

20 FEB 2017

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Monday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Group to start review of DENR orders

Finance chief says 'following due process is not recommen'

By Ben O. de Vera
@bendeveraINQ

As the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) meets today to start the review of the mining operations earlier suspended by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III has assured stakeholders that the process would undergo due process.

Dominguez told reporters last Friday that the MICC technical working group tasked to do the review would start off

with an organizational meeting to implement Resolution No. 6, which he and Environment Secretary Regina Lopez signed last Feb. 9 as MICC co-chairs.

Resolution No. 6 called for the establishment of a multistakeholder review of the DENR's orders to shut down mines in 10 provinces as mandated under Executive Order No. 79.

"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

We don't know exactly what was done. Was it a notice of cancellation or a notice of show cause?

Carlos G. Dominguez III
Finance Secretary

State's police power to serve the common good, especially of the poor," the resolution said.

The MICC was also ordered to "advise the DENR on the performance of existing mining operations in consultation with local government units (LGUs)," according to the resolution.

Asked to comment on Lopez's pronouncements that the MICC would only be recommendatory in nature such that the DENR would have the final say on the suspension as well as closure orders of more than 80 mining operations and con-

tracts, Dominguez pointed out that "following due process is not recommendatory."

"That is the law. The law is not recommendatory—the law is to be followed. And we are reminding that this is the law," Dominguez said.

The Finance chief noted that the MICC resolution pointed out that "it's important to follow the due process."

As for last week's additional orders covering 75 mineral production sharing agreements (MP-SAs), Dominguez said the MICC must first know what was specif-

ically ordered by the DENR.

"We don't know exactly what was done. Was it a notice of cancellation or a notice of show cause? So we have to check in each case," Dominguez said.

"Each case is different, because they are individual contracts. And I'm not sure if all the contracts have the same terms. And as the Office of the Solicitor General said during the [Feb. 9 MICC] meeting, what is the law is the contract, the law between the parties is the contract, so you have to look at the contract," Dominguez added. INQ

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TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

MICC to review mining contracts

By MARY GRACE PADIN

The Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) is set to convene again today to iron out the details of the multi-stakeholder review on the existing contracts of all mining companies in light of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' recent actions against the mining industry.

"The technical working group, (that is) the one going to do the reviews. That was part of the board resolution, so they're going to implement it on Monday. They will decide what to do," Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez, who co-chairs the MICC, said.

Dominguez and Environment Secretary Gina Lopez issued on Feb. 9 a resolution in relation to the closure and suspension orders announced by the DENR which sparked criticism from the mining sector.

A total of 23 mining firms were ordered close, while five others were suspended. An-

other 75 mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs) were cancelled.

"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.

The heads (or their authorized representatives) of the Departments of Finance, Environment and Natural Resources, Interior and Local Government, Trade and Industry, Budget and Management, Energy, Agriculture, Agrarian Reform, Justice, Labor and Employment, and Social Welfare and Development are expected to attend the meeting.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

MICC meets today to start review

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLORES**

The Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) will convene today, Monday, to formally identify the members of the multi-stakeholder technical review team as well as discuss the expanded scope of the evaluation on the operations of mining firms that were ordered closed or suspended by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Department of Finance (DOF) Undersecretary Bayani Agabin, who heads the DOF Legal Services Group, said the MICC will meet today in order to jumpstart the technical review this month or "as soon as" possible. MICC will nominate the members that will compose the technical review.

"The idea is you get the professionals, academics, those that have no connections, no interest at all with mining companies. What we want is transparent, scientific, methodical, legal review of the

operations of mining companies," said Agabin.

MICC, which was created to ensure continuing dialogue and coordination, among all mining stakeholders, is co-chaired by the secretaries of the DENR and DOF.

The technical review will resolve the issues surrounding the order of Environment Secretary Gina Lopez to close and suspend 28 mines as well as cancel 75 Mineral Production Sharing Agreement contracts.

Following the DENR order, the MICC stepped in and created a multi-stakeholder team to do a technical review on the performance of existing mining operations in consultation with local government units (LGUs).

Expected to attend the meeting are co-chairpersons Dominguez and Lopez, along with Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea and Director General Ernesto Pernia of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Mining council buckles down for review

THE GOVERNMENT is scrambling to contain spreading business concern over twin decisions by the Environment department earlier this month to cancel the permits of nearly a hundred mine projects, so far, with the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) buckling down this afternoon to organize a review sought by miners.

A Feb. 17 memorandum of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) called the 19 members of the council to an "MICC-Multi Stakeholder Review Team Organizational Meeting" at 2 p.m. this afternoon at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas compound in Manila.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) last Feb. 2 announced its decision to shutter 23 of the country's 41 operational metal mines and suspend five others for violations such as being located in watersheds and polluting surrounding bodies of water, sparking an industry outcry that prompted the MICC to convene a week later.

At the end of the Feb. 9 meeting, the MICC — consisting of members of the Cabinet clusters on Economic Development and on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation plus representatives of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines — issued a resolution providing for a "multi-stakeholder review" and ensuring that due process, which miners say has been lacking, is observed.

That meeting was followed five days later by DENR's announcement that it was putting 75 undeveloped mines nationwide on the chopping block as well.

Affected miners have said they would appeal to President Ro-

they were ready to take the DENR to court.

Business groups had initially said the impact of sanctions should not spill out from the industry, but announcement of the 75 other projects for termination spawned warnings of erosion of general investor sentiment.

'... THIS IS THE LAW'

In a statement yesterday, the Finance department quoted Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III — who co-chairs the MICC with Environment Sec. Regina Paz "Gina" L. Lopez — as saying MICC's "technical working group... will decide what to do" next.

"As discussed during the (Feb. 9) MICC meeting... there is a need to observe due process," the statement read, quoting Bayani H. Agabin, Finance undersecretary in charge of the Legal Services and the Domestic Finance groups.

"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 was followed," he explained of the technical working group's focus of review.

While it remains to be seen how much time the review of DENR's decision will take, Mr. Dominguez reiterated to reporters last Friday that the process will look into each affected miner's contract with the government. Republic Act No. 7942, or the Mining Act of 1995, provided two kinds of such contracts: mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs) that allow 60% foreign ownership and financial or technical assistance that allow full foreign ownership.

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INCREASE YOUR BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

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Mining,
from SI/1

There are 311 MPSAs, including those of the 98 projects now up for termination.

"[I]t is the resolution of the entire MICC that it's important to follow the due process. If you read that (resolution), I think 'due process' is mentioned two or three times," Mr. Dominguez told reporters last Friday.

"And, by the way, each case is different *ha*, because they are individual contracts and I'm not sure that all the contracts have the same terms," the Finance chief emphasized.

"And as the SolGen (Solicitor General Jose C. Calida) said during the (Feb. 9 MICC) meeting: what is the law is the contract. The law between the parties is the contract. So you have to look at the contract."

Asked to react to Ms. Lopez's description of the MICC as just a recommendatory body that cannot change her ruling, Mr. Dominguez replied: "Following due process is not recommendatory — that is the law."

"The law is not recommendatory. The law is to be followed. And we are reminding that this is the law."

SIGNALS MIXED

Mr. Duterte himself has sent mixed signals on the matter, expressing unqualified support for Ms. Lopez last Feb. 2 — a few hours after she first announced mines to be sanctioned — then seemingly backpedaling during dinner last Friday in Baguio City with members of Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Class 1967 and then saying in his speech before PMA cadets and alumni the following morning that "man-made diseases like extractive industries" threatened the country.

"Kay Gina Lopez... *ang gulo na* (The issue with Gina Lopez is get-

ting out of hand)," Mr. Duterte said in his speech last Friday evening.

"But... I will review. There's such a thing as... exhaustion of administrative remedies," he added.

"I will... not judge her now... *kung mali talaga, eh wala akong magagawa*, if it's destructive to the environment [then there is nothing I can do but uphold Ms. Lopez's decision to shutter mines and suspend others]," he explained, adding, however: "But if... *medyo* (the damage is not that much)... then we correct it."

At the same time, he acknowledged that mining's gross value added to the economy — though estimated at less than one percent of gross domestic product since at least 2012, a year after the government stopped processing new permits — was still a factor to consider.

"We get something like P70 billion a year out of mining operations in the Philippines, so... we have to also take (that) into consideration..." Mr. Duterte told members of PMA Class 1967.

Miners have been reeling from unfriendly state policy since 2011, when the administration of former president Benigno S. C. Aquino III imposed a moratorium on new mining permits that was extended indefinitely through Executive Order No. 79 — which formed the MICC — signed on July 6, 2012.

MGB reported last Feb. 2 that metal mineral production dropped eight percent to P100.56 billion last year from 2015's P109.84 billion, blaming "[p]oor base metal price, a string of mine suspension and... non-operation due to unfavorable weather conditions" for the sector's "lackluster performance." — **reports from Janina C. Lim with E. J. C. Tubayan**

Daily Tribune

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR

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Group meets to review DENR order against mining firms

A multi-stakeholder team of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) that was formed to review existing mining operations that were ordered shut down or suspended by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will hold its first meeting today.

This organizational meeting is a result of MICC Resolution 6, which had resolved to create "a multi-stakeholder team" to "review existing mining operations in consultation with local government units (LGUs), which 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 of the poor."

Resolution 6 was approved by the MICC in its February 9 meeting.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez, who co-chairs the

MICC, said the team is essentially a "technical working group" that will review the operations of the mine sites affected by the DENR order.

"The technical working group, (that is) the one going to do the reviews. That was part of the board resolution, so they're going to implement it on Monday. They will decide what to do, the technical working group," Dominguez said.

The multi-stakeholder review team shall also include representatives from relevant government agencies and institutions.

Invitations were sent to the co-chairpersons of the MICC—Dominguez and Regina Lopez of the DENR, along with Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea and Director General Ernesto Pernia of the National Economic and Development Authority.

Also invited to the meeting are

Secretaries Ramon Lopez of the Department of Trade and Industry, Ismael Suenò of the Interior and Local Government, Benjamin Diokno of Budget and Management, Alfonso Cusi of Energy, Emmanuel Pinol of Agriculture, Rafael Mariano of Agrarian Reform, Vitaliano Aguirre of Justice, Silvestre Bello III of Labor and Employment, and Judy Taguiwalo of Social Welfare and Development.

Cabinet Secretary Leoncio Evasco Jr., Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo, Solicitor General Jose Calida, Undersecretary Ferdinand Cui Jr. of the Presidential Management Staff, chairperson Leonor Oralde-Quintayo of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, executive director Sandra Paredes of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines are also invited to the meeting.

Earlier, the MICC affirmed the

primacy of both "procedural and substantive" due process in the final resolution of DENR's series of actions on existing mineral production sharing agreements.

"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," said DOF Undersecretary Bayani Agabin, who heads the Department's Legal Services Group.

MICC Resolution No. 6 stressed that both the DENR and the Council "recognize the requirements of due process in the applicable mining laws, rules and regulations."

Resolution 6 was signed by both Lopez and Dominguez.

MICC unit to review operations of closed mines

BY MAYVELIN U. CARABALLO

A TECHNICAL working group created under the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) is set to meet today, Monday, to fulfill its mandate to review the operations of 28 mining sites closed or suspended by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

According to a memorandum issued by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), a multi-stakeholder team formed under MICC Resolution 6 will review "existing mining operations in consultation with local government units (LGUs), which 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 of the poor."

Resolution 6 was approved by the MICC in its February 9 meeting.

"The technical working group, (that is) the one going to do the reviews. That was part of the board resolution, so they're going to implement it on Monday. They will decide what to do," Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez 3rd, who co-chairs the MICC, told reporters over the weekend.

The review team will also include representatives from relevant government agencies and institutions.

Invitations were sent to the co-chairpersons of the MICC—Dominguez and Regina Lopez of the DENR, along with Executive Secretary Salvador

Medialdea and Director General Ernesto Pernia of NEDA.

Also invited to the meeting were Secretaries Ramon Lopez of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Ismael Sueno of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Benjamin Diokno of Budget and Management (DBM), Alfonso Cusi of Energy (DOE), Emmanuel Pinol of Agriculture (DA), Rafael Mariano of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Vitaliano Aguirre III of Justice (DOJ), Silvestre Bello III of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and Judy Taguiwalo of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Cabinet Secretary Leoncio Evasco Jr., Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo, Solicitor General Jose Calida, Undersecretary Ferdinand Cui Jr. of the Presidential Management Staff (PMS), Chairperson Leonor Oralde-Quintayo of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, and Executive Director Sandra Paredes of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP) were

also invited to the meeting.

Earlier, the MICC affirmed the primacy of both "procedural and substantive" due process in the final resolution of DENR's series of actions on existing mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs).

"As discussed during the MICC meeting...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," said DOF Undersecretary Bayani Agabin, who heads the DOF's Legal Services Group.

MICC Resolution 6, which was signed by both Lopez and Dominguez, stressed that both the DENR and the Council "recognize the requirements of due process in the applicable mining laws, rules and regulations."

PEOPLES Tonight

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

Duterte to review closure of mines

By EFREN MONTANO

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte is set to review the decisions of Environment Secretary Gina Lopez for the mine closures and scrapping the mining contracts affecting watershed areas.

Duterte, however, said he was withholding judgment on Lopez, pointing out that there was nothing he could do about her decision if the companies involved were really destroying the environment.

It will be recalled that mining firms are up in arms over Lopez's decision to order the closure of 23 mines and to scrap 75 mining contracts for covering watershed areas.

The President said that there were administrative remedies that the mining firms could take.

"But I will, I will review. There's such a thing as exhaustion, for the lawyers, exhaustion of administrative remedies. I will not judge her now," the President said in a dinner with

Philippine Military Academy alumni at Fort Del Pilar, Friday.

But if the companies were destroying the environment, there was nothing he could do.

"I will look at it. But if it's in the wrong, there's nothing I could do, if it's destructive to the environment," the President said.

Duterte also said he would take into account the revenue brought in by mining operations.

"We get something like P70 billion a year out of the mining operations in the entire Philippines. So we have to also take [that] into consideration," he said.

Lopez earlier said she scrapped 75 mineral production-sharing agreements because the projects were located in watershed areas.

The closure of 23 mines came after an audit by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which found that they had engaged in indiscriminate mining and ruined watershed areas.

The mining firms are seeking to block Lopez's confirmation as environ-



ment secretary before the Commission on Appointments, although the latter remains unfazed with it.

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Mining firms: Lopez has no power to declare an area is a watershed

By Ronnel W. Domingo
@ronwdomingoINQ

Mining activities are disallowed only in watersheds that are by law declared "critical," and only the President has that power, according to the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP).

The COMP was refuting statements of Environment Secretary Regina Lopez, who earlier ordered the closure of at least 15 mines and the cancellation of 75 mineral production sharing agreements (MPSA). Lopez claimed the areas involved were in watershed areas.

Lopez had said all open-pit mining operations in the Philippines were being done in a watershed, which "should never be allowed."

She added there should be no more mining not just in legally proclaimed watersheds, but even in "functional" watersheds.

"The environment secretary has no power to proclaim that an area is a watershed," COMP vice president Ronald Recidoro said in an interview.

Citing the Revised Forestry Code or Presidential Decree No. 705 issued in 1975, Recidoro said section 18 stated that the Presi-

dent may establish forest reserves that are for preservation as critical watersheds or for any other purpose. The President can also modify the boundaries of existing forest reserves.

PD 705 defines a watershed as "a land area drained by a stream or fixed body of water and its tributaries having a common outlet for surface runoff."

Further, the law defines "critical watershed" as a drainage area of a river system which supports existing and proposed hydro-electric power, irrigation works or domestic water facilities that need immediate protection or rehabilita-

tion.

The River Basin Control Office, which is under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, lists 142 critical watersheds across the country.

"These are what the law says and there is nothing about 'functional watershed,'" Recidoro said. "If (Lopez) can make her own definitions, then even her home stands in a watershed."

The dictionary refers to a watershed as the region or area drained by a river, stream, and other bodies of water. Terms used interchangeably with watershed include "drainage

basin" or "catchment."

According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), watersheds "can be as small as a footprint or large enough to encompass all the land that drains water into rivers that drain into Chesapeake Bay, where it enters the Atlantic Ocean," referring to a big chunk of the US East Coast.

"If you are standing on ground right now, just look down. You're standing, and everyone is standing, in a watershed," the USGS said in its website.

In 2009, then President Gloria Arroyo issued Presidential Proclamation No. 1747, which

identified a total of 43,601 hectares in Surigao del Sur and Agusan del Norte as critical watershed forest reserves.

The proclaimed watershed areas overlap sites in the towns of Carrascal, Canilan and Madrid towns in Surigao del Sur, where Marcventures Mining and Development Corp. (MMDC) operates a nickel mine. MMDC brought the mine into commercial operation based on an MPSA issued in 1993.

Recidoro said MMDC had been allowed to continue mining operations even with PP 1747 because the proclamation recognizes prior rights. INQ

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

GINA UNFIT FOR DENR JOB —SOLONS

By Christine F. Herrera

LAWMAKERS and mining company executives on Sunday vowed to block the confirmation of Environment Secretary Regina Lopez before the Commission on Appointments, citing her "mental in-

capacity" and what they said was her use of illegal drugs when she was still a minor.

Lopez has come under intense fire since she ordered the closure of 75 mining companies for allegedly violating environmental laws, and is the target of a lobbying ef-

fort to oust her from the Cabinet of President Rodrigo Duterte.

Sources in the mining industry said Lopez was a drug dependent at a young age, and was confined twice in St. Luke's Medical Center in Global City for "traumatic brain injury and stage 4 brain cancer."

"Lopez was confined first on Nov. 4, 2012 under brain surgeon Dr. Nick Cruz for traumatic brain injury. She paid hospital bills amounting to P87,000," said one of the sources, who requested anonymity.

"Second, on April 11, 2016,

she was again admitted for 'undisclosed reasons' under another brain surgeon, Dr. Samuel Ang. She paid P70,000 in hospital bills," the source told the **Manila Standard**.

"We question her mental capacity to head an agency because we

believe these explain her unilateral decisions and why she passes judgment without observing due process," the source said.

"She knew she is dying and thus is in a hurry to leave a legacy even if [it is] at the expense of the

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Gina...

From A1

mining industry, the government and the economy."

Supreme Court documents show that on July 4, 1974, Regina Paz Lopez was voluntarily submitted by her mother, Conchita, to the Court for treatment and rehabilitation for drug dependency.

The younger Lopez was committed to the Dare Foundation Inc., a duly accredited rehabilitation center, on the same date. But on Sept. 23, 1974, Lopez escaped from the drug rehabilitation center, after the Court ordered expert psychiatrists to examine her to determine whether she was still drug dependent or suffering from a personality disorder.

In the same year, Lopez and her friends in the Ananda Marga sect filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus against her mother and the Dare Foundation, a petition that was thrown out a year later when Lopez reached the age of majority.

Officers of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines—Artemio Disini, Nelia Halcon and Ronald Recidoro—filed an opposition to the confirmation of Lopez before the CA committee on environment and natural resources on Feb. 10, 2017.

In their letter, they said Lopez's recent actions show an "undeniable bias" against and antagonism towards large-scale mining, "rendering her unfit and incapable of a responsible, fair, just and balanced implementation of the Constitution, the Philippine Mining Act and related laws and regulations, and of upholding personal interest and advocacies over public interest."

The complainants said Lopez had shortcut legal and administrative processes, disregarded due process and vested rights, and even ignored the sanctity of contracts between the government and its mining contractors.

"Lopez is grossly unfit and does not have the administrative experience and competence to lead the DENR. Lopez has a

managing environment and ecotourism projects," the complainants said.

They said Lopez attended Assumption College and Newton College of the Sacred Heart in Boston, "apparently without earning any degrees."

However, they said, she is supposed to have a master's degree in Development Management from the Asian Institute of Management and a doctorate degree in Humanities (Honoris Causa) from the Ateneo de Naga University.

"Lopez spent 20 years as a yoga missionary in Europe, India and Africa, returning to the Philippines only in the late 1990s. Little is known about Lopez before she sat as the managing director of the ABS-CBN Foundation. Lopez is most recognized only as an active spearhead of the foundation's core projects, Kapit Bisig para sa Ilog Pasig, Bayan ni Juan and Bantay Kalikasan. Lopez apparently has no experience in leading and managing in an executive capacity in any organization other than the foundation," the complainants told the CA.

The complainants said Lopez's appointment as DENR secretary brought to fore the key issues of competence and conflict of interest.

"She is clearly inexperienced and incompetent to head and manage a key executive department, especially one as complex as the DENR. More importantly, the Lopez family's many involvements in the energy sector highlight the glaring conflict of interest: How will she resolve the environmental catastrophes that involve her family's energy business, such as the 2010 FPIC (First Philippine Industrial Corp.) pipeline leak that effectively ruined the West Tower Condominium?" they said.

On Monday, a multi-stakeholder team of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) will hold its first meeting as part of a review of Lopez's closure orders.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, who co-chairs the MICC, said the team is essentially a "technical working group" that will review the on-

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erations of the mine sites affected by the DENR order.

"The technical working group, [is] the one going to do the reviews. That was part of the board resolution, so they're going to implement it on Monday. They will decide what to do," Dominguez said.

The multi-stakeholder review team will also include representatives from relevant government agencies and institutions.

Invitations were sent to the co-chairpersons of the MICC—Dominguez and Lopez, along with Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea and Director General Ernesto Pernia of the National Economic and Development Authority.

Also invited to the meeting are Secretaries Ramon Lopez of the Department of Trade and Industry, Ismael Sueno of the Interior

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substantive" due process in the final resolution of DENR's series of actions on existing mineral production sharing agreements.

"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," said Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin, who heads the department's Legal Services Group.

MICC Resolution No. 6 said both the DENR and the Council "recognize the requirements of due process in the applicable mining laws, rules and regulations."

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

PHIL shuns big mines for 'green' business

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

THE government is keen on attracting foreign investors who will set up businesses that would put a premium on protecting the environment and creating jobs, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

\$22B

The potential mining investments that the country would lose due to the mines closure

SEE "BIG MINES," A2

Big mines. . .

CONTINUED FROM A1

Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez made the pronouncement after she was criticized by the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) for "killing" the mining industry.

"We want investments that will help us, like investments in our biodiversity, which will pay our people well. We welcome investments in an area development where they can make money, but they are helping everybody else improve also," Lopez said.

Businessmen criticized the DENR chief after she shuttered large-scale mines and canceled 75 mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs). Lopez said the move was made to protect the country's watersheds or sources of freshwater.

The COMP said this sends the "wrong signal" to businessmen and cause the country to lose \$22 billion in potential investments in mining

projects that can spur economic activities and provide jobs.

The group's concern was shared by members of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who warned that some investors are "now worried about putting their money in [local] business ventures, as they might lose their investments overnight."

Lopez, however, said foreign investors should not be worried, especially if their operations would not cause environmental degradation.

"If they invest and rape the country, I prefer that they go away," she said in a statement.

Lopez vowed to turn abandoned and closed mines into ecotourism sites and help communities get out of poverty within 18 months, citing several successful projects she started back when she was with the ABS-CBN network's corporate social responsibility arm—ABS-CBN Foundation, Inc.

Citing studies, she said 82 percent of the net revenue of mining companies goes to the investor, of which 95 percent goes out of local

economy. This, despite the fact that mining activities leave "massive and long-lasting damage" to the environment and communities.

The DENR, Lopez said, would tap miners affected by the mines closure and suspension orders as partners in the implementation of the Enhanced National Greening Program (E-NGP).

She said the department has identified 29 priority areas where area development will be implemented, which will include the use of NGP funds, mining company's final mine closure and rehabilitation fund and social development management programs (SDMP).

She said an administrative order is currently being drafted by the DENR's legal affairs unit, headed by Undersecretary Maria Paz Luna, to allow the use of SDMPs beyond their host communities to promote development on a wider scale in mining towns and provinces.

Lopez said she is open to the idea of establishing more forest plantations under the E-NGP and integrate ecotourism in forest

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PHIL SHUTS BIG MINES FOR GREEN BUSINESS

management in partnership with the private sector and communities.

MICC review

A MULTISTAKEHOLDER team formed by the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) to review existing mining operations that were ordered closed and suspended by the DENR is set to convene on February 20, according to the Department of Finance (DOF).

Under MICC Resolution 6 approved last week, the review will be done with local government units (LGUs) and will be based on the guidelines and parameters indicated in the specific mining contracts.

According to Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III, who cochairs the MICC with the DENR, the multistakeholder team is essentially a technical working group that will review the operations of the mine sites affected by the order issued by Lopez.

"The technical working group will undertake the reviews. That was part of the board resolution, so they're going to implement it on Monday," Dominguez said.

Earlier, the MICC affirmed the primacy of both procedural and substantive due process in the final resolution of the DENR's series of actions on existing MPSAs.

"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 was followed," Finance Undersecretary Bayani H. Agabin said.

Apart from shutting down mines, Lopez also announced the cancellation of 75 MPSAs. Mining firms were given show-cause orders to explain why their contracts should not be canceled.

Of the 75 MPSAs issued show-cause orders, 27 mining companies are in Luzon, 11 in the Visayas and 37 in Mindanao. "Each case is different because they are individual contracts and I'm not sure if all the contracts have the same terms. And as the Solicitor General said during our meeting, the law between the parties is the contract," Dominguez said.

With Rea Cu

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Lopez unfazed by possible graft raps

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez is unfazed by possible graft charges that mining firms may file against her.

Lopez stood firm on her decision to close down 28 operations and cancel 75 mining contracts.

"I have followed the law at every step of the way. I am

backed up by the Constitution and law and everything I have done is within my powers as DENR (Department of Environment and Natural

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Resources) secretary," Lopez told The STAR.

Lopez was responding to claims of the mining industry that she is violating the Revised Administrative Code of 1987 of the Civil Service Commission, the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees and Republic Act 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

Industry sources bared majority of the affected mining companies are planning to file graft cases against Lopez for lack of due process in her orders to close down the operations of several

mining firms.

Lopez refused to address the possible graft charges, saying it might hamper her scheduled confirmation by the Commission on Appointments (CA).

"I don't do things to get confirmation. I do things because it's the right thing to do. I just let the dice fall where they may," Lopez said.

"We simply cannot and must not mine our watersheds. We have a severe water shortage coming because of climate change," she added.

Lopez has failed to get the nod of the CA and was just reappointed by President Duterte as DENR chief.

Her confirmation was originally slated last Feb. 15 but she

requested to have it rescheduled to March 1.

In a separate interview over the weekend, Ronald Recidoro, legal and policy vice president of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP), maintained companies that will choose to file cases against Lopez have the right to do so as stated in their contracts.

"We insist on due process. We feel that her announcements failed to comply with due process. She cancelled and suspended operations without giving firms the opportunity to defend the finding against them," Recidoro said.

—With Mayen Jaymatin, Elizabeth Marcelo

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Mine shutdown to displace 20,500 in Caraga — DOLE

By **SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA**

More than 20,500 workers will be displaced if the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) enforces its closure orders against 13 mining firms in the Caraga region, according to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

Citing a report from DOLE Region 13, Labor undersecretary Joel Maglunsod disclosed that 10,974 of the affected workers are directly hired by mining companies, while the remaining 9,615 are contractuels.

He said they are now profiling these workers and their dependents so they can receive emergency employment, skills training or livelihood assistance from DOLE once they are retrenched.

The labor official noted the affected workers are used to temporary displacement since mining in Caraga is seasonal.

"This part of the year is considered an off-season for mining (in Caraga) because of the weather conditions... during this period, there is reduced mining operations," Maglunsod said.

DENR earlier issued closure orders against 23 mining firms nationwide due to their proximity to functional watersheds.

Thirteen of these mines are in the Caraga region, particularly in the province of Surigao del Norte and Dinagat Island.

The mines covered by the closure orders in Caraga are AAMPHIL Natural Resources Exploration, Oriental Synergy Mining Corporation, SinoSteel Philippines HY Mining Corporation, Kromico Incorporated, Oriental Vision Mining Philippines Corporation, Wellex Mining Corporation, Libjo Mining Corporation, Claver Mineral Development Corporation, ADNAMA Mining Resources Corporation, Hinatuan Mining Corporation, CTP Construction and Mining Corporation, Carrascal Nickel Corporation, Marcventures Mining and Development Corporation and Platinum Group Metals Corporation.

Except for Claver Mineral Development Corporation, which has been closed since 2015, Maglunsod said the aforementioned mining firms are still operating since the closure orders issued against them are still being reviewed.

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20K mining workers to be displaced

AT least 20,000 workers in the mining industry are expected to go jobless when the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) implements the closure order for 23 mining operations.

Labor Undersecretary Joel Maglunsod said they have already profiled 20,589 workers from 13 of the 23 mining firms who are expected to lose their jobs.

"This number doesn't include yet their dependents," Maglunsod said, adding that 10,974 were hired directly by the mining companies while the remaining 9,615 were hired from labor providers.

Maglunsod said they are already assessing the needs of the affected workers and their

dependents.

He said an emergency employment program under the Tulong Pangkabuhayan para sa mga Displaced/Disadvantaged workers (TUPAD) program is being readied for the displaced workers.

The Associated Labor Unions (ALU) urged displaced mining workers to consider the offer of the DENR.

ALU Spokesman Alan Tanjusay said mining workers should consider shifting to other jobs that are more environment-friendly.

"It is difficult but affected workers must learn to evolve from mining work to green jobs that would give them livelihood without hurting our environment," Tanjusay said. — *Gerard Naval*

PHL could lose position as top source of nickel; Indonesia resumes exports

THE Philippines could lose its standing as the world's top nickel supplier with Indonesia lifting its export ban on the metal, and after the Environment department ordered closures and canceled concessions which affected 28 mines, accounting for half of the country's total nickel output.

Last month, Indonesia announced that it will allow shipments of excess nickel ore, bauxite and other mineral concentrates by miners that build processing plants, an easing of its blanket export ban on unprocessed ore, in place since 2014.

A Jan. 12 Reuters report, citing an Indonesian mining ministry official, said that Indonesia could export up to 15 million tons of nickel ore this year if the ban is lifted.

As such, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau forecasts that Indonesia will recapture some of its old market share, dislodging the Philippines from its current position in the nickel market.

"Top nickel supplier status is market-driven depending on supply and demand," Mines and Geosciences Bureau Assistant Director Danilo U. Uykieng said in a text message over the weekend.

"Since Indonesia will now allow exports, it will affect the supply side aggravated by the closure/suspension of Phil. mines," Mr. Uykieng added.

This concern was also raised by Enrique C. Fernandez, president of Eramen Minerals, Inc. one of the four nickel mines in Zambales which was issued a suspension order at the start of the audit and is now flagged for closure.

"When (Indonesia) come(s) into the market and we hold back, what will happen? The price will go up, Indonesia will take advantage of prices. And where are we?" Mr. Fernandez said in a Friday interview at the Manila Golf Club.

Although the Philippines, geographically the nearest source of nickel to China, the largest importer of the metal, enjoys the advantage of lower freight costs, government should motivate rather than discourage miners to compete with other exporters.

"The government should be encouraging us to be competitive, not holding us back. China will buy from wherever they get the best deal so we have to compete," Mr. Fernandez added.

Eramen Minerals halted operations in 2014 along with other nickel miners in Sta. Cruz, Zambales after the firm declined to heed the local government's order for the joint construction of a dedicated mining road after the miners were alleged to have used public roads to deliver their output to ports.

Local residents protested the transport of mine product, claiming their exposure to serious health risks.

However, in the case of Eramen Minerals, Mr. Fernandez said that the company has three mining roads, which it uses exclusively for its operations.

"I already have a road. Why should I build another road? They wanted us to build the road then turn over the ownership to the governor. Then when we give it, and use it, they'll charge us to use it," Mr. Fernandez said.

He added that the Environment department is also accusing the company of violating environmental laws for operating in watersheds — the nearest of which, Mr. Fernandez said, is a five-hour drive from the mine site.

Mr. Fernandez said he plans to operate and compete this year and hopes to be vindicated on appeal to the Office of the President or the courts.

"Until there's final resolution on that, we will continue operating," Mr. Fernandez added.

Meanwhile, the country's number two nickel producer, Global Ferronickel Holdings Inc. (GFNI) expressed concern that the construction of the processing plant agreed by affiliate Iplan Nickel Corp. with Chinese state-run Liaoyin Nonferrous Group Co. Ltd. will not go ahead amid uncertainties stemming from the government's clampdown against the industry.

"We are worried that it might not because of this one," GFNI President Dante R. Bravo told reporters last week in Quezon City, when asked of the signed memorandum of cooperation between GFNI and Baiyin last October regarding the construction of a \$700 million value-added downstream facility.

"They did not say categorically that they withhold. All I'm saying is there is the possibility for it to be on hold," Mr. Bravo added.

On Indonesia's policy shift, Mr. Bravo said that this will "not have much impact" on the company's operations, and said subsidiary Platinum Group

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PHL COULD LOSE POSITION AS TOP SOURCE OF NICKEL,
INDONESIA RESUMES EXPORTS

Metals Corp.'s (PGMC) is maintaining its production target of 5 to 6 wet million metric tons (MT) this year.

"(W)e expect the volume will not be that much because the conditions for export are very stringent," Mr. Bravo said in a separate text message over the weekend.

GFNI's PGMC, which is under a closure order, accounts for 8.15% of the 24.65 million dry MT of nickel shipped last year.

A BMI Research report released last week projected world nickel prices to average \$10,500/ton this year, edging up to \$13,500/ton by 2021. Prices fell to \$9,647/ton last year from \$11,877/ton in 2015.

The report of the Fitch unit added that large nickel miners, having avoided any closures or suspensions and with a better financial footing, should be able to comply with the government's move to tighten environment regulations, while smaller ones may exit the market.

On Feb. 2, the Environment department ordered the closure of 23 metal mines and the suspension of five others for various environmental violations.

Last week, Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez also canceled 75 mining permits, or more than three-fifths of the 311 existing mineral production sharing agreements.

The 75 miners, all still in exploration phase, allegedly violated environmental law for planning to operate in watershed areas, posing a risk to the water supply of residents near the mine sites, Ms. Lopez said. — Janina C. Lim

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ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION AND INITIATION

PhilExport fears mining crackdown's impact on jobs, exports, supply chain

THE Philippine Exporters Confederation (PhilExport) is concerned that the directives of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to cancel 75 mining contracts on top of the 23 closure and five suspension orders may have serious economic repercussions affecting jobs, exports and the supply chain.

Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr., PhilExport president, said the group is alarmed by the latest order of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez to cancel 75 mining contracts on the heels of an earlier order on February 2 to close 23 operations and suspend five others that DENR deemed destructive to the environment.

PhilExport supports sustainable and responsible mining, Ortiz-Luis noted, saying that a sweeping crackdown on the industry would have "serious local and global trade repercussions."

An imminent danger is the loss

of jobs affecting thousands of workers who rely on mining and related industries for their livelihood, Ortiz-Luis noted, saying that mining companies continue to pay the salaries and benefits of workers even when operations are hampered as a result of the seasonal rains or when calamities strike.

"Where will these people go for jobs and livelihood, not to mention the effects on their dependents and the other stakeholders in the communities hosting them?" he said. "Even if the Environment Department has temporary funds to help the displaced workers, I doubt if these funds can be immediately disbursed."

Ortiz-Luis said Philippine exports have been weak for nearly two years now because of the slump in global demand, and the closure of mining operations could further worsen the country's export performance.

At the same time, the crackdown

on mining will severely undermine investor confidence and negatively affect the supply chain, the PhilExport chief claimed.

"Secretary Lopez's action is posing danger not just to the mining sector, but also to other sectors in the supply chain including drilling, construction, hauling and shipping, processing companies, manpower and transportation service providers," Ortiz-Luis further claimed.

He called for transparency and due process and emphasized cases should be filed and the arbitration clause of the mining agreements invoked in instances where mining and environmental laws have been breached.

"But none of these took place and, instead, these firms are now going through 'trial by publicity' that taints the good name they have established for years," Ortiz-Luis alleged.

PhilExport said that in the case

of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP), a PhilExport member in good standing for years now, the majority of its members are ISO 14001 certified and several more are undergoing the accreditation process.

The chamber is the mining industry lobby group representing large mining corporations and whose members are affected by the DENR directives.

"They have also been faithful in their duties towards social development and management, environmental enhancement and protection and payment of taxes," Ortiz-Luis claimed.

Local governments also stand to lose revenue from local taxes, fees and charges as well as shares from the national tax as a result of the closure and suspension order, he said.

Instead of targeting legitimate businesses, Ortiz-Luis said the DENR should focus on "eliminating illegal mining operations that do not pay taxes, nor help in community development and are destructive to the environment."

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Go green or go away, foreign investors told

By **ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ**

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez is open to foreign investors who would uplift the country's local communities and environment, otherwise they have to "go away."

Lopez was reacting to statements from the international and local business communities that her decision to close down 23 mining firms found to

have committed serious environmental violations is seen as a red flag by some foreign investors.

Lopez, however, said foreign investors should not be worried if their businesses do not cause environmental degradation and suffering in areas they operate.

"If they invest and rape the country, I prefer that they go away," Lopez said.

"We want investments that will help us, like investments in our biodiversity, investments which will pay our people

well. We welcome investments in areas where they can make money, but they are helping everybody else improve also," she added.

As for mining, Lopez said studies have shown that 82 percent of the net revenue goes to the investor and 95 percent of which goes out of local economy.

This is despite the fact that mining activities leave massive and long-lasting damage to the environment and communities, she added.



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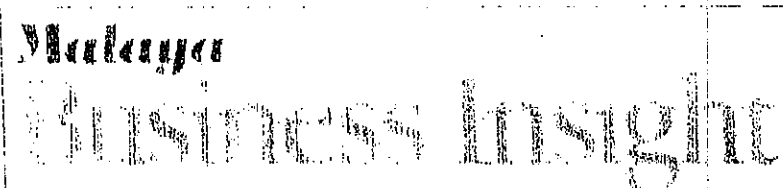
Lopez sa investors: Help us or stay away

Hindi dapat mabahala ang mga banyagang mamuhunan kung ang kanilang negosyo ay nagmamalasakit sa kapaligiran at sa mamamayan.

Ito ang reaksiyon ni Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez sa mga pahayag na ilang foreign investor ang nangangambang mamuhunan sa bansa dahil baka malugi lamang sila, bunsod ng kanyang desisyon na ipasara ang ilang minahan.

"If they invest and rape the country, I prefer that they go away," ani Lopez. "We want investments that will help us, like investments in our biodiversity, investments which will pay our people well. We welcome investments in area development where they can make money, but they are helping everybody else improve also."

Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz



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Marcventures to ship nickel ore in March

MARCVENTURES Mining and Development Corp, whose nickel mine was one of 23 ordered to close by the environment ministry, said it will take legal action to overturn the ruling and plans to ship out ore next month.

Marcventures' mine in southern Philippines was among those ordered shut by Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Regina Lopez for environmental violations in a ruling that has led to an outcry from the industry. Another five of the 41 mines in the world's largest nickel ore supplier were suspended.

A unit of Marcventures Holdings Inc the company said its mine was ordered to close as it was located in a declared watershed, where mining is prohibited.

But the area was only declared a protected watershed by the government in 2009, while

Marcventures secured its mining contract in 1993, the company said in a filing to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

It also contested the agency's finding that that it failed to plant three million seedlings, saying efforts were underway and there was no basis for the closure order.

"We will take all the necessary legal actions and exhaust all remedies available to prevent the implementation of the order," it said. "We expect to operate as usual and to start shipments of nickel ore by first week of March 2017."

Mining typically halts in the southern Philippines during the monsoon season that starts around October and ends in the first quarter of the following year.

Lopez has said her decision on Feb. 2 to shut mines operating in watershed zones is non-

negotiable, arguing they will affect water supply and quality.

She has also canceled almost a third of contracts for undeveloped mines she said were located in watershed areas.

"The environment is under siege from forces of greed and selfishness and it is the government's duty to regulate it such that the environment benefits our people," Lopez told local radio on Friday.

Mines ordered shut can appeal to President Rodrigo Duterte, who has so far backed her latest actions.

Australian miner OceanaGold Corp which runs the Philippines' biggest gold mine and was ordered to suspend operations, said earlier this week it has filed an appeal with Duterte's office, putting a stay on the execution of the suspension order. — Reuters

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Gina Lopez and mining

SECRETARY of Environment, Gina Lopez, has been the subject of attack by mining companies following her order to close down 23 mining operations which reportedly failed in the compliance audit and her cancellation of 75 Mineral Production and Sharing Agreements involving exploration and mining operations in watersheds.

Watersheds are areas of land that drain rain water down to rivers and other bodies of fresh water. Secretary Gina pointed out that once fresh water is poisoned because of the toxic chemicals used in mining such as cyanide, sometimes even mercury, people will have no fresh water to drink, no vegetation from which to derive food and no fish to catch in the oceans.

The major dailies have carried news hitting her on various dimensions including her education and personal life. News stories even said that mining firms are mulling filing graft cases against Gina. Yet, she would not have been in this bind in the first place if her predecessors had not issued MPSAs on areas covering watersheds which the law prohibits. And if she were corrupt, then she would not have ruffled feathers and fully performed her task of regulating the mining industry.

I have known Gina for quite a time now. She is someone passionately working for the protection of the environment because she genuinely cares about people. She often says every person deserves a quality of life that allows him to enjoy a healthy environment, a means of living that will preserve nature's riches for generations to come, and access to what are vital in life such as clean water, clean air and sufficient food.

The President himself has called her what she truly is—a crusader. Thus, despite the reality that the government is the most ungrateful employer, and despite her having to endure long hours of work and stress on the job, she does her work with passion. She can take all the flak because she derives

strength from the belief that what she is doing will be for the good of the entire country and the Filipino people for generations to come. Some people, working in the companies ordered closed are said to be protesting about losing their jobs. They worry about the now but do not realize that if irresponsible and destructive mining goes unabated, they will be left with a barren, untillable land, no safe water to drink and no food to feed themselves and their families

“As I know
her, she is not
anti-mining
per se.”

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Gina Lopez and mining

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It is understandable that the mining companies are up in arms and bent on blocking Gina Lopez's confirmation by the Commission on Appointments. What is at stake is their business interests and investments. Yet, they too must realize that quality of life far outweighs profits in the grand scheme of things. Gina, as I know her, is not anti-mining per se. She—like all of us—knows that there are minerals essential to living. What she is riling about is the irresponsible operation of mines that destroys life in its wake like the open pit type of mining. As a case study made by the Cordillera People's Alliance said, open-pit mining is the most destructive as it requires removing whole mountains and excavating deep pits. Generally, open pits need to be very big—sometimes more than 2.5 kilometers in depth. In order to dig these giant holes, huge amounts of earth need to be moved, forests cleared, drainage systems diverted, and large amounts of dust let loose. By the very nature of this method, the top soil and vegetation of the land would necessarily be stripped away. In Itogon and Mankayan, Mountain Province, for instance, whole mountains and entire villages were removed from the land surface.

Mining requires large volumes of water for milling and waste disposal. Thus, in the Itogon and Mankayan experience, the mining companies privatized the sources of water, forcing the people in the mining-affected areas to buy water for drinking and domestic use from outside sources. The study further states that while toxic tailings were supposed to have been contained in dams, heavy rainfall and typhoons have caused the dams to either collapse or leak, causing toxic tailings to escape, poisoning the soil and water as far as Abra river. What is now left in Itogon and Mankayan is a wide gorge of barren and poisoned land on either side of a polluted river.

The Cordillera People's Alliance has made many sound recommendations for responsible mining. One, the international community should develop minimum standards for the protection of the environment and human rights that are binding on all countries and companies, with effective monitoring and sanctions. Two, countries that are home to transnational mining companies should enact laws that will require those companies to operate using the same standards wherever they operate in the world. Home countries whose nationals and corporate entities inflict damage in developing countries should impose a penalty on the offending parties. Three, an international system should be created to allow complaints to be filed by affected peoples. Four, since no monetary compensation could replace the destroyed environment and the traditional of affected peoples, destructive large-scale corporate mining should be stopped. Alternatives such as chemical-free traditional small-scale mining methods need to be promoted and supported, the paper says.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

The weird watershed angle

THE latest in Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez's anti-mining crusade is the cancellation of some 75 mineral production sharing agreements or MPSAs, citing their location in watershed areas.

Needless to say, crying foul is the mining industry and its many stakeholders, especially those who are bound to be rendered jobless by an act that's been described by the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines as "irresponsible."

Philexport president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. has likewise expressed concern about the serious impact to the extensive supply chain of mining that affects not just drilling, construction, hauling and shipping but extends to processing companies, manpower and transportation services.

Amid the flexing of the DENR secretary designate's media propaganda might, she has presented no viable plan for more than a million bread winners, dependents and other stakeholders in mining communities who cannot just shift overnight to her silver-bullet solution of eco-tourism.

But beyond the emotionalism and sloganeering, a quick analysis of the science behind the claim will reveal its utter absurdity.

Watershed areas—or drainage or catchment basins—refer to any expanse of land to which all surface water drains at a lower elevation. It is a broad and, for any kind of de-

velopment that disturbs the virgin landscape, a potentially prohibitive definition. To cite, the Mississippi River, the

world's fourth-largest watershed, some 320 million hectares, nearly 40 percent, more than a third, of continental United States. Mining has historically provided the backbone of industrial development; the whole of North America would not have achieved its optimum potential if the same absurd logic were followed.

Moreover, there is no such thing as a "functional watershed" in the Mining Act or the Forestry Code. Inventing this new concept and again without any technical explanation became an effective sound bite for her announcement of mine closures.

For perspective, in the Philippines, the total land area covered by mining tenements as of November 2014 is less than a million hectares, or less than three percent of the country's total land area. It is also less than 10 percent of the nine million hectares with "high mineral potential," which means the industry has barely scratched the surface. Thus, to speak so grandly of the potential damage of mining in watershed areas ignores these minuscule numbers.

Besides, geothermal and re-



newable energy plants, such as wind, solar and hydro farms, are also located in watersheds. Quarries, for instance, will also

have to be summarily banned for the same reason (and, by definition, quarrying is open pit mining, which Secretary Lopez has repeatedly announced she would not allow). If she succeeds, the blanket ban entails will reverse the country's accelerating construction boom into a national crisis. The supply and production of cement and aggregates, both of which come from open-pit mining, will be shut down. Even the Lopez Group's First Balfour, one of the largest suppliers of transport infrastructure and construction projects, extracts mine aggregates in a watershed.

But isn't Secretary Lopez just enforcing the law? The Mining Act has indeed specified areas that are closed to mining applications on environmental grounds. These include old growth or virgin forests, including bird sanctuaries and marine reserve and protected parks, and critical watershed with appropriate barangay or municipal or provincial ordinances specifying their locations and specific boundaries. The key word there is obviously "critical," and is not meant to be applied wholesale to all water-

shed areas.

So why was these MPSAs issued in the first place? Under Why was this allowed under five-year watch of her most trusted consultant, former Mines and Geosciences Bureau Director Leo Jazareno? Why isn't the former director being made accountable for what Lopez has labelled a mistake of the DENR?

Some say that mining contributes less than one percent to the country's gross domestic product.

The number, while good for headlines, is misleading. As pointed out, only a small area of the Philippines are hosts to mining activities. What the one percent occlude are the regions—some of the country's poorest—that benefit greatly from mining. To cite, in Maraga and Mindanao, contributions from mining exceed 20 percent—a fifth—of the region's revenues. Averaging these gargantuan inputs with huge swathes of areas with no mining activities is a dastardly spin because it ignores local realities.

If this weird watershed angle tells us anything, it is that this war has been waged less on science and more on dangerously misguided dogma. As a purveyor of state policy, Secretary Lopez should know better. Or is there a hidden agenda that her communications experts have so cleverly masked with an environmental spin? Will the Commission on Appointments be pressured by this power play?

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Ensure due process in environmental drive

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources cancelled on February 2 the permits of 23 metal mines and suspended those of five others for various violations of environmental law. The 23 firms had reportedly encroached on watersheds, leaking wastes into rivers.

Two weeks later, the DENR cancelled 75 mining contracts, including those for three of the biggest projects in the country – the \$5.9-billion Tampakan project in South Cotabato, the \$2-billion Kingking project in Davao del Norte, and the \$2.9-billion Silangan project in Surigao del Norte. All the cancelled projects are in watershed zones, Secretary Gina Lopez said.

As in the case of the 23 closed mines, the 75 cancelled contracts drew protests not only from the mining companies but also from some members of Congress. The DENR action, it was charged, was “wreaking havoc” on the national economy, but the objections centered on the DENR’s alleged failure to observe due process and fairness in its decisions.

Congressmen Allen Mangaoang of Kalinga and Anthony Bravo of party-list Coop-Natcco filed House resolution 756 to inquire into the DENR actions. They pointed out that the department had immediately closed and suspended the mining companies instead of allowing them to institute corrective measures.

The Philippine Mining Act of 1995 has a provision giving a mining company a reasonable time to correct a violation. There is also a Miners Production Sharing Agreement which provides that in any audit of a mining firm, it is allowed to have an official join the audit team and, then, if violations are found, to rectify the violations.

The DENR actions have focused national attention on environmental issues related to mining. There is a move to replace the Mining Act of 1995 which national environmental organization Kalikasan considers the root of current problems.

In the meantime, it will be best to carry out the campaign with due respect for existing laws and regulations, keeping in mind the case of former President Benigno S. Aquino III who cancelled a Belgian firm’s \$18.7-billion Laguna Lake Rehabilitation Project in 2011. The Belgian firm sued the Philippines before the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes. Last January 23, the center ruled that the Philippines must pay \$800 million to the Belgian firm for what it had already invested plus interest since 2011.

Many of the mining companies whose contracts are now being cancelled may well take the same course of action, having invested much more in their mining projects. It will be best to ensure that all legal requirements are met as Secretary Lopez proceeds with her campaign for the environment.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

EDITORIAL

Ensure due process in environmental drive

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources cancelled on February 2 the permits of 23 metal mines and suspended those of five others for various violations of environmental law. The 23 firms had reportedly encroached on watersheds, leaking wastes into rivers.

Two weeks later, the DENR cancelled 75 mining contracts, including those for three of the biggest projects in the country – the \$5.9-billion Tampakan project in South Cotabato, the \$2-billion Kingking project in Davao del Norte, and the \$2.9-billion Silangan project in Surigao del Norte. All the cancelled projects are in watershed zones, Secretary Gina Lopez said.

As in the case of the 23 closed mines, the 75 cancelled contracts drew protests not only from the mining companies but also from some members of Congress. The DENR action, it was charged, was “wreaking havoc” on the national economy, but the objections centered on the DENR’s alleged failure to observe due process and fairness in its decisions.

Congressmen Allen Mangaoang of Kalinga and Anthony Bravo of party-list Coop-Natcco filed House resolution 756 to inquire into the DENR actions. They pointed out that the department had immediately closed and suspended the mining companies instead of allowing them to institute corrective measures.

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EDITORIAL

TIYAKING NAIPATUTUPAD ANG TAMANG PROSESO SA KAMPANYA PARA SA KALIKASAN

KINANSELA nitong Pebrero 2 ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources ang mga permit ng 23 minahan ng metal at sinuspinde ang sa limang iba pa dahil sa iba't ibang paglabag sa mga batas na pangkalikasan. Napaulat na nag-operate ang 23 kumpanya sa mga watershed, at kumalat sa mga ilog ang katas ng minahan.

Makalipas ang dalawang linggo, kinansela naman ng DENR ang 75 kontrata sa pagmimina, kabilang ang tatlong pinakamalaking proyekto sa bansa — ang \$5.9-billion na Tampakan project sa South Cotabato, ang \$2-billion Kingking project sa Davao del Norte, at ang \$2.9-billion Silangan project sa Surigao del Norte. Ang lahat ng kinanselang proyekto ay nasasakupan ng watershed, ayon kay Secretary Gina Lopez.

Tulad sa kaso ng 23 ipinasarang minahan, ang 75 kinansela ay nagbunsod ng mga protesta hindi lamang mula sa mga kumpanya ng minahan kundi mula rin sa ilang miyembro ng Kongreso. Ang ginawa ng DENR, giit nila, ay "nagdulot ng matinding pinsala" sa ekonomiya ng bansa, ngunit sumentro ang mga pagtutol sa umano'y kabiguan ng DENR na tumupad sa wastong proseso at pagiging hindi patas sa naging desisyon nito.

Inihain ng mga kongresistang sina Allen Mangaoang, ng Kalinga, at Anthony Bravo ng Coop-Natcco Party-list, ang House Resolution 756 upang imbestigahan ang naging pasya ng DENR. Giit nila, kaagad na ipinasara at sinuspinde ng kagawaran ang mga kumpanya ng minahan sa halip na pahintulutan ang mga itong magpatupad ng kinakailangang remedyo sa mga naging pagkakamali.

May probisyon ang Philippine Mining Act of 1995 na nagbibigay sa kumpanya ng minahan ng sapat na panahon upang maiwasto ang naging paglabag. May umiiral din na Miners Production Sharing Agreement na nagsasaad na sa alinmang auditing sa kumpanya ng minahan, kailangang may opisyal nitong kasapi sa audit team upang sakaling may natukoy na paglabag ay kaagad itong maaaksiyunan.

Dahil sa naging hakbangin ng DENR, napagtuunan ng atensiyon ng bansa ang mga usaping pangkalikasan na may kaugnayan sa pagmimina. Isinusulong na palitan ang Mining Act of 1995 na itinuturing ng pambansang organisasyong pangkapaligiran na Kalikasan na ugat ng lahat ng problema sa ngayon.

Sa ngayon, pinakamainam na ipagpatuloy ang kampanya nang may buong paggalang sa mga umiiral na batas at regulasyon, at isaisip ang pagkansela ni dating Pangulong Benigno S. Aquino III sa P18.7-bilyon Laguna Lake Rehabilitation Project ng isang kumpanyang Belgian noong 2011. Idinemandang nasabing kumpanya ang Pilipinas sa International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes. Noong Enero, nagpasya ang center na kailangang magbayad ang Pilipinas ng P800 milyon sa kumpanyang Belgian dahil sa pamumuhunan nito, kasama ang interes, noong 2011.

Karamihan sa mga kumpanya ng minahan na kinansela ang kontrata ang posibleng gawin ang kaparehong hakbangin, lalo dahil hindi hamak na mas malaki na ang naipuhunan nila sa mga proyekto sa pagmimina. Marapat lang na tiyaking naipatutupad ang lahat ng pangangailangang legal habang itinataguyod ni Secretary Lopez ang kanyang kampanya para sa kalikasan.

EDITORIAL

Common ground

A confrontation between the local mining industry and the government has been expected ever since President Duterte appointed antimining advocate Gina Lopez to head the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Early this month, things came to a head: Lopez ordered the closure of 23 mines and the suspension of five others across the country. The situation was somehow calmed by Malacañang, which stated as a policy that there would be due process before any closure or suspension is implemented. But last week, the DENR chief stepped up her antimining campaign by canceling 75 MPSAs (mineral production sharing agreements), triggering more confusion and antagonism.

Mining companies accuse Lopez, whose family owns broadcast network ABS-CBN, of arbitrarily shutting down or suspending their operations without giving them the chance to contest the allegations against them. Lopez denies this, claiming that the DENR has provided each of the affected mining companies with a copy of the complete mining audit, and that her decision is the result of a six-month review process.

Expectedly, Malacañang is backing a member of Mr. Duterte's official family, but with a caveat—that the DENR should establish that due process has been followed before enforcing applicable laws, rules, or regulations.

Apart from the issue of due process, the problem seems to lie in the severity of the orders. Lopez herself admitted that the mining audit technical review committee's recommendation was to penalize "erring" mines with fines, but that she didn't agree and instead proceeded to order closures or suspensions using her prerogative as DENR chief and basing her decisions on her policy "that there should be no mining in watersheds." A new problem has cropped up—the definition of a legally proclaimed or protected watershed and what Lopez refers to as "functional" watersheds.

The vagueness of Lopez's orders has also caused an uproar in the industry. For example, Marcventures Mining and Development Corp.

(MMDC) said it received an order from the DENR canceling its MPSA, but the order "failed to identify specific environmental violations which would warrant cancellation" of its contract with the government, and only said that it was operating in a declared watershed. The problem is that MMDC's MPSA was approved in 1993, prior to the issuance of the watershed declaration under Presidential Proclamation No. 1747 in 2009, which stipulates that "prior rights must be respected."

What is needed now is to find a common ground. There should be acceptance on the government's part that mining per se is not objectionable; otherwise, it would have been banned worldwide. There should also be acceptance that so-called responsible mining is possible, as Australia and Canada have shown. There should likewise be due process in a fair audit, after which the DENR can close or suspend or fine mining companies that have actually violated the law, and respect the rights of others that have been operating in accordance with the law.

Ultimately, Lopez will not have the final say on the implementation of the ordered closures and suspensions, as well as the cancellation of MPSAs. It will be up to the President. The interagency Mining Industry Coordinating Council, which has been tasked to review the DENR's orders, is only recommendatory and companies can appeal their case to the President.

If this common ground is not found, the damage will be huge—legal suits here and possible arbitration cases overseas given that some mining companies here are owned by foreign investors. Also, failure to find a common ground will result in mining companies taking all legal actions deemed necessary and exhausting all remedies available to prevent the implementation of the closure and suspension orders and cancellation of MPSAs.

The worst-case scenario, according to some private miners, is this: The Duterte administration will face a big number of court cases similar to those involving the Naia 3 controversy, which the government eventually lost.



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SELECTIVE LOGGING THEN, RESPONSIBLE MINING NOW Weak states like ours impotent to regulate mining

BY RIGOBERTO D. TIGLAO
Columnist

WE have to face reality, and review the past.

We have had, and continue to have such a weak state—its bureaucracy ridden with corruption and inefficiency—that we have been, and will be at least in the next decade unable to regulate

mining. Without a strong state, unscrupulous miners, and there are many, will wreak havoc on our environment, and steal—yes, *steal* as I discuss below—our gold and other natural resources.

We should just leave it for future generations to benefit from the wealth of gold, nickel, and other mineral resources beneath our territory, when our state is

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■ A QUIRK: Protesters in 2012 against Philex Mining's Padcal disaster; right, Environment Secretary Regina Lopez.

■ TIGLAO FROM A1

Weak states like ours impotent to regulate mining

strong enough to really regulate all, not just a few mining firms.

Mining, like logging, has unique, obvious features that make it extremely difficult for the state to regulate: Mines and logging operations are located in the hinterlands, where state authority, especially its police and military, are the weakest. This is because we don't have the roads going to those areas, nor sufficient government personnel and transport equipment such as helicopters—as Australia and Canada have—to regularly patrol mining sites.

Do you think an employee of the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources' regional office will really be able to monitor and make sure that all the gold on Mt. Diwalwal in Compostela Valley are sold to government, as required by law?

Notice that the Communist Party and its noisy propaganda arms have been mum over the debate on the mining industry. Logging used to be the New People's Army's major source of "revolutionary taxes". When many of these folded up because of the government-declared moratorium on new logging permits, the mining firms have become the NPA's biggest moneymaker. It is not a coincidence that mining sites like Surigao, Northern Samar, and the Compostela Valley in Davao are the main guerrilla fronts of the NPA, where they are even able to amass company formations.



RIGOBERTO
TIGLAO

What "selective logging" was to loggers is now "responsible mining" for mining firms. Both merely allow the steady destruction of our environment.

Logging and mining

The analogy between logging and mining isn't mine. It was President Duterte who first articulated the similarity between these two industries that plunder our natural resources when he pointed out back in August: "Mining is a sunset industry, almost. Including logging. It's not even sunset time, it's already too late."

These two industries, often perceived as environmentally destructive, are sources of economic growth the country can do away with, added the President. "*Ika nga* (As they say), if there are 24 hours in one day, logging is on its 25th hour. *Tapos na 'yan* (It is finished). We cannot

have this," he said.

A silly, old argument of pro-mining advocates is that we rely on products of mining all the time, and our iPads and iPhones are almost 100 percent built from materials mined from the earth; therefore we have to support the local mining industry. This is of course the same old argument of loggers, that we can't live without furniture, desks, even toothpicks and matches.

It doesn't need a second to figure out the fallacy of the mining argument. Of course we need materials dug from the earth, and civilization's eras are even labeled from these stuff: the Iron Age and the Bronze Age.

But haven't you guys heard of the global market? We buy these materials

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STRATEGIC MINING INDUSTRY AND INVESTMENT

from countries which have been able to mine them while keeping their environment intact, with Australia, Canada, China, and the US now the world's biggest producers of iron ore and gold. We don't even process the gold, nickel, and aluminum that are used as materials for our cell phones.

Will we ever suffer from a deliberate embargo by these nations of their output of metals? Probably, but that would mean a total global economic conflagration, as most countries don't mine and process these materials. Japan and all of the Asian Tigers—South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong—of course had practically no mining industries, yet became industrialized countries in a generation.

The nature of a country's state is important. I agree with the Netherlands' legalization of pot and even prostitution, but in the Philippines with a weak state and with millions impoverished, it will only mean the legalization of the biggest crime syndicates.

Very bad cases

There are several very bad cases that indisputably demonstrate that because we have a weak state, it will be impossible to regulate the mining industry.

First, investigative reports by the British news agency, Reuters, and by the Asian Sentinel, a region-wide news site that has won journalism awards, exposed in 2012 the massive smuggling of gold and other mineral resources by Chinese mining firms in the Philippines. A comparison of Philippine data on shipments of gold to Hong Kong and those by Hong Kong authorities showed that only 3 percent of gold produced in the country were sold, as required by law, to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. The remaining 98 percent were smuggled to Hong Kong and then to the Chinese mainland.

An indication of the miners' hold on President Aquino's administration and the media as well, no government investigation of the allegations was made, and media hardly reported the articles.

Second, even mining firms you would expect to be so careful, and with the finances to be so, in complying with environmental laws have had episodes of severely damaging the environment.

In 1996, the Canadian firm Marcopper Mining Corp.'s copper mine resulted in the largest mining disaster in the country, when its toxic mine waste spilled into the Makulapnit-Boac Rivers in Marinduque, poisoning it.

In 2012, the Padcal mine in Benguet province of Philex Mining, a stock market-listed firm controlled by the Indonesian magnate Anthoni Salim, spilled 20.6 million tons of toxic tailings into water bodies. In terms of volume, the spill though less toxic was 10 times larger than the Marcopper disaster, according to the Environmental Justice Atlas.

(It was Philex Mining chairman Manuel Pangilinan who in March 2012 made a scene at a forum when he called Lopez "a liar" for saying that mining sites are ugly, and implied that his firm's Padcal mine site was a nice place to live in. The Padcal mine disaster occurred a few months later in August.)

If these firms couldn't comply with regulations to protect the environment, what would you expect of the smaller, less capitalized firms, especially those operating in the country's hinterlands?

Third, a number of mining firms have violated the Constitution's 40 percent limit on foreign ownership. Can you expect them to comply with the regulations of a mere department? Little discussed is the fact that probably two-thirds of the country's mining firms now plotting to remove Environment Secretary Regina "Gina" Lopez are owned by foreigners from opposite sides of the globe, North America and China.

In 2014, the Supreme Court itself issued a decision that found three mining firms which had claimed to be majority-owned by Filipinos were actually majority-owned by a Canadian firm, MBMI Resources, Inc.; Narra Nickel Mining and Development Corp.; Tesoro Mining and Development Inc., and McArthur Mining. MBMI used a corporate layering scheme to hide the fact that its ownership of the three firms was at least 60 percent.

Continuation of : Weak states like ours

Layering scheme

This is the same kind of corporate layering scheme used by Philex Mining, the biggest mining firm in the country. Through several intermediate firms, the Indonesian tycoon actually owns 44 percent of Philex Mining. (Details in my book *Colossal Deception: How*

Foreigners Control our Telecom Sector, available in local bookstores as well in amazon.com.)

But the illegal foreign ownership of the four mining firms was disclosed only because of a court suit brought against them by a Filipino-owned competitor that wanted to get its hands on the mining rights that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) had awarded them.

How many more firms would



■ Philex chairman Pangilinan in March 2012 telling Lopez (foreground, back camera) to her face that she is a liar. SCREEN CAPTURE OF VIDEO

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Confirmation : "Weak states like ours ..."

be exposed as foreign controlled, in violation of the Constitution, if court suits were brought against them, or if the DENR also audited their ownership? I suspect many of the new mining firms with Chinese equity (even names!) are really controlled by them, with their purported Filipino partners—a few even former government officials—being mere dummies.

Just as we have a very unorthodox President willing to take on the ruling elite, we are lucky that he appointed a probably more unorthodox person as environment secretary, Lopez.

Only a person with Lopez's unique background—a missionary of the meditation-social service cult Ananda Marga ("Path of Bliss") for over 20 years that included 11 years in the most squalid conditions in Africa—could be not only so detached from the elites of the mining industry, but also devoted to saving the environment.

Such a quirk of fate for a weak state to have an island of strength in Secretary Lopez. Duterte appointed her to the post on impulse, probably getting bored when Lopez lectured him on environmental concerns when she visited him in Davao right after the elections, and told her to just shut up and head the DENR. That is certainly lucky for this unlucky country.

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Editorial

Irresponsible mining and the sword of Damocles

NO matter what other Cabinet officials and lawmakers are saying against the closure, suspension and cancellation orders issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on irresponsible mining operations, such rhetoric can only be construed as something akin to voices of vested interests, especially now when the controversial directives have elicited a deafening crescendo of reactions from various stakeholders.

The sword of Damocles has been hanging over the heads of those irresponsible mining corporations, whose primary motive is greed and power at the expense of Mother Nature and the Filipino people, ever since they started extracting mineral deposits on Philippine soil. And it took someone like Gina Lopez, the designated environment and natural resources secretary, to cut each strand of horsehair holding those swords that are now careening down towards the shameless, well-coiffed heads of those responsible for environmental degradation for countless decades now.

But Lopez alone cannot continue this fight against injustice, against environmental destruction. Relentless though she may be, she felt and saw the power of greed and money started cranking up like a well-oiled machine clawing back at her when she issued those orders to close 23 mining operations, suspend five others and canceled 75 mining contracts involving operations in watershed areas.

The question of due process, which the Oxford Dictionary of the English Language defines as "fair treatment through normal judicial process, especially a citizen's entitlement to notice of a charge and a hearing before an impartial judge," seemed to be the only credible issue raised against Lopez by the mining corporations affected by her directives, largely because she made public announcements of those orders via press conferences before the orders were actually received by the mining companies.

Right now, President Rodrigo Duterte has been making public pronouncements in support of his controversial DENR chief. Obviously, the President is trying to weigh the pros and cons of the DENR directives and trying to strike a balance between the voices of vested interests and the actions of Lopez.

Jobs will be lost, as well as government revenues from mining, and the bottom line of mining corporations will definitely be wiped out. These things must be taken into consideration, according to the President, when he spoke during dinner at the Philippine Military Academy alumni get-together on Friday, taking some of the heat off his environment secretary.

The political and economic research group, IBON Foundation, has refuted the economic benefits of large-scale mining as claimed by the industry. "While mineral exports hit a high of \$3.4 billion in 2013, mining contributed a measly 0.7 percent to the gross domestic product (GDP) in the same year. The sector's contribution grew to this level only from 0.5 percent after more than a decade of operations.

"The annual average share of mining revenues to total government revenues in 2009-2012 was only 1.18 percent. The contribution of the mining and quarrying sector to employment was also negligible at 0.7 percent of total employment," IBON said.

"Aside from human deaths, large-scale mining has caused damaged dams, soil and water pollution due to excessive tailings, siltation, contamination and damage to agricultural lands, fish kill and other damages to marine life," according to IBON.

"More than 90 percent of Philippine mineral production is exported for use by other countries' steel industries while the country has none. This, despite the Philippines being one of the world's top producers of gold, copper and nickel," it said in a note on Friday.

What has been lost in this controversy is the fact that 12 other mining operations run by big mining corporations made it through the hurdle set by the DENR mining audit that, in the first place, elicited the closure and suspension orders.

What this important detail tells us is that responsible mining can and do exist, and that there is no reason why those that have been violating the laws governing the industry and must not be punished to the full extent of the law.

So, let the sword of Damocles fall on those irresponsible miners to make sure that the mineral deposits being extracted from the bowels of this land will, in the end, benefit its people with quality jobs, and that mining operators take it upon themselves to protect the environment they have been exploiting for profit and give back to Mother Nature the respect she truly deserves.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

THE ECONOMIC REVOLUTION THE PHILIPPINES REALLY NEEDS

INTROSPECTIVE
CALIXTO V. CHIKIAMCO

A productivity revolution
in agriculture will strengthen
democracy and change
Philippine politics
for the better.

For political, social, moral, and geo-political reasons, the revolution that the Philippines really needs is a productivity revolution in agriculture.

Only a productivity revolution in agriculture will solve the problem of poverty in the countryside where most of the poor live.

Only a productivity revolution in agriculture will lay the foundation for long-term sustainable growth and for the takeoff into industrialization. A productivity revolution in agriculture will lower the inputs to industry, make more food more affordable to wage workers, and expand the market for industrial goods.

In addition, a productivity revolution in agriculture will strengthen democracy and change Philippine politics for the better. More and richer farmers and agri-entrepreneurs will serve to articulate the needs of the countryside and serve as a check to unequal relations fostered by political dynasties over their impoverished subjects.

A productivity revolution in agriculture will also strengthen the country geopolitically. At a time of rising global protectionism, export-led growth will be harder to achieve. On the other hand, increasing productivity in agriculture will lead to an expanded domestic market that can be the basis for industrial takeoff.

Although climate change is a threat to agriculture, it also represents an opportunity. By planting climate-change resistant crops, the country can not only avoid the negative consequences of climate change, but it can also sell them to countries which are not as well-prepared or cannot do anything about them.

The aging demographics of the world also present an opportunity. The increasing average age of farmers in Japan, China, Thailand and elsewhere could presage lowering farm output in those countries. This represents a golden opportunity for us if we can create an environment that would make it attractive for our relatively younger population to take up farming and produce for the world.

Alas, however, agricultural productivity in the Philippines is low and has remained low for decades. (See table from FAO provided by Dr. Rolando Dy.)

One reason is that there has been a historical bias in economic policy against agriculture. It started with gross overvaluation of the peso after independence in 1946. US colonizers deprived the Philippines of exchange rate sovereignty and imposed an overvalued exchange rate (P2 to \$1) as a condition for independence so that Philippine agricultural exports will not threaten the US market.

This bias continued with an import-dependent, import-substitution policy in the '50s that favored finished goods industrialization at the expenses of agriculture. On the other hand, the US also promoted rent-seeking and unproductive agriculture by awarding the Philippines sugar quotas that enabled sugar *hacenderos* (pro-American, of course) to sell sugar above world market prices.

These controls, from price control to fertilizer import control, hampered the growth of agriculture.

It didn't help that the Department of Agriculture was a nest of corruption and rent-seeking. It's not surprising that the major corruption scandals like the Napoles scam, the fertilizer scam, irrigation scams, and others occurred in the DA because its constituents, the farmers, are too poor, politically weak and dispersed to protest.

With low agricultural productivity persisting for decades, it's no wonder that rural insurgency found a fertile ground.

The post-EDSA Cory Aquino government tried to deal with the rural insurgency that had grown under Marcos's repressive rule by instituting the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). CARP essentially sacrificed middle-class landlords by subjecting them to land reform (and forced land distribution) and exempting the big landlords who used devices like stock distribution or conversion to industrial and commercial uses to escape CARP.

Although the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program succeeded in reducing rural insurgency, it didn't completely eliminate it, because it failed to increase agricultural productivity.

According to the World Bank, the Philippines has the most successful land distribution program in the world, with 84% of targeted lands having been distributed. Take note that the demand of the CPP-NPA has changed from "land to the landless" to "free land distribution to farmers" because under CARP, landless farmers got land but they are indebted to the Land Bank.

Why did CARP fail to increase productivity?

It created uncertainty in property rights and deterred investments in agriculture. It's the longest continuing land reform program in the world (about 28 years to be exact until CARP-ER expired in 2016.) Successful land reform programs are limited in duration and scope. It also covered all crops — rice, corn, coconut, sugar. According to Dr. Febella, land reform in Taiwan was confined to rice alone and took only two years. It also helped that Taiwan, which had been administered by the Japanese, had good land records, thereby facilitating land reform.

By freeing him from bondage to a landowner, CARP was supposed to unleash the farmer's individual initiative. The problem was that most of the CARP beneficiaries didn't get individual CLOAs, but only collective title. DAR didn't bother with the tedious task of individual surveys and titling and instead relied on a single collective title to claim huge accomplishments.

CARP also saddled the farmer beneficiaries with so many restrictions. Beneficiaries can't borrow or mortgage the land for 10 years, and they can only do so after they have paid off their 30-year amortizations to the Land Bank. If a beneficiary is allowed to sell after 10 years, it can only be to another beneficiary.

However, the most pernicious restriction is the prohibition to own more than five hectares of agricultural land.

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The economic revolution the Philippines really needs

This prevents more efficient farmers from buying out inefficient ones; and condemns farms to be low productivity forever and poor farmers to be chained to their land.

The atomization of agricultural land is therefore encouraged. It's no wonder then that the average size of agricultural land is less than a hectare.

CARP was also implemented on public agricultural lands, applying the law on agricultural free patents, i.e. land was given to farmer-tillers out of the public domain rather than forcibly taken from private landowners.

Unfortunately, these agricultural patents, about 2.5 million of them, carry Commonwealth-era restrictions that prevent land consolidation and make them unbankable and unsaleable. These restrictions include a five-year prohibition in the sale or mortgage of the land within five years of the grant of free patent, and a perpetual option of the free patent holder or his heirs to buy back the property within five years of its sale or alienation. These restrictions make them toxic to banks, which have to hold them as foreclosed property for five years, as well as to investors, who will not buy land and improve it only to have it bought back by the seller in five years.

The problem of increasing agricultural productivity has received short shrift from the Duterte administration. President Duterte appointed a politician to head the Department of Agriculture whose idea of

developing agriculture is to give away goodies, such as free irrigation. Also, the Secretary of the Department Agrarian Reform is a leftist who mainly pushes for an anti-development agenda, such as the two-year moratorium on land conversion from agricultural land to other uses.

How can we foster an economic revolution in agricultural productivity?

We have to make the countryside hospitable to private investments and the injection of management and science into agriculture. As I said before, increasing agricultural productivity requires management skills and some knowledge of genetics, biochemistry, soil science, meteorology, mechanical, civil and industrial engineering. It also requires the knowledge and use of digital technologies such as sensors, satellites, drones, and lately, data science ("Big Data"). These technologies may be advanced but we have to move in that direction. Our agricultural sector needs the infusion of capital, modern management, and science and technology. Unfortunately, current laws favor agricultural stasis, with efficient farmers unable to buy out inefficient ones.

The process by which efficient farmers buy out inefficient ones and increase agricultural productivity should not be feared. Increases in agricultural productivity will lead to an increase in general welfare. The farmer who can produce only P10,000 from a hectare of land may be better off as a farm worker earn-

ing P50,000 a year in a land that can produce P1,000,000 from a hectare of land.

A productivity revolution in agriculture will also allow industry, especially those producing wage goods, to take off because the market in the countryside will expand and food costs, and therefore wage costs, will fall. The unemployed and underemployed in the countryside can find work and better paying jobs in labor-intensive manufacturing.

To increase agricultural productivity, we need to free the rural land market.

I will agree with the Communist Left on its main demand of "genuine agrarian reform": giving the CARP lands free to the farmers, i.e. cancel their loan amortizations to the Land Bank. After all, only 17% are able to pay their loan amortizations.

However, CARP lands should be free from restrictions. Farmers should be free to mortgage, sell, or lease them to whomever they want, not just to qualified land reform beneficiaries.

At the very least, according to Dr. Raul Fabella, National Scientist for Economic Science, CARP farmers should be able to lease them. The lease income acts as a safety net for small farmers while leasing will allow consolidation of lands in favor of more efficient and productive farmers.

(Transfer of ownership is still superior to leasing in land consolidation since it provides an incentive for maintaining soil productivity over the long term but for political reasons, leasing will do.)

The government, in fact, should encourage land consolidation. It should designate a agency to negotiate with farmer consolidate lands, and offer them to investors on long-term lease or usufruct.

Even China, a supposed socialist country, is encouraging land consolidation. About third of China's farmlands have been leased and consolidated through a system of tradable land rights. Chinese President Xi Jinping clearly sees agricultural modernization through land consolidation as a key food security.

Aside from freeing CARP lands from restrictions, the Commonwealth-era restrictions on agricultural patents have to be removed. These property rights reforms in rural land will then form the basis of a productivity revolution in agriculture.

Of all the arrows needed to develop the Philippine economy, the arrow of a productivity revolution in agriculture is the most important. Not a gold age of infrastructure. Not investments in education. Not an expanded Conditional Cash Transfer program. A productivity revolution in agriculture is the economic revolution the Philippines really needs.

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Money over environment protection?

BY EMETERIO Sd. PEREZ
Columnist

WHY the obsession with money to the detriment of the environment? Can't it be the

other way around?

The public who may be curious to know the answer need only read reports of the debates surrounding the closure of certain mining companies

►PerezB3

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Money over environment protection?

on orders of Secretary Regina Lopez of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The arguments outside the DENR have failed consider the protection of the environment. Instead, their proponents focused more on pecuniary interests. Some asked: What would happen to the workers who lost their jobs with the stoppage of mining operations?

Jobs, of course, mean money.

Businessmen feared the potential losses from their investments; they forgot to tell the public that over the years, their net profits had piled up and bloated their retained earnings.

From retained earnings are sourced the dividends that, having been approved by the board, companies distribute either in cash or in stock to their stockholders.

Whatever happened to the focus of the debates that was and should be the protection of the environment? Net profit first before anything else? Every reasoning by politicians, who care about people because of their votes, goes against the DENR and Lopez.

Can't our legislators think of a solution without sacrificing either the workers or the environment?

Marcventures

Let me go to specifics.

Marcventures Mining and Development Corp. (MMDC) is the only subsidiary of Marcventures Holdings Inc. (MHI). This is the reason MHI describes its financial filing as "Marcventures Holdings Inc. and subsidiary."



DUE
DILIGENCER
EMETERIO
Sd. PEREZ

Unlike MHI shares, MMDC shares are not listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange. As an MHI subsidiary, however, its 1,821,358,599 outstanding common shares are also partly owned – though indirectly – by few public investors. Of MHI's outstanding common shares, 1,821,327,687 are listed.

In its PSE posting, MHI said it had free-float level of 42 percent. With its unit engaged in mining, foreigners are allowed to own only up to 40 percent of its outstanding capital stock.

Recently, MHI's seven-person board doubled its authorized capital to P4 billion and increased the number of its directors by two to nine. The capital expansion means the company's only subsidiary, MMDC, is in need of more money to boost its search for precious metals. Never mind the result, which would be sacrificing the environment in favor of money.

Financials

In a financial filing, MHI reported capital stock consisting of 1,821,358,599 common shares with par value of P1 per share.

It had additional paid-in capital (APIC) of P212,655,494.

APIC is the total premium over par value resulting from the issuance of shares, whether common or preferred.

When MHI's APIC of P212,655,494 is added to outstanding capital of P1,821,358,599, the sum is P2,034,014,093.

This, in turn, means MHI raised a total of P2,034,014,093 from the issuance of 1,821,358,599 common shares to its stockholders, including its public stockholders. The issuance translates to P1.117 per share.

Reyes Tacandong & Co., MHI's external auditor, reported MHI's retained earnings of P798,037,518 as of Dec. 31, 2015, down from P829,604,241 as a result of a net loss of P31,566,723 during the year. The company did well in 2014 when it recorded net income of P844,280,341, and did better in 2013 when its net profit topped P1 billion at P1,185,536,096.

Dividends

MHI's profitability resulted from P800 million and P1,244,078,034 in dividends it received from MMDC, its only unit, in 2014 and 2015, respectively.

With these dividends, Marcventures Holdings has proven the profitability of operating a mining venture even if only through a subsidiary. It did not have to go to the mountains. By staying home, it received a total of P2,044,078,034 in dividend. MHI stockholders who owned 1,821,358,599 common shares were entitled to a dividend of P1.1223 per share.

If the APIC worth P212,655,494 were added to P1,821,358,599 computed at P1 par value, this would result in total outstanding capital of P2,044,078,034, which in turn, would translate to a dividend of P1.005 per share.

In the third quarter of 2016 MHI reported that its net profit increased 36.1 percent to P140.24 million from P103.048 million in the same period in 2015.

In the same unaudited financial report, MHI said it still has P858.67 million in retained earnings left after the dividends its board approved for distribution in 2013 and 2014. These number should prove the profitability of mining. Shouldn't they?

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"GETTING LOST"

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Getting lost in translation in the fight vs corruption

SOME key members of the Duterte Cabinet are apparently as confused as many of us on the anti-corruption policies and pronouncements of the President.

While it is clear from the start—even before Rodrigo Duterte was elected to the highest office that corruption and criminality are top priorities in his governance policy, it remains unclear how this policy should be translated into action.

Fighting corruption and criminality is not simply saying that you're against it, that you abhor it. More than words, one needs to prove his/her sincerity by doing something to correct a wrong that had been done, and to hold the erring person accountable for it.

Recently, Environment Secretary Gina Lopez revealed at a press briefing in Malacañang that she was offered a P6 million monthly bribe if she would sign a document in favor of a mining company.

On the same occasion, she said a miner told her that an official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) had asked for a P30 million bribe. She also mentioned that other officials of the agency had titled land to themselves.

Lopez, who comes from the wealthy Lopez family that owns the ABS-CBN broadcasting network and a host of other big corporations, has shown that she is "a woman with balls" by standing firm against mining companies violating environmental laws, and ordering more than 20 mines closed and suspending at least seven others.



TEA TIME

TITA C. VALDERAMA

While Lopez described the rate of corruption in her agency as "disgusting," she fell short of identifying or initiating any legal action against any of those involved in seemingly blatant acts of bribery, corruption, and extortion.

Last December, Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre revealed at a press conference that he had been offered a bribe by Wally Sombero, a former police officer who now works as a broker for Macau-based gambling tycoon Jack Lam.

He said Sombero asked him to be Lam's padrino for his casinos at the Clark Economic Zone and at Fort Ilocandia in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte. Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) Chair Andrea Domingo was likewise offered 1 percent commission from Lam's casino earnings, Aguirre said.

He added that Lam had spent P70 million, bribing officials of the Bureau of Immigration (BI) for the release of 1,316 Chinese nationals arrested during a raid in late November for working without permits at the online gambling casinos operating at Lam's Fontana Leisure Parks and Casino at Clark in Pampanga.

Some reports speculated that the offer for Aguirre could reach as much as P100 million a month.

The Senate has been investigating an alleged P50-million bribery of BI officials—deputy commissioners Alfonso Argosino and Michael Robles, and Charles Calima in connection with the arrest of the Chinese workers. Sombero, however, claimed it was a case of extortion.

At least some names in this multi-million-peso scandal have been publicly identified.

It was also in early December that Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol disclosed on his Facebook account that he received a Rolex Submariner Date wristwatch, which he later found to have a value of P450,000.

It was a gift, placed in a box stuffed in a bag with other mementos, handed to him during a dinner with top officials of a "very large" agricultural company.

Piñol said he nearly fell out of his seat when he opened the box and found the Rolex Submariner, which he described as "a watch which almost every man dreams of owning."

Candidly, he said he initially thought of keeping the watch, especially after finding out its price tag on the internet. "Who does not like to own a Rolex, anyway?" he said.

But then Piñol said he returned the expensive watch because he was mindful of President Duterte's anti-corruption policy. "Now I can look at anybody straight in the eye and

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tell him or her that I am following President Rody Duterte's directive that members of his Cabinet must not be linked to any act of corruption," he said.

It was clear that Piñol knew the giver. He said he returned the watch to the sender "respectfully" and explained that he could not accept it, even if it was given during the Christmas season of gift-giving.

It was clear that Piñol knew the law against receiving or accepting expensive gifts, especially when the giver is involved in a company that has dealings, or is engaged in transactions, with the government office he belongs to.

Piñol, a former journalist, even advised colleagues in government service to exercise "careful discernment on what kind of Christmas presents we could receive and from whom."

But instead of getting praise from the President for refusing to accept the rare-edition Rolex, what Piñol got was taunting for bragging about it. In his speech at the 7th anniversary of Federalismo Alyansa Bicol in Legaspi City, Albay, a few days after Piñol returned the Rolex, Duterte said the agriculture secretary should not have done returned the watch and instead sold it and used the proceeds to buy rice to be distributed to the poor.

A month later, Piñol was reported to have said that Duterte and his special assistant Christopher "Bong" Go also received Rolex watches and had those returned. It was not clear, however, whether the gifts came from the same giant agricultural company.

In this case, the gift-giver or givers were not identified even if they were known to the recipients.

Corruption is a grave criminal offense. It will continue to flourish if the offenders remain unknown or are not held accountable and liable.

Public-shaming the corrupt, or exposing them to trial by publicity through congressional investigations are not the appropriate solutions to the serious problem of corruption and criminality.

Recognizing that corruption has reached "disgusting" levels and lamenting that almost half of the government's budget is wasted to corruption will not solve the problem.

People need to see government's determination and seriousness in fighting graft by throwing the errant public servants in jail, by equally applying legal procedures on anyone, regardless of rank and economic status.

Invoking technicalities, old age, or sickness to set free high-ranking erring officials while summarily executing or putting in jail ordinary persons will never be an acceptable policy. Do that and be ready to lose public trust!

Every one in government should be made aware of the following laws to be clear about what they should and should not do in the performance of their duties in order to keep their integrity:

1. Articles 210-212 of the Revised Penal Code, relating to direct and indirect bribery;

2. Republic Act 3019, or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, which prohibits "directly or indirectly requesting gifts, presents, shares, percentages, and other benefits in connection with the work of a public officer, as well as soliciting for others, including members of the family of the public officer;

3. Republic Act 6713, of the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees; and

4. Presidential Decree 46, making it unlawful for public officials and employees to receive, and for private persons to give, gifts on any occasion, including Christmas.

Each of the 1.4 million or so public servants, from the lowest-ranked to the President, should have these provisions and prohibitions in mind so they don't get lost in translation.

Daily Tribune

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ICE

Measuring toughness

Gina Lopez's anti-mining activism has crept into the policies of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and it is not an encouraging sign to her confirmation as a Cabinet secretary.

That is if Lopez cares about it at all.

But if she would not receive the strongest of support from the highly popular President Duterte, who wields the power to influence key members of the very powerful Commission on Appointments if he wants to, it is likely Lopez would get bypassed by the CA anew.

Not that it would affect Lopez's performance as she is among the few bright spots in the Cabinet that make the Duterte presidency attractive to the masses, though.

But she appears to be bracing for the long haul in her battle for confirmation or possible rejection, although the CA seldom nixes a presidential appointee.

The CA, however, can give an appointed official hell, like it did to other appointees many times in the past.

Sen. Leila de Lima was bypassed by the CA 17 times when she was appointed Justice secretary by former President Aquino. It took her four years in the Cabinet before she finally received her confirmation.

It was the same story for Aquino's Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman.

The most recent and longest series of CA snubs was held by the late Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales, whom former president Gloria Arroyo had to reappoint 25 times before he finally got the CA nod.

Lopez cannot deny the pressure, however. She can only perform well as long as President Duterte allows her to stay in her post.

maybe for now.

Two Sundays ago, President Duterte admonished mining companies in earthquake-ravaged Suriago for their alleged practices destructive to environment.

He said: "I can't do anything if Environment Secretary Gina

Lopez would order the closure of erring mining operations," which she did.

That is why Lopez is in the crosshairs of the giant mining firms.

Some of the biggest and oldest media companies have ganged up on Lopez after she had ordered the closure of 28 mining companies and the cancellation of 75 mining contracts with government.

These media companies are either owned or linked with personalities with interests in mining. Advertising money also influences media stand on issues like this.

Mining firms have also tapped public relations companies which have been working triple-time advancing their client firms' positions, while others have demonized Lopez to sort of balance their thrust in maintaining the status quo to their business.

Lopez had also claimed to have received an indecent proposal of a P6-million grease money for her to go soft on some erring firms. She did not name the person or the company which had tried to bribe her, though.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (CoMP) stated its stand outright, however, when it filed its opposition to Lopez's confirmation before the CA.

Some politicians and interest groups also have stakes in mining and it is not unlikely that their influence over some members of the CA may affect their view of Lopez.



Aldrin Cardona



Duterte have also revealed Lopez is standing on shaky grounds.

In a statement last year, the President said: "I do not think she would ever get the confirmation. But Gina, in the meantime, let us just concede good faith in her. I hope she would listen to (Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) chief Mario Luis) Jacinto." And then Duterte gave Jacinto, his former environment and natural resources official in Davao City, some glaring comments about his past work and academic achievements in the University of the Philippines.

Jacinto could be the standby for Lopez.

Lopez's appointment was rather controversial. She was offered her post after she went to Davao to lecture the President about her advocacies.

After Lopez accepted the post, mining and oil shares have plunged by as much as 837.14 points or 7.31 percent in the Philippine Stock Exchange.

In what could be viewed as a warning, the CoMP claimed Lopez's recent actions might be costly to government. It raised the possibility that we will have to pay mining companies "several billion dollars" in investment guarantees if the big mining companies are ordered to shut down their operations.

That is the clincher.

Lopez admitted last week of being unsure about her stay in the Cabinet. And it is not unlikely Duterte would crumble under pressure from the mining firms

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

Namigay ng mining permit sa watershed panagutin din

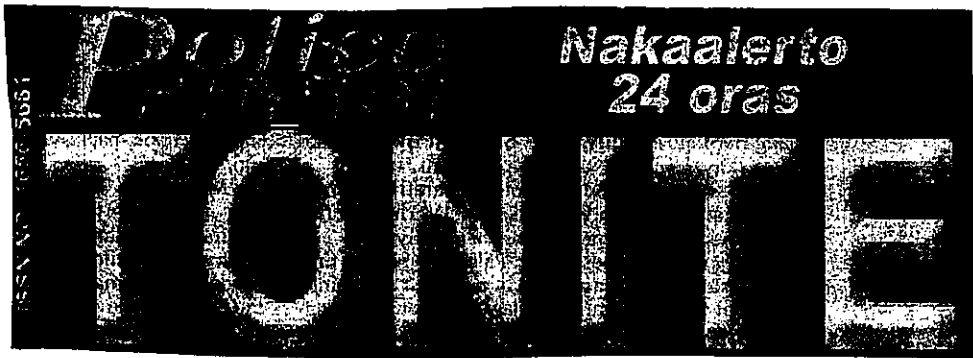
Hindi lang mga mining companies ang dapat panagutin ni Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Gina Lopez kundi ang mga tauhan ng kanyang ahensya na nagbigay ng permit para magmina sa mga watersheds.

Ito ang hamon ni Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers kay Lopez matapos kanselahin ng kalihim ang may 75 mining contracts dahil sa pagkasira ng mga watersheds.

"Why is it that the DENR allowed these mining firms to operate near watersheds in the first place?" ani Barbers kaya upang maging patas umano si Lopez ay panagutin din ang mga tauhan ng DENR na nagbigay ng permit sa mga mining companies.

Naging irresponsible umano ang mga tauhan ng DENR sa pagbibigay ng mga permit kaya narapat lamang na habulin din umano ito ni Lopez at kasuhan kung kinakailangan dahil bahagi sila ng pagkasira ng watersheds.

Naniniwala ang mambabatas na nasa posisyon pa ang mga tauhan ng DENR na nag-apruba para makapagmina ang mga mining companies sa mga watershed sa bansa kaya narapat na panagutin din ang mga ito. (Bernard Taguinod)



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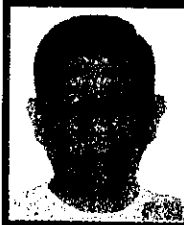
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Pulso ng Retirado Pulis Maynila

ni Tony Emmanuel

LUMABAS sa mga pahayagan; DENR Secretary Gina Lopez ay nagpalabas ng kautusan sa closure ng ilang Mining Operations sa Pilipinas for damaging water sheds and for siltation of coastal waters and farmland.

Kapag sumasapit na ang panahon ng mga bagyong dumadating sa Pilipinas, ay laganap ang mapinsalang baha na gumigiba ng mga bahay, palayan, tulay, dahil sa malakas na anod ng baha na ang dahilan ay landslide sa mga kabundukan kaya lampas tao ang baha.

Napapanahon ang liderato ni Sec. Lopez para bantayan ang mga minahan para sa protection ng kalikasan.

Ang pagkakalbo ng mga puno sa kapatagan at kabundukan at pagsuyod sa lupain ang pinsala ng kapaligiran. Naalala lang natin ang kahalagahan ng puno kapag may rumaragasa na ang baha at landslide.

Sa Metro-Manila naman ang basura ay dahilan ng baha, kaya paralisado ang Metro-Manila kapag,

DENR Sec. Gina Lopez

bumabagyo na, malaking tulong ang DENR, bilang central agency na protektahan ang kapaligiran kasama na ang Waste Management ng MMDA at Local Unit ang dapat tumutok dito kasama ang DPWH.

Maraming makakabangga ang Secretary ng DENR na handa niyang harapin dahil alam niyang suportado siya ni Pangulong Duterte.

"It's a stand for social justice. You cannot and you must not run your operations and affect our farmers and fishermen. This is not acceptable under the Duterte Administration and this is not acceptable under DENR." Let us help protect our environment for the future generations." Ito ang mensahe ni Sec. Gina Lopez sa Press Conference on Minor Audit Results.

Mabuhay ka DENR Sec. Gina Lopez, ituloy mo ang laban para sa kalikasan!

Ang Aklat ni ISAIAS 35: 1, 2

"Ang ulilang lupaing malaon nang tigang ay muling sasaya, mararariwa at mamumulaklak ang ilang. Ang dating ilang ay await sa tuwa, ito'y muling gaganda tulad ng mga bundok ng Libano at mamumunga ng sagana tulad ng Carmelo at Sarone mamamasdan ng lahat ang kaningningan at kapangyarihan ni Yahweh.

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SEC. LOPEZ TAHIMIK SA FILMINERA MINING

BILIB na sana ako kay DENR Sec. Gina Lopez.

Kasi buong tapang niyang hinarap ang dam-buhalang grupo ng mga minero.

At nilabanan ang presyur para bitiwang usapin sa pagkasira ng Inang Kalikasan.

Masigasig niyang isinusulong hindi lang ang pagsuspinde sa mga tiwaling minero sa bansa.

Kundi talagang ipinasara pa nya, Suki, ang mga pasaway at sadyang salaulang minahan.

Very gud na sana, Suki!

Kaya lang, bakit mukhang may pinipikitan?

Sec. Gina, Madame, pakibasa nitong text ng mga suki mo sa lalawigan kong mahal:

"Sir Rey, ask mo lng Mam Lopez bklt bglang tahmik cya sa Filminera d2 sa Msbte. Pki im-bistga na rin tngkol sa aming pblema."

oOo

Kasama ang Filminera Resources Corporation sa unang sigwa ng unos na ibinuhos ni Madame Gina sa industriya ng mga minero.

Mapanirang mga minero, para eksakto.

Mga minahan na sinalaula ang kabundukan ng buong lahi ni Juan.

Pero habang niraratsada ng Katipunerang bantay (kuno) ng kalikasan ang mga bugok na minero ay tila'y naiwan bigla itong isang minahan sa bayan ng Aroroy sa lalawigan ng Masbate.

Na ayon, Suki, sa libo-libong magsasaka sa paligid ng minahan ay patuloy silang pineperwisyo ng "open pit" na pagmimina ng Filminera.

Wala umanong oras ang paghasik ng gimbal sa mga residente dahil sa tone-toneladang pampasabog sa blasting sites.

Na ang mga pagyanig ay naging sanhi ng pagkakabitak-bitak ng kongkretong dingding at pozo negro ng kanilang mga tahanan.

Bukod pa sa mga sakit na idinulot sa matatandang residente niyang walang puknat na pagpapasabog, tulad ng nervous breakdown.

Pero ang pinakamatindi, Suki, ay ang banta sa kalusugan ng mga residente.

oOo

Nauna nang nagreklamo sa DENR ang libo-libong apektadong residente, Suki.

Ang kanilang pangunahing reklamo: Kontaminadong tubig na dumadaloy sa mga ilog at sakahan, pati na sa mga gripo ng tahanan.

Kaya nga kasama sa mga unang suspension list ng DENR ang Filminera.

Bakit biglang natahimik Madame Gina?

X-FILES

SAGAD SA BALITA, BULGAR SA KATOTOHANAN

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Kakampi Mo Ang Batas

Atty. Batas Mauricio

Sa mga katanungan, tumawag sa (02) 927 7226, 0917 984 24 68, 0918 574 0193 at 0922 833 43 96. Mag-email po kayo sa batasmauricio@yahoo.com, o sumulat po kayo sa 18 D Mahiyain corner Mapagkawanggawa, Teachers Village, Diliman, Quezon City.

GINA LOPEZ, DAPAT PASALAMATAN NG MGA PINOY: Nadismaya po ako, sa totoo lang, sa pahayag ng Pangu-long Duterte na "total mess" o malaking problema ang idinulot ng mga kautusan ni Environment Secretary Gina Lopez upang ipasara at suspendihin ang operasyon ng maraming mga mining companies. Bagamat totoo na ang mga utos na ito ni Gina ay mangangahulugan ng pagkawala ng P70 bilyon sa kaban ng bayan, ang tunay na isyu dito ay hindi pananalapi.

Ang isyu dito ay ang pagkawasak ng kalikasan at kapaligiran batay sa kasakiman ng mga negosyanteng walang pakialam sa pinsalang dulot nila sa bansa upang magkamal lamang sila ng bilyones pesos na kita para sa kanilang sarili at sa kanilang mga among dayuhan. Ang isyu dito ay ang kamatayan at kapinsalaan ng sambayanan at ng kanilang mga bayan o lungsod. Tunay nga, walang presyo ang kaligtasan at kalusugan ng tao.

Sa matagal ng panahon, alam na ng mga Pilipino ang banta sa kanilang mga buhay dulot ng mga operasyon ng mining companies. Pero wala ni isa man sa mga nasa kapangyarihan at mayayaman ang kumontra sa mga mining companies na ito, na makapangyarihan at mayayaman din. Dapat pasalamatan kung ganoon ng sambayanang Pilipino si Gina Lopez sa kanyang mga pagkilos sa isyung ito.

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HEALTH HAZARD

DENR URGED TO ACT ON WOES OF BATAAN FOLK

The Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ), the largest climate justice group in the country, has called out the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for its inaction regarding the operations of a coal-fired power plant in Bataan which had left residents with various health complications due to bottom ash from its operations.

The group was referring to the coal plant of Petron-San Miguel Consolidated Power Corp. (SMC) in Barangay Lamao in Limay, Bataan.

"It was more than a month since they (DENR) issued a notice of alleged violation to Petron and SMC but until now, no immediate action has been undertaken. We don't think this issue is being taken seriously," said Ian Rivera, National Coordinator of PMCJ.

The DENR Environmental Management Bureau Region III sent a notice of alleged violation to SMC which was received last Jan. 6, 2017, while another order was issued to Petron dated Dec. 28, 2016, directly from 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.

In its order, the DENR told Petron that the company had acted beyond what was indicated in its Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) and had failed to install a Continuous Emission Monitoring System.

It also noted that the bodies of water surrounding the coal plant had been contaminated with hazardous substances. The company also failed to manage the bottom ash produced by the coal plant.

The Pollution Adjudication Board (PAB), however, claimed that it had not received any endorsement from the DENR Regional Office regarding Petron-SMC's case, which left them unable to investigate the case further.

"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 on the issue.

"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," he added.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Lopez asked to shut down Bataan coal plant

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL groups are asking the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to shut down a coal-fired power plant in Bataan whose operation caused ash fall that threaten the health and well-being of communities in Limay, Bataan.

The Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ) earlier staged a picket in front of the DENR main office in Quezon City last week, challenging Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez's stance against destructive development projects.

In particular, they chided the DENR chief's inaction regarding a coal-fired power plant in Barangay Lamao in Limay, Bataan, which left the residents of the communities with different health complications owing to bottom ash from coal-plant operation.

Lopez vowed to address the issue but Ian Rivera, national coordinator of PMCJ, said one month after allegedly issuing a notice of violation to its operator, no corrective action has been undertaken.

"I don't think this issue is being taken seriously," he said.

The Environmental Management Bureau's Central Luzon office sent a notice of violation on December 28, 2016, and the Office of the DENR secretary sent a similar notice on January 6 this year.

Daily Tribune

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Payatas dumpsite to be transformed into eco-park

The administration of Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista said concerned city hall officials are now crafting a master plan that will convert the Payatas controlled disposal facility into an eco-park or any suitable land use as part of its post closure-care activity.

"A master plan is now being crafted to determine short and long-term development initiatives in the area," said the mayor during late last week interview with the Quezon City Press Club.

QC's Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department head Frederika Rentoy has been directed to lead in shaping the master plan and complete the same at the soonest possible time.

The local government is using a seven-hectare engineered sanitary landfill in Payatas for the disposal of solid waste generated by the city.

Earlier, the city government had appealed to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to reconsider its order calling for the immediate closure of the Payatas sanitary landfill.

In its appeal, the local government asked the DENR that it be given sufficient time to prepare for all the vital adjustments to ensure minimal impact on the city's solid waste management system.

To date, Bautista has already been given the go-signal by the QC Council to forge a joint venture agreement with the private sector for the development of the city's own waste-to-energy (WTE) plant which he earlier had described as vital in its effort to avert a possible crisis in waste management with the impending closure of the sanitary landfill.

As provided for under the resolution,

the city government shall ensure that the project configuration of the proposed WTE facility is compliant with the required laws and regulations, including but not limited to: the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000; Clean Air Act; Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Act; Renewable Energy Act of 2008, and guidelines governing the establishment and operation of waste-to-energy technologies for municipal solid wastes.

Meanwhile, effective last February 15, a temporary parking policy was adopted at Quezon City Hall as construction of various projects at its compounds has just begun.

Only the following are allowed to park within the QC Hall compound: All elected city officials, private vehicles of department heads and chiefs of offices, government vehicles (red plate), taxpayers

and transacting public, motorcycles, senior citizens, and persons with disability.

Bautista urged the full cooperation of city hall officials and employees as well as taxpayers and the transacting public in ensuring the strict implementation of the new parking policy.

In a directive, all employees with private vehicles are ordered to park at the Quezon Memorial Circle as traffic enforcers from the QC Department of Public Order and Safety together with security guards have been tasked to monitor and report violators.

Scheduled for construction at the QC Hall compound are a multi-level parking structure at the taxpayers' parking area along East Avenue corner Gate 3 and the proposed convention center at the employees' parking area (football grounds) along East Avenue.

Arlie O. Calala

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

QC turning Payatas dump into eco-park

By Rio N. Araja

QUEZON City Mayor Herbert Bautista is eyeing the possible transformation of the Payatas dump into an eco-park or any suitable land use as part of its post-closure care activity.

He tasked the Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department, headed by Frederika Rentoy, to craft a master plan for the controlled landfill to determine short and long-term development initiatives in the area.

This was after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources ordered Payatas' immediate closure by the first quarter of 2017.

The city government through Rentoy appealed to Environment Secretary Regina Lopez to recon-

sider her closure order, saying the city's garbage hauling contract is due to end in September.

The QC government is using the seven-hectare engineered sanitary landfill in Payatas to dispose solid waste generated by the city.

Rentoy asked the DENR for sufficient time to prepare the vital adjustments to ensure minimal impact to QC's solid waste management system.

Bautista already got the green light from the City Council to forge a joint venture with the private sector to develop the city's own waste-to-energy plant.

The mayor described it as vital in averting a possible crisis in waste management with the impending closure of the landfill in Payatas.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Pollution now 'unbearable' for humanity

UNITED NATIONS-- Pollution has reached a level that is unbearable to humanity, and one of the important solutions to current emergency is to invest in renewable energy, said UN Environment Program Deputy Executive Director Ibrahim Thiaw.

In a recent interview with Xinhua, Thiaw said pollution is a multi-dimensional issue that has an impact on public health and also affects the economy.

Thiaw earlier cited World Health Organization statistics as saying that 7 million premature deaths annually linked to air pollution, adding that trillions of dollars are also being lost every year due to pollution.

Moreover, he noted that pollution may cause trans-boundary issues because pollutants generated in one country may affect another country or region far away through rivers and lakes, forest fires or air.

The most effective solution to curb pollution, according to Thiaw, is to find out the sources and reduce them, which is a complex process and in need of joint efforts from all walks of life-- governments, the private sector and the civil society.

ENVIRO WATCH

Among the efforts, Thiaw said investing in renewable energy is a feasible approach to tackle, for instance, air pollution and this industry has proven to be profitable. "The price is going down and the technology is accessible."

Thiaw said the UN environment agency believes that by using new technology and renewable energy, a country can provide energy to its communities without further polluting the environment.

"A good example is China where hundreds of billions of dollars are being invested every year on renewable energy," he noted.

To reduce the air pollution in China, Thiaw said the Chinese government is investing quite massively to reduce the number of coal-fired energy systems and is promoting clean transport systems with electric vehicles and motor-bikes.

He said though the measures need to be further enhanced, "the right policies are already being put in place" and "we are very confident that the leadership in China is fully aware of the situation and will be addressing it in

the future".

Noting that the air pollution, known as smog, has also been observed in other parts of the world, like in France and in India, Thiaw said it is critical to establish mechanisms for countries to share experiences on how to reduce pollution through effective measures.

He mentioned that the UN Environment Program is organizing the UN Environment Assembly, to be held in December this year in Nairobi with the theme, "Pollution".

He said the conference itself is a wonderful opportunity for dialogues and he expects representatives of governments, as well as the private sector to join the discussion to help the world adopt a new way of life so as to reduce pollution.

As for current international cooperation, Thiaw noted the Paris Agreement, the deal reached by the international community to combat climate change.

While stressing that the links between climate change and pollution are evident, he said, with the Paris Agreement, governments will make decisions to cut greenhouse gas emissions, and that will contribute to reducing the air pollution nowadays.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

4Ps beneficiaries help protect mangrove areas

By **RESTITUTO A. CAYUBIT**

BARANGAY LOOC, Cabucgayan, Biliran – The beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) are helping protect the mangrove areas in this barangay and at the same time earning income for their efforts.

DSWD Regional Director for Eastern Visayas Restituto Macuto said 52 4Ps beneficiaries are part of the group that protects the mangrove areas in Looc.

Macuto, who accompanied the media in a tour of DSWD projects in Leyte and Biliran, said 100 Looc residents make up the association that watches over the mangrove sites.

Cabucgayan Mayor Edwin Masbang

said mangroves are the main attraction in the "Boardwalk," one of the town's tourist attractions.

The Boardwalk was reopened to the public last January 8.

Masbang said the mangrove gardening project in Looc is managed by the Naravil Association, composed of residents from sitios Naga, Rawis, Villa Corro.

Department of Environment and

Natural Resources (DENR) Regional Director Leonardo Sibbaluca said the 18-hectare mangrove forest in this barangay is a sanctuary for birds and other animals. It is also a breeding area of several fish species, he added.

Sibbaluca is encouraging other communities to protect mangrove forests which protect coastal communities from storm surges.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Palm plantations threaten biodiversity in Palawan

BY RHAYDZ B. BARCIA

PUERTO PRINCESA, Palawan: A long stretch of land, as far as the eye can see, on the southern tip of Palawan, is now the preserve of massive palm plantations.

This is not a scene straight out of a disturbing film but it is a reality that reflects the growing threat to the country's last frontier, declared a Unesco Man and Biosphere Reserve in the 1990s.

But the moderate climate and rich soil of Palawan ironically made it the ideal hub for growing palm trees to the detriment of local coconut farmers.

Ten years ago, Amirul Marinse, 68-year-old member of the Pala'uan tribe and former coconut farmer in Iraray Sofronio, Espanola, Palawan rented out his seven hectares of land to the Agumil Company for P1,000 per hectare annually with the agreement that aside from the rent, after three years, there would be profit-sharing from the palm oil harvest on the land.

But to this day, Marinse told *The Manila Times*, there has been no such profit-sharing and he found it frustrating that the contract is for 30 years.

He said he wishes to be freed from his contract with Agumil but knows it is not possible.

A decade after signing the contract, Marinse added, he cannot even afford a carabao-drawn carriage.

"We were promised that we can have a big house or even buy a car in one year [with the profits] from one hectare alone. Unfortunately, we cannot even buy food and medicine for my maintenance," he said.

Palm oil comes from these trees that are native to West Africa but also thrive in any hot and wet tropical climate.

Today, palm trees are massively grown in Asia, Africa and the Americas but the biggest palm plantations are in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Rodico Asil, Pala'uan tribal chief in Barangay Iraray, Sofronio Espanola, said Agumil company started planting palm trees here in 2005 when many tribal communities leased their land to the firm.

Bad impact

His older brother also rented out his 1.5-hectare coconut farm to Agumil for a 30-year period but Asil opted to remain a coconut farmer.

He said these conversions had a very bad impact on indigenous communities as rapid expansion of the palm plantations is wreaking havoc on their lives as these are destroying their farmlands and the rainforest.

Asil added that the secondary forests in Palawan were also cleared, the massive deforestation giving way to palm plantations to take the place of numerous coconut farms.

Hunting grounds of the indigenous peoples (IPs) also disappeared and with it the forest products on which they had depended for survival.

Their water sources also became heavily polluted.

The plantations, according to the IPs, are endangering the biodiversity, water resources and soil since the local community are prohibited by palm oil firms from planting vegetables, *camote* (sweet potato), cassava and other root crops.

Palm oil is used by multinational companies like Nestle and Kellogg's for manufacturing a long list of food products and Unilever for its personal care and beauty products.

The huge demand for palm oil continues as it is the most widely produced vegetable oil in the world and is a major ingredient of candy bars, soap, biofuel and lipstick, among many others.

John Mart Salunday, 36, Tagbanwa tribal chief and concurrent president of Nagkakaisang Tribu sa Palawan (NTP), said during a seminar on environment reporting initiated by the Philippine Press Institute (PPI) that locals were lured to convert their coconut farms and plant palm trees instead because of rosy promises of rapid development and economic opportunities.

Palm plantations threaten biodiversity in Palawan

Apparently, it was just a ploy as the entry of palm oil companies caused divisiveness among the tribesmen and brought to the surface their opposing sentiments on the issue of land use.

Salunday said the rapidly expanding palm oil industry dominated by huge palm oil companies has transformed Palawan--regarded as the Philippines' last frontier--into vast palm oil plantations that originally overran many countries in Southeast Asia before they came to Palawan.

This supposedly is threatening the biodiversity and water supply here as well and has fueled landgrabbing.

Voices of discontent are rising as regrets mount with the enormity of the trade-offs for the farmers who leased their lands for 30 years.

Malaysian investors

Palm trees were introduced in Palawan in 2005.

The Palawan provincial government backed by Malaysian investors initiated the creation of the Palm Oil Industry Development Council composed of multi-sectoral groups.

Today, the bulk of palm plantations and operations are under the Palawan Palm and Vegetable Oil Mills Inc. and its sister company Agumil Philippines Inc., Salunday said.

Both companies were established through joint ventures among Filipino, Singaporean and Malaysian investors.

Over 6,000 hectares of protected land have already been cleared and planted to palm trees.

To date, some 20,000 hectares of land have been set aside for palm plantations in Palawan.

The Philippine government has described the palm tree as the tree of peace or economic growth and regards it as "overall the best environmentally friendly option for eradicating rural poverty while reducing dependence on imported edible oils."

Salunday said the government claims that it will only allow idle and underdeveloped land to be converted to palm plantations.

He added that the expansion of palm plantations in Palawan province was boosted by President Rodrigo Duterte opening the door to palm oil producers and encouraging the development of 80,000 hectares in the country for palm plantations with Malaysia as target market for locally produced palm oil.

The NTP said that based on research, out of 350,000 hectares that can be planted to palm trees, 10,000 hectares are in Palawan.

The municipalities of Brooke's Point and Sofronio Española in southern Palawan have emerged as the core of the industry.

Data shows that around 40,000 workers are now engaged in this new sector, with six towns in Palawan--Aborlan, Bataraza, Brooke's Point, Rizal, Quezon and Sofronio Española--being the hub of the palm plantations.

But what was initially regarded as a sunshine industry is turning into a cross too heavy to carry for its farmer cooperators.

Salunday reiterated that the entry of palm oil companies has caused divisiveness among the tribesmen with their opposing sentiments on the issue of land use.

'Onerous' conditions

The agriculturist said the contracts that the farmers entered into with the oil palm companies provided no conversion of coconut plantations and no opening of virgin forests.

Alberto Santos, another farmer, said men with chainsaws have cleared what in his estimate covered 50 hectares, only to find out later that the project was to stretch to 500 hectares.

Farmer Leopoldo Tuba was also saddened by the thought of any coconut tree going down because it offends their cultural sensibilities.

Palawan currently has 35,000 coconut farmers and 99,000 hectares of land here are devoted to copra production.

The palm oil plantations also threaten the important craft of weaving with the leaves of the *buri* plant that grows wild in their area.

These plants were cleared to make way for the palm trees.

Loss of the *buri* plants also worsened pest infestation of coconut trees, the farmers said.

The realization that palm trees yield only oil for fuel and cooking makes the coconut tree even more precious now to the Palawan farmers.

Salunday said the tribes are suffering from the environmental degradation brought about by the presence of the palm oil plantations.

"Our voices have been drowned in the wilderness as the local officials in Palawan continue to strongly support the expansion of palm plantations. There is the issue of landgrabbing, environmental impact and pollution of the water sources. All of these are aggravating poverty here as the Agumil corporation is not allowing the farmers, mostly indigenous peoples, to intercrop to support their day-to-day subsistence," he added.

"We are happy that the PPI seminar on environment reporting was held here because our plight can be heard now. Through your help, we are seeking a legislative inquiry so Congress can take action on the pressing issues in Palawan," Salunday also told *The Manila Times*.

The Philippine Times

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Palam Plantation



■ AMIRUL MARINSE, 68-year old Pala'uan tribe member in Araray, Espanola, Palawan, points to the palm oil plantation that threatens the coconut industry and biodiversity of the country's last frontier.
PHOTO BY RHAYDZ B. BARCIA



Balita



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2 DENR official sinibak, 4 pa 'floating' muna

CABANATUAN CITY - Dalawang opisyal ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)-Region 3 ang sinibak sa puwesto habang apat na iba pa ang nasa floating status kasunod ng malawakang balasahan sa regional office.

Na-relieve sa puwesto sina Aurora Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO) Joselito Blanco at Balaan PENRO Raul Urmamac.

Pinalitan si Blanco ni Nicomedes Claudio, CENRO-Casiguran, habang si Raymund Rivera ng CENRO-Masinloc sa Zambales naman ang pumalit kay Urmamac.

Nasa floating status naman sina CENRO-Dingalan Jimmy Aberin, CENRO-Muñoz (Nueva Ecija) Gerundio Fernandez, CENRO-Baliuag (Bulacan) Meliton Vicente at CENRO-Tarlac Laurino Macadangdang.

Nananatili naman sa puwesto ang mga PENRO chief na sina Leovino Ignacio ng Nueva Ecija, Celia Esteban ng Bulacan, Rafael Otic ng Pampanga, Emelita Lingat ng Tarlac, at Laude Mirsalac ng Zambales.

Na-retain din sa puwesto ang mga opisyal ng CENRO na sina Ariel Mendoza ng Bagac (Bataan), Florencio Jalu ng Dinalupihan, Roger Encarnacion ng Guiguinto (Bulacan), Ricardo Lazaro ng Cabanatuan City (Nueva Ecija), Rommel Santiago ng Bacolor (Pampanga), Alfredo Collado ng Camiling (Tarlac), at Marife Castillo ng Olongapo City (Zambales).

Ayon kay DENR-Region 3 Director Francisco Milla, ang balasahan sa mga opisyal ng kagawaran sa rehiyon ay bunsod umano ng ibinabang desisyon ng grupong binuo ni DENR Secretary Gina Lopez.

Nilinaw naman ni Milla na wala pang special order for relief kina Aberin, Fernandez, Vicente at Macadangdang bilang mga CENRO officer.

Light A. Nolasco

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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FACING CLOSURE - Officials of the nickel-ore mine SR Metals in Tubay, Agusan del Sur, survey the mine, one of the 20 that have been ordered closed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for environmental violations. (Reuters/Erik de Casti)



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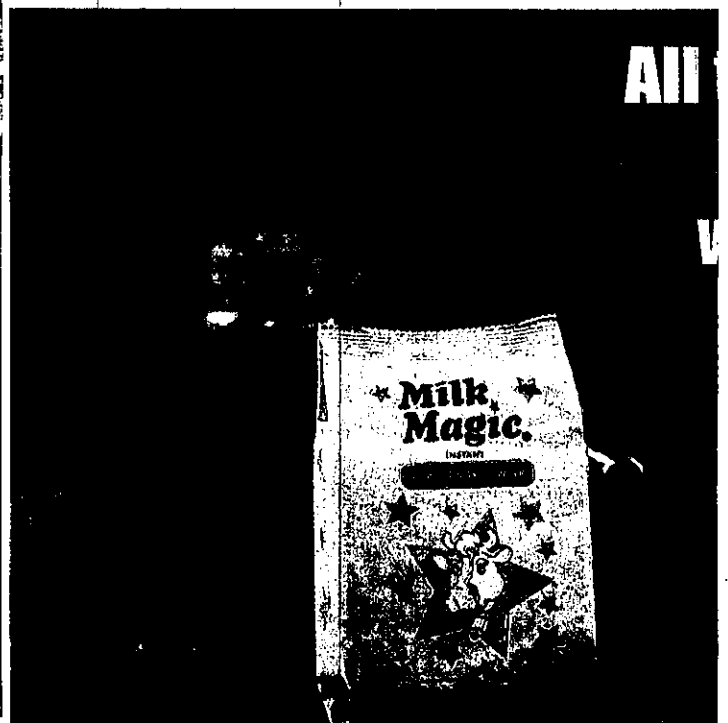
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



MAYNILAD KICKS-OFF 'PLANT FOR LIFE': West Zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. recently kicked off its 'Plant for Life Program' for Muntinlupa at the Baywalk of Barangay Bayanan in Muntinlupa City. The launch of the 'Plant for Life: Muntinlupa Trees Growing Project' was marked by a ceremonial tree-planting activity led by Muntinlupa City administrator Allan Cachuela (right) and Maynilad president and CEO Ramoncito Fernandez (left). The event also saw the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) among the city, Maynilad, and the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) to rehabilitate Laguna Lake by planting trees and establish nurseries for mangrove species propagation along its shoreline.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Ensure due process in environmental
drive

