

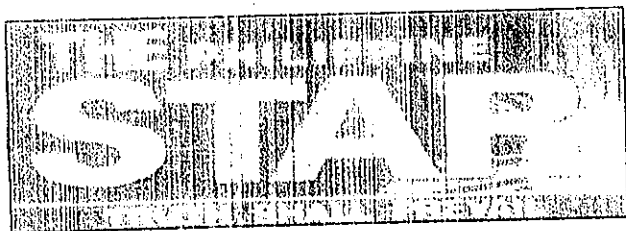
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DATE : 05 OCT 2016

DAY : Wednesday

# DENR

## IN THE NEWS



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## CTalk

By CITO BELTRAN

## The way of the elephant

He was a former US Marine drill sergeant of few words and even less patience dealing with slackers and violators. Fortunately, I was not a recruit and he was no longer in the service. That however was small comfort knowing he was the man that cited numerous environmental control violations at a development project acquired by my employers.



The original developer had piled up several violations so the Local EPA or Environment Protection Agency got fed up and sent us notice to fix the problems or be completely shut down.

I did not realize I had been sent to the Lion's den. I was completely clueless and so I simply told him: "Sir, I am totally ignorant about environmental controls! But if you would give me the list of violations, teach me what needs to be done to correct each violation, and allow me to check with you from time to time, I give you my word of honor that I will get the job done." With a wicked glint in eyes he said: "This I gotta see."

I got the three-page single spaced list of violations, asked the "Drill Sergeant" for very detailed instructions as well as recommended suppliers and essentially did everything myself and made sure that the standard of work was double than required on the list. Mr. Eagle Eyes kept his part of the bargain by stalking the job site until he was eventually convinced that we were committed to environmental protection and compliance.

I'm sharing this story in relation to the state of affairs of the mining industry and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) that has been a hot topic in the pages of most business sections. For transparency sake, I have a bit of a bias against "mining" after the disaster left by Marcopper in Marinduque as well as a number of other serious environmental damages done by smaller legal or illegal miners.

However, a man is no match against an elephant in size and strength. The best approach would be to tame, train and benefit from the size and strength of the elephant. The problem in the Philippines is we have not properly dealt with the elephant called "mining" for everyone's advantage.

DENR Secretary Gina Lopez is quoted as saying that she would rather "help the mining firms get their act together instead of opening the field to new companies." That is exactly what needs to be done. Just like the Marine Sergeant, Secretary Lopez should call in the

publicly announcing the list of 20 suspended mining firms. I welcome the get-tough stance on erring firms, but are the so-called violations an overnight development or are some people in the department cutting the mining companies loose in order to save their own skin or careers for failing to do their jobs right? When the DENR came out with the list of the 20 suspended firms during a Press conference, one or two firms claimed being "the last to know - first to suffer."

A source quotes a CEO as saying: As far as we know, we have been fully compliant not just with DENR requirements but as well as with our global standards and practices. The announcement totally blind-sided us."

Sec. Gina's idea of making the mining industry get their act together may be a pipe dream because I've heard that there is discord within the industry, even discontent with the way the Chamber of Mines has been going about its business representing the industry players. Some want a more professional approach while those ruling the roost insist on relying on connections and lobby. Funny thing is they need all of the above and then some.

One thing that works against mining firms is that they do business in the provinces but pay taxes in Makati that already makes more money than it needs. Meanwhile provincial governments and other LGUs are left wanting, wishing and pissed off having to beg or fight for what is rightfully theirs in tax money. If the bulk of tax money is paid to provinces, this would fast track development in the most far-flung places where mining firms and resorts operate. All companies should be made to pay taxes where they conduct business or generate their income and not where it is convenient for their lawyers and accountants to do their work!

The DENR and the DILG should also determine who has jurisdiction on tax earnings since many mines cover large areas, multiple towns even a province or two. An anti-mine advocate once told me that in their area two provinces are tied up in court as to who gets the tax money and the case remains hanging after three years.

In the most recent controversy, I read the words "social issues" alongside "violations." Let's all be honest about it, an elephant may seem genteel but its core value is still its strength. We can agree or disagree about their purpose but there is no disagreeing that they can be destructive in their feeding patterns, they scar the land when they walk about and they leave large mounds of poop. Whatever good they serve, they make a mess. Someone else will have to clean up the mess or we will step in it or drive through it.

The same goes for mining firms, the nature of the business is and will be disruptive and 'destructive.' That's why we call it mining. It makes no sense to expect the elephants and the mining companies to clean up after themselves and make the communities happy. That is not their core competency. Let the mines pay for the cost of doing business, get tree huggers and

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Workers of suspended mining firms will not lose jobs—Lopez

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

✉ @jonlmayuga

**E**NVIRONMENT Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez said suspended mining companies should employ displaced mine workers in the rehabilitation areas affected by their operations.

Lopez had ordered Senor Undersecretary Leo L. Jasareno to make sure none of the mine workers would be laid off in case of suspension of operations.

A former director of the DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), Jasareno is Lopez's designated point man for mining and environmental management.

He also led the 16 audit mine teams that evaluated the 41 operating metallic mines.

Lopez wants to make sure that the workers will not end up losing their bread and butter by making sure that they are utilized in the conduct of the mine rehab as a condition of the suspension order.



LOPEZ: "No, the workers won't lose their jobs. It will be part of the order. They [mining companies] must hire those people to rehabilitate the mines."

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has so far ordered the suspension of 10 large-scale operating mines and issued show-cause orders to 20 others that failed the audit it conducted in August.

Asked by the BUSINESSMIRROR about the fate of the workers in case of suspension, Lopez reiterated her commitment to the people in areas affected by mining, as well as workers who are facing possible suspension.

"No, the workers won't lose their jobs. It will be part of the order. They [mining companies] must hire those people to rehabilitate

the mines," she said.

In a meanwhile, Lopez said the department is looking at replicating a biochar project used in Zambales as a tool for mine rehabilitation in various parts of the country.

Biochar is a type of charcoal produced by burning only a small amount of oxygen.

This enables the carbon to be absorbed by the plants and prevent it from accumulating in the atmosphere.

Last week Lopez met with executives of mining companies to propose a much viable sustainable livelihood program that will benefit the communities where their projects operate.

During the meeting, Lopez presented her models of ecotourism sites to give the mining executives some ideas on how to help communities get out of poverty.

Lopez earlier vowed to tap the displaced mine workers for the National Greening Program (NGP), the government's massive forest-rehabilitation program.

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Miners confident Lopez's conditions easy to hurdle

**A** MINING audit in the world's top nickel supplier that's threatened mass closures may see producers prevail, with companies signaling their confidence shutdowns can be avoided, as they race to remedy problems flagged in the nationwide Philippine checkup. Futures dropped.

Nickel Asia Corp. said its Hinatuan Mining Corp. unit, among those slated for closure unless it fixes shortcomings, remains in operation a week after the audit's findings, and it's expected to stay that way, according to a statement on Tuesday. Separately, OceanaGold Corp. said its Didipio copper-gold mine is also still in business, and talks with officials have been constructive.

"I am highly confident that our Didipio operations will continue to operate without interruption," OceanaGold President and CEO Mick F. Wilkes said in an exchange release on Tuesday. Talks include discussions with Environment Secretary Regina L. Paz Lopez, who's led the checkup, and the company said it was sticking with full-year production guidance for the site.

The government said last week that three-quarters of the nation's mines fell short in the audit ordered by President Duterte, with 20 mines facing suspension on top of 10 already halted. The prospects of significant interruptions to the flow of minerals, especially nickel ore, have helped to lift prices in a market that already faces a deficit. The country accounts for about a quarter of global mined nickel supply.

#### 'Not be suspended'

"WE remain confident that HMC's operation will not be suspended," Nickel Asia President Gerard H. Brimo said in a statement, using the initials for Hinatuan Mining Corp. The social and environmental standards being employed at the project are the same standards, as the company has at its other local operations, which haven't been targeted for shortcomings, he said.

Nickel lost as much as 1.1 percent to \$10,235 a metric ton on the London Metal Exchange, and was at \$10,315 at 4:25 p.m. in Manila, paring its gain this year to 17 percent. Prices surged to as much as \$10,900 on September 27, as Lopez presented the list of mines recommended for suspension.

The country's top miners group said on Tuesday while there remains a real threat to many companies' existence, the one-page letters from the environment department to members detailing grounds for suspension often listed administrative matters. These ranged from "small violations" of the mining act to insufficient tree-planting; Ronald S. Recidoro, vice president for legal and policy at the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, said in an interview.

#### 'Bend backward'

MORE difficult to address within the permitted weeklong time-frame were so-called social-acceptability findings, according to Recidoro. "How do you solve that in seven days?" he said. "Right

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Miners. . .

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now, we will exert all efforts to work with the government. If we can bend backward to fix perceived issues, we will do it."

Other miners have said they will probably prevail, too. Canada's TVI Pacific Inc. said last week its Agata nickel mine, which was recommended for suspension, remains in operation and the company is confident it'll be able to address concerns raised by Lopez. On Friday Marcventures Holdings Inc. said the audit findings are defensible and can be reversed.

While Deutsche Bank AG raised the possibility this week that nickel may surge to as much as \$14,000 a ton in the event of a significant wave of mine closures in the Southeast Asian nation, the bank cautioned that "the magnitude of the rally will, of course, depend on the final outcome" of the environmental audit.

Outlining three potential outcomes for the loss of nickel supply, the bank said in a report there may be symbolic closures totaling 50,000 tons of contained nickel, a more significant scenario with losses of 200,000 tons, and a third possibility, with shutdowns preceding a total ban on unprocessed ore exports. *Bloomberg News*

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Mining companies may avoid shutdowns in audit

A MINING audit in the world's top nickel supplier that threatened mass closures may see producers prevail, with companies signaling their confidence shutdowns can be avoided as they race to remedy problems flagged in the nationwide Philippine check-up. Futures dropped.

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"I am highly confident that our Didipio operations will continue to operate without interruption," OceanaGold President and Chief Executive Officer Mick Wilkes said in an exchange release on Tuesday. Talks include discussions with Environment Secretary Regina L. Lopez, who led the checkup, and the company said it was sticking with full-year production guidance for the site.

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The country's top miners' group said while there remains a real threat to many companies' existence, the one-page letter from the Environment department to members detailing grounds for suspension often listed administrative matters. These ranged from "small violations" of the mining act to insufficient tree-planting. Ronald Recidoro, vice-president for legal and policy at the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, said in an interview.

More difficult to address within the permitted week-long timeframe were so-called social-acceptability findings, according to Mr. Recidoro. "How do you solve that in seven days?" he said. "Right now, we will exert all efforts to work with government. If we can bend backward to fix perceived issues, we will do it."

Other miners have said they will probably prevail, too. TVI Pacific, Inc. said last week its Agata nickel mine, which was recommended for suspension, remains in operation and the company is confident it'll be able to address concerns raised by Ms. Lopez. On Friday, Marcventures Holdings, Inc. said the audit findings are defensible and can be reversed.

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## Nickel Asia says Hinatuan mine follows same green standards as 3 other mines

NICKEL Asia Corp. (NAC) yesterday said its subsidiary Hinatuan Mining Corp. which was recommended for suspension by the government follows the same environmental standards by three other units that passed the audit.

"We remain confident HMC's operation will not be suspended," said Gerard Brimo, NAC president and chief executive officer, in a letter to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

HMC was recommended for suspension due to alleged violation of conditions set forth in its environmental compliance certificate. The three other firms under NAC are Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corp., Taganito Mining Corp. and Cagdianao Mining Corp. which passed the audit.

But NAC assured a suspension of HMC will not have a significant effect on the company.

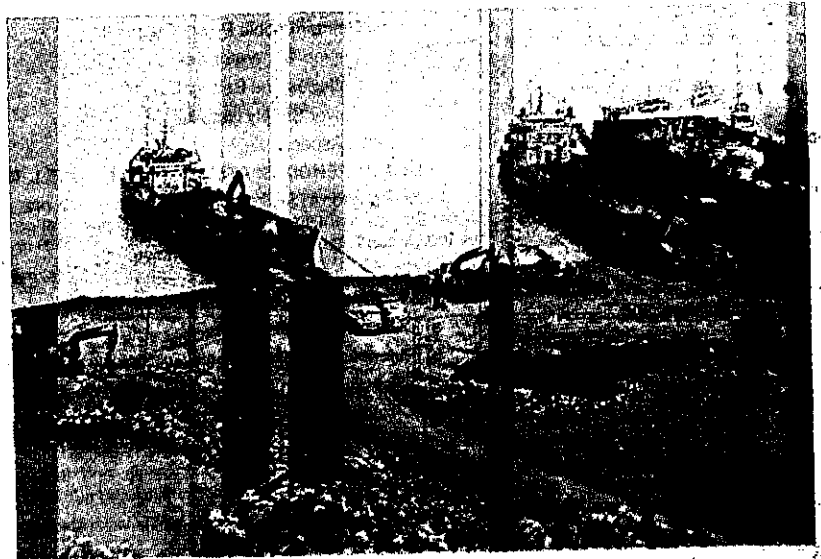
"In 2015, HMC contributed 15 percent to NAC's consolidated earnings from its mining operations. For the six month period ended June 30, 2016, HMC contributed 13 percent of NAC's consolidated earnings from its mining operations. As such, any possible suspension of HMC's operations will not have a significant impact on NAC," Brimo said in the letter.

NAC earlier disclosed it recorded a 98 percent drop in its attributable net income for the first half of the year to only P24.4 million from P1.49 billion in the same period a year ago due to the losses it absorbed from its equity interests from two mineral processing plants.

Aside from mining, NAC is also involved in renewable energy investments.

NAC plans to build a 150 megawatts (MW) solar and wind hybrid plant in Subic while the other locations will be sites for geothermal plants.

NAC's power generation subsidiary Emerging Power Inc. has completed the drilling of eight wells in its Biliran prospect that could initially supply 21 MW by 2017 and an additional 31.5 MW by 2018.



Nickel Asia said Hinatuan follows the same environment standards as affiliates Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corp., Taganito Mining Corp. and Cagdianao Mining Corp.

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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

## Indonesia 'still discussing' overturning nickel ore ban

JAKARTA - Indonesia is still considering whether to resume nickel ore exports amid broader talks on the mining rules in

Southeast Asia's biggest economy, the mining minister said on Tuesday, and expects to make a decision within weeks.

The country is thinking of giving mining companies a further three to five years to complete smelter projects before banning mineral exports, the country's mining minister said on Tuesday.

Miners that have not built smelters within five years could have their permits revoked, minister Luhut Pandjaitan told reporters.

"We will provide an opportunity to companies building smelters, in the form of a relaxation in stages, in accordance with progress on smelter development," Pandjaitan said.

"They will also have to pay an export tax that we will impose in stages according to their smelter development progress."

The change would be a potential breakthrough to miners like U.S. giant Freeport McMoRan Inc. which under existing rules would not be allowed to export copper concentrate beyond January 2017.

Indonesia banned exports of unprocessed nickel ore in 2014. Smelter companies have said they fear a reversal of the ban would undermine prices of the metal and put at risk up to \$12 billion in investments.

"It is still being discussed whether nickel (ore) can be exported or not," Pandjaitan told reporters, referring to rules on nickel ore. The government expects to reach a decision on the rules within weeks, he said.

Pandjaitan said the government was looking into rules on ore with a 1.8 percent nickel content, "because no one can process it domestically. Perhaps we will consider exporting it."

The Philippines took the crown as the world's top nickel ore exporter after Indonesia banned nickel ore shipments, and now accounts for around one-quarter of the world's mined nickel supply, most of which is shipped to China.

But Indonesia has found compensation in shipping nickel pig iron to China, India and other buyers, and the industry now worries that resuming ore exports could undermine the prices for such semi-finished and refined metals.

"Actually no one supports there being ore (exports) any more," Jonatan Handojo, executive director of Indonesia's main smelter industry association, told Reuters.

Overturning the ban would go against the wishes of most of the participants in Indonesia's nickel smelter industry, Handojo said, dismissing a "handful" of companies, such as Indonesian state owned miner Aneka Tambang which hope that Indonesia will again open up nickel ore exports to prop up income and support financing for smelter investments.

Pandjaitan said: "There is no way we can satisfy everyone, but we are trying to be as fair as possible, and to act in the interests of the government, the people of Indonesia and investors in that sector."

Nickel prices hit a seven-week high of \$10,900 a tonne on the London Metal Exchange last week, after the Philippines intensified its environmental crackdown on nickel miners.

Pandjaitan also said on Tuesday that companies mining other ores might be given a further three to five years to complete smelter projects before banning mineral exports completely, potentially pushing back a deadline for full domestic mineral processing to 2022.



# THE STANDARD

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Mining employees to keep jobs — Lopez

By Anna Leah E. Gonzales

EMPLOYEES of 20 mining companies that were recommended for suspension will keep their jobs for the moment, Environment Secretary Regina Lopez said Tuesday.

Lopez, in a meeting with mining executives, assured that workers would not end up unemployed, as they would be used in the rehabilitation of mine sites, which was one of the conditions imposed by the Environment Department.

Lopez said the goal was to make sure that workers would continue to work despite the suspension of mining operations.

"No, they won't be [unemployed]... A part of the directive, should there be suspension, is that they [mining companies] must hire those people to rehabilitate the mining sites," Lopez said.

Lopez met with executives of mining companies to propose a viable sustainable livelihood program that would benefit the communities where their projects operate.

Lopez said they could also tap the displaced mine workers for the National Greening Program, the government's massive forest rehabilitation initiative that doubles as an anti-poverty measure due to its cash-for-work component.

The government earlier announced that only 11 of the 41 metallic mines in the country passed the mining audit.

Environment Undersecretary and head of the mining audit Leo Jasareno assured the companies would be given due process.

Mining companies expressed confidence shutdowns could be avoided as they raced to remedy problems flagged in the nationwide checkup.

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The Manila Times

**Business**

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AFTER DENR'S SUSPENSION ORDER

## OceanaGold CEO 'confident' on Didipio operations

BY JAMES KONSTANTIN GALVEZ

**A**USTRALIAN miner OceanaGold Corp. on Tuesday assured stakeholders that its Didipio copper-gold mine in the province of Nueva Vizcaya continues to operate without interruption despite the reported suspension order from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) due to complaints from affected residents.

"I am highly confident that our Didipio operations will continue to operate without interruption as the Didipio Mine sets the benchmark for responsible mining based on international best practices and serves as the template for the type of operation that President [Rodrigo] Duterte and his administration are seeking for all mining operations in the Philippines as they advance a responsible mining sector," said Mick Wilkes, OceanaGold president and chief executive officer.

Wilkes added that they are firmly maintaining the 2016 production and cost guidance for the operation of its local unit Oceana

expects to produce 385,000 to 425,000 ounces of gold from the combined New Zealand and Didipio operations and 19,000 to 21,000 tons of copper from the Didipio operation at all-in sustaining costs of \$700 to \$750 per ounce.

The company has recently engaged directly with the DENR Secretary Gina Lopez and other senior government officials to gain clarity on the findings identified with respect to the Didipio operation.

"Discussions with government officials including Sec. Lopez have been constructive and the company will continue to engage with all stakeholders to demonstrate the many achievements and attri-

mine has delivered thus far to its communities," Wilkes said.

Earlier, Environment Undersecretary Leo Jasareno said OceanaGold Philippines may lose its permit to explore adjacent areas surrounding its Didipio mine following complaints from Nueva Vizcaya residents.

Leo Jasareno, the former director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), said they are now reviewing the permit granted to OceanaGold in March this year, which allows the company to conduct exploration activities in the broader region surrounding Didipio over the next five years.

Jasareno said residents were complaining of the possible effect of expanded mining activity in the area since the exploration area is a rich agricultural land.

OceanaGold's mining claim covers around 15,000 hectares, but the company has only explored and developed around 900 hectares.

The company earlier said it has mobilized additional resources to further identify and build its pipeline of targets within the 13,000-hectare area while commencing drilling of the more advanced targets in the second

is a rich agricultural area, citrus capital of Nueva Vizcaya. Meron silang [They have a] program for agro-forest. The LGU [local government unit] wants to use land for agro-forestry rather than exploration," he said.

"We will clarify that. If it can be found that the petitions are valid, then the secretary will have to withdraw the permit. We will investigate," he added.

The Didipio mine is a high-grade gold-copper open pit and underground mine in Nueva Vizcaya. It is one of the lowest-cost gold mines in the world, with nominal production of 100,000 ounces of gold and 14,000 tons of copper. It has an estimated reserve of 1.59 million ounces of gold and 210,000 tons of copper. It had its first full year of operation in 2014.

OceanaGold holds significant exploration tenements in the Philippines and the Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) covers approximately 158 square kilometers located in the provinces of Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino.

Joey Leviste, chairman of OceanaGold Philippines, earlier said they are willing to invest more in the Philippines but there



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

CORAL REGROWTH - PAGE 1/2

## HUNDRED ISLANDS

# Coral regrowth is new crusade

By Yolanda Sotelo  
Alaminos City

**E**VERY day at 9 a.m., divers scour the waters off Mayor's Island in the Hundred Islands National Park (HINP) in Alaminos City in Pangasinan province, to look for fragments of live coral that could still be nurtured at the coral nursery or planted in the sea bed.

They intend to rebuild the coral reefs—colorful gardens under the sea where marine life thrives—which are often damaged by bleaching brought about by global warming.

Bleaching is a slow process, though the damage it causes may seem too quick and sudden for the average observer, said Dr. Edgardo Gómez, professor emeritus of the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute based in Bolineo town in Pangasinan.

Coral bleaching means these marine animals expel the algae (zooxanthellae) living in their tissues, causing the coral to turn white.

Many of these sea resources

are still under threat worldwide, said Gomez, a National Scientist who led the first worldwide assessment on coral reefs.

What the divers are doing is part of the coral regeneration program financed by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research (PCAARD) and implemented by Pangasinan State University and the Alaminos City government.

The coral mass planting was started in 2012, using asexually reproduced corals in different coastal areas of the country, according to Virna Salac, DOST-PCAARD national coordinator of

the coral restoration program.

In 2014, the agency rolled out the program to other areas, including the HINP. It contracted PSU and the city government to plant 30,000 fragments.

Rolando Cerezo, PSU director for special projects, said that 20,000 fragments had been planted so far off Mayor's Island. The remaining 10,000 are slated for planting until December this year.

Salac and Cerezo met last week with Alaminos Mayor Arthur Celeste to discuss the HINP project and its extension through assistance from Pioneer Adhesives Foundation Inc. (Pafi). The selection of project sites includes the willingness of local officials to host the program, Salac said.

The program uses two coral

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CORAL REGROWTH **PAGE 2/2**

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Editor Jun Bandayre  
Rolando B. Fernandez

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Palawan



A DIVER helps rebuild the coral bed of the Hundred Islands National Park.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

transplantation technologies: One is through coral nurseries where fragments less than 3 centimeters are reared for three months before these are transplanted. The second requires fragments to be attached to substrates (natural stones or materials).

On the seabed, trained divers pick the coral fragments that have been detached from the reefs because of wave action, careless divers and boat anchorage.

"We do not introduce anything that can't be found in the sea such as artificial reefs; we are replanting dislodged corals," Salac said. They mainly use *Acropora* branching species for the coral reef regeneration program.

PSU and the city government

maintain 10 coral nurseries (made of steel) in a shallow portion of the HINP, one of which can hold 500 fragments. When they reveal a good survival rate after three months, these fragments are attached to substrates using the commercial epoxy clay aqua. Sometimes they have to be secured by concrete nails.

There is no exact number of hectares where the corals have been replanted, but at least 100 fragments are planted in every 10 by 10 square meter, said Shella Parreno, a research coordinator of PSU-Binmaley.

Though deep in the sea, not all replanted corals survive, as they still face natural challenges, like being overgrown with sargassum (a kind of sea-

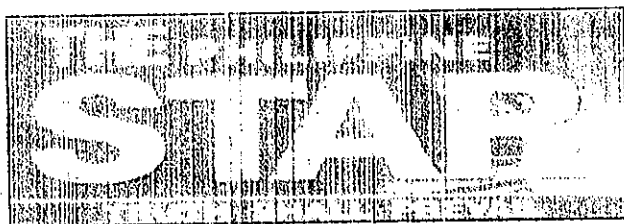
grass) or they could bleach because of hot temperature.

Climate change is a big threat to corals, Salac said, adding that when it gets warm, the corals bleach and die.

The latest massive bleaching occurred in July in Tangdol Reef in Palawan where 90 percent of the reef and 95 percent of the newly transplanted corals were wiped out.

The Palawan experience is caused by El Niño phenomenon which warms the sea water.

The situation at the HINP is better than that of the Palawan coral beds. Only 10-15 percent of corals around the HINP suffered from bleaching, Cerezo said. The HINP still has a 60-65 percent live coral cover.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# CREBA backs NEDA stand against land conversion ban



Gorayeb



Cariño

The country's largest organization of key real estate industry players supports the position of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) rejecting the impending imposition of a 2-year moratorium on conversion of agricultural lands for subdivision development and other non-agri uses.

NEDA director-general and socio-economic planning secretary Ernesto M. Pernia has said that the proposed moratorium is detrimental to the economy and would result to a slow-down in the delivery of housing units, particularly to the millions of homeless poor.

Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations Inc. (CREBA) national president Charlie A. V. Gorayeb likewise moved for the reconsideration of the proposal saying that land conversion moratorium alone is "not the cure-all" to failed efforts of past administrations to implement an effective agrarian reform system and achieve optimum agricultural production.

"There is no argument that prime agricultural lands must be preserved for food security. But though the State has powers to explore, develop and utilize the country's land resources, the Constitution ensures citizens' right to engage in legitimate activities to increase the country's wealth."

"What we need is to apply modern farming technology, more infrastructure and better government support for farmers to make the most out of the land that they till," Gorayeb said.

CREBA fears that the moratorium will bring efforts to deliver decent and affordable homes to at least 5.5 million homeless families to a standstill. "Jobs created

by housing construction are at stake; substantial taxes and other revenues from related business activities will be lost; economic pump-priming effects will be suppressed. Limited space will result to urban congestion as tension between agricultural land use and rapid urbanization escalates," Gorayeb said.

Noel Toti M. Cariño, CREBA national chairman, pointed out that Republic Act 6657 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law recognizes that under certain conditions, some agricultural lands are better reserved for non-agricultural uses. "Some of these are when the land ceases to be economically feasible for agricultural purposes or locality has become highly urbanized and the land will have a greater economic value for other purposes," he said.

Amidst the widespread alarm, the group renewed its call for the passage of the proposed national land use act (NLUA) filed in Congress to put the country's economic and physical development in order by setting 4 major categories of land uses for planning purposes – Protection, Production, Settlements, and Infrastructure.

"An equitable national land use plan has long been needed by this country to be a key policy reference for all local comprehensive land use and development plans in all sectors, including

housing and real estate," Cariño said.

The bill is the 3<sup>rd</sup> in CREBA's 5-point agenda for housing to be discussed at its 25<sup>th</sup> national convention set from October 12-15 this year in Baguio City. The agenda pursues CREBA's long-term vision towards "a home for every Filipino."

Citing an in-depth CREBA-led study validated by the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA), Gorayeb debunked misconception that the real estate sector is the "culprit" for food shortage resulting from supposed "indiscriminate" or "rampant" conversion of lands.

It showed that agri lands account for some 12.5 million hectares or 42.72 percent of the country's total hectareage of 29.5 million. Yet, the built-up or developed areas amounted to only 741,353 hectares or just 2.52 percent of the total.

"Lands built up or developed for non-agricultural uses – from time immemorial up to Year 2010 – hardly made a dent in the country's total agricultural hectareage despite all government and private infrastructure nationwide."

"Instead, agricultural land area even expanded by 5.4 percent from 2003 to 2010 as forest, shrubs, fallow and barren lands registered small decreases. These data confirm that conversion and development are not the reasons why the country's agricultural situation lags behind its rice-exporting neighbors," Gorayeb said.

"Comparatively, Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam have bigger total land areas than our archipelagic country, but they all have lesser agricultural hectareage than the Philippines at only 38.75 percent in Thailand, 24 percent in Malaysia, and 28.51 percent in Vietnam."

"We need a rational and holistic land use policy that reflects the realities on the ground, covering all areas of land use, and factoring in all the development requirements of every sector to achieve a well-balanced and stable economy," the two CREBA leaders concluded. #

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## MINING WORKERS 'DI MAGIGING TAMBAY

PINAWI ni Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez ang pangamba na maraming mawawalan ng trabaho sa sandaling maging pinal ang desisyon na suspendihin ang operasyon ng 20 minahan matapos bumagsak sa isinagawang audit.

Ayon kay Lopez, hindi magiging tambay ang mga manggagawa ng minahan dahil magtatrabaho pa rin sila sa rehabilitasyon ng mga minahan.

Sinabi ng kalihim na ito ang itinakda nilang kondisyon sa bawat suspension order na kanilang ipalalabas.

Aniya, layunin nila

na patuloy na magkaroon ng ikabubuhay ang mga manggagawa sa kabila ng suspensyon ng operasyon ng minahan.

"No, they (workers) won't be (unemployed). A part of the directive, should there be suspension, is that they (firms) must hire those people to rehabilitate the mining sites," ani Lopez.

Binanggit pa ng kalihim na isa sa tinitingnanang potensiyal na gagamitin sa rehabilitasyon ng minahan ay ang biochar.

Ang biochar ay isang uri ng uling na nagpoprodyus ng init na gamit ang kaunting oxygen. Ang carbon ay kinukuha nito sa hala-

man at napipigilang kumalat sa atmosphere o kalawakan.

Iminungkahi rin ni Lopez ang pagpapatupad ng mga programang pangkabuhayang na makatutulong sa mga komunidad na may mga minahan.

Bukod dito, maaari rin anyang maging bahagiang mga nawalan ng trabaho ng National Greening Program (NGP) na nagsasagawa ng malawakang rehabilitasyon sa mga kagubatan.

Dagdag pa niya, ang mga manggagawa ay bahagi ng cash-for-work program para malabanan ang kahirapan.

MONCHET  
LARANO

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Ilocos Norte bans coal for power supply

**Laoag City, Ilocos Norte:** Local government officials have totally banned the use of coal with the passage of a provincial board resolution, making it the first province to phase out coal use to become a total renewable-energy consumer.

Sangguniang Panlalawigan Provincial Resolution 017-2016 authored by Board Member Mariano Marcos 2nd, environment committee chairman, declares Ilocos Norte as a "clean, green and coal-free province."

"No office or instrumentality of the provincial government of Ilocos Norte shall issue any permit, authorization, endorsement or any expression of support to the development of coal projects in the province," the resolution said.

The board encouraged all two cities and 21 towns of the province to refrain from issuing coal permits.

Such ban, said Sherwin de Vera, regional coordinator of the environment group Defend Ilocos, "is a positive move and merits commendation," expressing support to President Rodrigo Duterte's policy declaration against energy that favors dirty coal.

De Vera called on the provincial board to also pass resolutions against other fossil fuels for power generation.

Earlier, criticisms were leveled against wind energy projects in the towns of Burgos and Bangui, over alleged violations of indigenous peoples rights where windmills were built and have since benefited local communities.

"We demand the immediate review of existing Memorandum of Agreements with affected communities," de Vera said, explaining that "the review should ensure that energy ventures lower electricity rates and provide substantial benefits to communities where the facilities are located."

wind-energy capacity as of 2015, it is also dubbed as the wind-energy capital of the Philippines.

Since 2010, local government initiatives have paved the way for Ilocos Norte to become home to the 150-MW wind-power project of Energy Development Corp. (EDC), a unit of First Gen Corp., in Burgos town; the 81-MW Caparispisan wind station of Northern Luzon UPC Asia Corp.; and the 52-MW Bangui wind project of Northwind Power and Development Corporation.

The province has also become perhaps the country's and Southeast Asia's renewable-energy capital.

A 5-MW Agua Grande hydroelectric power plant in Pagudpud and solar farms, like the 20-MW solar-power facility of Soleq Philippines Inc. in Barangay Paguludan in Currimao and the 4.1-MW and 2.6-MW solar farms in Burgos of EDC are being developed.

The provincial board said, "The leadership of Ilocos Norte has consciously supported renewable-energy development not only because the province is endowed with the essential natural environment but also because it is the only way to promote the economic prosperity of present and future generations of Ilocanos that is friendly to the environment and is not harmful to the people's health and well-being."

"Renewable energy has also given the people of Ilocos Norte reason to be proud for significantly contributing to the reduction of carbon emissions that harm the environment and sadly render the country and the Filipinos among the most vulnerable in the world to the devastating effects of climate change," the resolution added. "[We] continue to shy away from energy developments

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### EcoWaste backs MMDA drive vs litterbugs

By CORY MARTINEZ

THE environment-advocate group EcoWaste Coalition has expressed its strong support to the intensified campaign of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) against litterbugs.

The group, through its coordinator Aileen Lucero, said that littering must be stopped since it is the most obvious and widespread environmental offense committed by people of all ages and walks of life.

"We all need to support the MMDA's renewed drive against litterbugs as this is for the common good. It's time to pursue a war on waste to protect human health and the environment," Lucero stressed.

Last week, the group, together with the Green Thumb Coalition's Waste Cluster, urged President Rodrigo Duterte and DENR Secretary Regina Lopez to wage a war on waste and pollution.

"As one agency's effort will never be enough to put a stop to this pervasive culture of littering, we appeal to all local government units (LGUs) to bolster their existing initiatives to complement MMDA's anti-littering program," she said.

Lucero lamented that enforcement of Republic Act 9003 and related ordinances is not being vigorously being carried out, particularly the LGUs.

"A vigorous enforcement by the LGUs of said law and local ordinance will help promote

environmental awareness and responsibility among citizens and halt all forms of indiscriminate garbage disposal," she added.

R.A. 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, promotes waste avoidance and volume reduction, separation of discards at source, reuse, recycling, composting and other best practices in waste management without dumping and burning.

"The LGUs should employ and deploy more environmental educators and enforcers on the streets to hammer home the message that littering, like open burning and open dumping, is an arrogant, inconsiderate, lazy and polluting act punishable by law," Lucero said. With Patricia Denise Peralta (OJT)



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ANG National Water Resources Board (NWRB) ang kinakatawan ng Pilipinas sa "Consultation Meeting on ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Project" na pinamagatang "Building Resilience for Sustainable ASEAN (mula sa dating Water Related Disasters)", kung saan idinaraos ang 2016 Chuncheon Global Water Forum sa Chuncheon, Gangwon-do, Korea, noong Setyembre 7 hanggang Setyembre 8, 2016.

Ayon kay Isidra D. Peñaranda, chief ng Policy and Program Division, ang kinatawan sa NWRB. "Ang layunin ng nasabing pagpupulong ay upang ipakita, talakayin at ibahagi sa iba pang mga bansa ang magiging kalagayan kung may paghahanda sa National Assessment Report at kung papaano maipagpatuloy o labanan ang hinding inaasahang na pangyayari sa pamamagitan ng pagbuo ng building resiliency for a sustainable ASEAN. Ginanap ang naturang pagpupulong makakasunod sa 2016 Chuncheon Global Water Forum.

Ang NWRB, kasama ang mga consultant, isinagawa ang isang inter-agency meeting ng iba't-ibang mga ahensiya na may kaugnayan

## ANG INYONG LINGKOD

**DR. HILDA C. ONG**

### "CONSULTATION MEETING ON ASEAN-ROK COOPERATION PROJECT" DINALUHAN NG NWRB BILANG KINATAWAN NG PILIPINAS

sa water-related disasters tulad ng Office of Civil Defense, Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Mines and Geo-Sciences Bureau (MGB) at ang Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) para ilahad ang mga proyekto at upang magtipon ng mga datos at impormasyon na kinakailangan sa paghahanda ng National Assessment Report.

Ang ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM) na tagapanguna ng proyektong ito, kung saan ang NWRB ang

pangunahin ahensiya ng Pilipinas.

"The project objective is to strengthen "resiliency in ASEAN countries against water-related disasters in the region through close cooperation between the ASEAN and Korea, by sharing knowledge and experience for effective policy-making in their respective national governments and towards regional cooperation".

Ang iskedyul ng ika-dalawang konsultasyon ay sa Oktubre 31 hanggang Nobyembre 1, 2016, gaganapin ang pagpupulong sa Jakarta, Indonesia at ang pinal na ulat ay inaasahan maisinumite sa darating na Disyembre 2016.

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## Road widening killing old trees

IVES SERVICE

By Manilyn T. Ugalde

LEGAZPI CITY—Former Albay governor and incumbent second district Rep. Joey Salceda lambasted the Department of Public Works and Highways for cutting and uprooting trees for the massive road widening and concreting of national roads it started three years ago.

Assistant public works regional director Armando Estrella reported that road widening in Bicol was 30 percent complete so Salceda mourned the thousands of trees, many more than 50 years old, that were felled to make way for the road projects.

Dr. Arme Santos-Tan, a retired professor of the Bicol University, also lamented that public resistance against cutting of trees in roads seems to have subsided.

In 2013, a district engineer ordered the initial cutting of more than 30 old trees in the first district of Albay without the knowledge and consent from the Capitol. However, the electric posts remain, each more than a meter from the pedestrian road way.

Strong support from the church and local environmentalists for his quest against mining and the cutting of trees led him to order the provincial board to declare persona non grata then-Albay first district engineer Teodoro Castillo and file criminal and administrative charges for cutting more than 30 trees on the sides of the 10-kilometer route from Tabaco City to Malinao to Tiwi towns in the first district.

But Salceda withdrew the resolution against Castillo a few weeks later and aborted the filing of charges after the district engineer reportedly came to him and seek forgiveness and

Polangui is the gateway to the provinces of Catanduanes, Masbate, Sorsogon and the Visayas region, motorists from Manila could only wonder at the sudden disappearance of old beautiful trees on the roads.

Former Albay Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Marcial Tuanqui complained of the rampant palay drying of residents and traders occupying both sides of the road shielded by big stones that pose danger to motorists.

Early last year, the 125-meter long Yawa Bridge from Legazpi poblacion to Barangay Rawis was expanded to four lanes, the first bridge to be widened in the region to ease traffic during rush hours.

When the road half a kilometer from the bridge leading to the first district was also widened and concreted and more than 100 old Agoho trees facing the regional center on the eastern side and the Aquinas University of Legazpi on the other side were marked "X" for demolition, the DPWH was stormed by protests from environmentalists, residents and students.

The DPWH then built the two-meter-deep covered line canal that effectively cut the major roots of the Agoho trees. When Typhoon "Nona" hit Albay and toppled the Agoho trees in Barangay Rawis, the DPWH was able to proceed with the road concreting.

Also last year, a Gregorian Mall project began on a 1000-square meter lot in the old Albay district once known as the Locsin Park. The site was leased by the city government.

The leasing of the Locsin Park by the city for the construction of the Gregorian mall caused friction between Salceda and Mayor Noel Rosal after the

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Govts told: Invest in low-carbon, climate-resilient health care

**I**NTERNATIONAL environmental health organization Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Asia on Tuesday urged governments of Southeast and East Asian countries to protect public health from climate change and to invest in building low carbon and climate-resilient health facilities, as health and environment leaders meet this week in Manila for the World Health Organization's Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Environment and Health (Fourth Regional Forum).

Many countries in the region, including the Philippines, are some of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The British medical journal The Lancet has referred to climate change as the "biggest global health threat of the 21st century," from extreme weather events, changes in patterns of diseases, increase in vector-borne diseases, and water and food insecurity affecting people's health and well-being.

"Considering the climate change's major impacts on people's health, health care needs to help lead the efforts

to address this, one of the greatest problems of our time. Our hospitals need to be the last buildings standing in an extreme weather event; our health systems must adapt to the shifting burden of disease; and we must reduce our own carbon footprint, which is quite large in some countries," explained Josh Karliner, HCWH international director of program and strategy, who will make a presentation on green, low-carbon, climate-resilient health care during the preforum discussions. *Claudeth Mocon-Giracao*

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

CREBA SEES HOUSING LACK BALLOONING TO 6.5M UNITS IN 4 YRS

## DAR told to rethink land-conversion ban

By CATHERINE N. PILLAS @c\_pillas29

**T**HE real-estate industry warned the government that the country's housing backlog could easily balloon to 6.5 million units by 2020, from the current 5.5 million units, if the moratorium on the conversion of agricultural lands being pushed by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) is implemented.

### 5.5M units

The estimated housing backlog in the country today

This, Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Association (Creba) President Charlie V. Gorayeb said, is because the DAR-proposed moratorium will delay the rollout of housing developments by at least four years.

"Even if the ban [on the conversion,

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## DAR told to rethink land-conversion ban

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of agricultural lands] is only two years, there is a gestation period from buying the land, to developing it, to introducing it into the market. So if the annual demand is at 250,000 housing units, at the end of four years, we'll have another million on top of the 5.5 million housing backlog," Gorayeb told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

The DAR is now reportedly crafting an executive order to operationalize the moratorium, aimed at protecting prime agricultural lands for food security.

This will definitely put to waste all the public-private efforts to significantly cut the housing dearth

under the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA).

The UDHA provides that all subdivision developers should build socialized housing equivalent to either 20 percent of the total project area or cost of their main developments, as a way to encourage them to provide housing for the underprivileged.

"Economic and socialized housing" refers to housing units that are within the affordability level of the average- and low-income earners, which is 30 percent of the gross family income as determined by the National Economic and Development Authority.

Developers' availment of incentives, given by the Board of Invest-

be used," Cariño said.

Citing studies, Cariño said less than 5 percent of the total land inventory in the Philippines, numbering to some 29 million hectares, is allocated for community settlement.

"Land for built-up settlements is less than 5 percent of the total land area in the country, the bulk is in agriculture. That alone will show you our problem," he added.

Considering that the total housing backlog is now at 5.5 million, and annual housing production is only at 200,000, the proposed moratorium will only exacerbate the dilemma, as developers will face additional delay in rolling out projects.

Moratorium the blanket moratorium

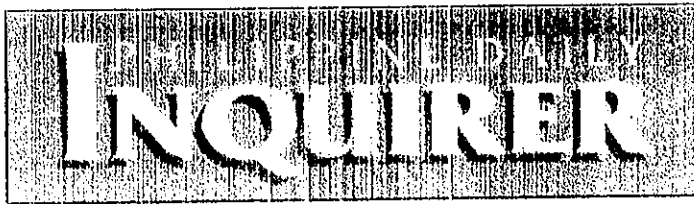
be agricultural," Cariño said.

On a broader scale, the proposal for a two-year ban on land conversion of agricultural lands may dampen economic activity as not only housing projects are affected, but also commercial and office developments.

"Let me emphasize that we are supportive of the objective of President Duterte's social aspect of the redistribution, but we're very concerned of the effect on the overall well-being of the investment and other economic activities," Cariño said.

Creba is appealing to the DAR to allow submitted applications for land conversion to proceed.

The group said it will seek dia-



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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## Farming moves to marshlands

COTABATO CITY—Moro farmers have expanded rice farming to up to 60,000 hectares of marshland in Maguindanao, effectively increasing production level by 34 percent in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Maguindanao Gov. Esmail Mangudadatu said an expanded agricultural activity on minimally inundated portions of the Liguasan marshland has improved rice productivity in what used to be conflict-affected towns of Sharif Sayduna Mustapha, Datu Piang and Datu Salibo.

But Mangudadatu said this option should be limited to organic rice farming and must be done without disturbing sanctuaries of migratory birds in the area.

Rice production has also increased in Lanao del Sur, the region's second largest rice-producing province after Maguindanao, said ARMM Agriculture Secretary Alexander Alonto.

ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman credited the increased rice production to an improving peace and order situation due to the ongoing peace process, stronger coordination of development programs with local governments, better road access and the construction of bridges.

Alonto said the Maguindanao rice expansion and improved infrastructure in the province and in Lanao del Sur pushed the region's average rice production in the first half of the year to 2.73 metric tons per hectare.

During the same period in 2014, the region registered an average harvest of 1.8 MT/ha, and even lower in 2015. *Nash B. Maulana, Inquirer Mindanao*

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



**ST. FRANCIS' FEAST** With its owner, a chihuahua named Yuki hears Mass in celebration of the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals, and the season of creation at Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center along the Elliptical Road in Quezon City. Most Rev. Deogracias Iniguez officiated at the Mass attended by pet lovers and blessed the animals.