

**DATE**  
**DAY**

17 FEB 2017

**Friday**

# **DENR**

## **IN THE NEWS**

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Conversion of closed mines into ecotourism sites eyed

BY MA. STELLA F. ARNALDO

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Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR

**T**HE Duterte administration has at least P80 million in funds to develop potential ecotourism sites and help support communities affected by the closure of select mining areas.

This was disclosed as Tourism Secretary Wanda Corazon T. Teo said she is ready to sit down with Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez on potential ecotourism areas.

In a text message to the BUSINESSMIRROR, Teo said the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (Tieza) can develop closed mining areas into ecotourism sites. "We are actually talking of ecotourism so we can help communities," she said. The Department of Tourism (DOT) secretary chairs Tieza, an attached agency formerly known as the Philippine Tourism Authority.

Asked if exploratory talks have

already been held with Lopez regarding potential ecotourism sites, Teo said, "Not yet. [But] I will sit down with her on this."

Lopez recently announced the completion of a mining audit by her department, and said she was determined to close down several mines that have violated environmental laws and those in watershed areas. Watersheds help protect the supply of drinking water of local communities, as well as irrigation water for farms.

She added that the local communities in the closed mining areas will earn more if their sites are devoted to ecotourism activities.

Tieza COO Guiller Asido explained that "part of our mandate is to develop ecotourism projects. And we have identified this effort on ecotourism as a major initiative for 2017."

He added the agency has a budget to develop ecotourism sites: "It's 5 percent of travel-tax collections; that's about P80 million. That's an



ASIDO: "That's about P80 million. That's an annual budget that we would like to work on with the DENR and DOT. And with tourism's multiplier effect, it will really help [the local communities that will be affected by the mining closures]."

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A recent study by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) showed that travel and tourism directly supported 1.26 million jobs or 3.3 percent of total employment in the Philippines in 2015. "It is expected to rise by 3.1 percent in 2016 and rise by 2.4 per annum to 1.65 million jobs

[3.3 percent of total employment] in 2026," the WTTC added.

In 2015 travel and tourism's total contribution to employment, "including jobs indirectly supported by the industry", was 10.3 percent of total employment, or roughly 4 million jobs. "This is expected to rise by 3.5 percent in 2016 to 4,145,500 jobs and rise by 2.5 per annum to 5,288,000 jobs in 2026 [10.6 percent of total]," it also said. In contrast, data from the Mining and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) of the DENR indicated that mining and quarrying jobs accounted for only 0.6 percent of total employed persons in the Philippines, or 236,000.

According to the Barcelona Fields Studies Center, "Tourism not only creates jobs in the tertiary sector, it also encourages growth in the primary and secondary sectors of industry. This is known as the multiplier effect, which, in its simplest form, is how many times money spent by a tourist, circulates

through a country's economy."

"Money spent in a hotel helps to create jobs directly in the hotel, but it also creates jobs indirectly elsewhere in the economy. The hotel, for example, has to buy food from local farmers, who may spend some of this money on fertilizer or clothes. The demand for local products increases as tourists often buy souvenirs, which increases secondary employment."

The DOT is targeting a 13.2-percent share in total employment for tourism in 2017. "And the number of poor beneficiaries [Filipinos living below the poverty line] as target is 471,631," the Tieza chief said.

While some of the mining areas to be closed are watershed areas, Tieza still believes it is still feasible to turn them into ecotourism sites. "It's a matter of agreeing with the DENR on what is the proper framework and guideline to be observed in identifying the appropriate project. There are international standards, as well, [that can be followed in

developing watershed areas into ecotourism sites]," Asido pointed out.

The WTTC study also showed that travel and tourism directly contributed about P570 billion to the Philippine economy as expressed in the GDP in 2015. This was equivalent to 4.2 percent of the GDP.

The same study showed that the total contribution of travel and tourism to the country's GDP was P1.43 trillion in 2015, or 10.6 percent of GDP. "It is forecast to rise by 6.6 percent in 2016, and to rise by 5.4 percent per annum to P2,590 billion [11.2 percent of GDP] in 2026."

The mining industry, on the other hand, contributed only 0.6 percent of the GDP in 2015, with its gross value added at current prices estimated at some P81 billion.

WTTC is an international organization of travel industry executives promoting travel and tourism worldwide. It regularly issues reports on the impact of tourism on the global economy, as well as the economies of different countries.

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Lopez ng DENR, palaban sa mga banta

Palaban si Environment Secretary Gina Lopez sa paghahamon ng 'gyera' ng grupong tumutulis sa kanya partikular ang The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) na nagbantang habarang sa appointment ng kalihim sa Commission on Appointments (CA).

Ayon kay Lopez, hindi siya aatras sa kanyang laban hangga't hindi siya lumalagpas sa mandatang binigay sa kanya ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na pagsilbihan ang interes ng taumbayan at wakasan ang pagmamalabis sa kalikasan.

"Wala na tayong magagawa diyan, bahala na! I keep my stand that there should be no mining in watersheds," wika ng kalihim.

Tanggap na rin umano ni Lopez na marami ang masasagasaan sa kanyang mga ginagawang aksyon sa DENR partikular sa isyu ng pagmimina dahil multi-million industry ang mga key players dito.

Sa kabila nito, hindi siya aniya magpapaintimidate at magpapaapekto sa mga gustong sumira sa kanyang mga adbokasiya sa kalikasan.

Muling nasilaban ang pag-aalboroto ng mga mining advocates matapos ipag-utos kamakailan ni Lopez ang kanselasyon sa 75 mining contracts na mapanganib sa buhay at kabu-hayan ng mga residenteng malapit sa watersheds.

Sa halip na magpaapekto sa pambabatikos

ng mga pro-mining advocates, muling iginiit ni Lopez na may mga isusunod pa siyang kakanselahing mining contracts at ipasasara ang mga mining firms na konektado dito kung kinakailangan.

Samantala, nakahanap ng kaalyado sa Kamara si Environment Secretary Gina Lopez sa harap ng batikos na inani nito sa ginawang pagpapasara sa 28 mining firms at pagkansela sa 75 mining contracts.

Ayon kay House Committee on Natural Resources

Chairman at Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate na nakabibilib at dapat pa ngang papurihan ang matapang na pagharap ni Lopez sa problema sa illegal mining na matagal na nilang inirereklamo.

Ani Zarate matagal nang inirereklamo ng mga environment activist ang mining agreements na sumasakop sa watershed areas dahil nakaapekto ito sa supply ng tubig para sa irigasyon at domestic use na ngayon lamang inaksyunan. (Jun Tadios/Tina Mendoza)

## Council to review DENR closure of mining firms

By MARY GRACE PADIN

The government's Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) is bent on subjecting to review the recent decision of Environment Secretary Regina Lopez to close down some mining firms and terminate existing government contracts with mining companies.

In a press briefing yesterday, Finance Undersecretary and Legal Services Group head Bayani Agabin reiterated that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)'s closure and suspension orders are appealable to the Office of the President, and as such could be reversed, modified or altered by Malacañang.

"As discussed during the MICC meeting last week, there is a need to observe due process. Due process is both substantive and procedural," Agabin said.

"As a general principle of law, decisions of Cabinet secretaries are appealable to the President, since the former are alter egos of the latter. As such, their decisions can be reversed, modified or altered, if warranted," he added.

Earlier this month, Lopez announced the closure of 23 mining companies, effectively revoking their mining contracts. Five more firms were later suspended.

She also recently announced the cancellation of some 75 mineral production-sharing agreements (MPSA), which are contracts between the government and mining contractors.

"If there are provisions (in the contract) for dispute resolution, this should be observed. If there are grounds for termination, these should be the basis for any termination," Agabin said.

The MICC, co-chaired by the Department of Finance (DOF) and the DENR, last week issued Resolution No. 6, which guides the council members on how to proceed with the DENR's directives.

The resolution stated that both the DENR and the council should recognize the requirements of due process.

The MICC also decided to form a multi-stakeholder panel to review the performance of all existing mining operations.

"Pursuant to EO (Executive Order) 79, the MICC shall create a multi-stakeholder review and advise the DENR on the performance of existing mining operations in consultation with local government units," the resolution read.

"The review shall be based on the guidelines and parameters set forth in the specific mining contract and in other pertinent laws, taking into account the valid exercise of the State's police power to serve the common good, especially the poor," it added.

Meanwhile, Agabin said the DOF still has not received copies of the DENR's order and the results of the mining audit.

"We have not seen the orders nor the audit, so we are not aware of the grounds nor the manner by which DENR Secretary Gina Lopez has made her decisions," he said.

## 11,000 FAMILIES LOSE LIVELIHOOD AS MINING ACTIVITIES STOP IN CAMARINES NORTE

By Juan Escandor Jr.  
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DAET, CAMARINES NORTE—Some 11,000 families in the towns of Paracale and Pangani-ban have lost their primary source of income after the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) of the Department of En-vironment and Natural Re-sources (DENR) issued a cease-and-desist order (CDO) against mining activities in 12 towns of Camarines Norte province.

"The action of the director of the MGB was sudden and has displaced subsistence miners in seven villages in Panganiban town, translating to 6,000 fami-

lies or about 30,000 individuals losing their livelihood," said Sarah Marie Aviado, municipal environment and natural re-sources officer of Panganiban.

In the town of Paracale, 5,000 subsistence miners and their families were affected by the CDO, said Gil Salen, municipal planning and development coordinator.

Aviado considered subsis-tence miners to be most affected by the CDO since they earn a liv-ing on a day-to-day basis and only when they are able to mine gold.

But Guillermo Molina, MGB-Bicol director, said the CDO he issued against mining activities on Jan. 10 was based on Execu-

tive Order No. 79, and the Im-plementing Rules and Regula-tions of Republic Act No. 7076, or the Small-Scale Mining Act.

"The issuance of the CDO shows that we are doing activi-ties not in line with the laws. I decided to enforce the CDO all over the province, especially in the towns of Paracale, Pangani-ban and Labo where there are il-legal mining activities," he said.

Molina said he enforced the CDO against illegal mining ac-tivities in Camarines Norte be-cause no one has been given per-mit for small-scale mining in the absence of "Minahang Bayan," a specific mineralized area in a lo-cality where small-scale mining

is permitted by the DENR secre-tary based on the recommenda-tion of the Provincial/City Min-ing Regulatory Board.

He said the DENR has ap-proved only seven Minahang Bayan so far since the Small-Scale Mining Act was approved in 1991 in the entire country.

Molina said that with Ca-marines Norte, there has been a lack of consent from large-scale mining corporations to allow a Minahang Bayan inside their claims, which barred approval of its application.

Serafin Dasco, president of the Samahan ng Magkakabod ng Paracale (Association of Subsis-tence Miners in Paracale), said

that if the problem was the con-sent from mineral claimants, there must be a prescription of the mineral claims once it is idle for a long period.

Molina said there is a five-year prescription after which the MGB can recommend the can-cellation of the mineral claims.

Wilfredo Sapalaran, 54, sub-sistence miner, said he raised his brood of seven children solely from mining which he started in 1980 in Barangay Luk-lukan in Panganiban town.

"I call on the government to allow us [to] continue our min-ing activities because we do not destroy the environment unlike the large-scale mining that

strips mountains of vegeta-tion," he said.

Maria Linda Yasis, 46, said the primary livelihood of her family was through subsistence mining.

She said that if the govern-ment continued to prevent them from mining, it would be tantamount to "burying their family in the grave."

Gov. Edgardo A. Tallado sympathized with the subsis-tence miners who have lost their livelihood since the CDO was enforced by the MGB without giv-ing them alternative livelihood.

"There were pending appli-cations for small-scale mining but the MGB won't give them permits," Tallado said. INQ

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### IPS MOST AFFECTED BY MINING

**P**ictures of mountains and rivers ravaged by mining companies should remind us of a quote from the Cree Indians of North America: "Only when the last tree has died, the last river has been poisoned, the last fish has been caught, will we realize that we can't eat money."

Often told but almost always ignored is the fact that the mountains and rivers are the source of food and water. In the Philippines, most affected by the sacrilegious practices of mining firms are our indigenous peoples (IPs) whose life and culture revolve around mountains and rivers. In fact, the Manobo call the mountains "*bobongan*" (which in English means roof or, metaphorically, "shelter."

The IPs are also often the victims of militarization, so much so that when there are so-called "*bakwit*" (evacuees), we think of IPs. Military presence and the mining operations must therefore not be mere coincidence because the IP habitat and mining areas are common grounds.

Mining companies justify their existence through the jobs that they create and the billions of pesos that they contribute to the economy. Promining personalities argue that blocking their activities will obstruct development. (At this

point, it should be noted that Benguet Mining Inc., the oldest mining corporation in the Philippines, has been operating since 1903.)

Some say that IPs are "primitive," and leaving them alone will keep them as such. That is the usual arrogance of the "schooled" and city dwellers. Perhaps because in the mountains there is no WiFi, cell phones are useless; but in the cities, people are useless without cell phones.

IPs are not stupid. Remember, they were here before "Jesus Christ" or before the Spanish conquerors landed on our shores. IPs in fact do some mining and logging, but they extract from nature only what they need. What they need is not necessarily money, but those that will give them the strength to live and live happily enough to enhance their culture. They may not possess the amenities that "modernization" has brought about, but they have been on this earth long enough to gain the wisdom of life. That is more advanced than the myth of "money and development."

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# Lopez exit seen a win-win solution to mining firms, gov't impasse

By Ronnel W. Domingo  
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Large-scale miners see the exit of Environment Secretary Regina Lopez as a solution that would allow the country to benefit from its mineral resources responsibly even as antimining advocates urged the government to stand firm on the cancellation of contracts.

Nelia C. Halcon, executive vice president of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP), said in an interview that if Lopez's orders were carried out, only the antimining side would be happy while people in mining communities would lose a source of

progress.

"We hope for the reasonableness of the members of the Commission on Appointments (CA)," Halcon said.

"It's one thing to support someone doing something within the bounds of law, and it's another thing to support someone acting (beyond the law)," she added.

COMP was among the first to file with the CA an opposition to Lopez's confirmation as Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) chief.

Earlier this week, Lopez said she requested to postpone discussions on her appointment until March 1.

"The reality of the Philippine situation is that mining money funds political campaigns and there are mining interests in (the House of Representatives) and the Senate, and I don't know (if these are present) in the CA," Lopez said in a press briefing.

When asked if the possible replacement of Lopez would be a win-win solution for the government and the industry, Halcon said: "Yes, we hope so."

Asked what the industry could look forward to if a new DENR chief was installed, Halcon said problems facing the industry would not be solved easily.

"There will still be issues even

if another person takes over," she said. "But we will be able to address all of those, even to the point of irresponsible miners getting shut out."

Halcon said some members of COMP were already looking at alternative solutions if the situation would take a turn for the worse.

"Some (companies) are diversifying, looking at other businesses like logistics, infrastructure development, etc," she said. "They are readying with their Plan B (in case Lopez prevails)."

In a statement, Ibon Foundation urged the Duterte administration to stand firm on Lopez's orders to close mines and cancel

contracts.

The think tank disputed assertions that large-scale mining has been beneficial to the economy, saying that the industry contributed "a measly" 0.7 percent to the gross domestic product in 2013.

Halcon argued there was no way the mining industry could grow when the regulatory environment was prohibitive and when governments do not promote the sector.

"During the Aquino administration, there was a moratorium on new projects and now we have (Lopez's orders)," Halcon said. "Before that, the Arroyo administration promoted mining only in the

last few years. We can't grow if the rules that the government lays down does not allow it, but the industry has much, greater potential than what we have now."

The Department of Finance also reiterated Thursday that mining firms affected by the latest cancellation of 75 contracts were assured of due process.

The DENR's closure and suspension orders are appealable to the President, as such, the decision can be reversed, modified or altered, if warranted by Malacañang," Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin said in a statement.

—WITH A REPORT FROM BEN O. DEVERA INQ

## DoF tells miners to appeal to Duterte

THE Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)'s closure and suspension of 28 mining companies can be appealed to President Rodrigo Duterte as part of due process, the Department of

Finance (DOF) said on Thursday.

In a statement, Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin, who heads the DOF Legal Services Group, said that "as such, [the

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### ■ APPEAL FROM A1

## DOF tells miners

decision] can be reversed, modified or altered, if warranted" by Malacañang.

Agabin issued the statement in response to queries from the media sent to the DOF, the agency that co-chairs the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) with the DENR.

"We have not seen the orders nor the audit, so we are not aware of the grounds nor the manner by which DENR Secretary Gina Lopez has made her decisions," Agabin said.

"As discussed during the MICC meeting last week, there is a need to observe due process. Due process is both substantive and procedural. Substantive due process means that there are valid grounds in law to support the cancellation. Procedural due process means the procedure for cancellation as provided for in the contract or under relevant laws were followed," he added.

The DOF added that the MICC affirmed in its most recent resolution the primacy of both "procedural and substantive" due process in the final resolution of the DENR's series of actions on existing mining contracts under mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs).

Last week, the MICC discussed the DENR directive to shut down 23 mine sites and suspend the operations of five others.

During that meeting, the MICC issued Resolution 6, which stressed that the DENR and the council "recognize the requirements of due process in the applicable mining laws, rules and regulations," and formed a panel to conduct a "multi-stakeholder review" of the performance of all existing mining operations.

Resolution No. 6 was signed by Lopez and Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez 3rd.

The resolution stated that the MICC "shall create a multi-stakeholder review and advise the DENR on the performance of existing mining operations in consultation with the local government units (LGUs). The review shall be based on the guidelines and parameters set forth in the specific mining contract and in other pertinent laws, taking into account the valid exercise of the State's police power to serve the common good, especially of the poor."

Agabin noted that the existing MPSAs granted to mining companies are contracts between the government and mining contractors. "If there are provisions for dispute resolution, this should be observed. If there are grounds for termination, these should be the basis for any termination," he said.

"As a general principle of law, decisions of Cabinet secretaries are appealable to the President since the former are alter egos of the latter. As such, their decisions can be reversed, modified or altered, if warranted," Agabin said.

**MAYVELIN U. CARABALLO**



## Mining firms told to appeal closure order

THE Department of Finance (DOF) said closure and suspension orders issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resource (DENR) on several mining firms are appealable to the President and as such, can be reversed, modified, or altered, if warranted by Malacañang.

"We have not seen the orders nor the audit, so we are not aware of the grounds nor the manner by which DENR Secretary Gina Lopez has made her decisions," said Bayani Agabin, finance undersecretary and head of the DOF Legal Services Group.

Agabin issued the statement in response to queries from the media sent to the DOF, the agency that co-chairs the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) with the DENR.

Agabin was at the MICC meeting last week when the Council discussed an earlier DENR directive shutting down 23 mine sites and suspending the operations of five others.

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appealable to the President since the former are alter egos of the latter. As such, their decisions can be reversed, modified or altered, if warranted," Agabin said.

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It added that the review shall be based on the guidelines and parameters set forth in the specific mining contract and in other pertinent laws, taking into account the valid exercise of the State's police power to serve the common good, especially of the poor.

Agabin noted that the existing mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs) granted to mining companies are contracts between the government and each of the contractors.

"If there are provisions for dispute resolution, these should be observed. If there are grounds for termination, these should be the basis for any termination," he said.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Marcventures insists on right to mine

By Ronnel W. Domingo  
@ronwdomingoINQ

Marcventures Holdings Inc. (MHI) reiterated on Thursday that its subsidiary's mine in Surigao del Sur province would continue to operate, defying a government order to shut down operations in a watershed area.

The firm said the project was expected to ship out minerals next month, and its president, Isidro Alcantara Jr., insisted that its mining concern "had prior rights that must be respected."

"We strongly object to such action being made without observance of due process and without basis in fact and in law," Alcantara said in a letter to

its shareholders.

Marcventures Mining and Development Corp. (MMDC) received on Monday an order from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) canceling its mineral production agreement (MPSA).

It is one of up to 75 mining contracts ordered by Environment Secretary Gina Lopez closed down.

### No specifics

But Alcantara said the document "failed to identify specific environmental violations of MMDC which would warrant cancellation" of the contract.

"While the order mentioned that MMDC operates in a declared watershed, we clarify

that MMDC has prior legal right to operate in the area since its MPSA was approved in 1993, prior to the issuance of the watershed declaration under Presidential Proclamation No. 1747 issued in 2009, which specifically stated that 'prior rights must be respected,'" he said.

The environment department also called out MMDC for allegedly failing to implement a program to plant 3 million seedlings.

Alcantara said MMDC had submitted the program proposal as early as February 2015, but was prevented from implementing it due to "previous inaction of the DENR."

He said the matter was re-

solved only in December 2016 when Lopez herself approved the program.

He added that MMDC was able to secure a memorandum of agreement with the concerned local government units only on Feb. 9.

### No basis

"We therefore see no basis at all for the closure order," Alcantara said. "We will take all the necessary legal actions and exhaust all remedies available to prevent the implementation of the order."

Alcantara said MMDC's nickel mine was expected to operate as usual and to start ore shipments by the first week of March 2017.

At the Philippine Stock Ex-

change, three more firms said they had interest in MPSAs listed among the 75 contracts that Lopez had identified.

DMCI Mining Corp., a unit of DMCI Holdings Inc., said it has also received an order for the suspension of operations for Berong Nickel Corp. (BNC) and another for the cancellation of the MPSA for Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. (ZDMC).

"ZDMC and BNC shall seek redress from the subject DENR orders raising, among others, the lack of due process and legal bases for the issuance of the same," DMCI said.

"The company does not foresee these orders as having any significant, immediate im-

pact on its bottom line, as both nickel companies had not been operating for the most part of 2016," it added.

Also, A Brown Co. Inc. said it has minority interests in PhiGold Ltd. which has ownership in PhiGold Metallic Ore Inc. as well as in Apex Mining Co., the parent firm of Itogon-Suyoc Resources Inc.

The MPSAs assigned to PhiGold and to Itogon-Suyoc were also among MPSAs ordered canceled.

"Currently, the corporation does not derive any income from these investments," A Brown said. "The effect on our investments will depend on the changes in the share price of these companies." INQ

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Solons rule out Gina's confirmation

By Christine F. Herrera

FOR making a "very bad decision" on mining, Environment Secretary Gina Lopez will not hurdle confirmation of the powerful Commission on Appointments, lawmakers said Thursday.

"Secretary Lopez's confirmation is ruled out because she made a very bad decision by closing down 75 mining firms without due process," said Kalinga Rep. Allen Jesse Mangaoang, who filed a resolution seeking to probe her closure orders.

Mangaoang and Coop-Natcco Rep. Anthony Brayo said Lopez's actions were wreaking havoc on the economy.

A CA member who requested anonymity, confirmed that several opposition letters had been

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submitted to the confirmation body questioning Lopez's qualifications to head the environ-

ment agency.

The lawmaker said the CA will convene on Wednesday next week (Feb. 22) to deliberate on Lopez's fate as DENR secretary.

"There is strong opposition to Secretary Lopez's confirmation

following her recent decisions to cancel the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement of 75 mining companies that displaced 1.2 million mine workers nationwide," the CA member said. "We have to hear all sides, including

the sentiments of the stakeholders that were adversely affected by Lopez's decision."

Mangaoang, a geologist, said the congressional hearing on Lopez's recent decisions would be held in the first week of March.

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## 6,000 defy rain, Lopez



detoured to Delani Crusher in Brgy. Diaz. The Malico Bridge at Daang Maharlika Road (Lipata-Surigao Section), on the other hand, has only one lane passable to only light vehicles.

Aside from the Anao-aon and the Malico bridges, other bridges which were damaged and are now undergoing repair and rehabilitation are the Kinabutan I Bridge Daang Maharlika Road (Lipata-Surigao Section), Kinabutan II Bridge Daang Maharlika Road (Lipata-Surigao Section), Friendship Bridge Surigao-San Juan Coastal Road and the Banahaw Bridge Surigao-San Juan Coastal Road.

6,000...

From A1

showed that in Caraga Region, there are 16,090 regularly employed in mining, 15,600 of them in the CarCanMadCarLan area.

There are 300,000 individuals dependent on mining jobs—regular and seasonal employees and their families.

(The figure does not include the downstream industries that are serving the communities.

Pichay said that though they support plans for eco-tourism, he said this would take long to develop.

"And you can't employ all the

**BRAVING THE ELEMENTS.** Nearly 6,000 mines workers, indigenous peoples, scholars, fisherfolk and farmers stand up Thursday to the weather, in Cantilan, Surigao del Sur to rally at the town square against the order of Environment Secretary Gina Lopez on the closure of mining operations in the province. Lance Baconguls

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"GOOD DEFFY RAIN"

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## Workers rally vs mining closure

By Lance Bacongus

**C**ANTILAN, Surigao del Sur—Despite torrential rain, close to 6,000 mine workers, indigenous peoples, scholars, fishermen and farmers rallied against the order of Environment Secretary Regina Lopez to close mining operations in Surigao del Sur at the town park here.

Lopez ordered the closure of 23 mining operations last week and canceled 75 Mineral Profit Sharing Agreements on Feb. 14.

The protesters said the Lopez order was an injustice to those who depended on the three mining operations—two in Carrascal town, CTP Mining and Carrascal Nickel Mining; and one in Cantilan, Marc Ventures Mining and Development Corp.

Cantilan Mayor Phillip Pichay said Lopez's move to shut down mining would hurt close to 7,000 workers who would lose their jobs, and affect their families and communities as well.

Cantilan is the commercial center of the Carrascal, Cantilan, Madrid, Carmen, Lanuza area and home to Surigao del Sur State University and the St. Michael College.

Pichay said that close to P700 million circulates in the town annually.

"The salaries of the 464 Indigenous peoples from Barangay Cabangahan alone employed by MMDC amounts to P60 million annually and the workers spend it here," Pichay said.

Pichay added that the salaries of the employed in Carrascal town is P600 million annually, about 30 percent or P180 million is spent in Cantilan.

Data from the DENR-Mines and Geosciences Bureau

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

"6,000 - DOPY PAIN"

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6,000...

From A1

showed that in Caraga Region, there are 16,090 regularly employed in mining, 15,600 of them in the CarCanMadCarLan area.

There are 300,000 individuals dependent on mining jobs—regular and seasonal employees and their families.

The figure does not include the downstream industries that are serving the communities.

Pichay said that though they support plans for eco-tourism, he said this would take long to develop.

"And you can't employ all the 7,000 people expected to be displaced by the closure of the mining site.

Pichay said that the current bed capacity of Cantilan is just 75 beds and not one of them is of comparable quality to accommodation like Boracay or even Bohol.

"We need 2,000 tourists per week here spending P2,000 per day for at least for three days to substitute our losses in mining, but where would we house them?" Pichay asked.

"Eco-tourism would take five to six years to build and the government is not the one to construct it, but the private sector," Pichay said.

Datu Engwan Ala, Carrascal's mandatory indigenous peoples' representative, said that they will be the hardest hit if the mining operations stop.

The Mamanwa-Manobo is the indigenous peoples of Surigao Peninsula.

Ala pointed out that they have been the most marginalized, most

discriminated, poorest, forgotten and neglected people in the province.

"But mining has given us work and dignity," Ala said.

Ala narrated that now that the mining companies are paying royalties for their ancestral domain, they have already 78 college students and one is about to finish his law studies in Manila.

Ala said that their communities have been developed because of the funding from the mining companies.

"Now we have schools, ambulance, we have work, we have dignity," Ala said.

Ala said that before mining came, people looked down at them as uneducated, "They look down on us because we eat frogs and rice rats, but now we are educated, we have work, we are not ashamed anymore because of what mining have given us," Ala said.

"We now have education, health, farming program, when the mining stops, we are vulnerable again to recruitment of the rebels," Ala said.

Ala issued a plea to President Rodrigo Duterte to look into their plight and the benefits that mining have given them.

"I can't control all of them, we don't want them to go back into the mountains and carry guns," Ala said.

Surigao del Sur Gov. Vicente Pimentel said Lopez's closure orders would cut his town's annual income from P210 million a year to only P1.5 million a year.

"We will file a petition to remove Lopez from DENR," Pimentel said even as he lashed out against priests whom he said had misled people on mining.

"When you run out of work and

hungry, you rob the priests first," Pimentel said, noting that highway robbery was rampant in the Red Mountains before mining operations started.

Pimentel said he was confused by the government.

"Why put an unqualified person in DENR?" he said.

Miner Leo Santos said that the voice of the indigenous peoples' have been put on the back burner in the closure of the mines.

"They have the final say on their ancestral lands, not Secretary Lopez," Santos said.

"Without work, we can't send our children to schools, we won't have food, no house—it's injustice," Santos added.

Another miner Ramon Arpilleda said they would show Lopez a green revolution arising from mining operations when they start rehabilitation after a mine-out operation.

Mining company scholar Alex is Estampa said that he hoped the government would reconsider the closure order.

"It's difficult not to be from a privileged family, Secretary Lopez. Do you want us to go back in time where it is difficult to live?" Estampa asked.

Pimentel, whose hometown Carrascal is home to one of the world's largest mineral deposits, argued that Lopez, in her haste to shut down mining operations in Surigao del Sur did not follow due process and instead shut her eyes and ears to the mining industry.

"She did not follow due process, in fact, when they had an audit, the members of the audit team were the Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM), and the priests," Pimentel said.

Pimentel questioned the find-

ings of the mining audit, which was conducted by people who were not experts in the field.

He added that siltation existed in the Tago and Tandag rivers even before mining operations in the area began.

He added that the companies operating in his jurisdiction were following Australian standards of mining, and have done no damage to the environment.

Pimentel said the Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the DENR inspects the mining sites every two weeks.

"The MGB together with the Multisectoral Monitoring Team, they inspect the mining operation and if there is any violation they are the ones who will stop the mining operations, the DENR is always inspecting the mining operations," Pimentel said.

"Gina Lopez said that the environment will be affected but there is already an endorsement by the Carrascal-Cantilan-MadricCarmen-Lanuza irrigators association that they support mining operations in Carrascal," Pimentel said.

Pimentel said that mining companies already have dredging machines to remove heavy siltation as part of their mitigation on silts.

"Gina Lopez spoke about eco-tourism, how can that help Cantilan and Carrascal when there is not a single investment on tourism development? Where will you send people to work?" Pimentel said.

Pimentel also hit Lopez's comment on "Water is life", "How about the employees of the mining companies? They are human beings, don't they have life?" Pimentel said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Miners mull suing DENR for canceling contracts, ruining status

The country's both large scale and small scale miners affected by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) crusade against the mining sector may soon have to explore options how to make the government liable for breaching contracts and ruining their reputations.

Dante Bravo, president of Global Ferronickel Holdings, Inc. (FNI), the second largest nickel producer in the country and the largest single lateritic mine exporter in the world, said the move of Environment Secretary Lopez to close and suspend mining operations as well as cancel contracts could easily cost the state "several billion dollars."

"Under the law, there is an investment guarantee (in mining contracts) so this amounts either to an expropriation. With the cancelling and all that, just take over this mine or say requisition investment. Either way, at the end of the day, Congress will have to pass a law to pay for this damage or for the return of investment for all the mining companies affected," Bravo said in an interview with reporters on Wednesday.

"Eventually it will be collected through taxes. It's going to be the Filipino people who will shoulder it," he added.

Neither Platinum Group Metals Corporation (PGMC) or any of the companies associated with FNI group is among the DENR's list of 75 mining companies whose Mineral Production Sharing Contracts will be cancelled.

PGMC, however, is one of the mining operations that Lopez wants to shutdown.

Bravo pointed out that once the DENR's closure, suspension, and cancellation orders are implemented, miners would be forced to go after the government for "full reimbursement" of their investments.

"You have to consider the loss of wealth. You have to consider the actual investment directly poured in by the company. You also have to consider other damage. Damage in reputation, all that. It cannot be just a simple calculation," Bravo further said.

"We did not violate (environmental standards) but we are being labelled as irresponsible. We're being labelled as violators. These are all attacks against our integrity, against our reputation," he added.

Nelia Halcon, Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) executive vice president, on the other hand, said COMP members are still hoping that Lopez won't get reappointed amid all the issues surrounding her nationwide audit on the mining sector. "We believe in the reasonableness of the CA (Commission on Appointments)," Halcon also said on Wednesday. (MBM)

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

News

Manila  
Standard

## DENR criticized over Limay plant

**A** GROUP of climate activists on Thursday slammed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for its supposed inaction on complaints against the coal power plant in Limay, Bataan.

The Philippine Movement for Climate Justice, the largest climate justice group in the country, trooped to the DENR office in Quezon City to demand an explanation for its inaction on the complaints against the coal plant of Petron-San Miguel Consolidated Power Corp. in Barangay Lamao in Limay.

"It [has been] more than a month since they issued a notice of alleged violation to Petron and SMC but until now, no immediate action has been undertaken. I don't think this issue is being taken seriously," said PMCJ national coordinator Ian Rivera, reiterating the health complaints of residents.

The DENR Environmental

Management Bureau in Central Luzon sent a notice of violation to San Miguel Corp. which was received by the end party last Jan. 6, 2017 while another order was issued to Petron dated Dec. 28, 2016 directly from the office of the DENR secretary.

"It was clearly stated in the documents issued to both companies that they are prohibited from continuing their test run and dumping operations while matters are being investigated but clearly, operations are business as usual," said Derec Cabe, coordinator of Nuclear-Free Bataan Movement.

The order issued to Petron also states that the company acted beyond their Environmental Compliance Certificate and failed to install a Continuous Emission

Monitoring System which disabled them to provide a regular monitoring report.

In addition, it was stated that the bodies of water surrounding the coal plant are contaminated by hazardous substances. Lastly, the company has failed to manage the bottom ash produced by their coal plant operations.

However, despite the release of the aforementioned notices, no formal complaint was ever filed.

The Pollution Adjudication Board claims that their office has not received any endorsement from the DENR Regional Office regarding Petron-SMC's case which left them unable to investigate further on the issue. In his last interview, Ramon Ang of SMC was demanding that the DENR release a permit to transport the remains of bottom ash being complained by the residents. However, Ang refused to admit that the waste products caused the residents' skin and

respiratory diseases.

"There is enough evidence that the said coal plant has committed both health and environmental violations. Notices have already been released. This is not just an issue of where to dump the bottom ash. The entire operations which produce the said waste materials should be stopped. There is no reason that the DENR is not taking action on this," Rivera said.

"We need an explanation from the DENR on why they did not endorse this case to PAB immediately," Rivera said. The group also reiterated that PAB must be assertive in this issue regardless since it was stated in the order that the body can act on its own pulse.

"We demand the closure of the Petron Coal Plant and the cancellation of the ECC granted to SMC immediately. Somebody has to be accountable for this delay—justice delayed is justice denied," Rivera added.



# Coal plants 'must monitor air quality'

By TARAYAP

**I**LOILO CITY — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is calling on two coal-fired power plants in Panay Island to be transparent in their air quality monitoring.

To achieve that, DENR Regional Director for Western Visayas Jim Sampulna said the Panay Energy Develop-

ment Corp. (PEDC) in Iloilo City and Panay Concepcion Power Corp. (PCPC) in northern Iloilo province must install real-time air monitoring devices.

The devices must be connected to the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) regional office for direct access to air quality index.

Sampulna said President Duterte wants coal-fired plants to utilize newer technologies to ensure that they fully

comply with the Clean Air Act.

DENR is strictly monitoring the two plants in the light of DENR Secretary Gina Lopez's campaign against mining firms that violate environmental laws.

DENR also urged the two plants to conduct continuous health surveys to ensure that their operation does not harm surrounding communities.

"The needs of the people must be

taken into consideration. We need to balance profit with environmental protection and sustainable development," Sampulna said.

PEDC and PCPC supply electricity to Panay, Negros, Cebu, and Leyte islands.

PEDC is a subsidiary of Global Business Power Corp. (GBP), and PCPC is a subsidiary of A Brown Co. Inc. and Jin Navitas Resource Inc.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Lopez landed on mine closure; Mining firms seek due process

By ANTONIO L. COLINA IV

**D**AVAO CITY – Environmentalists here praised environment and natural resources Secretary Regina Lopez for the closure of 23 mining operations and the cancellation of 75 existing mineral production sharing agreements (MPAs) within watershed areas, a move described as “long overdue” since the environment has long been degraded by unregulated mining activities.

Meantime, the Alliance of Responsible Miners of Region 11 (ARMOR) appealed to President Duterte to grant the affected mining firms due process with regard to closure orders and cancellation of the mineral production sharing agreements (MPAs) within the watershed areas by Lopez.

#### 'About time'

Interface Development Interventions (IDIS) acting executive director Chinkie T. Pelino-Golle said Lopez and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) must be commended for its bold decision against several mining companies whose unregulated mining activities caused the devastation of the environment.

“It is a long overdue action since the environment has already been devastated by the unregulated mining activities. Local communities have long been suffering from the destructions

and continue to suffer from poverty,” she said.

#### Biodiversity damage

She added that the mining companies have failed to deliver on their promise of development to the communities and even caused violations to environmental and social justice, citing how the mining operations affected the country's biodiversity.

“The biodiversity, supposedly, will support the needs of the people to survive and will ensure a balanced environment. But with the mining operations, biodiversity are also gone and so the benefits they give,” she said.

#### Rehab efforts

She also called on DENR, local government units (LGUs), and mining-affected communities to work together to rehabilitate the mined areas.

“Let us give DENR and this government, a chance, to uphold environmental and social justice,” she said.

#### Deadly crusade

Dr. Jean Lindo, an environmental activist from the Panalipdan Mindanao, claimed there were anti-mining activists killed in the crusade against operations of the mining companies in their communities.

“These communities have remained poor despite the mining operations. The rivers and coastal areas are very important source of water and food. They suffer food insecurity and health problems. How could we consider this

responsible mining?” she said.

#### 'Environment first'

Mylai Santos, director of Ecoteneo Division of the Ateneo de Davao University, echoed the same support for Lopez by saying it was high time that the stakeholders put the environmental and people's general welfare at the forefront of the development.

A DENR press release issued on Tuesday quoted Lopez as saying that her decision is backed by the provisions of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 that gives her the power to regulate and make decisions pertaining to watersheds and even cited the Forestry Code, which “mandates that surface mined areas should be brought back to its natural state.”

#### Due process

Rodulfo Palma, president of the Alliance of Responsible Miners of Region (ARMOR) 11, expressed dismay over the actions taken by the environment chief against several mining companies.

“It's not even a usual Valentine's gift for all the communities, specifically members of the host communities of the mining companies,” he said.

He said that mining companies would like to know the basis for the environment chief's decision.

“You cannot just simply cancel an agreement if you are going to use as basis, one that is not provided for by the law, otherwise we should forget the

sanctity of contracts,” he said.

#### Rody's decision

“Whatever will be the decision, the mining companies have the option to appeal that to the Office of the President. Unless, the President decided on the issue, the mining companies can continue with the operation,” he said.

#### Mining firms' take

He said that the mining companies will take appropriate actions after they receive the show cause orders to allow them to respond within seven days “why their MPSAs should not be cancelled for threatening watersheds, which are a major source of drinking and recreational water for many communities.”

“For mining companies, what we are waiting for is the serving of the notices so that the mining companies can also evaluate and know the specific basis for the cancellation or issuance of such order without which, the mining companies would be in limbo on what to do,” he said.

Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) 11 director Wilfredo G. Moncano said Lopez' decision is not only killing the mining industry but also veering away from President Duterte's promise of industrialization.

“It's a sad day because if we follow the statement or pronouncement of president when he assumed office that the direction of the country is for industrialization. Now what will happen

to that direction if the mining industry is slowly being killed.” He stressed.

“The mining industry for that matter is an important component of industrialization. We want to produce our own steel products, we need to have mines operating to feed to these steel manufacturing companies. It will really be a direction that is contradicting to the direction of a president,” he added.

He pointed out that nine out of 75 MPSAs are in Davao Region – four in Compostela Valley (Kingking Mining Corp., Alsons Development and Investment Co., Inc., King Eagle Exploration and Mining Corporation, Napnapan Mineral Resources, Inc.) and five in Davao Oriental (Dabawenyos Minerals Corporation, Phil. Youbang Mining International Corp., Sinophil Mining and Trading Corporation, Core Mining Corporation, Oro-East Mining Company, Inc.)

#### Economic impact

He said that about 400 direct workers will be displaced by the closure order but he added mining companies will suffer from major losses in terms of future investments.

“If they proceed with the cancellation, it will result in the loss of taxes, loss of royalties, loss of real property taxes, loss of employment, loss of social development and management program for the communities, and of course, the aspiring professionals. All of these will be lost,” he said.

# PILIPINO MIRROR

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



PAGBALIK tanaw, noong ika-2 ng Enero, ang mga residente ng Quezon City sa 5th District ay nabigla nang ilang araw na hindi nakolekta ang kanilang mga basura. Ito ay pagkatapos ng selebrasyon ng Bagong Taon.

Nagtambakan ang mga hindi nakolektang basura sa mga lansangan at mga subdibisyon. Nagtaka ang mga taga lungsod Quezon. 'Yun pala, mahigit na tatlong daang basurero ay nag-strike at humintong magtrabaho dahil hindi raw ibinigay ang hiling na umento sa kanilang suweldo.

Ang mga basurero ay sumusweldo lamang

pala ng P190 kada araw. Kaya kung limang araw ang kanilang trabaho, sila ay sumusweldo lamang ng P3,800 kada buwan. Ito ay kapag dalawampung araw ang kanilang trabaho sa isang linggo. Kung walang pahinga, sasahod sila ng P5,700 sa isang buwan. 'Yan ay kung tatlumpung araw na direktong paghahakot ng basura. Napakababa talaga ng sahod nila kaya tama lamang na humingi sila ng umento.

Napagbigyan yata ang kanilang hiling kaya matapos ang ilang araw, naging normal ulit ang koleksiyon ng basura sa nasabing distrito.

Ito ngayon ang nais kong talakayin. Malinaw na hindi sapat ang suweldo at proteksiyon sa ating mga basurero. Napakahirap at mapanganib sa kalusugan ang kanilang hanapbuhay. Makikita natin na hindi sapat ang mga proteksiyon sa kapila tuwing sila ay humahakot ng basura.

Wala silang suot na guwantes. Kinakamay nila ang mga mabaho at maruming basura. Wala silang proteksiyon sa bibig at ilong upang masaila ang mga maaaring nakalalason na amoy mula sa basura. Napansin ko na marami sa mga basurero ay nakatsinelas at hindi nakasapatos. Delikado ito. Maaaring matibo sila sa mga matatalas na bagay mula sa basura.

Sana ay may mambabatas na makaisip ng panukalang batas upang mabigyan ng sapat na proteksiyon ang ating mga basurero. Maliban sa kasiguraduhang sahod para sa kanila, dapat ay mayroon din silang karagdagang benepisyo para sa

kanilang kalusugan.

Mahalaga kahit saang lungsod o bayan na may mahusay na programa sa pagkolekta ng basura. Ito ay mapanganib, hindi lamang sa ating kalusugan, pati na rin sa ating kalikasan. Isa sa malaking isyu rito ay ang tinatawag na dumpsites o kung saang lugar ang tapunan ng ating mga basura. Sa Quezon City at iba pang siyudad ng Metro Manila, sa Payatas pa rin ang kanilang tapunan.

Kamakailan, ang Lungsod ng Quezon ay humiling kay DENR Sec. Lopez na ikonsidera ang kanyang pagbawi sa pagpasara ng Payatas Sanitary landfill. Ito raw ay dahil maaaring makasira sa programa ng Quezon City sa kanilang tinatawag na solid waste management system.

Humihingi ang Quezon City ng kaunting palugit upang may panahon pa sila na ayusin ang kanilang programa sa solid waste management plan.

Ang kontrata ng Quezon City sa mga nag-

operate ng pagkolekta ng basura ay mag-expire sa September 2017. Ayon sa Quezon City, kailangan nila ng sapat na panahon upang maghanap ng ibang lugar kapag ipinasara na ang Payatas ng DENR.

Sa akin lang, mahalaga na hanapan ng kapalit ang Payatas. Matagal ng tapunan ng basura 'yan. Napakalapit din nito sa La Mesa Dam kung saan tayo kumukuha ng tubig inumin. Subalit mahalaga rin na pagtuunan ang kapakanan at sapat na proteksiyon ang ating mga basurero.

Binabalewala natin ang kanilang hanapbuhay. Subalit kapag nawalan tayo ng mga basurero, mararamdaman natin agad ang epekto nito. Hindi kaila sa atin, na tone-toneladang basura ang ating itinatapon kada araw. Kapag ito ay hindi kinolekta ng ating mga basurero, tiyak babaho at mas dudumi ang Metro Manila. Kaya, bigyan natin sila ng halaga. Bigyan natin sila ng sapat na sahod at proteksiyon sa kanilang kalusugan.



**NAKAABANG** ang ama at kapatid ng batang ito sa Vitas Bridge, Tondo, Manila upang siya ay alalayan galing sa pamumolot ng kalakal sa maruming ilog. Kuha ni **BENJAMIN CUARESMA**

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# People power and political will

**P**eople power without the government's political will often results in impotence. Consider the recent experience of Laguna Lake.

Laguna de Bay is our nation's largest inland body of water and the third largest in Southeast Asia. It is 33 times bigger than Manila. Until recently, it is where justice reigned supreme.

In his first State of the Nation Address (Sona) on July 25, 2016, President Duterte said: "The plane passes over that lake every time I go to Davao. I see there is no more space for small fisher-

## COMMENTARY

ERNESTO M. ORDOÑEZ

men." Saying he would address the negative impact of watershed destruction, land conversion and pollution, he added: "This is what I'm telling you. Poor fishermen will have priority in its entitlement."

On Jan. 12, Duterte made good on his promise. The Laguna Lake Development Authority required illegal fish pen and fish

cage owners to demolish their structures.

The Fisheries Code (Republic Act No. 8550) states: "Not over 10 percent of the suitable waterservice area of all lakes and rivers shall be allotted for aquaculture purposes like fish pens, fish cages and fish structures." For Laguna Lake, this means a maximum of 9,000 hectares. But the law has been violated with impunity. Some 12,316 hectares are occupied by fish pens and fish cages. The 2,261 illegal fish pen operators are more than double the 1,018 legal ones. How did this

happen?

Mel Felix, head of the Association of Laguna Lake Fish Producers, provides the answer: "The illegal operators usually have connections with mayors of lakeshore towns or with LLDA field agents." This is the kind of corruption Duterte detests.

As early as March 16, 2012, a people power Trisec Laguna Lake Initiative was undertaken by eight national-based rural people organizations. Four of the eight are members of Alyansa Agrikultura (AA).

AA Co-Convenor Omi Royan-

doyan submitted a 34-page report funded by Oxfam that recommended significant Laguna Lake governance changes.

He wrote: "Community-based democratic people powered common resource management is possible only through organized actions of the stakeholders. To rely primarily on the state bureaucracy to achieve this objective will only slow down the process."

Unfortunately, with no political will from the government, the people power Trisec initiative had almost no result. We

still need the state bureaucracy to implement change. This change finally happened through the state bureaucracy. But it was made possible only because of the political will demonstrated by Duterte.

Illegal fish pens are finally being dismantled. This will allow the lake to flourish once again and enable small fisherfolk to continue their livelihood.

Our previous presidents have talked about stopping Laguna Lake abuses. But nothing has happened until now, when the administra-

## PEOPLE POWER AND POLITICAL WILL

**FROM B6** tion showed the political will that previous ones did not have.

Royandoyan said the first step in winning social justice is for the oppressed to organize themselves to form people power. But if relevant government officials do not support this with political will, no action is taken. This is why rebel groups like the New People's

Army (NPA) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have resorted to violence.

The government's initial response to these disgruntled groups is to counter this violence with superior violence. This just results in an unending and escalating spiral. The correct solution is for the government to exercise political will to support people power.

We are seeing this unfold in

Laguna Lake. People power supported by political will is resulting in the illegal fish pens finally being dismantled, and social justice restored. INQ



The author is Agriwatch chair, former Secretary of Presidential Programs and Projects, and former Undersecretary of the DA and DTI. Contact is agriwatch\_phil@yahoo.com.

# PEOPLES' JOURNALS

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### PH to support global conservation of marine resources -- Pimentel

THE Philippines has affirmed full legislative support for the global agenda for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

Senate President Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III stressed these are important to ensure human survival and sustainable development.

He told fellow parliamentarians that the Philippine government's commitment to the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goal 14, which focuses on the oceans, seas and marine resources.

Pimentel led the Philippine delegation to the annual parliamentary hearing of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the global organization of national parliaments and lawmakers that works to establish democracy, peace

and cooperation among peoples. Almost 140 national parliaments are members of the IPU.

The Philippine delegation included Cavite Rep. Francis Gerald Abaya, vice chair of the House Committee on Climate Change.

The Senate president informed the delegates the Duterte administration's efforts to address climate change and ocean pollution by prohibiting the indiscriminate discard of plastic wastes and by closing certain mining companies whose toxic tailings have severely affected some of the country's watersheds, rivers and coasts.

"We have a concept in the Philippines called 'Ridge to Reef' which we use in our disaster preparedness planning.

"Because of what we

learned (in this meeting,) I will amend the concept to make it 'Ridge to Ocean,' and that from now on, all kinds of planning in the Philippines must include the oceans," Pimentel said.

This year's topic seeks to provide parliamentary input to the high-level oceans conference to be held at the UN from June 5 to 9, which experts believe can become the game changer that will reverse the decline in the health of the oceans, and synergize the oceans' relationship with other 2030 Agenda goals such as climate change mitigation, sustainable consumption and production patterns, hunger and food security, health risks linked to pollution and other harmful materials, and governance and the rule of law.

**Cristina Lee-Pisco**

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Gov't efforts to address climate change cited

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The Philippines recently highlighted the Duterte administration's efforts to address climate change and ocean pollution by prohibiting the indiscriminate disposal of plastic waste and by closing certain mining companies.

Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III told the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) that protecting the environment is important to ensure human survival and sustainable development.

Pimentel reiterated the Philippine government's commitment to the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goal 14, which focuses on the oceans, seas and marine resources during the annual parliamentary hearing of the IPU held in New York City last Feb. 13 and 14.

The Philippines affirmed its full legislative support for the global agenda to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources as a vital ecosystem to ensure human survival and sustainable development.

Pimentel led the Philippine delegation to the IPU, the global organization of national parliaments and lawmakers that works to establish democracy, peace and co-operation among peoples. Almost 140 national parliaments are members of the IPU.

In his statement, Pimentel informed the meeting of the Duterte administration's efforts to address climate change and ocean pollution.

He said there were mining companies closed because their toxic tailings have severely affected

some of the country's watersheds, rivers and coasts.

"We have a concept in the Philippines called 'Ridge to Reef' which we use in our disaster preparedness planning," Pimentel said.

"Because of what we learned (in this meeting), I will amend this concept... to make it 'Ridge to Ocean,' and that from now on, all kinds of planning in the Philippines must include the oceans," he added.

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### THE NEED FOR REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION

By: Emelle G. Abad

T-3

Nueva Era, Elementary School  
San Manuel, Isabela

Every teacher wants every learner to be a good reader. When we speak of a good reader, we mean one who reads with fluency and comprehension. However to attain such goal is difficult for our PHIL RI results show that several of our learners are under frustration. With this scenario, we need to conduct remedial instructions to them to make them independent readers able to read with fluency and comprehension.

To conduct remedial instructions to these learners, one must start from where they are. If there is a need to begin with letter identification then we must do so. However, there is a great need for phonemics awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate words, parts of words and individual sounds in spoken words. Before a child could read, he has to learn and become more aware of how the sounds in words work. He must understand that words are made up of speech sounds. It is the goal of phonics to enable the blending the sound-spelling pattern.

It takes time, patience and understanding when we conduct remedial instructions to our learners. We really need to start from where they are, even to the point of starting with letter identification. However, the need to conduct a remedial instruction for our non-readers is an opportunity to helping them become good readers; able to read with fluency and comprehension which in turn will enable them to become globally competent and productive citizens of the nation.

Let us not be selfish then to give them this opportunity for remedial instructions. In doing an extra effort like conducting remedial instruction, one may not be well compensated, but it gives fulfillment having done your part to help one become a good reader.