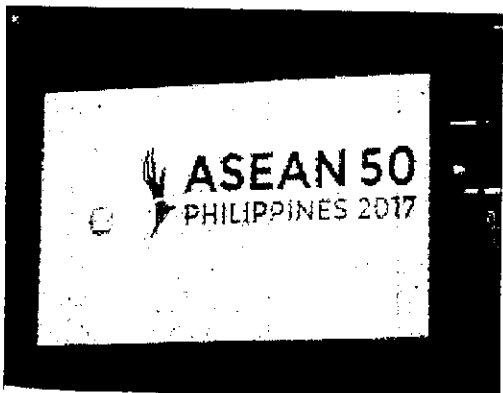
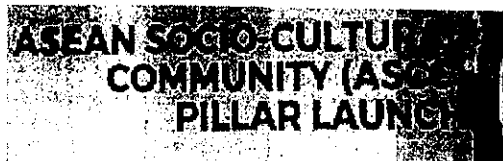
Sa nakaraang kaganapan, si Ambassador Marciano Paynor Jr., ASEAN 2017 Philippines Director-General for Operations, ang nanguna sa pagbibigay kahalagahan upang malaman ng nakarami kung ano ang ASEAN. Binanggit niya na ang ibang tao sa ibang ASEAN countries ay may malawak na kaalaman tungkol sa ano ang pamayanan.

Samantalang kaunti lamang sa mga Pilipino ang nakakaalam kung ano ang ASEAN. Kaya ayon sa kanya napapanahon na upang turuan ang ating mga mama-



### NWRB KASAMA SA MGA PILLAR NG ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY

mayan, higit sa lahat umpisahan natin sa mga kabataan ang paglilinaw kung ano ang ASEAN.



Ang National Water Resources Board ay nakilahok sa nasabing aktibidad dahil ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), na siyang mother agency nito ay kabilang sa mga ahensya na tutulong sa ilalim ng ASCC pillar.

Dumalo ang mga kalahok na nanggaling sa mga ahensya ng pamahalaan, mga pribadong institusyon, civil society organizations at sa academy.

Ang isang-araw na aktibidad ay naging masaya at naaalw silang lahat sa performance ng "KASAMAKA sa Bulacan at Angeles City Trade School dance troupes" at sa dalawang soprano singers na nag-dubbed bilang Nightingales.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Poe: Environment must not be sacrificed in traffic-related emergency power

SENATOR Grace Poe has given assurance that environmental protection will remain a "top priority" in the implementation of projects under the traffic-related emergency powers to be granted to President Rodrigo Duterte.

Poe stressed this point yesterday during the opening of the plenary debates on Senate Bill No. 1284 or the Traffic and Congestion Crisis Act designed to grant the President emergency powers to deal with the traffic problem.

Poe said while the process for securing permits is streamlined and certain licenses are being waived including the grant of an environmental compliance certificate (ECC), she suggested that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources be part of an advisory council that will make recommendations to the Traffic Crisis Manager.

"We will definitely not sacrifice the environment and natural resources for this because if we do so, then we are just creating one problem after attempting to solve one," said Poe, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Public Services.

However, she hopes that while environmental protection is very critical, it should "not hold hostage" the key projects to be implemented under the emergency powers since the duration of the special powers to be granted to the Executive branch will be less than three

years.

"Experience tells us that the issuance of an environmental compliance certificate usually takes six to seven months, so we really need to expedite the process," Poe said.

The grant of an ECC -- a document issued by the Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) indicating that the proposed project will not cause significant negative environmental impact -- is mandated under Presidential Decree 1586 issued in 1978 but which the emergency act could suspend for a short duration, while the traffic crisis is being addressed.

Currently, contractors are required to secure five permits from different government agencies before it can proceed with the construction of an infrastructure project. The required licenses are local government permit from the LGU concerned; approved traffic re-routing scheme from the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority; ECC from the DENR; excavation permit from the Department of Public Works and Highways; and tree-cutting permit from the DENR.

The measure authorizes the President, through his appointed Traffic Crisis Manager, to use alternative methods of procurement under existing laws to speed up the implementation of key transportation projects to address traffic woes.

# THE STANDARD

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Environmental protection remains a priority—Poe

By Macon Araneta

SENATOR Grace Poe has given assurances that environmental protection will remain a top priority in the implementation of projects in the traffic-related emergency powers.

"We will definitely not sacrifice the environment and natural resources for this because if we do so, then we are just creating one problem after attempting to solve one," said Poe.

During the opening of the plenary debates on Senate Bill No. 1284 or the Traffic and Congestion Crisis Act, Poe said while the process for securing permits was streamlined and certain licenses were being waived including the grant of an environmental compliance certificate, she suggested the Department of Environment and Natural Resources be part of an advisory council that would make recommendations to the Traffic Crisis Manager.

"What's sad even in the right-of-way issues [is that we see] one government agency against another government agency, when in fact the reason why we are doing this is we are all in this together in a crisis," he said.

"So I think the least of our worries should be our own agencies throwing hurdles in front of us, rendering this Emergency Crisis Act inutile," she said.

"We will streamline this and if they need to have a representative in the board or in the advisory council then maybe that's one area that we need to put as safe-

guard," she added.

Poe, chairperson of the Senate committee on public services, however, hopes that while environmental protection is very critical, it should not hold hostage the key projects to be implemented under the emergency powers since the duration of the special powers to be granted to the Executive will be less than three years.

According to Poe, "experience tells us" that the issuance of an environmental compliance certificate usually takes six to seven months, "so we really need to expedite the process."

Under Section 16 of the emergency powers bill, provisions of the Local Government Code on the issuance of building permits and requiring prior consultation, the National Building Code requiring building permits before any work is started, Presidential Decree No. 1586 and its implementing rules and regulations, and the Labor Code requiring clearances for foreign employment are temporarily suspended to expedite the process and effectively roll out transportation projects.

The grant of an ECC—a document issued by the Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources indicating the proposed project will not cause significant negative environmental impact—is mandated under PD 1586 issued in 1978 but which the emergency act could suspend for a short duration, while the traffic crisis is being addressed.

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### REHABILITASYON NG DUMPSITE NG DAGUPAN

**S**UMASAILALIM sa rehabilitasyon ang dumpsite ng Dagupan City, Pangasinan, na isinara ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) noong Enero 21, at sa lalong madaling panahon ay tataniman ng mga puno at gulay.

Ito ang ibinahagi ni Ronald De Guzman, waste management officer ng lungsod, at sinabi na ito ay pagtalima sa Republic Act 9003 na tinatawag na "Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000."

Nagsalita si De Guzman sa public hearing na isinagawa ng Committee on Environment and Natural Resources ng city council na pinamumunuan ni Councilor Jeslito Seen.

"Soon, we will start conducting tree planting as part of the rehabilitation of the dumpsite," ani De Guzman.

Isinara ang open dumpsite ng lungsod nang maglabas ng cease and desist order ang regional office ng Environment Management Bureau (EMB), isang ahensiya ng DENR.

Dinaluhan ng lahat ng mga barangay chairman at iba pang mga stakeholder, idinetalye sa public hearing ang mga binabalak na gagawin ng lungsod para maiwasang umabot sa krisis ang kasalukuyang problema sa basura ng lungsod.

Ipinasa ng lungsod noong Pebrero 1 ang isang ecological waste management plan para sa taong 2015 hanggang 2024 na kung matagumpay na maisasakatuparan ay magiging malinis at environment-friendly city ang Dagupan at kasama ang mga mamamayan nito na inatasang tumulong sa pangangasiwa ng basura ng lungsod sa pamamagitan ng paghihiwalay ng iba't ibang uri ng basura at pagbabawas nito.

Umaasa si Konsehal Seen na maisasaayos ang basura ng lungsod bilang pagtugon na rin sa probisyon ng RA 9003.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# ADB climate operations reach record \$3.7 billion in 2016

**T**he Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved \$3.7 billion in climate finance investments in 2016, according to recently released figures — marking a 42% boost from the \$2.6 billion reached in 2015. Estimates show that in 2016, climate finance from ADB's internal sources reached a record \$2.65 billion for climate mitigation and \$1.08 billion for climate adaptation.

"ADB is responding to the Paris Agreement by boosting its support to climate action in developing member countries in line with their Nationally Determined Contributions and the Sustainable Development Goals," said ADB President Takehiko Nakao. "ADB remains committed to scaling up its climate financing to \$6 billion by 2020, of which \$4 billion will target mitigation

and \$2-billion adaptation." It is expected that ADB's spending on climate change will increase to around 30% of its overall financing by 2020.

In addition to its own financing, ADB mobilized \$701 million from external sources, with \$595 million invested in mitigation and \$106 million in adaptation. Including financing from external sources, ADB delivered over \$4.4 billion in climate finance in 2016.

ADB said it will continue to work with public and private sector partners to mobilize additional financing for climate projects. In December 2016, the Green Climate Fund announced its support to ADB's proposed Pacific Islands Renewable Energy Investment Program. This includes a \$12-million grant to help the Cook Islands install energy storage sys-

tems and support private sector investment in renewable energy, as well as a \$5-million grant to assist seven Pacific island countries to transition to renewable energy sources.

In response to climate action commitments made under the COP 21 Paris agreement by its developing member countries (DMCs), ADB is developing a Climate Change Strategic Framework. The strategic framework will spell out ADB's future direction regarding climate change from 2017 to 2030, and will feed into ADB's new corporate strategy toward 2030, which is currently under development. It will also outline how ADB will deliver on its \$6-billion goal by 2020 and the anticipated growth in DMC demand for ADB support for climate action to 2030.

# Abante

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Illegal loggers, next target ng DENR

Pagkatapos ng pasabog na pagkastigo sa mga delingkwente at pasaway na mining firms, sunod na target ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang paglipol sa mga illegal loggers na dahilan ng pagkakalbo ng mga kagubatan.

Kahapon, inanunsyo ni DENR Secretary Gina Lopez ang resulta

ng limang araw na operasyon ng Environmental Anti-Crime Task Force sa Agusan del Sur kung saan nasa 2,000 piraso ng malalaking punong-kahoy ang nasabat.

Ayon kay Lopez, iba't ibang klase ng kahoy tulad ng Lanipao, Mahogany at Malapajo ang nasabat ng task force simula February 2 hang-

gang February 6.

Nakuha ang mga illegal cut logs sa Sitio Mantuyom at Sitio Sote sa Makarluka, Bislig City; gayundin sa bayan ng Talacogon, at Trento sa Agusan del Sur.

Naglabas rin ng marching order ang kalinim sa lahat ng regional directors ng DENR sa buong kapuluan na simulan

na ang intensive crackdown sa mga illegal logging activities sa kanilang nasasakupan.

"I'm warning all DENR regional people who allowed this to happen—heads will roll!" giit ni Lopez.

Samantala, sa isang post sa official website ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), nakapaskil ang open letter ng Archdiocese of Lipa kay Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte hinggil sa pag-suporta ng Simbahan sa isyu ng ilegal na pagmimina. (Jun Tadios/Noel Abuel/Tina Mendoza)



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### 2,000 illegal logs nasabat sa Agusan

Halos 2,000 punong kahoy na ilegal, na pinutol ang nasabat ng Department of Environment Natural Resources (DENR) sa limang araw na operasyon sa Agusan Del Sur.

Mula Pebrero 2 hanggang 6, isinagawa ng Environmental Anti-Crime Task Force ang operasyon sa Sitio Mantuyom at Sitio Sote sa Makarlaka, Bislig City; gayundin sa bayan ng Talacogon, at Trento sa Agusan Del Sur; at sa Trento.

Dito na nagresulta sa pagkakasabat sa mga putul-putol na kahoy na kinabibilangan ng mga Dipterocarps, Lanipao, Mahogany at Malapajo.

Ang operasyon ayon kay DENR Secretary Gina Lopez ay layong tuldukan ang lumalalang illegal logging sa kanti-kanilang nasasakupan.

**Beth Camia**

# PILIPINO MIRROR

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## 2,000 HOTLOGS NASABAT

NASABAT ng Department of Environment Natural Resources (DENR) ang halos 2,000 punong kahoy na ilegal na pinutol sa Agusan Del Sur.

Ayon kay DENR, nagsagawa ang kaniyang Environmental Anti-Crime Task Force ang operasyon mula noong February 2 hanggang 6.

Ang mga nasabat na punong kahoy ay kinabibilangan ng mga Dipterocarps, Lanipao, Mahogany, Malapajo at iba pa.

Nakuha ang mga illegal cut log sa itio Mantuyom at Sitio Sote sa Makarlika, Bislig City; gayundin sa bayan ng Talacogon at Trento sa Agusan Del Sur at sa Trento.

Kaugnay nito, inatasan din ng DENR ang lahat ng regional directors na tapusin ang illegal logging sa kani-kanilang nasasakupan.

Kung mabibigo ang mga ito na aksiyonan ang illegal logging, sinabi ni DENR Sec. Gina Lopez na maha-harap sila sa administrative case o disciplinary actions. PMRT



## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SER

### Haribon trains LGUs to protect Naujan watershed

The Haribon Foundation has launched a Biodiversity Fellows Program (BFP), a training course for local leaders and environmental officers from the municipalities surrounding the biodiversity-rich Naujan Lake National Park (NLNP) in Oriental Mindoro.

The Biodiversity Fellows Program, or BFP, is a coaching and mentoring program funded in part by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that aims to train conservation leaders in the effective management and protection of NLNP sub-watersheds in the four neighboring municipalities: Naujan, Victoria, Socorro and Camo, Haribon explained.

The Naujan Lake National Park covers 21,655 hectares of land inhabited by threatened endemic species such as the Tamaraw, Philippine pine, Mindoro warty pig, Philippine teak, Mindoro bleeding-heart pigeon, and the Philippine duck, which is listed as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Despite its ecological importance, pressures that include land-use conflicts, over-extraction of resources and poor waste management threaten the Naujan Lake National Park and its sub-watersheds.

"The protection of the mountains and forests that surround the Naujan Lake is the focus of this training," explained Haribon project manager Noel Resurreccion.

#### Conservation begins in knowledge

Eugene Gonzales of the Philippine-American Fund welcomed the program participants at a recent seminar, describing the concept of biodiversity in the Filipino language, "Ito ang halu-halo, pagkakaugnay at gulong o siklong buhay (It is the diverse and connected cycle of life)."

Danilo Balet, research associate from the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, stressed the importance of understanding how ecology and ecosystems function in order to confront the various threats to the Naujan Lake watersheds.

He cautioned against the rampant nature-degrading activities in the guise of development projects and proposals, and distinguished between the consumptive and productive use of natural resources.

"Will you risk erosion after a typhoon for the sake of money?" Balet asked rhetorically.

According to a study by the Karlsruhe Institute for Technology and the University of the Philippines, various forms of agroforestry and agriculture that caused the soil and forest degradation in Mindoro result in "unsustainable rates of erosion and reduced biodiversity."

"I live near the Naujan Lake. In our community, erratic weather conditions have been strongly felt by ordinary people in the recent years because of our declining forests," lamented Leonardo Camo,

chairman of the Victoria Organic Farmers Association.

Farmer leader Reymundo Dimasacat echoed the same sentiment for their village in Socorro municipality. He recalled that back in the days they did not pay attention to the flooding in their communities until it worsened through the years.

"I learned from this workshop that the big floods are caused by our deforested mountains," he said.

In his session on lake ecology, Dr. Rey Papa, associate professor from the University of Sto. Tomas, emphasized that the problem of lakes will not be understood without considering the problem of watersheds.

"Lakes are sentinels of climate change," he said. "What happens to a lake is an indication of how the area is affected by climate change."

Raquel Umali, OIC of the Municipal Planning and Development division in Naujan identified the lack of public awareness as a major factor that aggravates environmental problems. She explained, "This is the reason why we need to strengthen environmental governance, though the implementation is challenging."

Mayor of Victoria Joselito Malabanan told Haribon that their municipality is faced with the grave issue of mining that threatens not only his constituents living near the lake but also the different species of fish and migratory birds.

"Through this training, I hope to benefit from this opportunity to learn about reforestation that will also improve the climate change adaptation efforts in our municipality," Malabanan said.

#### Empowered Protectors

Alex Villanueva, vice chair of the Batuhan Upland and Lowland Farmers Association (BULFA) in Pola distinguished BFP from other seminars he has attended. "This workshop is unlike the usual seminars I frequent. BFP gave us a wider picture of how we should use our natural resources that keeps the next generation in mind," he said.

Villanueva told Haribon that through his association, he plans to propose a policy or livelihood program in their *barangay* that pursues sustainable practices.

"Even as a 72-year-old man, I remain hopeful that with the new perspectives gained from this course, our hurting nature will bounce back if we only work together," enthused Camo.

"I thank Haribon and USAID for putting the Biodiversity Fellows Program together and I hope to see the realization of what we have started here," he added.

Haribon chief Belinda de la Paz commended the participants' active engagement throughout the three-day workshop. "The insights and experience you shared prove that much work is laid before us. Nonetheless, we are headed to a good start," she said.

KITTY AMANTE/HARIBON FOUNDATION

Haribon Foundation COO Maria Belinda de la Paz speaks to Naujan Lake leaders during the recent Biodiversity Fellowship Program training session. PHOTO BY KITTY AMANTE/HARIBON FOUNDATION



#### SAFE HAVEN

Although considered endangered, Tufted Ducks (*Aythya fuligula*) can be found in Naujan Lake by the thousands. PHOTO BY DAVID QUIMPO/HARIBON FOUNDATION



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Philippine eagle freed in Sarangani's 'last frontier'

A rehabilitated juvenile Philippine eagle was recently released to its habitat less than a month after being found in Mt. Busa, a key biodiversity area in Maitum town in Sarangani.

The eaglet, named Sarangani Pride by Senator Manny Pacquiao, was found dehydrated and malnourished in the upland village of Batian on Jan. 2 and was brought by the municipal government staff to the Philippine Eagle Center (PEC) in Davao City.

The release team is composed of Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) director for conservation Dr. Jayson Ibanez, PEC executive director Dennis Salvador, Maitum OIC Menro Nanette Nacional, CENRO Kiamba Jhing Guilao, DENR Region 12 representatives, and Sarangani Information Office.

Salvador said the eagle was released on the basis of its health and physical conditions. During its rehabilitation, an X-ray result showed an embedded pellet in its left groin and had to be nurtured into prime condition.

A team of biologists will be monitoring the bird's condition for 10 days.

"Our staff will be monitoring this eagle post-release via satellite and radio transmitter. We want to make sure that this eaglet will be accepted



Philippine Eagle / Credit: PEC

back by its parents and fed until it fully fledges," Salvador said.

According to Sarangani Environmental Conservation and Protection Center (ECPC) executive director Emma Nebran, the forest where the eaglet was released is considered the last frontier of the province.

"Mt. Busa is the remaining forest we have here in Sarangani, and we must protect, conserve and preserve the biodiversity that we have here," she revealed.

She added that the Provincial Government, headed by Governor Steve Solon, supports efforts in protecting Mt. Busa and has committed funds to support conservation initiatives in the area.

The 114,000-hectare Mt. Busa, which covers the towns of Maasim,

Kiamba, and Maitum, is threatened by land conversion (to farmland), kaingin (slash-and-burn), wildlife hunting, illegal logging and mining.

In a related development, Maitum Mayor Alexander Bryan Reganit said the municipal government will declare the barangays of Batian and Tuanadatu as protected areas.

He pointed out that the presence of the Philippine Eagle in the forest of Maitum shows that it is still pristine, healthy and is worth conserving.

He said local communities can help in the conservation by informing local authorities in case of sightings of birds in distress.

The PEC estimates that there are only about 400 pairs of eagles left in the wild, and can be found in Mindanao, Samar, Leyte, and Luzon.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## URBAN NIGHTMARE

## Govt told to crack whip on land planning

BY ANGELA CELIS

FINANCE Secretary Carlos Dominguez yesterday said the government will start overhauling land planning policies touching on agrarian land reform, rights of indigenous people, right of way and meeting land demand in urban areas.

Dominguez also pointed out the need to pass the National Land Use bill.

He added that the "urban nightmare" that is Metro Manila shows the problems of the absence of planning in cities and communities. He said Metro Manila's severe case of poor land administration should not spread to other parts of the country.

He said unless the government acts swiftly to upgrade its land governance policies, other areas of the country will suffer the same fate as that of Metro Manila, where high land costs and the lack of provisions for road expansions inhibit the government's response to the worsening problems related to urban congestion.

"Metro Manila presents us with the most severe case of poor land governance. This is an urban nightmare, a metropolis that grew without planning," Dominguez said in his keynote speech at the Conference on Sustainable Governance organized by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) yesterday.

"Right now, high land costs prevent us from acquiring property to build schools and hospitals. Right-of-way has become a costly proposition for public works. No provisions were put in place for road widening," he added.



Dominguez: "Metro Manila represents the most severe case of poor land governance. This is an urban nightmare, a metropolis that grew without planning."

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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

**GOV'T**

Dominguez said the Department of Finance (DOF) has been doing its part in "bringing coherence" to the country's land governance by moving to reduce estate taxes to encourage the documentation of land assets and free them up for productive use.

Moreover, Dominguez said the DOF is also encouraging local government units to update their land valuations as a measure not just to raise revenues but also to discourage owners of prime land in their respective localities from keeping these assets idle or non-productive.

He acknowledged that policies on land governance are "in urgent need of updating," with the proposed National Land Use Plan "sitting in the legislative mill, with little indication it will be passed into law any time soon."

"So many of our settlements are vulnerable. Our cities are congested. Our forested areas have been stripped to make way for human habitation. We are truly facing a land governance crisis and we must respond decisively to this," Dominguez said.

Further underscoring the necessity of passing a National Land Use Plan, Dominguez said the government needs to harmonize conflicting provisions of the Indigenous People's Rights Act and existing property rights, clarify rules on habitation in danger zones, and rethink agrarian reform in light of the "continuing backwardness of our agriculture."

"The Philippines, being an archipelago, has less arable land per unit of population than

Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia," Dominguez said.

The finance chief said that our farms and cities are built in narrow strips between shore and mountainside.

"Our farms are small. Our cities are congested. There is severe shortage of land to build homes. A happy compromise will have to be found between the demands of agriculture and the requirements of an increasingly urban population," Dominguez said.

"As our population increased rapidly over the last few decades, with our land policies hardly keeping pace, the phenomenon of landlessness has become more severe. Settlements are pushed to the most perilous places: steep slopes prone to landslides; shorelines prone to storm surges; and riverbanks that have become clogged. We need to plan for our settlements, addressing a housing backlog estimated at well over three million units," he added.

He pointed out that unless the government updates its land governance policies, land prices will likely spiral as commercial developers, agricultural estates, industrial and export-processing zones and the extractive industries compete for the use of the country's scarce land resources.

"If land becomes too expensive, it will be inaccessible to the homeless and raise the costs of production thereby diminishing our competitiveness," Dominguez said.

"We are truly facing a land governance crisis and must respond decisively to this," he added.

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## DENR, DA to dredge 4 rivers

TO AVERT heavy flooding, President Rodrigo Duterte has approved recommendations to start the dredging of four heavily-silted rivers which cause floods that destroy crops and properties every year, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said Wednesday.

"[The President] directed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture to work with the Department of Public Works and Highways to implement the dredging," Piñol said in a Facebook post.

"The dredging operations will be a stop-gap measure to avert flooding in the areas where the rivers pass through," he added.

Rivers that will be dredged are the Agusan River which flows from the mountains of Davao and ends up in Butuan City which recently overflowed its banks and damaged an estimated 50,000 hectares of farmlands, Rio Grande de Mindanao which flows out of Cotabato City from the plains of Central Mindanao passing through the Liguasan Marsh, Pampanga River which causes flooding in Pampanga Province every year destroying crops and Cagayan River, the country's longest and biggest river which flows from Quirino Province and ends up in Aparri, Cagayan.

The long-term solution agreed by the DENR, DA and DILG during a meeting Monday was to implement the President's directive of a total log ban in the headwaters of the rivers and to reforest the mountains.

John Paolo Bencito

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Distressing

ONE of the priorities of President Rodrigo R. Duterte, who assumed the top political post of the land at 12 noon on June 30, 2016, is the generation of more quality local jobs.

Thus, it is certainly distressing, saddening and lamentable that thousands of workers in the mining industry now run the risk of losing their jobs.

This after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ordered the closure of 23 mines nationwide.

Thus, it would do well for Duterte, who is waging an all-out war against illegal drugs, to aid mine workers, who will lose their jobs due to DENR's "wholesale" revocation of mining permits.

As shutdowns loom, Senate Minority Leader Ralph Recto urged Malacañang authorities to form an inter-agency group that will seek "ways and means" to help affected workers.

Mine owners have warned that the DENR's closure order will affect an estimated 1.2 million workers in the mining industry.

According to the highly-articulate senator from Batangas, there should be a program, a master plan, which is designed to address the problems of displaced mining workers.

Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Rodel Batocabe, on the other hand, said Congress ought to exercise its oversight powers to determine the bases of the closure of the 23 mines.

"We have to evaluate and review carefully if indeed there are sufficient legal bases for the (DENR) ruling," said Batocabe.

Let's create more jobs if we are to meet the employment needs of the mushrooming population, which is projected to reach more than 105 million at the end of 2017.

Maliwanag pa sa sikat ng araw na maraming manggagawa na karamihan ay mga mahihirap, ang magagandang pag-sala ngayon na may gawing maraming karamnaya sa bansa.

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TO THE  
POINT  
EMIL P.  
JURADO

## A national tragedy

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As far as I am concerned, the biggest mistake of President Duterte from the beginning of his term was the appointment of Gina Lopez, heiress to the Lopez clan, owners of ABS-CBN, as secretary of environment and natural resources.

If it was the idea of the President to get the support of one of the largest radio-television networks of the country, he is now being proven wrong. What Lopez is doing to the mining industry—she closed down 23 big mine firms and suspended five others—creates bigger problems. Lopez has become a big problem to him.

My *gulay*, the President should listen more to Finance Secretary Carlos "Sonny" Dominguez, his senior adviser. Dominguez said there would be no less than P653 million in foregone government revenues.

Dominguez said that of the total P441.92 million revenue losses from the affected mining firms, the remaining P211.72 million would represent taxes lost. Worse, closure of mines in mining communities would have adverse effects on communities.

The light at the end of the tunnel for the affected mine

firms is the fact-finding body on the audit reports of Lopez and her anti-mining allies. This will be through the Mining Industry Coordinating Council, which Dominguez heads.

President Duterte should have known from the start that Lopez, a self-proclaimed environmentalist and a staunch anti-mining advocate, was a square peg in a round hole. She is obsessed about killing the mining industry in the Philippines. She is on record as saying that if she had her way, there would be no mining at all in the Philippines.

Santa Banana, without mining, would she have a cellphone, or iPad to use and utensils with which to eat? Where would Lopez get her trinkets to wear and a vehicle to go to work? Where does she think the helicopter she used to fly over mines to inspect come from?

My *gulay*, some 1.2 million direct jobs and induced employment have been lost. And Lopez does not care.

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