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Friday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Daily Tribune

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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Green thumbs up

Members of different environmentalist groups gathered yesterday in Quezon City to express their support to DENR Secretary Gina Lopez's crackdown on harmful mining practices that led to the suspension of operations of 23 mining firms and cancellation of 75 mining permits in critically affected mining communities. ANALY LABOR

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Lopez supporters Members of the militant women's organization Gabriela gather at the gate of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to throw support behind the recent policy actions of DENR Secretary Gina Lopez and to challenge the Duterte government to ensure a mining industry that is environment and people-friendly by removing foreign market links.

ANALY LABOR

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Editor: Dionisio L. Pelayo • Friday, February 24, 2017

Lopez backed by top environment advocates

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

SOME of the country's top environment advocates are backing Environment Secretary Regina L. Paz Lopez's advocacy in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

International environmental law expert Antonio Oposa Jr. and Sonia Mendoza, Mother Earth Foundation chairman, led the support groups for the embattled Lopez as she faces rough sailing in the Commission on Appointments (CA).

Oposa, a Ramon Magsaysay awardee for his environmental crusade, commended Lopez and her team for taking on what were seemingly impossible tasks, such as clearing Laguna de Bay of illegal fishpens and instilling discipline in the extractive and inherently destructive mining industry.

"We stand shoulder to shoulder with Secretary Gina in her efforts to correct the long-festering injustices committed to our country. All these have been done to satisfy the false gods of money for a few, at the expense and to the irreversible damage of our natural resources and to this beautiful country," Oposa said in a statement.

"We are people who care for the country's natural wealth, wealth beyond financial calculation. We call on the members of the Commission on Appointments not to be influenced by the powerful interests that seek to derail

the confirmation of Secretary Gina Lopez. We urge the good congressmen and senators to confirm her appointment as soon as possible," Oposa said.

Mendoza, chairman of Mother Earth Foundation, also declared support for Lopez and asked for her confirmation by the CA "because she is a true protector of the environment for the Filipino people and for the future generations of our country".

Other environmental advocates and their groups backing Lopez's confirmation are Advocates for Excellent Government, an environment and antigraft and corruption civil-society organization led by its Managing Director Jose Maria Mirasol; former Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward S. Hagedorn, an environment advocate and a United Nations Environment Program Global 500 awardee; and Tony Abaya, chairman of The S.E.E.D. Institute; a non-governmental organization for sustainable development and president of Natural Wonders Tourism Foundation Inc.

Various militant environmental groups have also declared support behind Lopez's confirmation as DENR chief.

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Environment leaders, NGOs support Lopez' confirmation

SOME of the country's top environment protection advocates and non-government organizations yesterday declared support for Environment Secretary Gina Lopez as she faces rough sailing in the Commission on Appointments.

International environmental law expert Antonio Oposa Jr. and Sonia Mendoza, chair of Mother Earth Foundation, led the support groups for Lopez.

Oposa commended Lopez and her team for taking on what were seemingly impossible tasks, such as clearing the Laguna Lake of illegal fish pens and instilling discipline in the extractive and inherently-destructive mining industry.

Mendoza said Lopez is a true protector of the environment.

Jose Ma. Mirasol, managing director of the Advocates for Excellent Government, an environment and anti-graft and corruption civil society organi-

zation, said Lopez has been steadfast in her commitment to deliver on the tasks entrusted to her by President Duterte to protect the environment and the vast but fast dwindling natural wealth of the country.

Former Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward S. Hagedorn, a staunch environment advocate, and a recipient of the United Nations Environment Program Global 500 award, said, "We support the fearless, gallant stand of DENR Secretary Gina Lopez to strictly enforce environment laws against destroyers of the environment."

Tony Abaya, chair of NGO The S.E.E.D. Institute and president of the Natural Wonders Tourism Foundation Inc. said Lopez is a "true environmentalist whose heart is centered only on the welfare and the need to protect the environment for our country."

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SEC. GINA LOPEZ SUPORTAHAN

MAGANDA ang mga programa ni DENR Sec. Gina Lopez. Mistula siyang bayani ng ating kalikasan at mga katutubo. Sa mga bumabatikos sa kanya, basang-basa naman ng taumbayan na ang totoong hangarin lamang sa likod ng mga ito ay upang wasakin ang kalikasan at kumita ng bilyon-bilyong piso mula rito.

Sinisiguro ni Sec. Lopez na may bansa pang maipapamana para sa mga susunod na henerasyon, isang bansang may magagandang kapaligiran na hitik sa puno at sariwang hangin.

Mga kabundukan at mga kagubatan na hitik sa sari-saring hayop at nakasusuporta sa panumuhay ng mga katutubo.

Sugo ng Panginoon ang isang Sec. Lopez sa ating kalagitnaan, kung hindi ay wala na tayong maaaring asahan; halimbawa ay ilang bundok na ang pinatag sa lalawigan ng Zambales sa ngalan ng pagmimina bago umupo si Lopez. Pinahinto niya ang maraming mining operation sa buong bansa.

Matapang siya kaya naman kailangang suklian natin ng maigting na suporta ang ating mahal na kalihim at huwag manahimik dahil ang kanyang ginagawa ay para sa ating lahat at sa mga susunod na henerasyon.

Wala naman talagang idinulot na maganda sa bansa ang pagmimina kundi matinding pagbaha, mala-delubiyong mga bagyo at pagguho ng mga kalupaan.

Ang pananahimik ng bawat isa sa gitna ng tinatanggap na mga batikos laban kay Lopez ay pagpayag na mawasak ang ating magandang bansa sa kamay ng mga berdugo ng pagmimina.

Tunay na mas marami ang makikinabang sa pagpapahinto sa mga pagmimina at mas makalilikha tayo ng mas maraming hanapbuhay para sa ating mga kababayan kaysa pagmimina.

Salamat Sec. Lopez, nasa likod po ninyo ang taumbayan. Suportahan taka.

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Environment leaders, NGOs support Lopez's confirmation

Ilan sa mga top environment protection advocates at non-government organizations ang nagdeklara ng suporta para kay Environment Secretary Gina Lopez na kasalukuyang dumadaan sa butas ng karayom sa Commission on Appointments.

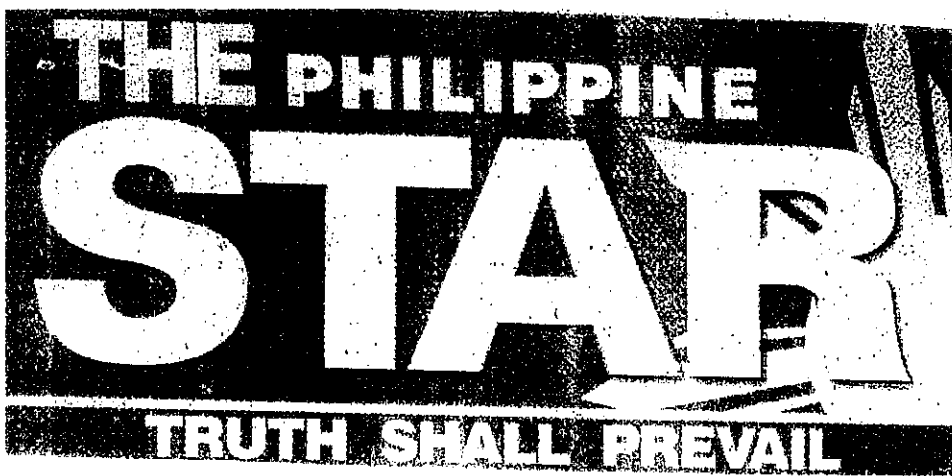
Pinangunahan nina international environmental law expert Antonio Oposa Jr., at Sonia Mendoza, Mother Earth Foundation chair ang suporta para kay Lopez.

Pinuri rin ni Oposa si Lopez at ang kanyang team sa pag-aksyon sa mga mistulang imposibleng trabaho tulad ng paglilinis ng Laguna Lake sa mga illegal fish pens at pagdisiplina sa extractive and inherently-destructive mining industry.

Sa kanilang pagdedeklara ng suporta kay Lopez, sinabi ni Oposa na: "We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Secretary Gina in her efforts to right the long-festering injustices committed to our country. All these have been done to satisfy the false gods of money for a few, at the expense and to the irreversible damage of our natural resources and to this beautiful country."

Nagdeklara rin si Sonia Mendoza, chair ng Mother Earth Foundation ng suporta kay Lopez at hiniling na kumpirmahin na ito ng Commission on Appointments dahil ito ang true protector ng environment.

Kabilang din sa mga nagdeklara ng suporta para kay Lopez ang mga advocates ng Excellent Government, isang environment and anti-graft and corruption civil society organization.



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Lopez unleashing rage on miners

After two decades as a yoga missionary, Environment Secretary Regina Lopez

is unleashing her inner rage on the mining industry while aiming for Bhutan-style gross national happiness.

Lopez has in recent months moved global commodity markets with a campaign to close roughly two-thirds of the existing mines in the Philippines, which is the world's biggest supplier of nickel ore and a major source of copper.

For the 63-year-old, her sudden elevation by firebrand President Duterte to government last year after a lifetime of spiritual and environmental pursuits has presented an unexpected chance to bring about radical change in society.

"This is a golden opportunity to do the right thing," Lopez, popularly known as Gina, told AFP in an interview on Wednesday at her bustling Manila office as she explained her determination to take on the mining industry.

"Not everyone has the guts and the wherewithal to stand on big business' toes. Right now I have that platform."

Lopez casts mining in a sinister light, accusing pow-

erful business figures and politicians involved in the industry of corruption and rapaciousness.

She insists mining is destroying the Southeast Asian archipelago's ecosystem, and that the natural resources on offer can be used in much more sustainable ways.

"We have 7,000 islands and if we rape the islands... and 95 percent of the wealth goes out of those islands, we will never see the light of day," Lopez said.

Lopez has ordered the closure or suspension of 28 mines which, if implemented, would leave just 12 in operation. She has also recommended the contracts of 75 planned mines be cancelled to protect watersheds.

Fightback

Mining Inc. is fighting back, with a public relations blitz insisting it is a law-abiding industry that generates billions of dollars for the economy and directly supports 1.2 million people.

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It has appealed to Duterte, who has spoken fiercely against the industry but nevertheless also has many promising figures in his Cabinet, to over-rule Lopez.

It is also lobbying for a congressional committee to reject her nomination as environment secretary when it conducts a confirmation hearing next month.

"This is the first time we have opposed an appointee of the President," Chamber of Mines of the Philippines vice president Ronald Recidoro told AFP.

"We've had to because our existence is on the line. If she is confirmed the mining industry is finished, we are done."

If Lopez survives as environment secretary and gets to serve her full six-year term, she has much bigger plans for remodelling the Philippine economy – and she is taking inspiration from the tiny Himalayan nation of Bhutan.

The Buddhist kingdom famously pursues an economic development model of "Gross National Happiness," which aims to balance spiritual and material wealth while taking into account the value of the environment and culture.

"I love the Bhutan model," Lopez said.

"They know if they kill their air, they kill their water, they will never ever be happy. And I find that quite enlightened."

Lopez dreams of a Philippines in which its rich biodi-

versity is capitalized on.

"We have barely begun to scratch the surface of what our country can offer the world," she said, citing sea sponges, shells and fruit she claimed could cure cancers.

"And the exciting thing is biodiversity is endemic. It is specific and exclusive to the Philippines. That sounds like a really good business deal."

'Path of Bliss'

Lopez has walked an unlikely path to becoming one of the most powerful women in the Philippines.

She belongs to one of the wealthiest families in the country. But Lopez exchanged a life of luxury as a young lady for one as a yoga missionary with a spiritual organization founded in India called Ananda Marga, or Path of Bliss.

Lopez spent two decades in Africa, India and Portugal promoting yoga and helping the underprivileged, before returning to the Philippines to raise two children.

Duterte has said he would be "happy to slaughter" three million drug addicts, and Amnesty International has warned he may be overseeing crimes against humanity.

Back home, Lopez earned a reputation as a passionate advocate for the environment, most notably with the charitable arm of her family's ABS-CBN media empire.

In his inaugural state of the nation address, Duterte described Lopez as a "crusader."

"We share the same paradigm: the interest of the country must come first," he said.

Many people overseas have a dark view of Duterte for waging a ruthless war on crime that has claimed thousands of lives.

Lopez has a different perspective. "He's genuine. He's the real thing," she said. "His love of people, his courage, his humility, it's real. And it's in this dimension that we resonate."

– AFP

Lopez unleashes rage on miners to protect environment

AFTER two decades as a yoga missionary, Environment Secretary Regina Lopez is unleashing her inner rage on the mining industry while aiming for Bhutan-style gross national happiness.

Lopez has in recent months moved global commodity markets with a campaign to close roughly two-thirds of the existing mines in the Philippines, which is the world's biggest supplier of nickel ore and a major source of copper.

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Lopez casts mining in a sinister light, accusing powerful business figures and politicians involved in the industry of corruption and rapaciousness.

She insists mining is destroying the Southeast Asian archipelago's ecosystem, and that the natural resources on offer can be used in much more sustainable ways.

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■ Environment Secretary Gina Lopez
AFP PHOTO

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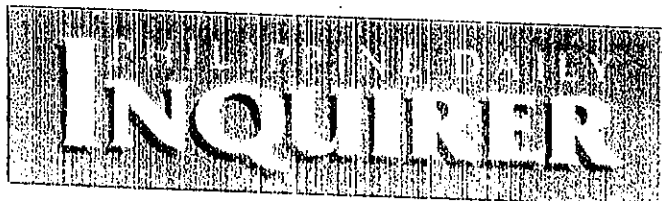
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5 groups to review DENR orders

Independent technical experts with no known conflict of interest

By Ben O. de Vera
@bendeveraINQ

The interagency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) will mobilize five technical groups to review the closure and suspension orders issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to 28 mining operations.

In a statement yesterday, the Department of Finance said the MICC technical working group (TWG) would delegate the three-month review to "five groups consisting of technical review experts who, for the sake of objectivity, shall be independent and have no known conflict of interest with the mining sector or any antimining nongovernment organization," cit-

ing the organizational framework adopted by the group when it met last Monday.

"Under the organizational framework, these five groups or technical review teams (TRTs) will go over the compliance of the 28 mine sites with applicable agreements, submissions, laws and regulations and impact of their operations, taking into account five as-

pects agreed upon during the Feb. 20 meeting of the TWG," the DOF said.

"Each TRT shall cover these five aspects that involve the technical, legal, social, environmental and economic (including the effect on agricultural reform areas) impacts of the mining operations," the DOF added.

"The review shall take off

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5 GROUPS TO REVIEW DENR ORDERS

FROM B1 or refer to the existing reports conducted by the DENR's audit team and technical review committee along with existing laws, rules and regulations," Finance Undersecretary Bayani H. Agabin said, adding that the DENR would make its audit findings available for the TRTs to review.

According to Agabin, the five TRTs would tap the academe and engage experts from state universities and colleges to help conduct the review.

"For the technical part of the review, the MICC will tap either a geologist, mining engineer or a metallurgical engineer from the private sector, while a lawyer, also from the private sector, will be hired to review the legal aspect," the DOF said. INQ

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Gov't to form 5 teams to review DENR mine closure, suspension orders

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLORES**

The government, through the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC), is creating five technical groups to review the mine closure orders and suspension of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The multi-stakeholder Technical Working Group (TWG) of the MICC is forming five technical groups that will conduct an "objective, fact-finding, science-based" review of the orders issued by the Environment Secretary Gina Lopez on the closure or suspension of 28 mine sites across the country.

According to the organizational framework adopted by the MICC's TWG during its first meeting earlier this week, the review will be conducted over a three-month period, beginning this March, by the five groups consisting of "technical review experts" who, for the sake of objectivity, "shall be independent and [have] no known conflict of interest" with the mining sector or any anti-mining nongovernment organization.

Under the organizational framework, these five groups or technical review teams (TRTs) will go over the compliance of the 28 mine sites with applicable agreements, submissions,

laws and regulations and impact of their operations.

Each TRT shall cover the technical, legal, social, environmental, and economic (including the effect on agricultural reform areas) impacts of the mining operations.

"This (review) it's pursuant to Executive Order 79, and our thrust, and as required, every two years, the MICC should review the mining operations," Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin said.

"The MICC is supposed to do every two years a multi-stakeholder review. So that's what we are doing," he added.

The DENR ordered last Feb. 2 the closure of 23 mine sites and the suspension of operations of five others across the country.

A week later, it ordered the cancellation of 75 mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs) still in the pre-operation stage that the government had forged with mining companies.

"The review shall take off or refer to the existing reports conducted by the DENR's audit team and Technical Review Committee along with existing laws, rules and regulations," said Agabin, who heads the Legal Affairs Group and Revenue Integrity Protection Service (RIPS) of the Department

of Finance (DOF).

He said the DENR will make its audit findings available for the TRTs to review.

The five TRTs will tap the academe and will engage experts from State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) to help conduct the review, he said.

For the technical part of the review, the MICC will tap either a geologist, mining engineer or a metallurgical engineer from the private sector, while a lawyer, also from the private sector, will be hired to review the legal aspect.

A community relations officer will also be involved in the social aspect, an environmental management officer will focus on the environmental impact, while representatives from the local government units, DOF, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and other concerned government agencies will go over the economic aspect of the review.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) and the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the DENR will also provide qualified technical personnel and provide available data and records to each TRT.

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MICC teams to review DENR order on closure of mine sites

THE multistakeholder Technical Working Group (TWG) of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) will form five technical groups that will conduct an "objective, fact-finding, science-based" review of the orders issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on the closure or suspension of 28 mine sites across the country.

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Such a review will be conducted over a three-month period, beginning this March, by the five groups consisting of "technical review experts" who, for the sake of objectivity, "shall be independent and [have] no known conflict of interest" with the mining sector or any anti-mining non-governmental organization, according to the organizational framework adopted by the MICC's TWG during its first meeting earlier this week.

Under the organizational framework, these five groups or technical review teams (TRTs) will go over the compliance of the 28 mine sites with applicable agreements, submissions, laws and regulations and impact of their operations, taking into account five aspects agreed upon during the February 26 meeting of the TWG.

The total number of mining contracts covered by MICC's review mandate, beginning with 23 sites shut down by the DENR

Each TRT shall cover these five aspects that involve the 1) technical, 2) legal, 3) social, 4) environmental and 5) economic (including the effect on agricultural reform areas) impacts of the mining operations.

"This [review], it's pursuant to Executive Order 79, and our thrust, and as required, every two years, the MICC should review the mining operations," Finance Undersecretary Bayani H. Agabin told the media after the MICC multistakeholder review meeting. "The MICC is supposed to do every two years a multistakeholder review. So that's what we are doing."

He said the TRTs will begin the review by focusing on the 28 mine sites suspended or shut down by the DENR.

The DENR ordered on February 2 the closure of 23 mine sites and the suspension of operations of five others across the country. A week later it ordered the cancellation of 75 mineral production sharing agreements still in the preoperation stage that the government had forged with mining companies.

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allurgical engineer from the private sector, while a lawyer, also from the private sector, will be hired to review the legal aspect.

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The Mines and Geosciences Bureau and the Environmental Management Bureau of the DENR will also provide qualified technical personnel and provide available data and records to each TRT. Agabin said the results of the review of the five TRTs will be submitted to the MICC's multistakeholder TWG.

"The TWG shall then verify the technical report before the final presentation to the MICC," he said.

The MICC will present the findings and submit its recommendations to the Office of the President, which shall make a final decision on the DENR's closure and suspension orders, Agabin said.

Agabin added the mandate of the MICC covers all 311 mining contracts across the country, but the review will first begin with the 23 sites ordered shut down by the DENR.

"The mines [which] already re-

ceived their orders shall be subjected to further review by qualified individuals or teams designated by the MICC. The schedule of review shall be based on the date of receipt of the DENR's order," Agabin said.

Ocular inspections of 28 affected mine sites and meetings with indigenous groups, the local governments, farmers and fishermen will be conducted, if deemed necessary by the review team, he added.

The funding for these efforts will be discussed with the Department of Budget and Management.

Besides Agabin, the MICC-TWG meeting was also attended by DENR Undersecretary Maria Paz Luna, and officials of the DENR legal service, along with representatives from the Office of the Executive Secretary, Office of the Solicitor General, the Office of the Chief Presidential Legal Counsel and the other government agencies called to the meeting.

The DENR's closure and suspension orders will cost 17 affected cities and municipalities in 10 provinces over P821 million annually in foregone revenues, according to updated estimates submitted by the DOF-attached Bureau of Local Government Finance (BLGF) earlier this week.

The latest estimates, which is an increase from the initial P653 million submitted by the BLGF, is based on the 100-percent compliance of city and municipal treasurers to a DOF order for each of them to submit a report on the revenue impact of the DENR orders on the affected LGUs. *Rea Cu with PNA*

MICC orders review of mine closures

BY ANGELA CELIS

THE Technical Working Group (TWG) of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) is forming five technical groups that will conduct a review of the orders issued by the Department of Environment and

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According to the organizational framework adopted by the MICC's TWG, the review will be conducted over a three-

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MICC

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Sub-groups formed to study DENR order

The multi-stakeholder Technical Working Group (TWG) of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) is forming five technical groups that will conduct an "objective, fact-finding, science-based" review of the orders issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on the closure or suspension of 28 mine sites across the country.

The review will be conducted over a three-month period, beginning this March, by the five groups consisting of "technical review experts" who, for the sake of objectivity, "shall be independent and (have) no known conflict of interest" with the mining sector or any anti-mining non-government organization, according to the organizational framework adopted by the MICC's TWG during its first meeting earlier this week.

Under the organizational framework, these five groups or technical review teams (TRTs) will go over the compliance of the 28 mine sites with applicable

agreements, submissions, laws and regulations and impact of their operations, taking into account five aspects agreed upon during the February 20 meeting of the TWG.

Each TRT shall cover these five aspects that involve 1) technical, 2) legal, 3) social, 4) environmental and 5) economic (including the effect on agricultural reform areas) impacts of the mining operations.

"This (review) it's pursuant to Executive Order 79, and our thrust, and as required, every two years, the MICC should review the mining operations,"

Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin said after the MICC multi-stakeholder review meeting.

"The MICC is supposed to do every two years a multi-stakeholder review. So that's what we are doing," he added.

He said the TRTs will begin the review by focusing on the 28 mine sites suspended or shut down by the DENR.

The DENR ordered last Feb. 2 the closure of 23 mine sites and

the suspension of operations of five others across the country.

A week later, it ordered the cancellation of 75 mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs) still in the pre-operation stage that the government had forged with mining companies.

"The review shall take off or refer to the existing reports conducted by the DENR's audit team and Technical Review Committee along with existing laws, rules and regulations," said Agabin, who heads the Legal Affairs Group and Revenue Integrity Protection Service of the Department of Finance (DoF).

He said the DENR will make its audit findings available for the TRTs to review.

The five TRTs will tap the academe and will engage experts from state universities and colleges (SUCs) to help conduct the review, he said.

For the technical part of the review, the MICC will tap either a geologist, mining engineer or a metallurgical engineer from the

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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR

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private sector, while a lawyer, also from the private sector, will be hired to review the legal aspect.

A community relations officer will be involved in the social aspect, an environmental management officer will focus on the environmental impact, while representatives from the local government units, DoF, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Trade and Industry, National Economic and Development Authority, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and other concerned government agencies will go over the economic aspect of the review.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau and the Environmental Management Bureau of the DENR will also provide qualified technical personnel and provide available data and records to each TRT.

Agabin said the results of the review of the five TRTs will be submitted to the MICC's multistakeholder TWG.

"The TWG shall then verify the

technical report before the final presentation to the MICC," he said.

The MICC will present its findings and submit its recommendations to the Office of the President, which shall make a final decision on the DENR's closure and suspension orders, Agabin said.

Agabin said the mandate of the MICC covers all 311 mining contracts across the country, but the review will first begin with the 23 sites ordered shut down by the DENR.

"The mines (which) already received their orders shall be subjected to further review by a qualified individuals or teams designated by the MICC. The schedule of review shall be based on the date of receipt of the DENR's order," Agabin said.

Ocular inspections of 28 affected mine sites and meetings with indigenous groups, the local governments, farmers and fishermen will be conducted if deemed necessary by the review team, he added.

Gi-Lo blames Inquirer for 'bribe story'

By Ronnel W. Domingo
and Dona Z. Pazzibugan
@Team Inquirer

An embattled Environment Secretary Gina Lopez hit back at the Inquirer on Thursday for reporting "stories" of corruption that she admitted were just rumors, even as she urged the powerful Commission on Appointments (CA) to give her a chance to prove her worth.

A visibly upset Lopez hastily called a press conference to stress that she did not accuse any CA member of being bribed to reject the confirmation of her appointment. The CA is scheduled to vote on her appointment on March 1.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines and a group of tribal chiefs from Mindanao

were among those opposing her confirmation.

"There is no implication or accusation of any corruption here. It's not fair for me to accuse anyone and I just heard stories," Lopez said on Thursday.

The Inquirer reported earlier this week that Lopez told members of the Rotary Club of Makati of an alleged bribe offer of P50 million for every CA member who would vote against her after she ordered the closure of 23 mines and the scrapping of 75 mining contracts.

She did not name names, and neither did she say where she got the information.

But she said then: "I was told every congressman was offered P50 million if they voted against

me. Well, people talk. Let the dice fall where it may."

Allegation made casually

In a turnaround, however, Lopez on Thursday admitted that she could not substantiate her claim, stressing that she made the allegation "casually."

"I would never have said it in a press con, but since the Inquirer put that on (paper), it is unfairly implicating people who I have met at the Commission on Appointments who I know to be honest," she said.

"I am not accusing anyone of corruption. I heard stories and there is no evidence at all. I said it casually and it was not appropriate for Inquirer to put it down as if it was an official statement. It's not fair to the CA. It looks like they're rocking the

boat to make trouble," she added.

Lopez said she did not mean to imply that any congressman was on the take "because there was just no evidence."

"Why do you put that? The way they worded it it's as if people are on the take. It's not true at all. I play it clean. I don't even accuse if there's no evidence," she continued.

Lopez, whose family owns the ABS-CBN media network, said she would not have mentioned the alleged bribe had she known there was a reporter around.

Irresponsibility

She also said she had her security detail beefed up, citing that the Philippines ranked second in the world where envi-

ronmentalists were targeted. She, however, has not received any threats, she added.

But two CA members criticized Lopez on Thursday, accusing her of sowing intrigue ahead of the confirmation hearing.

"It is the height of irresponsibility," said Iloilo City Rep. Jerry Treñas, the assistant minority leader on the CA, a constitutional body composed of senators and House members with the power to approve or disapprove appointments made by the President.

"I was personally hurt by her statement," Treñas told the Inquirer.

Isabela Rep. Rodolfo Albano III, the CA's majority leader, said Lopez should name the people she claimed were involved in this "alleged attempted bribery"

so they could face investigation.

Otherwise, she was just "merely engaging in innuendo and intrigues," Albano said.

"Is that an example of how she will run the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) should she be confirmed?" he said.

House Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas said Lopez's "unfair" remark "now puts undue pressure on the way they (the CA) will vote."

Environmentalists

Even so, environmentalists led by Antonio Oposa Jr. and Sonia Mendoza of the Mother Earth Foundation expressed their "all-out support" for Lopez and called for her immediate confirmation. —WITH A REPORT FROM DJYAP INQ

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Gina retracts bribery claim, says no proof

By Rio N. Araja
and Christine F. Herrera

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Regina Lopez retracted on Thursday her accusation that members of the Commission on Appointments each received a P50-million bribe to block her confirmation.

At a news conference, Lopez said she was not accusing the CA members and said she did not have any proof of the bribes.

"I am not accusing anyone. I don't have the evidence. I was just telling [about the supposed bribe] casually. I don't have any idea. This is my first time in politics," she told reporters.

She said she called a press briefing to immediately clarify

her statement.

"You can quote me on this. Politics is really messy. All I want to do is just to save water," she said, referring to her plan to close 75 mining companies operating in watershed areas.

After giving a talk about environmental protection before the Makati Business Club Tuesday, Lopez said she was "worried about the CA."

"I just answered casually. [But] There was no press [in that event]. [I said] I heard there was P50 million," she said.

"I don't know [all] those congressmen in the CA. Some people [there] I know because I like them, like [Manila Rep. Rosenda Ann] Sandy Ocampo."

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Gina...

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Lopez said Ocampo had helped her once in one of her river system projects in Manila.

She also expressed her approval of A-Teacher Rep. Julieta Cortuna and Davao Oriental Rep. Joel Almario, as well as Valenzuela City Rep. Wes Gatchalian.

She blamed the Philippine Daily Inquirer for coming out with an article based on her "casual" remarks before the Makati Business Club.

"I really heard there's a big kitty [out] there to make sure I don't get confirmed. That's what I heard but I don't have the evidence," she said.

She appealed to the CA to give her the chance to "clean the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. That is my promise to the President."

She said someone was just "rocking the boat to cause trouble."

"I am not hitting anyone."

She admitted there are corrupt agency officials.

"I know there is corruption at the DENR. Any regulatory body is a seabed of corruption," she said.

Lopez met with about 50 MBC members on Tuesday, during which she said that she was told that every congressman was offered P50 million if they voted against her confirmation.

She said she had met briefly with President Rodrigo Duterte about the mining closures.

"The President backs my decision," she said.

Lopez, however, lost the support of Almario, who chided her for making "irresponsible accusations" against the members of the CA.

He said he now agrees with Lopez's detractors that she is "unfit for the position."

"I have manifested in our CA meetings of the House contingent that I may perhaps vote to confirm her as I see her [as] incorruptible," Almario said.

As a matter of fact, Almario said, he even issued a press release supporting Lopez's closure orders

of mining operations and urged her to terminate or suspend DENR employees and officials who issued permits to these operations during the past administration.

"But her irresponsible and sweeping accusation shows there is some truth to what her detractors have been saying all along against her as unfit for the position," Almario said.

"And now as one of the 12 congressman-members of the Commission on Appointments, I am included as a suspect to her sweeping accusations," he said.

In another news conference in Quezon City, various non-government agencies came forward to support the confirmation of Lopez on March 1.

In an eight-minute video posted on her Facebook page, Lopez turned emotional and addressed her detractors, particularly a few of the mine owners, and called them "very greedy."

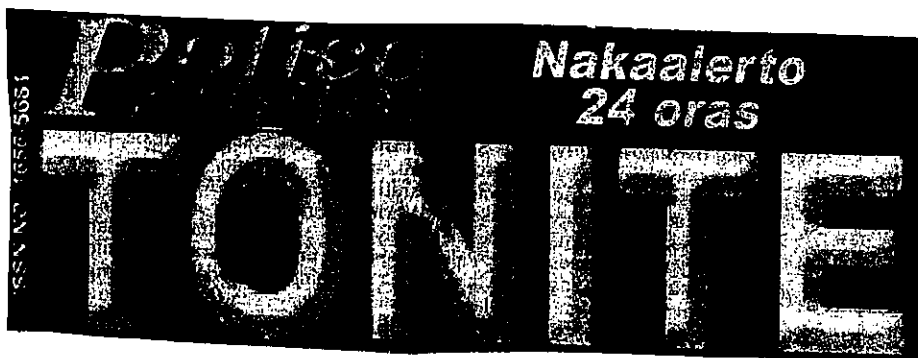
Before the business group, Lopez had said: "My confirmation is on March 1. Let the dice fall where it may. I don't care. I was told that every congressman was offered P50 million if they voted against me. I don't know. I heard there's a kitty out there. I don't know, that's people talking."

CA member Isabela Rep. Rodolfo Rodito Albano III chided Lopez and advised her to "stop acting like a prima donna."

"She heard? She just heard and she took it already as gospel truth? What's her motive for making it public? [So] that when the congressmen voted against her, people would think the CA members got bribed?" Albano said.

Following Lopez's statement against the lawmakers, the 12-member House contingent, led by its chairman San Juan City Rep. Ronaldo Zamora, canceled the "courtesy call" sought by Lopez with the House contingent.

Zamora said the contingent would just see Lopez on Wednesday during her confirmation hearing.



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Para 'di makumpirma sa CA

Sec. Lopez: Solons inalok ng P50-M para bumoto laban sa akin

IBINUNYAG kahapon ni Environment Sec. Gina Lopez na may mga mambabatas na inalok ng P50 milyon kapalit ng pag-boto laban sa kaniyang confirmation.

Ito'y matapos niyang iutos ang pagpapasara sa 23 minahan; at ibasura ang 75 mining contracts na nakakaapekto sa mga watershed areas.

Hindi naman tinukoy ni Lopez kung sino ang nanuhol sa mga kongresista, at hindi rin niya binanggit kung kanino niya ito nalaman.

May nag-sabi aniya sa kaniya na bawat kongresista ay inalok ng P50 milyon sakaling bumoto ang mga ito laban sa kaniya.

Ayon kay Lopez, batid niyang makakaapekto ang kaniyang mga naging desisyon sa kaniyang confirmation dahil pinopondohan ng mga minahan ang mga political campaigns.

Aniya pa, hindi na niya alam kung ano pa ang mga susunod na mangyayari kaya ginagawa na lang niya kung ano ang tama.

Nakatakda na ang pagpunta ni Lopez sa Commission on Appointment sa March 1 para sa kaniyang confirmation hearing.

Samantala, sinabi naman ni Lopez na nang makausap niya si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte noong Lunes, patuloy pa rin ang pagsuporta nito sa kaniya.

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'PRIMA DONNA' LOPEZ CHIDED



By Ryan Ponce Pacpaco

THE House contingent to the 12-man powerful Commission on Appointments (CA) yesterday told Environment Secretary Gina Lopez to stop acting like a "prima donna" at the expense of lawmakers and prove that she deserves her position.

Isabela Rep. Rodolfo "Rodito" Albano III, a CA member, stressed this after Lopez made a "sweeping allegation" that congressmen were bribed P50 million each to vote against her confirmation before the CA.

"I challenge Secretary Lopez to stop acting like a prima donna and instead explain why she deserved to be a DENR secretary despite strong opposition against her confirmation by several sectors," said Albano.

Lopez, on Wednesday, also stepped up her attacks against her critics, particularly the media and the miners, starting her tirades in an eight-minute video posted on her Facebook page after her "daily meditation" early morning that she said made her address the issues against her "really in a calm way."

Albano said the allegation of Lopez against CA

members about the P50 million bribe to vote against her confirmation is baseless and unfounded.

He said Lopez is complicating her situation because she has not been answering valid queries about the mining industry.

"She's making things difficult for herself. As it is, there are valid mining-related issues she has to explain. She made the situation worse," said Albano.

"Otherwise, she is merely engaging in innuendo and intrigue. I was inclined to support her until this irresponsible and unfounded statement from her," said Lopez.

The CA is headed by San Juan City Rep. Ronaldo Zamora, whose family owns Nickel Asia Corp., one of the largest mining companies in the country.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines has filed an opposition to the confirmation of Lopez, who has ordered the closure of 23 mines, suspension of five and the cancellation of 75 mine production-sharing agreements for allegedly destroying mountains and watersheds and polluting rivers.

Lopez is also under fire at the House of Representatives for ignoring invitations to hearings on mining-related bills.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

LOPEZ TOLD: STOP BEING A PRIMA DONNA

By RYAN PONCE PACPAGO

A HOUSE contingent to the 12-man powerful Commission on Appointments (CA) yesterday dared Environment Sec. Gina Lopez to stop acting like a "prima donna" at the expense of lawmakers and prove that she deserves her position.

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LOPEZ...

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Lopez is also under fire at the House of Representatives for ignoring the invitations several times on hearings about mining-related bills.

Ryan Ponce Pacpago

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Duterte backs mining ban in watershed areas

ENVIRONMENT secretary Regina Lopez said President Duterte had backed her decision to ban mining in watershed areas at a meeting earlier this week, winning his support once more for her crackdown on the sector.

"I met the president Monday... There was a NEDA board meeting and then I met the president for a few minutes

before he went into the room. I told him that I just want to assure that I followed due process and that I really believe that we should not mine inside our watersheds. He agreed (with) me," the environment chief told reporters in a briefing yesterday.

Duterte who warned last year the Philippines could survive without a mining sec-

tor had supported Lopez's decision this month to shut over half the country's mines. But he later did not rule out reviewing her order amid the potential revenue losses from mining.

"He said: 'I agree with you. Don't worry, you are my cabinet secretary and I also believe that there should be no mining in watersheds'," Lopez said

recalling her meeting with the president.

Lopez on February 2 ordered the closure of 23 of 41 mines in the world's top nickel ore supplier for environmental violations, saying many of them were in watershed zones that threaten water supply and quality. Another five mines were

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suspended.

Lopez also ordered the cancellation of 75 mining contracts, or nearly a third of mineral production sharing agreements for mines that have yet to go into production, for being located in watershed areas.

This developed as more mining firms disclosed they received orders from the DENR and said they will be exhausting legal measures to overturn them.

Lopez reiterated her stance on Thursday, saying she would not allow mining at the expense of the environment and people who depend on seas and farms for their livelihood. Lopez also repeated that her decisions were above board.

"Every step of the way, I followed due process," she said.

Lopez said added she is confident that with the president's support, the DENR decision will not be overturned especially that she followed due process. "His (Duterte) interest is due process but I can show proof that every step of the way, I followed due process. I followed it from beginning up until to the end and even in the beginning, I am backed up by the law," Lopez added.

The recent moves by Lopez, a staunch environmentalist long before she joined Duterte's cabinet last June, have angered domestic miners many of whom have appealed their case with the president.

Miners that have filed appeals with Duterte can continue operating unless he rules otherwise.

A mining industry group has

said the mining closures and suspensions would affect 1.2 million people.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines last week sought to block Lopez's appointment, saying her recent moves showed an "undeniable bias" against the sector. Lopez is among a few cabinet members who have yet to be confirmed by Congress and her next confirmation hearing is on March 1.

Amid the uproar, a government inter-agency panel will have its own review of the 28 affected mines that will begin in March and will take three months.

Benguet Corp. and subsidiary Benguet Corp. Nickel Mines Inc. filed a notice of appeal to the office of the president in connection with the cancellation orders dated February 8,

2017 DENR.

NiHAO Mineral Resources International Inc. said subsidiary Mina Tierra Gracia, Inc. (MTGI) received a show cause letter dated Feb. 13, 2017 from the DENR requiring them to explain why its Mineral Production Sharing Agreement should not be cancelled for being situated within a watershed area.

"Contrary to social media pronouncement and news reports, the show cause letter from the DENR is not a closure order. MTGI will respond to the show cause letter in due course," the company said.

TVI Resource Development Philippines Inc. (TVIRD) said there is no ground to validly cancel, terminate or suspend its MPSA with the government for its Balabag Gold-Silver prospect in

Zamboanga del Sur since there is neither violation of the terms of the agreement nor of any law, rule or regulation that would merit it.

The company said it received on Feb. 17, 2017 from the DENR the show cause letter dated Feb. 13, 2017.

"It is on this basis that TVIRD

vehemently assails in the strongest terms the arbitrary decision of the DENR to cancel its Balabag MPSA and the complete absence of respect for the sanctity of contracts entered into by both parties for their common development," said Eugene Mateo, TVIRD president.

Gina Lopez--Marcopper's legacy

BELOW, an excerpted reprint of my April 13, 1996 column on the Marcopper disaster:

There was an urgency to get for Marcopper, the ECC extension for another 10 years. Marcopper is in big trouble for its illegal mining. What happened at their mines?

When one digs deep enough, one reaches a depth where water starts filling up the hole, making the pit a mud pond. One way to get rid of the flood is to put a horizontal tunnel that will drain the water from the pit. Thereafter, the digging/mining can continue. As the water rises, it runs off the tunnel. There comes a point when the hole gets too deep that it is no longer profitable for the alien owners to continue digging. The tunnel is unable to drain the flood. It is then time to abandon the old mine, and start digging a new hole.

Mining in this new hole brings up great quantities of soil and debris. Where to dump? Unload all into the first pit, the pit with the tunnel. But first, the tunnel has got to be blocked, sealed, so that the new debris remains intact in the hole; its permanent burial place.

The old pit, the one with the locked tunnel leading to the river, continues to be loaded with more mine tailings from the new pit, year after year. It

is possible that because of the volume of the debris loaded into the old pit, that the blockage developed seepage.

Such situation must be familiar to John Looney. The opening of the old mine's tunnel was sealed. The seepage was ignored. Last month, March 24, this blockage burst. Chemical-loaded mine tailings, 1.5 million cubic meters, ran down from the mine, bursting the tunnel, surging down the Boac river communities toward Laylay Bay.

How bad? A radio interviewer asked the then Director Punongbayan of Philvolcs. If one were to believe Mr. P, there's nothing to worry about. At the onset, he volunteered that no one paid him to say what he had to say. Mr. P said he stuck his hand in the Boac river, and

nothing happened to his hand. Hand did not fall off, nor did the skin peel off, nor itch. This to Mr. P means that Boac river is a-okay.

What about the fish? There are dead fish floating, insists the patient interviewer. Those fish may have drowned. Drowned fish? What about the ecological balance of the area, such as the birds and fowl, asked the exasperated interviewer. Oh, the birds are still there—I spotted a kingfisher, Mr. P said.

Diyos ko. Unto Your hands I commend Boac River, Marinduque. [End of my column of 21 years ago, April 13, 1996.]

God bless you, Gina Lopez, President Duterte's cabinet



DAHLI ASPILLERA

John Looney, in front of a crowd, swallowed one single forkful of steamed Boac fish. Edible, not contaminated, this Marcopper president flaunted.'

member now concerned with Boac residents suffering from chemical pollution ailments. She is stopping the billions in net profit from illegal mining raked in by mine owners. Marinduque residents periphery of abandoned Marcopper mines are victims of ailments and deprivation that Secretary Lopez is attending to.

Exploited underground miners living a hand-to-mouth existence decade after decade, are today themselves begging to allow the illegal mines to stay open. They worry about being without jobs. They refuse to believe the government and Gina Lopez: That the resources of the mines will thereafter be for the benefit of local residents, instead of all the resources going to the foreign companies' millionaire owners, mostly abroad.

Miners' leaders worry that they all might starve to death without jobs in these illegal mine closings. This argument was used when Clark and Subic were to close—"Don't close the bases. The GROs and prostitutes will die of starvation." To date, none of the military bases girls had died from starvation and joblessness. They all found less degrading, respectable, safer means of livelihood.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Editorial

The DENR Doing its job?

“Absolute power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely,” according to British historian Lord Acton. Perhaps, no government agency has more absolute power than the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Although rarely, if ever, talked about, ask any member of the mining industry “off the record” and you will hear stories of the corruption in the DENR during past administrations.

It is with comfort that we assume these practices have ended under the Duterte/Lopez administration of the DENR. However, the controversy over the moves by Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez to suspend certain mining operations and cancel some 75 mineral production sharing agreements is not going to go away soon.

Issues of the transparency of the decisions and due process are probably going to be decided by the courts, and that is both a necessary and important development. It is vitally important the mining industry be held to the letter of the law and is equally vital the government properly enforces the law.

The legal mandate of the DENR, as stated in Executive Order 192, Series of 1987, says: “There is a need to protect and enhance the quality of the country’s environment. It is hereby declared the policy of the State to ensure the sustainable use, development, management, renewal and conservation of the country’s forest, mineral, land, off-shore areas and other natural resources”.

But also part of the mandate is to “increase the productivity of natural resources in order to meet the demands for forest, mineral and land resources of a growing population” and to “enhance the contribution of natural resources for achieving national economic and social development”.

While Lopez declares she is not “antimining”, it is difficult to find any series of statements from her about enhancing the contribution of natural resources, including mineral wealth, for achieving national economic and social development.

Further, nowhere in the DENR mandate is there a call to pick business-sector winners and losers in favoring “green jobs” over mineral-wealth extraction.

Lopez calls reference to the ecotourism project of Ugong Rock in Puerto Princesa, which is a success and can be duplicated across the nation. However, can we assume that the DENR is currently and actively cataloging other sites for a similar program?

Mining operations must protect the environment. But how can we compare a 25- to 50-year mining project, delivering sustainable revenue and employment, to that of Ugong Rock? It is unlikely tourists will return year after year for an annual pilgrimage to ride the zip line. Both are necessary, but this is an apples and mangoes comparison.

Now that the DENR has taken the first step of shutting down certain mining operations, can we expect that illegal mining—which is equally or even more destructive to the environment—will come under prohibition?

The current estimated value of the total proven mineral resources of the nation is \$2.1 trillion. If the DENR—and Congress—is not willing or capable of fulfilling its legal obligation to “ensure equitable sharing of the benefits derived therefrom for the welfare of the present and future generations of Filipinos”, then the country has a problem.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Ex-yoga missionary unleashes rage on Philippine miners

AFTER TWO decades as a yoga missionary, Philippine Environment Secretary Regina Lopez is unleashing her inner rage on the mining industry while aiming for Bhutan-style gross national happiness.

Ms. Lopez has in recent months moved global commodity markets with a campaign to close roughly two-thirds of the existing mines in the Philippines, which is the world's biggest supplier of nickel ore and a major source of copper.

For the 63-year-old, her sudden elevation by firebrand President Rodrigo Duterte to government last year after a lifetime of spiritual and environmental pursuits has presented an un-

expected chance to bring about radical change in society.

"This is a golden opportunity to do the right thing," Ms. Lopez, popularly known as Gina, told AFP in an interview on Wednesday at her bustling Manila office as she explained her determination to take on the mining industry.

"Not everyone has the guts and the wherewithal to stand on big business' toes. Right now I have that platform." —AFP

FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link <<https://goo.gl/TKx69Dk>>



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HINDI totoo ang sinasabi ng ilang negosyante na malaki ang kontribusyon ng minahan sa kaban ng Pilipinas. Ang rason: Ang malaking bahagi raw ng mga ginto ay palihim na inaangkat patungong Hong Kong.

Kadalasan, nangyayari raw ang puslitan sa rehiyon ng Mindanao, kung saan maraming minahan at kaunti lang ang tauhan ng gobyerno para magbantay sa iligal na gawain.

Tinatayang mga \$4 bilyon o nasa P200 bilyon sa pera natin, ang naitakas ng mga minero mula noong 2005 hanggang 2015.

Malaking bahagi ng 'smuggling' na ito ay ginawa noong panahon ni dating Pangulong Noynoy Aquino.

Ang perang ito na nawala ay nagamit sana ng gobyerno para mapaayos ang ating ekonomiya at imprastruktura, mapataas ang sahod ng mga guro at sundalo at mapaayos ang sistema ng edukasyon.

Kaya tama si Secretary Gina Lopez ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources na pigilan ang mga iligal na minahan.

Marami pa ring korup at hindi pa kaya ng Pilipinas ang malawakang pagbabantay ng industriya ng minahan na ang mga naglalaro ay malalaking tao na walang pakialam sa pagwasak ng ating kalikasan.

Noong panahon ni Aquino, higit 24 na kumpanyang Tsino ang pumasok sa negosyong pagmimina ng ginto.

Alam ng lahat na si Aquino, kasama na ang kandidato ng Partido Liberal noong 2016 na si Mar Roxas, ay malapit sa mga mayayamang minero at todo ang suporta nila sa industriyang ito.

Noong kampanya para sa eleksiyon ng 2016, madalas na ginagamit ni Roxas ang mga helicopter at eroplano ni Eric Gutierrez, ang may-ari ng San Roque Metals (SRM), isa sa pinakamalaking minahan sa bansa.

Si Congressman Edgar Erice, ang tagapagsalita ng Partido Liberal, ay naging chairman din ng SRMI.

Ayon sa datos mula sa U.N. Comtrade o United Nations International Trade Statistics Database, sinabi ng Hong Kong na \$5.3 bilyong ginto ang kanilang nakuha sa Pilipinas mula noong 2005 hanggang 2015.

Ngunit, ang ulat mula sa Pilipinas ay sinabing \$1.1 bilyong ginto lamang ang kanilang na-'export' patungong Hong Kong.

Saan napunta ang \$4.2 bilyon na ginto? Ang pagkakaibang ito raw ang halaga ng ginto na iligal na naitakas palabas ng Pilipinas.

Mga 86 na porsiyento raw ng 'smuggling' na ito



Mga may-ari ng mining company, malamang daw na pondohan ang mga kilos-protesta laban kay P-Digong

ay nangyari noong panahon ni Aquino.

Dahil sa malawakang pagpuslit ng ating likas na kayamanan, ginto ang naging numero unong 'import' ng Hong Kong mula sa Pilipinas.

May ginawang imbestigasyon ang Asian Sentinel tungkol dito at ito ang sinabi nila sa kanilang ulat na ang pamagat ay 'China's Filipino Gold Rush':

"Isang malawak at lumalaking ilog ng ginto na karamihan ay iligal ang hinuhukay mula sa Pilipinas ng mga kumpanyang Tsino at pumapasok daw ito sa Hong Kong bago ito iparating sa Tsina.

Ang mga minahan na Tsino ay kadalasang iligal at sila raw ang nag-aangkat ng ginto, nikel at iba pang mahahalagang mineral palabas ng mga datungan ng Pilipinas kung saan walang nagbabantay na Customs at marami rin daw ang mga opisyal na korup."

Sinabi rin ng Reuters sa isang ulat noong Agosto 2012: "Ang pangunahing pinanggagalingan ng gintong pumapasok sa Hong Kong ay ang Pilipinas."

Bagaman, lumabas ang mga balitang ito noong panahon ni Aquino, wala raw itong ginawa para ito ay pigilan. Katunayan, tumaas pa raw ang bilang ng na-smuggle na ginto mula \$590 milyon noong 2012, pataas ng \$716 milyon noong 2013.

Ayon sa batas, dapat ay 60 porsiyento ng mga gintong namimina sa bansa ay ibinebenta sa Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, para lumaki ang ating 'international reserves'. May buwis din dapat ang bawat pagbebenta ng ginto. Mayroong 5 porsiyento na withholding tax at 2 porsiyento na excise tax sa ginto.

Dahil P222 bilyon ang naitakas ng mga minero, nawalan ang Republika ng Pilipinas ng P14 bilyong buwis. Pera sana ito para sa bayan at sa mamamayan.

Galit daw ngayon kina Digong at Gina ang mga mayayamang minero.

At malamang daw dahil sa galit na ito ay popondohan nila ang kilos ng mga dilawang grupo na nagnanais pabagsakin ang administrasyong Duterte. Papayag ba ang taumbayan dito?

The Manila Times

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The Manila Times Business

Canadian mining firm: No basis for termination of MPSA

BY JAMES GALVEZ

THE local unit of Canada's TVI Pacific Inc. on Thursday stressed that there is no valid ground to cancel, suspend or terminate its Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) with the Philippine government, saying there is no government proclaimed watershed within its Balabag gold-silver project in Zamboanga del Sur.

"There is neither violation of the terms of the MPSA nor of any law, rule or regulation that would merit its cancellation, termination or suspension," TVIRD President

Atty. Eugene Mateo said in light of the recent proclamation to rescind the MPSAs of 75 mining companies on the basis of their projects being located in "func-

tional watersheds."

Mateo cited that Section 19 of Republic Act 7942 (or the Philippine Mining Act) provides that applications for mining permit shall not be allowed in "proclaimed watershed forest reserves," thus preventing the issuance of mining permits in these areas.

"In line with this, we can say that the Balabag Project is not located within the vicinity of any lake, spring or tributary enumerated in the country's list of proclaimed watershed forest reserves or any critical watershed that are included in the National Mapping and Resource Information

Authority (NAMRIA) and National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS)," he said.

Also, in answer to the assertion that DENR's review of the said MPSA "shows that the contract area is within a watershed, such that in case mining operation will be pursued therein, said operation, given its extractive and disruptive nature, is likely to cause impairment of the ecological functions of that watershed," Mateo said the agency neither specified which particular watershed it is referring to nor did it indicate what particular functions are being referenced, he added.

The Manila Times

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Because of the lack of a study or facts with more substantial references to offer than the phrase "likely to cause impairment," Mateo said that TVIRD deems the cancellation of the MPSA to have no merit.

"The entire land mass of the Philippines is covered by watersheds and all environmental professionals are aware that any project regardless of its kind and location throughout the country is within a watershed," he said.

He added that agricultural projects, water supply dams, hydropower projects and urban development are just a few activities that have significant impacts on the watershed environment and certainly may impair the ecological functions of watersheds. Some even more so than mining projects.

However, many of these projects have moved forward in spite of this, he said.

By virtue of its MPSA, Mateo said TVIRD was among the mining companies the government had invited to invest in Philippine mining projects and with whom the government signed contracts as partners in mineral resource development.

"On this basis, TVIRD invested in the development of Balabag and established environmental and social programs for the overall sustainability of its surrounding communities including the indigenous Subanens," he added.

As of December 2016, TVIRD has invested in excess of P1.5 billion to advance the Balabag project (located within the Balabag MPSA) while head office costs, management time, maintenance expenditures and necessary Capex to bring the project on-stream will easily bring investments to approx-

imately P3.0 billion, Mateo said.

"By entering into these contracts (MPSAs), both government and the company are bound to operate in the spirit of fairness and due process. In the case of violations, the law provides for a procedure that includes the filing of appropriate cases and invoking the arbitration clause of the mining agreements. The law further provides that such decisions should be based on reviews conducted by the DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau," he said.

It was only on February 17 that TVIRD received from the DENR the show cause letter dated February 13.

"It is on this basis that TVIRD vehemently assails in the strongest terms the arbitrary decision of the DENR to cancel its Balabag MPSA and the complete absence of respect for the sanctity of contracts entered into by both parties for their common development," Mateo said.

"Moreover, as TVIRD stands on the threshold of operating in Balabag, who then will sustain the development already put in place - and on which the company, the LGU and the communities' common progress hinge?" he added.

The spirit of social justice

TVIRD Operations Vice President Jake Foronda said that he "believes that social justice is not mutually exclusive to a single entity, organization or agency. But rather, it is the humanization of laws and the equalization of social and economic forces so that justice may be delivered, a principle that the Company has espoused in protecting its communities' inalienable rights and indigenous cultures, and the equitable distribution of resources."

The Manila Times

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Philex scores huge profits from 'large-scale' mining

BY EMETERIO Sd. PEREZ
Columnist

(First of a series)

PUBLIC investors, who trade on listed stocks, need only to access the website of the Philippine Stock Exchange for a summary of information about Philex Mining Corp., a listed company that uses PX as its market symbol.

Under "company information," Philex explains the primary purpose of its corporate existence. Incorporated on July 19, 1955, it is "primarily engaged in mining activities."

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■ PEREZ FROM A1

Philex scores huge profits from 'large-scale' mining

"The company and its subsidiaries," Philex informed investors through the PSE website, "are organized into two main business groupings." It said the metals business is "under PX, Philex Gold Philippines Inc. (PGPI) and Silangan Mindanao Mining Co. Inc. (SMMCI). The energy and hydrocarbon business is "under Philex Petroleum Corp."

Philex Petroleum has been renamed PXP Energy Corp., which, like Philex which owns it, is also a listed company. (More on PXP in another Due Diligencer.)

If Philex's mining activities are comprehensive, perhaps, they could also be described as "intensive."

Is Philex, by the way, also engaged in restoring the mountains, where it had profited from finds such as gold, silver and copper, to their "pristine glory?"



DUE
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EMETERIO
Sd. PEREZ

Indirect owner

The Indonesian-owned First Pacific Co. Ltd. is not listed among Philex's top 100 stockholders but is an indirect stockholder of the Philippines' biggest mining company through its subsidiaries and affiliates. One of them, Asia Link B.V., even topped the list as of Dec. 31, 2016 with 1.023 billion PX common shares, or 20.71 percent.

However, Twin Rivers Pacific Holdings, a significant stockholder, is identified as "Filipino," when, in fact, it belongs to the First Pacific group. It holds 738,871 million PX common shares, or 14.96 percent.

Hasn't anyone noticed any relation between Twin Rivers and First Pacific by the former's use of "Pacific" in its corporate name?

If the public investors are interested to know how an Indonesian company is related to Philex, they should ask the officials of the

Securities and Exchange Commission. If they don't have any access to anyone among the regulators but have extra funds to spend to satisfy their curiosity, they can do their own research by going over the corporate files of Philex's top 100 stockholders.

'Large-scale' mining

Through the PSE website, Philex defined for the public investors its mining activities by emphasizing that "PX and its subsidiaries are primarily engaged in large-scale exploration, development and utilization of mineral resources."

Philex found mining for gold and silver and copper very profitable. Otherwise, it could have abandoned one site where

it has been operating for more close to 60 years.

"The company," Philex said, referring to itself, "operated the Padcal mine for the past 58 years using the underground block-cave method." It described the site as "one of the oldest operating mines in the country and produces copper concentrates, containing copper, gold and silver."

In addition to Padcal, Philex said "PGPI operated the Bulawan mine in Negros Occidental until the second quarter of 2002. Silangan Mindanao Exploration Inc, through SMMCI, owns the Silangan project covering the Boyongan and Bayugo deposits in Surigao."

PGPI, of course, is a Philex subsidiary but, unlike the parent, is not a listed company.

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Atlas Mining hikes capital to P8.5 B

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corp. has increased its authorized capital stock to P8.5 billion from P6 billion.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange Wednesday, Atlas said the new capitalization comprises 8.5 billion common shares with a par value of P1 per share.

Major shareholders SM Investments Corp., Anglo Philippines Corp. and Alakor Corp. subscribed to the increase in capital of Atlas.

Atlas issued shares equivalent to at least 25 percent of the increased capital stock or 313.6 million shares to the said companies at P4.3842 per share for a total of P1.375 billion.

SMIC acquired 282.3 million or 90 percent of the shares for P1.24 billion.

Anglo subscribed to 25.09 million shares while Alakor 6.3 million shares.

Atlas said 25 percent of the amount subscribed or P343.75 million had been paid in cash upon execution of the subscription agreement.

At the same time, Atlas issued approximately 5.6 billion warrants and 5.6 billion underlying common shares of stock. The warrants were issued at the exercise price of P4.3842.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR under fire for Payatas closure

By **CHARISSA M. LUCI**

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has been under fire for ordering the Quezon City government to close down the Payatas dumpsite last month.

AKO BICOL party-list Rep. Rodel Batocabe, president of the House party-list coalition bloc, sought a congressional probe on the order made by Environment Secretary Gina Lopez on Jan. 21, 2017 supposedly due to ecological hazards.

"The transfer to an alternative landfill site will result in greater cost to the Quezon City government, considering that the proposed sites are located in areas outside Quezon City, which cost will in turn be passed on to the taxpayers," he said.

"The livelihood of scavengers who will be affected by the closure should also be considered," Batocabe said.

Spanning around four to six hectares, the landfill receives an estimated 500 garbage trucks daily with a fee of around P600 per ton, he noted.

The House leader filed

House Resolution 714 urging the House Committee on Metro Manila Development to look into the DENR's order.

"The Quezon City government has asked the DENR to give them until the end of the year to close down the Payatas landfill, citing needed preparations for the city's solid waste management system," Batocabe noted.

In a statement, Frederika Rentoy, who heads the City Environment Protection and Waste Management Department, said although they have been preparing for the closure of the waste facility since 2014, it would be best to defer the landfill's closure to the end of the year.

Rentoy said they support the DENR's decision, but they appealed for more time to prepare for the Payatas dumpsite's closure.

The Quezon City government has identified the landfills in Rodriguez in Rizal, Navotas and Vitas Marine loading station as possible facilities that could be utilized in the event the Payatas dump is closed down.

CLEAN UP EMB-NCR, LOPEZ URGED

This refers to the news story about the order of Environment Secretary Gina Lopez to close the Payatas dumpsite while Frederika Rentoy, head of

Quezon City's Environment Protection and Waste Management Department (EPWMD), is appealing for its extension ("Gina set on Payatas landfill closure,"

Metro, 1/21/17).

Congratulations, Secretary Lopez for the order. I pity the residents of Payatas, as well as those of subdivisions close to their community. Because of the dumpsite, they are exposed daily to health risks and endure the foul odor of garbage from QC and other Metro Manila cities illegally dumped in Payatas.

My daughter and her family, who are living in the vicinity of Payatas, are among the affected residents. They suffer from colds, cough, skin problems and asthma, especially her two children. That goes for the children in other nearby communities who also suffer from foul dumpsite odor, while waste effluents seep into the water table, possibly finding their way to the La Mesa Dam and Balara Filtration System, which provide us our drinking water. Water and air pollution from the dumpsite

can affect even areas far from QC.

The QC garbage business has been a huge source of corruption. Insiders say a very influential member of the QC Bids and Awards Committee, which screens business proponents, has favored dump truck contractors. However, go around QC, especially at nighttime up to early morning, and you will see mixed garbage, a lot of these in banned plastic bags of all sizes, on main roads, inner streets, sidewalks, bridges, markets. Open burning of unsegregated waste is rampant. What is QC's waste (mis)management department doing, and where are the environment police?

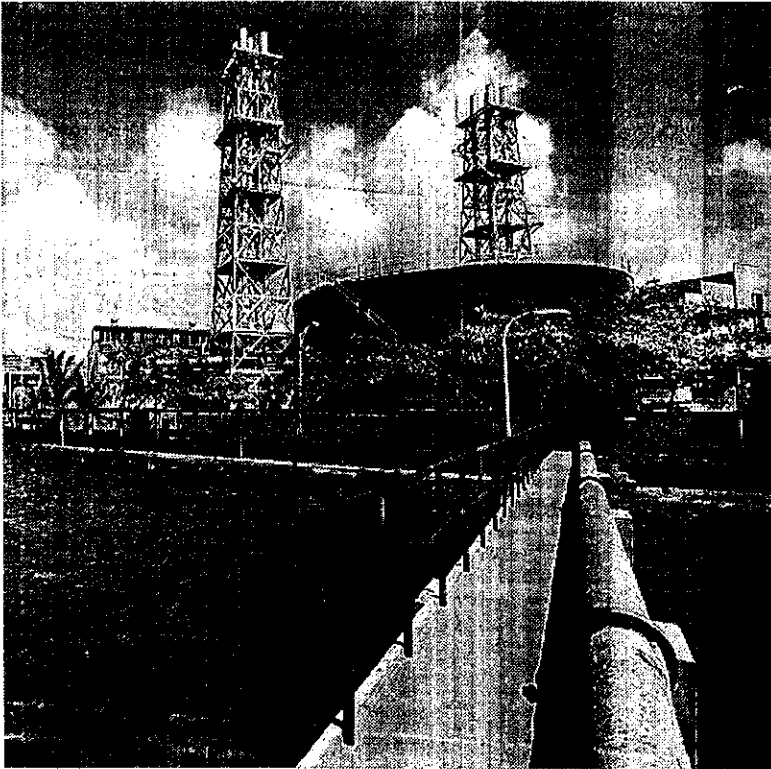
As for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Secretary Lopez should clean up the Environmental Management Bureau-National Capital Region (EMB-NCR). This office gives the environmental compliance certificates (ECCs) to dumpsite and similar businesses in Metro Manila. Why is the Payatas dumpsite still there if, as Secretary Lopez said, it contaminates La Mesa Dam and nearby bodies of water? What gives?

A former head of the powerful EMB, also approved the ECC for the Payatas dumpsite. Other offices and officials are also to blame for the existence of illegal dumpsites. These officials, according to the news, have a pending writ of kalikasan case with the Supreme Court ("SC grants plea to stop Payatas landfill operation, expansion," Inquirer.net, 9/7/15).

Secretary Lopez, I, my family and our friends support your order to close the Payatas dumpsite this March. No more extension please. Let the axe fall where it should. I also call on Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales, a mother too, to investigate officials of QC's EPWMD, EMB-NCR and the National Solid Waste Management Commission, a former official of the EMB, a QC garbage collection contractor and their cohorts. I heard that corruption at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources starts with "permitting."

MARISSA S. REAL,
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More AboitizPower plants pass safety, environmental audits



nal audit found that the Cebu Private Power Corp.'s 70-MW (megawatt) thermal plant in Ermita, Cebu City conforms with international standards on occupational safety and environmental management.

ABOITIZPOWER'S Oil Business Unit (BU) secured international certifications in occupational health and safety and environmental management upon the recommendation of TÜV Rheinland Philippines, Inc.

TÜV Rheinland Philippines—an affiliate of TÜV Rheinland, an internationally known technical testing organization for safety, efficiency and quality—conducted an audit on the Oil BU headquarters at the PFDA Bldg. and Therma Mobile, Inc. (TMO) in Navotas; Cebu Private Power Corporation in Barangay Ermita, Cebu City; Therma Marine, Inc. (M1) in Maco, Compostela Valley; and Therma Marine, Inc. (M2) in Nasipit, Agusan del Norte.

The power plants provide efficient and reliable peaking power to its customers in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao as part of AboitizPower's balanced mix strategy of tapping various power generation technologies to ensure ample power supply at a cost-effective rate.

The audits aimed to determine the Oil BU's conformance to OHSAS 18001:2007 (Occupational Health and Safety Management System) and ISO 14001:2004 (Environmental Management System) standards.

"I would like to congratulate each

and every one of you for a job well done. These certifications prove that our organization satisfies internationally recognized standards for safety, health and environmental management and is in line with our APGen (AboitizPower Generation) initiative of gearing up towards a world-class organization through IMS (integrated management system) Certification," AboitizPower Oil BU President and Chief Operating Officer Danel Aboitiz said.

"Safety and environmental standards are among the pillars of our business. Pursuing world-class practice in these areas limits operational risk, enhances stakeholder reputation and ensures we deliver a positive effect on the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit," Aboitiz said.

The Oil BU embarked on securing the OHSAS and ISO 14001 certifications to demonstrate that its facilities are safe for workers and host communities, and that their environmental impacts are minimized and managed. Conformances to the international certifications meant team members and team leaders of the Oil BU have adopted the principles and procedures on occupational health and safety and environmental manage-

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

PH scientist: Climate change is real, prompt preventive actions a must

By **MARTIN A. SADONGDONG**

The Earth, as seen from its orbit is never the same due to the adverse effects of climate change, yet a large number of people still believe it isn't happening.

This was the message stressed by Dr. Josefino Comiso, senior research scientist of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Goddard Space Flight Center, as he explained the "alarming and dominating" rate of the rising greenhouse gases (GHG) and its effect on the country.

'Quick melt'

Comiso, also a polar science expert, climatologist and satellite remote sensing scientist, cited the "quickly" melting phenomenon in Greenland during DOST-National Academy of Science and Technology's "Science Information Forum on Global Climate Change Signals as Observed from Space" held in Manila yesterday.

"The area of melt increased dramatically in Greenland in 2002 until 2012 where it was almost completely melted in a rate of three kilometers sheet (per year)" Comiso said at the Science Information Forum on Global Climate Change Signals as observed from Space.

Threat is real

So why do we have to worry if

we are thousands of kilometers away from Greenland?

"We have a lot of islands, thousands of them. If ice melts, it causes rise in regional sea level... about seven feet. Why do we have to worry? Our islands are likely to disappear, that's why," Comiso said.

Comiso added that due to the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the ultraviolet rays entering the ozone layer could not escape, thus, warming the Earth and melting the ice sheets.

The trapped heat is also causing a rise of three to four degree Celsius in the global temperature.

Typhoon Yolanda warning

With the rising sea levels, Comiso cited the super-typhoon Yolanda which hit the Philippines in 2013, regarded as the strongest typhoon ever recorded.

Super-typhoon Yolanda or Typhoon Haiyan (international name) recorded 81 in the Dvorak scale, a tropical cyclone intensity measuring instrument used in NASA. What is alarming is that it passed the upper limit of 80.

"So you see, with the signals we are seeing, melting of ice caps in other regions, rising sea level, hotter temperature, the effects are inevitable. Typhoon Yolanda (recorded) 6,340 deaths, maybe more," he said.

Comiso said that due to the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the ultraviolet rays entering the ozone layer could not escape, thus, warming the Earth and melting the ice sheets.

The trapped heat is also causing a rise of three to four degree Celsius in the global temperature.

What now?

"Effective mitigation, reducing the greenhouse gases for one, requires international efforts. There should be more emphasis on strategies for adaptation, risk and resiliency," Comiso said.

"Planning and implementation should start as soon as possible. Postponing will only make the cost more expensive," Comiso said.

NAST member

Prior to the forum, Comiso was conferred by the DOST as NAST's newest corresponding member.

DOST Secretary Fortunato dela Peña expressed his gratitude to Comiso as the science chief recognized his significant contributions to the science community and to the public.

Comiso is one of the founding members of the Philippine-American Academy of Science and Engineering with more than 200 highly-skilled scientists, engineers and scholars from the Philippines and other countries.



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TUMATAAS NA TEMPERATURA SA BAGUIO CITY, NANGANGAHULUGANG MALAPIT NA ANG TAG-INIT

TUMATAAS na ngayon ang temperatura sa Baguio City, indikasyon ng pagsisimula ng tag-init at pagtatapos ng malamig na panahon na naranasan ng lungsod sa nakalipas na mga linggo.

Inihayag ng local weather forecaster na si Eugene Ventura nitong Miyerkules na dakong 6:00 ng umaga nang maitala ang mababang temperatura na may 14.8°C at naitala ang pinakamataas na temperatura nitong Martes sa 24°C.

Ang naitalang pinakamababang temperatura ngayong taon ay 7.3°C, dakong 6:00 ng umaga noong Pebrero 15.

Makikita sa talaan ng Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration na ang pinakamababang temperaturang naitala sa Baguio City ay 6.3°C noong Enero 18, 1961 at naitala ang 7.1°C noong Enero 9, 1971.

Ang 7.3°C na naitala ngayong buwan ang ikalimang pinakamababa sa kasaysayan simula noong 1961; noong Pebrero 28, 1963 nang naitala ang 6.7°C; 6.8°C noong Enero 8, 1986 at 1971; at 7.3°C ngayong 2017.

Nagdulot ng pagyeyelo ang pinakamababang temperaturang naitala ng lokal na tanggapan ng Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration sa matataas na bahagi ng Benguet at Mountain Province, ngunit hindi naman ito nakasama sa mga semi-temperate vegetable, na nasa vegetative at flowering stages ang kabuuan.

Naranasan na ito ng mga magsasaka sa mga nagdaang panahon kaya nagkaroon na sila ng kaalaman kung paano masosolusyunan ang pagyeyelo tuwing umaga sa kanilang mga taniman.

Sa Mount Sto. Tomas sa Tuba, Benguet naitala ang pinakamababang temperatura na 4.5°C habang naitala ang pinakamababang 5.6°C sa Madaymen, Kibungan, Benguet noong Pebrero 15.

Umabot na rin ang temperatura sa tuktok ng Mt. Pulag sa Kabayan, Benguet sa pagitan ng 2° at 5°C nitong Pebrero 11-16. Ang Mt. Pulag ang pangalawa sa pinakamataas na bundok sa bansa.

Nagsimula ang pagbaba ng temperatura sa lungsod noong Pebrero 11 nang bumaba ang temperatura sa 9.6°C, at lalo pang bumaba sa nakalipas na limang araw dahil sa northeast monsoon o amihan at maulap na langit.

Sinabi ni Ventura na inaasahang tataas pa ang temperatura ng Baguio City at Benguet sa 25.2°, at mababang 14.5° hanggang Marso 2017.

Madalas nagsisimula ang malamig na panahon sa lungsod at sa iba pang matataas na lugar sa Benguet at Mountain Province sa pagitan ng Nobyembre at Marso bagamat nakadepende ang malamig na panahon sa lakas ng amihan, dagdag ni Ventura.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

LGUUs tapped for illegal logging fight

NAVAL, Biliran – With illegal logging still a problem in some villages in the province of Biliran, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Eastern Visayas plans to deputize local government unit (LGU) officials to help the agency's campaign not only on illegal logging but against all forms of illegal activities.

"I will bring my team here in Naval town," vowed DENR Regional Executive Director Leonardo R. Sibbaluca during the one-day convergence last Wednesday of heads of national government

agencies, local government officials and development stakeholders dubbed as Tagpo-Kauswagan sa Naval (Convergence for Naval's Progress).

Sibbaluca's proposal came into the picture after one of the barangay officials in Naval reported of illegal logging in his area.

He assured Naval Mayor Gerard Roger M. Espina that barangay officials will be deputized as forest officers with authority to confiscate illegally cut logs.

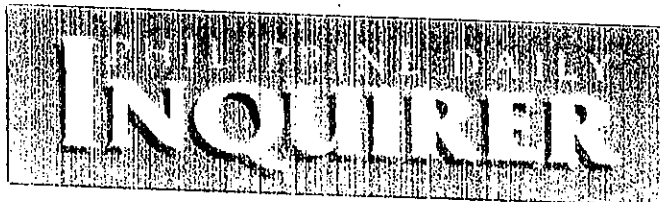
Sibbaluca said he will donate the confiscated logs to deputized officials

along with equipment like chainsaws and transport.

"Please help us," Sibbaluca appealed to the LGU officials after admitting his agency is short of people to carry out the campaign against illegal logging and fishing.

Sibbaluca said he will bring his team in Naval to hold a one-day training for deputized environmental officers, who will be issued with deputation papers.

He said the DENR has already deputized environmental officers in Samar provinces. (PIA)



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DENR ORDER

BANAHAW STILL OFF-LIMITS

LUCENA CITY—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has warned pilgrims and outdoor enthusiasts against groups offering trips to Mt. Banahaw for a fee.

These mountains are still off-limits to the public, according to Salud Pangan, DENR park superintendent for Mts. Banahaw and San Cristobal.

She said the DENR had not issued permits to any group to go to restricted areas of the mountain.

Thousands visit Mt. Banahaw during the Lenten season to pray in its sacred sites and commune with nature.

In 2004, authorities installed barbed-wire fences to seal off several trails leading to the mountain's interior to start a program to revive its natural resources.

Environment personnel have attributed the deteriorating conditions of the mountain to years of abuse by visitors.

The Mounts Banahaw-San Cristobal Protected Landscape-Protected Area Management Board last year decided to extend the mountain's closure until February 2019, to protect the gains from long years of reforestation and rehabilitation.

The multisectoral body was created by law to keep watch over government-declared protected areas.

The 10,901-hectare Banahaw and San Cristobal straddle the towns of Lucban, Tayabas, Sariaya, Candelaria and Dolores in Quezon province, and parts of the towns of Rizal, Nagcarlan, Liliw and Majayjay, and San Pablo City in Laguna province. —DELFIN T. MALLARI JR. INQ

MABILIS SA BALITA

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Sinamahan si Sen. Cynthia Villar nina Senators Nancy Binay at Loren Legarda sa pagbubukas ng exhibit na 'Wetland Wonders of the Philippines' sa Senado. Ipinakikita sa exhibit ang pitong pangunahing lugar sa bansa na idineklarang Wetlands of International Importance ng Ramsar Convention at binibigyang pansin ang kahalagahan ng pangangalaga at pagpapanatili sa wetlands para sa survival ng marine resources at disaster risk prevention. Dumalo rin sa ribbon-cutting ceremony sina Department of Environment and Natural Resources National Capital Region Dir. Lourdes Wagan at Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Eco-Tourism Area Focal Leader Rey Aguinaldo.