

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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DENR

IN THE NEWS

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DENR exec in audit of mine firms quits

The audit of the mining industry will continue even after Wilfredo Moncano replaced Leo Jasareno as acting director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, Environment Secretary Regina Lopez said. The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines welcomed Moncano's appointment, saying he would "set the proper policy direction" for the industry. Even so, the audit would go on "unabated," Lopez said.

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By Ronnel W. Domingo
@ronwdomingoINQ

Government efforts to clean up the mining industry will continue even if Senior Environment Undersecretary Leo Jasareno, who led the audit teams that recommended the suspension of 20 mine operators, is now out of the picture, Environment Secretary Gina Lopez said on Wednesday.

Jasareno, director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), resigned recently after President Duterte ordered all appointees of his predecessor, Benigno Aquino III, to vacate their posts.

Last week, Mr. Duterte appointed Wilfredo G. Moncano acting director IV of the MGB, replacing Jasareno.

Proper policy direction

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) yesterday welcomed the appointment of Moncano, saying large-scale miners were confident that he would "set the proper policy direction" for the industry.

Moncano, the MGB said, has taken his oath and assumed his new office while remaining as director of MGB in the Davao region, a post he has been holding since July 30, 2015.

Environment Undersecretary Mario Luis J. Jacinto remains the chief of the MGB, as well as the supervising authority over the Environmental Management Bureau.

When Jacinto was appointed in late July, Lopez said Jasareno—Jacinto's predecessor at the MGB—would continue to serve as senior undersec-

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DENR usec who led mining audit resigns



IN THE KNOW

Senior Environment Undersecretary Leo Jasareno is the former director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

In August, antimining protesters called for the removal of Jasareno and other officials from the DENR for alleged corruption and inaction.

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez defended Jasareno, saying he helped close down 10 mines for violating environmental laws.

—INQUIRER RESEARCH

AUDIT WORK STILL ON

Even with the resignation of Senior Environment Undersecretary Leo Jasareno, his superior, Secretary Gina Lopez, says the audit of mining projects "goes on, unabated."

retary at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Unabated

But even with Jasareno out, Lopez said the mine audit "goes on, unabated."

When asked whether she

In a statement issued yesterday, COMP suggested better prospects with Moncano.

"We are looking forward to working with Director Moncano and are confident that he will set the proper policy direction needed to boost the industry," said COMP.

next five years," he said.

"This will have significant positive impact on communities as we implement our social development and management program," he added.

Recidoro was referring to the SDMP, a requirement im-

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Lopez wants to keep ex-MGB head Jasareno as DENR senior executive

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

WHILE saying that the ongoing audit of mining operations does not solely rest on a particular individual, Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez is not just about ready to give up former Mines and Geosciences (MGB) Director Leo L. Jasareno.

Unlike other environmental and antimining advocates, the environment chief maintains she trusts Jasareno because of his honesty and integrity.

Lopez said she would talk to President Duterte to lobby for Jasareno's official designation as senior undersecretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Jasareno was named by Lopez as senior undersecretary and head of the ongoing mine audit on August 3.

Jacinto, a Duterte appointee, was the first to make the announcement during Monday's flag-raising ceremony at the MGB without Lopez's knowledge.

Jacinto was quoted as saying Jasareno no longer has any business with the DENR without an official appointment from Malacañang.

He also announced that Duterte has designated lawyer Wilfredo G. Moncano as the new director of the MGB, replacing Jasareno's job item Director IV.

director of the MGB for five years, and was responsible for giving the DENR, then under the leadership of Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje, policy direction in dealing with "irresponsible" mining companies.

Under Jasareno's watch as MGB chief, the DENR suspended Philex Mining Corp.'s copper-gold mine in Tuba and Itogon, Benguet, in 2012.

The MGB also recommended to slap Philex with over P1 billion in fine for the accidental leak in the Tailings Pond No. 3 of Philex's copper-gold mine, the biggest fine ever to be paid by a mining company for causing environmental damage and pollution.

Guidance

UNDER Lopez's watch as DENR chief, Jasareno provides Lopez guidance when it comes to legal and technical aspects of mining operations. Environmental and antimining groups, meanwhile, expressed alarm over the sudden change in the leadership of the MGB.

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Lopez wants to keep ex-MGB head
Jasareno as DENR senior executive

the mining audit will be affected.

"We call on DENR-MGB to immediately release the official and formal results of the mining audit, explain clearly the next steps and timeline of implementing the recommendations of the mining audit and issue the necessary suspensions as soon as possible," Garganera said.

He also said all former DENR officials must be held accountable for their actions, including the issuance of "midnight mining deals" in the last six months of the Aquino administration and the continued operations of suspended mining projects.

"While we appreciate the efforts of Undersecretary Jasareno to lead the mining audit, [but] he must also explain the questionable mining permits, and the inability of the MGB to adequately address mining accidents and complaints," he said.

Cleansing

MEANWHILE, ATM called on Jacinto and Moncano to convene a stakeholders' meeting to be facilitated by the DENR chief to assess and map out the directions and priorities to address mining issues.

Clemente Bautista, national coordinator of Kalikasan-People's Network for the Environment, said "it is good that Aquino's top pro-

moter of mining liberalization" is out of the audit team.

"This will further strengthen the monitoring of mining operation in the country. Aside from cleansing the DENR of corrupt and pro-mining plunder officials, Secretary Lopez should institute radical policy reforms, making mining serves our quest for national industrialization and modernization of our agriculture. Unlike now, it is oriented toward export and private profit," Bautista said.

COMP's choice?

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP), on the other hand, welcomed Moncano's reported appointment to the MGB.

In a news statement released on Wednesday, COMP, which represents mining industry's big players, said it "welcomes the appointment of Director IV Wilfredo Moncano, formerly director of MGB-Davao region to the MGB's top post."

Moncano, the COMP statement said, "officially removes from the official roster of Department of Environment and Natural Resources officials Leo J. Jasareno, whose appointment as senior undersecretary is still pending in Malacañang."

"We are looking forward to working with Director Moncano

and are confident that he will set the proper policy direction needed to boost the industry," COMP Vice President for Legal and Policy Ronald S. Recidoro said.

The chamber also welcomed the statements of Jacinto that it is the MGB's mandate to encourage growth in investments in the mining industry, which will benefit local communities.

"The confidence of Director Jacinto that the industry has the potential to contribute more to the development of far-flung communities and also to the country's GDP remains a challenge for us in the chamber to strengthen our programs in community development," Recidoro added.

In a report, Jacinto stressed local governments will suffer the brunt of losses if the government suspends "too many mines." Jacinto went on to cite MGB data, where chamber members contribute a sizable chunk of regional GDP.

"Under the strict mandate of the MGB, we are hoping to pour in another \$20 billion worth of mining projects into the country's economy for the next five years. This will have significant positive impact in communities as we implement our social development and management programs," Recidoro said.



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Mining clampdown worries investors

By RICHMOND MERCURIO

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is sending the wrong signals to investors with its pronouncements seen harming what should be an attractive Philippine mining industry, an official of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI)'s mining committee warned.

"It destroys the image of the Philippines from an investment standpoint," PCCI mining committee co-chairman Jose Leviste said in an interview yesterday.

"We are concerned about the pronouncements of DENR,

particularly the announcement the other day when 23 mining companies are recommended for suspension," he added.

Leviste said such suspension orders are causing concerns for the industry, particularly to those looking to invest in the country.

"Mining investors of course will have second thoughts about the Philippines. For those of us who are here already, we are familiar with the dynamics of Philippine business but to those who will come

in of course are getting nervous," he said.

According to Leviste, the Philippines has the potential to be the Chile of Southeast Asia when it comes to its industry of mining.

However, recent pronouncements by the DENR are not helping the country in reaching such potential, he said.

"We are going to be a mining country and be like Chile depending on the actions of DENR. For example, we have

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to decide on whether we want to proceed with Tampakan or not. I personally think we should. But if we decide that we as a country don't want to develop Tampakan, then you are not developing the largest undeveloped copper mine in Southeast Asia," Leviste said.

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez has ordered a massive audit of the operations of mining companies since her

DENR by President Duterte.

The audit resulted in the suspension of the operations of 10 mining companies for violation of environmental standards, while several more companies including Filminera Resources, Marcventures Mining and Development, Agata, CTP Construction and Mining, Hinatuan Mining, Benguet, Lepanto Consolidated Mining and Oceana Gold were also recommended

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No new mining investments seen

By LEE C. CHIPONGSIAN

With how the Duterte government and the fiery environment advocate-turned-Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Gina Lopez is re-working mining regulations, a local businessman said it's no wonder there are no new investors entering the mining sector.

Oceana Gold Philippines Inc. president Jose P. Leviste Jr. said new mining investors may be turned off by the reorganization and restructuring of DENR rules.

"They are nervous," said Leviste yesterday on the sidelines of the 42nd Philippine Business Conference. He said existing businesses including Oceangold are already familiar with the "dynamics of Philippine business."

With DENR's move to suspend numerous mining permits, Leviste said

his company which is listed in Toronto and Sydney has also been affected. "Our stocks (had a) 22.3 percent drop in one single day. The incoming mining investor will have second thoughts about the Philippines," he said.

When asked if he knows of any mining prospects sniffing around the country, his answer is disappointing. "I can tell there is probably none. Before the pronouncements (DENR), people are highly excited. These days, the mood is subdued," he said. Leviste lamented this since the Philippines is considered a highly mineralized country. The local mining industry is top listed as a copper and nickel source in a global scale.

Leviste however clarified that he wholly agreed with the Duterte government's policy of responsible mining. "We also welcome the appointment of Louie Jacinto (as department undersecretary. He has been able to give focus and atten-

tion to the mining sector."

Lopez has issued several mining permit cancellations and has been closing down mining operations she found to be irresponsible. There are 23 mining operations that are eyed for suspension at the moment.

Leviste said they have been spared such crackdowns. "We are fine, we're OK. No problem with (DENR) audit. We don't have a suspension order." The company is on the 23 list recommended for suspension but there was no formal notice from the government.

Leviste said he is "friends" with Lopez. "Our families have been friends for a long time, we are political allies. He said Oceana Gold is "alive and very well."

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DENR mining stance worries business

By Amy R. Remo
@amyremoINQ

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry yesterday warned that sweeping statements and announcements being made by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources are "destroying the image of the Philippines from an investment standpoint."

The PCCI, the country's largest business organization, was referring to the series of DENR announcements regard-

ing the list of mining firms that were up for suspension.

"This creates some concern for the industry. For us (mining firms) that are already here, we are proceeding with our operations. But for those who want to come in, they are getting nervous," said Jose P. Leviste Jr., who co-chairs the mining committee of the PCCI.

"Incoming mining investors will now have second thoughts about the Philippines and, because of these pronouncements, no investor would want

to come in even if we are a highly mineralized country," Leviste said on the sidelines of the 42nd Philippine Business Conference yesterday.

Leviste stressed the need to create a lucrative and conducive environment for the mining sector, which had the potential to become a significant contributor to the economy.

At the same time, Leviste urged the government to make a firm decision on the fate of the Tampakan copper gold mine project, which has the potential



**The Philippines
can be the Chile
of Southeast
Asia in mining
but investors are
nervous**

Jose P. Leviste Jr.
Co-chair, PCCI mining committee

to become the single largest foreign investment in the country with a planned \$6-billion capital infusion.

"The Philippines can be the Chile of Southeast Asia when it comes to mining but many investors are nervous. The Philippines can become a mining country but it will depend on the actions of the DENR. For example, we have to decide whether we want to proceed with Tampakan or not."

"Should we move slowly? Yes. Should we move carefully?

Yes. But if we decide that we don't want to develop Tampakan, then you won't be developing the largest undeveloped copper mine in Southeast Asia. The previous administration issued an environment compliance certificate but the current DENR team is questioning that ECC," Leviste added.

On OceanaGold Corp., Leviste said the company was continuing to operate the Didipio gold-copper mine despite concerns about the direction that the DENR was taking. INQ

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OceanaGold slams mining audit results

By Othel V. Campos

OCEANAGOLD Philippines Inc., a unit of Australia-based OceanaGold Corp., decried Wednesday the results of the the mining audit done by the Environment Department, saying the move ruined the image of the Philippines as an investment destination.

"The pronouncements are sweeping, no question about that. I could tell there is probably none (mining companies) going here. When you make that kind of announcements, it affects the whole industry," company president Jose Leviste Jr. said at the sidelines of 42nd Philippine Business Conference at the Mar-

riot Hotel in Pasay City.

"As the head of the gold and copper section of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, I'm concerned not only for OceanaGold but for the entire industry," he said.

Leviste made the remarks after the Environment Department recommended the cancelation of 23 mining permits, including that of OceanGold's.

OceanaGold, he said, was still operating in the absence of a formal government order stopping the firm's copper-gold operations in Didipio, Nueva Vizcaya province.

"We don't have a suspension order. We're operating. To serve

a suspension order, it has to have due process and due process means they should have a good reason for suspension," Leviste said.

The company welcomed President Rodrigo Duterte's call for responsible mining practices and the adoption of the Canadian and Australian standards in mining. The company said it was an advocate and practitioner of responsible mining.

Leviste declined to disclose the company's prospects for the year due to reports that the Environment Department would cancel the extension of the exploration permit granted by the previous administration.

OceanaGold's mother company, which is listed in Toronto and Sydney bourse, suffered a 22.3-point drop in stock price in a single day, Leviste said.

He added mining companies poised to enter the Philippines were "having second thoughts and quite nervous" of the dynamics of Philippine business.

Leviste said the Philippines still has the opportunity to be a mining country it projected if the Environment Department will stick to the policy of the Duterte government.

"We can still be the Chile of Southeast Asia, depending on the actuations of the department," he said

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DENR weighs in on lifting of mining ban

By TARA YAP

ILOILO CITY—The Capiz Provincial Board may have upheld the decision to lift a 50-year mining ban, but the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said it does not mean the provincial government has the authority to issue mining permits.

In a phone interview with Manila Bulletin, DENR Capiz Provincial Director Valentin Talabero said the approval for exploration activities or mining permit is issued by DENR Central Office in Metro Manila and not by Capiz provincial government.

Talabero reminded members of the provincial board that DENR Secretary Gina Lopez is not amenable to new mining activities.

“Even existing mining companies are undergoing audit,” he said.

Capiz Governor Antonio del Rosario has repeatedly expressed his opposition to mining activities in the province.

But majority of the provincial board members voted to reinstate the lifting of the ban, which was initially decided by the previous board last May.

The decision to lift the ban stemmed from the request of the Maayon town government.

Maayon officials believe the town would benefit economically if the Teresa Marble Corp., an Australian company, is allowed to extract minerals from Canapian village.

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REGIONS

'Lumad' marchers reach Los Baños

At least 2,300 indigenous peoples from Southern Tagalog and Mindanao are on their way to Metro Manila for the final leg of a caravan that seeks to bring their concerns to the attention of the national government. Mangyan, Dumagat and Pala'wan, "lumad" and Moro representatives will join other groups on the University of the Philippines Diliman campus in Quezon City for a series of programs.

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TRIBAL FOLK GIVE DU30 HIGH SCORE, BUT CALL FOR MORE ATTENTION

LOS BAÑOS, LAGUNA—Indigenous peoples from Southern Tagalog and Mindanao on Wednesday gathered at the University of the Philippines Los Baños campus here as they prepare for the final leg of a caravan that seeks to bring their concerns to the attention of the national government.

Aboard buses, vans and jeeps, at least 2,300 delegates to the "Lakbayan ng Pambansang Minorya" (Caravan of National Minorities), which consist of Mangyan, Dumagat and Pala'wan tribes from Southern

Tagalog and lumad and Moro tribes from Mindanao, are on their way to the UP Diliman campus in Quezon City.

At the Mindanao group's stop in Naga City earlier this week, lumad leaders said they gave President Duterte a rating of 8, in a scale of 10, in his first 100 days in office as they continue to press the government for action on their plight.

Kaerlan Fanagel, a B'laan leader and spokesperson of Lakbayan, said his group credited Mr. Duterte with an initiative to review and suspend mining

operations in Mindanao.

Fanagel said the lumad also appreciated the administration's move, through the Department of Agrarian Reform, to pursue land reform by issuing a two-year moratorium on land conversion.

He said the lumad would continue to call on the national government to stop the killings of tribal people and harassment of lumad schools in the hinterlands, which have been targeted by paramilitary groups.

Fanagel said the group, though, recognizes Mr. Duterte's

efforts to disband paramilitary groups in Mindanao.

"Now, President Duterte has told the Armed Forces of the Philippines to recognize that [the military] organized and armed these paramilitary groups. [This] shows that these paramilitary groups must be held responsible for the killings of lumad," he said.

Fanagel said the group wanted to unite all indigenous peoples in the country so they could speak in one voice. —REPORTS FROM

KIMMY BARAOIDAN, JUAN ESCANDOR JR. AND MARS ARGUELLES INQ

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HOUSE, SENATE PARTNERSHIP IS 'GOOD'

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ @joveemarie

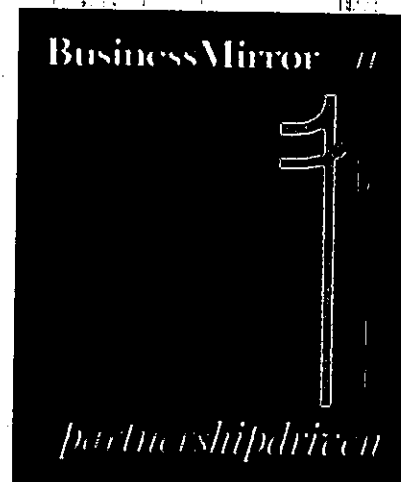
THE legislative partnership between the House of Representatives and the Senate is one of the most important partnerships in the Philippine government, as both houses of Congress need to be one, yet independent, to craft and pass laws.

According to the 1987 Constitution, legislative power shall be vested in the Congress of the Philippines, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives.

Speaker Pantaleon D. Alvarez described the relationship between the upper and lower houses as "good."

"We have good relationship with the Senate. We've been conducting regular meetings with the Senate leadership to assure the passage of our respective legislative agenda in the 17th Congress," the Speaker said. "Our mission, in this 17th Congress, is clear: To enact laws that will deliver to our nation and our people a future better than yesterday's and brighter than today's," he said.

PDP-Laban and Majority Leader Rep. Rodolfo C. Fariñas of Ilocos Norte said the partnership of two houses is strong as Senate President Aquilino



President Duterte's PDP-Laban.

"We don't have a problem in terms of partnership [with the senators] because the Senate President and the Speaker belong to the same party," Fariñas said.

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House, Senate Partnership is
'GOOD'

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"We are on track [to pass our legislative agenda] under the leadership of the Speaker. The President has signified to convene regularly the Lepad [Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council]," Fariñas added.

The lawmakers said the 17th Congress legislative agenda is important, as it will be a tool "to effect meaningful and genuine change."

Alvarez said both the House of Representatives and the Senate would give each other full support through the immediate passage of priority bills.

The Speaker said included on the House's legislative agenda are tax-reform law; mining-reform law; transforming the country's unitary presidential form of government to a federal parliamentary system; reimposition of death penalty; reversion of the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 15 to 9; emergency powers for the President to resolve the traffic problem; enactment of a freedom of information law, labor-reform law and law increasing pensions for retirees; and the revision of Government Procurement Act.

If this legislative agenda seems overly ambitious to some, Alvarez said it is only because of inertia.

Mining

ALVAREZ said the House would like to see mining companies securing a legislative franchise before they are allowed to operate.

The Speaker said he would file a bill requiring mining companies to secure legislative franchise and subjecting mining companies to congressional oversight. His bill will also require mined ores to be processed or semiprocessed within the Philippines.

"That way, their activities would be subject to legislative oversight and their franchises can be revoked by the oversight body, instead of a probably bribable bureaucrat in an obscure DENR [Department of Environment and Natural Resources] office if they violate the terms and conditions," Alvarez said.

"Also, we would like to ensure that these companies do not export the ores they mine. Processing or semiprocessing of these ores should be done within the Philippines. This is one way to give jobs to our people, instead of enriching only the stockholders of mining companies," he added.



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Apex Mining gets ISO badge

Listed Apex Mining Co. Inc. has received its International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 14001 certification for Environmental Management System (EMS).

In a disclosure to the local bourse, the company said its operating mine in Compostela Valley has met the standards of compliance for the issuance of the ISO 14001 after two stages of audit.

The certification has a validity of three years for its exploration activities, underground mining, milling and recovery, smelting of gold and silver using carbon-in-pulp pro-

cess, mine waste and mill tails management and all support services.

Established in 1996, the ISO 14001 EMS standard is a systematic framework to manage the immediate and long term environmental impacts of an organization's products, services and processes.

The Maco Mine in Compostela Valley milled 203,476 tons of ore in the first half 34 percent more than the 152,136 tons of ore milled a year earlier.

The mine produced 26,577 ounces of gold and 140,317 ounces of silver, higher than

the 20,334 ounces of gold and 107,036 ounces of silver produced in 2015.

Former Environment and Natural Resources secretary Ramon Paje signed Administrative Order 2015-07 mandating all mining contractors to secure ISO 14001 Certification.

The DAO 2015-07 "institutionalizes an environmental management system that ensures the adherence of local mining operations to international standards, particularly the ISO 14001 certification, as a measure of responsible mining

in the country. It ensures that appropriate measures are put in place to achieve minimal negative impacts of mining on the environment."

Meanwhile, Apex Mining posted a net income of P133 million in the first semester of the year, up 60 percent year on year.

The increase was due to the new production record following improved mill recoveries established by the Maco mine during the period.

The company is primarily engaged in the mining and production of gold, silver, copper, lead and other precious metals.

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'Ugly scars' left by miners overshadow development

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

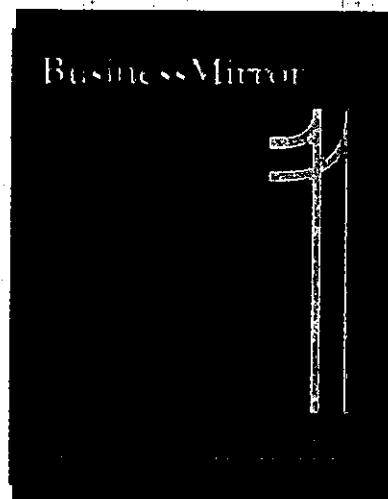
MINING disasters often leave behind ugly scars, grim reminders of the destruction brought by mining operations that overshadow promised development in host communities, environmental activists said.

Even mined-out areas still bear the ugly face of mineral-extraction activities many years after the operations have ceased, leaders of Kalikasan-People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan-PNE) and Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) added, as they challenged anew the government to review mining's benefits as against the damage they cause the environment.

According to Jaybee Garganera, national coordinator of ATM, the scars left behind by Marcopper in Marinduque and Philex in Benguet are among the worst in the country's history.

Kalikasan-PNE and ATM are vocal critics of the mining-liberalization policy of the government and want large-scale mining in the country stopped.

Both are calling for the repeal of



the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and President Aquino's Executive Order 79. They also seek the enactment of a mining law that will protect the environment and give more benefits to the people.

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'Ugly scars' left by miners overshadow development

The groups said that, despite the so-called economic benefits and the aggressive promotion of the government, mining sector's contribution to the national economy remains insignificant.

Mining companies, they say, rake huge profit in exploiting the country's mineral resources, but pay very little taxes, and some companies even get to enjoy tax holidays under the current mining fiscal regime, they lamented.

They added that the taxes mining companies pay to the government, little as they are, are hardly felt by the residents of the host communities, whose lives and livelihood are first to be affected when a mining disaster struck.

Mining companies, through the various projects, have made their presence felt in many areas, where roads, bridges, schools, health and civic centers were put up in host communities. But these, according to their critics, are nothing compared to what mining companies get from exploiting the country's rich mineral deposits.

Garganera said mining's contribution to the GDP is less than 1 percent. Annual employment generated by the mining sector, he said, ranges from 200,000 to 250,000. This includes quarrying and small-scale mining operations.

Revenues generated by the government from mining, he said, are even lower than the taxes paid by tobacco and liquor companies.

Citing a comparative study on the economic contributions of industries in terms of excise tax by Cielo Magno of Bantay Kita, in 2012, Garganera noted that 45.5 percent of the P22-billion excise tax collected by the government came from tobacco companies, while 33.3 percent came from alcohol companies. Mining only chipped in 3 percent.

"In terms of toxicity, Marcopper is the worst. Philex's [mining disaster] is worst in terms of volume," Garganera said. "The difference is that Marcopper did not pay for its crime, while Philex settled over P1 billion in fines to the government," he said. In between Marcopper and Philex mining disasters, the Rapu-Rapu mining disaster in 2005 was also not mentioning, Garganera said.

Even so, he said the over P1 billion in fines the company paid for the accidental tailings-pond leak in August 2013 from the company's Padcal copper and gold mine in Benguet are not enough to cover for the massive environmental damage.

Garganera added that there is no way to know whether the fines and penalties paid by mining companies have in fact, been used for the rehabilitation of affected areas.

The accidental leak at Philex's Padcal mine dumped over 20 million metric tons of sediments into the Balog Creek

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'ugly scars' left by miners
overshadows development

in Benguet and the Agno River in Pangasinan, and reached the San Roque Dam.

The Marcopper mining disaster, on March 24, 1996, on the island-province of Marinduque, on the other hand, rendered the Boac River "biologically dead".

A fact-finding report by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines-Nassa, he said, indicates that communities still suffer from the impacts of Philex mining disaster even though the government had already allowed the company to resume its normal operations.

He said the government should first come up with a comprehensive study and determine the economic value of forestry, agriculture and fisheries as against the benefits offered by mining before opening an area to large-scale mining companies.

"This, I believe, is the primary consideration why the provincial government of South Cotabato has decided not to allow the open-pit mining method because of the potential adverse impact to agriculture, watersheds and forest resources of the province," Garganera said.

Also, he said the government should come up with a methodology where fines and penalties paid by mining companies for environmental violations are exclusively used for the protection and conservation of the country's natural wealth.

Clemente Bautista, national coordinator of Kalikasan-PNE, said damage to the environment as a result of mining disasters

remains a big problem. "There has been no actual rehabilitation," he said.

Garganera cited that of the P900-million fine paid by Rapu-Rapu for dumping cyanide in coastal areas of Rapu Rapu Island in Albay, more than half, or P500 million, was used to pay for the consultation on how to rehabilitate affected coastal areas in the Bicol region.

"Whatever happened to the P1-billion fine paid by Philex? Nobody knows. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources should tell the people where it is now," he said. "Even if these companies have bad records, the government even give them awards and citation. Until now, there are traces of tailings waste along the Balog Creek and Agno River."

Mining companies like Philex, Garganera said, are "recidivists" and often get away with their crimes.

"Mining disasters happen not once, but twice and even thrice already, but the government has done nothing to prevent these disasters," he said.

Garganera added there should be a moratorium on large-scale mining operation, and until such time that a new mining policy has been put in place, mining should not be allowed to take place.

"The government should impose a mining moratorium; first look into the promised benefits of mining and the potential damage to the environment they may eventually cause," he said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Saving Danjungan Island



FUTURE conservationists at the island's learning center

with people's organizations in Cauayan to help protect the island against destructive fishing and other activities. It facilitates alternative livelihood for people living near the island's coastal barangays.

Mary Ann Cordilla, president of the Caliling Environment-friendly Production Association, said PRRCFI is a big help to its 47 members, who, besides earning extra income from planting mangroves under a program funded by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), are now engaged in raising crabs under the Philippine National Aquaculture Program.

The group's small cage for crabs is on Danjungan Island, which income augments their earnings from fishing and mangrove planting.

Randy Quezon, president of Linahon Sustenance Fishing Association, added that their group also benefit from Danjungan's conservation.

He said the corals and mangroves around the island provide a healthy breeding ground and protection for small fishes, allowing the fish stocks in Cauayan's municipal fishing ground to flourish.

The group, which also plants mangroves for BFAR's program, said the healthy mangrove forests it helps maintain become a good source of fishes, such as *gusaw*, *sapsap*, and crabs locally called *kasag*. Quezon said they no longer have to go in open seas for bigger catch.

Albao, meanwhile, said the PRRCFI continues to struggle to educate the people to change their destructive way of life and protect Danjungan, as well as other islands from destructive activities.

"We want to teach the people, especially the children, the importance of protecting the marine environment," Albao added. PRRCFI's two major programs focus on marine ecosystem education, information and communications.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Saving Danjungan Island

Tourists, future conservation advocates

THE PRRCFI allows visitors to come and stay on the island through the annual Marine and Wildlife Camps, and the Danjungan Island Environmental Education Program (DEEP).

The annual camps, a pioneering initiative of PRRCFI, started in 1991. It offers young people ages 13 to 17, an opportunity to stay on the island to experience, learn and appreciate nature, particularly the marine ecosystem and wildlife.

More than a thousand campers have had the privilege of exploring the island since the summer camp was offered. "We are happy to know that some of the campers have been touched by their stay on the island. Some of them promised to pursue college education and take up marine biology to help us," Albao said.

"What normally are not taught in schools are taught on the island's learning center," Albao added.

He explained that besides learning the scientific names of species, campers are taught about its nature and the role each species play in the ecosystem.

"That way, we can teach them to become future conservationists," he said.

DEEP appreciation

FUNDED by the Foundation of the Philippine Environment (FPE), DEEP started in 2011 to support the summer camp. It seeks to address the constraints to marine and wildlife conservation that haunt most parts of the country by engaging educational institutions.

DEEP camps, which usually take three to five days, involve campers—including teachers and students—who live and have fun on the island while learning about marine biodiversity, inculcating in the students a deep appreciation of what nature has to offer. Albao said summer camps teach about biodiversity conservation, sustainable development and climate change to students and teachers of schools in the towns of Cauayan, Sipalay and Hinobaan.

The program's successful implementation prompted FPE to consider another grant for DEEP, extending and expanding the project's scope and coverage, including enhanced partnership with various national government agencies and LGUs in Negros Occidental, academic and scientific community, for research and scientific exploration and studies to boost efforts to save other areas in Negros

from destruction. "We hope that, someday, their [campers] experience on the island will encourage them to become conservation advocates," Albao said.

Activities by campers include boat riding, kayaking and snorkeling. Participants are asked to identify or at least draw an image of the fish and other species they found. Yet campers are allowed to take a tour in some part of the island through the eco-pathwalk which leads from one lagoon to another and one beach to next and ends in a watchtower that reveals the beauty of the island and surroundings.

In between is a path that leads to a small cave inhabited by about 5,000 fruit bats, which are important in maintaining a healthy forest. Teaching people, Albao said, is a strategy of PRRCFI on Danjungan Island to encourage the youth to appreciate Negros Occidental's marine biodiversity more and one day become part of the growing number of environmentally conscious people.

For PRRCFI, buying an island, protecting and using it to teach people about the value of having a healthy ecology is a tested and proven way of saving an island.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Marine protected areas established in Palawan to rebuild fish stocks

A WHOPPING 1,013,340 hectares covering both the coastal and offshore waters of Cagayancillo, plus 80,000 hectares of Aborlan in the Philippine province of Palawan were recently declared as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

This is part of a two-country initiative by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Fondation Segré to rebuild the fish stocks of the Coral Triangle by changing the way people view protected areas.

MPAs are portions of the sea that are protected by law. According to MPAtlas, the Philippines hosts 1557—more than any other country in Southeast Asia. Established largely through local government initiatives and administered by coastal communities, these undersea enclaves provide vital safe havens for marine life, while also attracting droves of tourists.

Sadly, many MPAs are plagued by a lack of funding. Perhaps just over 100 MPAs are properly administered. Many are negatively viewed by coastal people as deterrents to their ability to fish in front of their homes.

This is because most MPAs have been designed to protect marine biodiversity rather than to replenish fish stocks and support local economies. "Fishermen were initially concerned that they would no longer be allowed to fish," recalls Aborlan Barangay Captain Zabalo. "But proper zoning allocated areas for fishing."

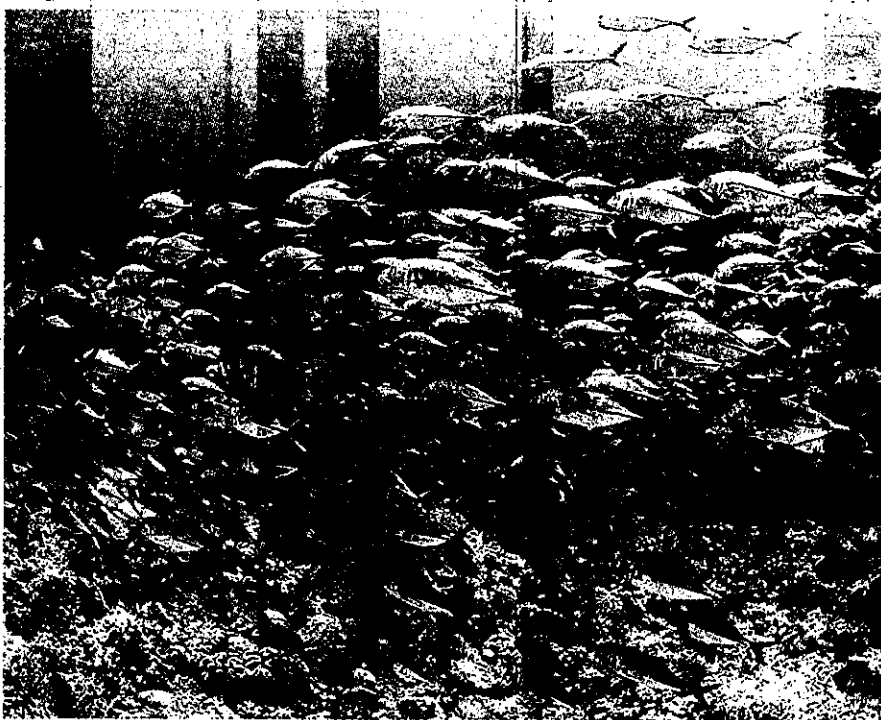
Over the past decade, WWF has been trying to put people's needs first by fo-

cusing on the value of MPAs to maximize fisheries production instead of merely protecting biodiversity. So effective has the move been that the people of Cagayancillo clamored to have their waters protected because they benefited from the bounty of the nearby Tubbataha Reefs plus their own marine conservation efforts in Cagayancillo.

"Since WWF introduced marine conservation in early 2000, we have been vigilant. The reefs sustain our need for food

and income. For years, we have had an abundant fish supply. I really believe some of them come from Tubbataha, especially the big ones," shares Cagayancillo-based conservationist Nison Abados. Though composed of both offshore and coastal zones, Cagayancillo is now the largest MPA in the country—due mostly to an ordinance under Republic Act 7611.

Collaborative management is the key to effective and sustainably funded MPAs. Roles, responsibilities and benefits are



■ The waters of the Philippines are some of the most productive in the Coral Triangle. Shown is a large school of trevally in Cagayancillo, which also covers the famed atolls of Tubbataha in Palawan. WWF PHOTO

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

marine protected areas established in Palawan to rebuild fish stocks

shared between national and local authorities, communities, the private sector and other resource users.

Realizing that sustainability means business viability, the initiative works with the local seafood and tourism sectors to finance and manage MPAs and sustainable fishing initiatives.

"The ease and speed by which Aborlan protected its waters was due to a three-year initiative by local provincial, municipal and village governments, the Environmental Legal Assistance Center, Western Philippines University and WWF," says WWF-Philippines President and CEO Joel Palma.

The move heavily involves local fishermen and communities in the management of marine resources by helping them gain exclusive rights to fisheries located in or near MPAs and by working with them to improve the health and productivity of their fisheries.

An example would be Seven Lines, a coral reef system in Aborlan. "Seven Lines supplies fish to smaller coral reefs in the region. This means fisherfolk don't need to travel far for fishing," says Aborlan Municipal Agriculture Officer Cacatian. This means that even if certain areas are off-limits to fishers, the spillover effects of protection will seed large areas with life.

The project aims to expand the network of critical marine areas that are protected, effectively managed and sustainably financed in the Coral Triangle. "Through well-managed MPAs, coastal communities can realize that conservation is the surest way to secure tomorrow's fish," concludes Palma.

As of 2016, the projects of WWF and its allies are protecting 904,000 hectares of MPAs in the Philippines.

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Phl deep leaves lasting impression on Cousteau

Oceana senior advisor Alexandra Cousteau wrapped up her two-week tour with a diving trip to El Nido in Palawan, which she described as a "world-class" destination worthy of protection.

Cousteau, granddaughter of renowned undersea explorer Jacques Cousteau, visited the Philippines from Aug. 29 to Sept. 11 to promote awareness on sustainable fisheries management and the global fight against illegal fishing

practices.

"When you think about the world that my grandfather started scuba diving 70 years ago, it was a world that didn't know what was under the surface of the ocean. As we've learned more about the oceans in the past 70 years than ever before, we've also lost more of the oceans," she told a media forum on her last day in the country.

She urged Filipinos to conserve the country's marine

bounty, after seeing their beauty during her diving trips. "I just saw Palawan and El Nido with my own eyes, and it is world-class," she said.

At Apo island in Negros Oriental, she swam with sea turtles in the marine sanctuary that has become a model for protected area management. In the tourist town of Moalboal in Cebu, Cousteau got a glimpse of the sardine shoal that provides livelihood for fishers. She was treated to dance numbers showing the fragility of the oceans by young pupils, whom she exhorted to be vigilant in conserving their resources to ensure food security in the future.

Speaking before students at the Silliman University in Dumaguete and at the University of Cebu, she focused on the role of the oceans for human survival. "The ocean is part of our lives. It gives us food, transportation, oxygen — all critical reasons to save it," she stressed.

Cousteau showed a film of

her grandfather depicting how marine resources are fast disappearing due to overexploitation and destructive fishing.

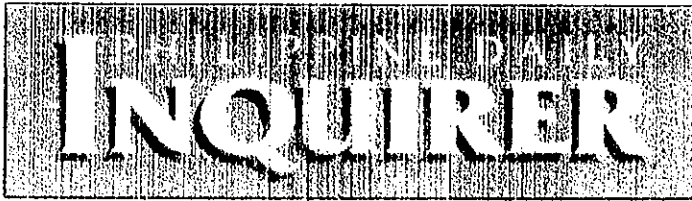
"What brings us together is the opportunity to restore abundance and diversity in the oceans," she said. "It is not just about sea turtles, dolphins and the whales and corals, but it's also about restoring resources that support people especially the poorest of the poor. There's an opportunity to protect communities from typhoons and in creating livelihood for sustainability and tourism."

In Manila, Cousteau met with Vice President Leni Robredo and legislators including Senators Cynthia Villar, Risa Hontiveros, Miguel Zubiri and Juan Edgardo Angara, as well as Rep. Pia Cayetano. They expressed interest in Oceana's campaigns as embodied in the slogan "Save the oceans, Feed the world" and vowed to help craft programs and laws that would promote wise use of marine resources.



Oceana senior adviser Alexandra Cousteau swims near a school of yellow snappers in south Miniloc Island in El Nido, Palawan.

PHOTO BY OCEANA/DANNY OCAMPO



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SIERRA MADRE

FOREST RANGERS SEEK GUNS TO FIGHT ILLEGAL LOGGERS

LUCENA CITY—Saying the job of protecting the Sierra Madre mountain ranges is getting riskier, an environment official reiterated an appeal for government forest rangers to be allowed to carry firearms in the fight against illegal loggers.

"The job is getting risky. Our enemies are getting bold and violent," said Milliarette Panaligan, community environment and natural resources officer (Cenro) based in Real town, Quezon province.

"Allow us to carry firearms for protection. We have to defend ourselves," said Panaligan.

Panaligan, who has been re-

ceiving death threats, is overseeing the latest government crackdown on logging in the Sierra Madre.

After a week of operation, government forest rangers and a team of policemen and Philippine Navy personnel recovered more than 3,000 illegally cut logs abandoned in General Nakar town. Among the hardwood species found are red and white lauan and yakal.

To stress the gravity of the situation, she said illegal loggers, "like drug pushers... should also be killed once they resist arrest and fight back."

The DENR's task to protect



**Our enemies are
getting bold and
violent**

Milliarette Panaligan

Cenro

Sierra Madre, which stretches from Quezon to Cagayan province, is too risky and forest rangers are "vulnerable" for lack of firearms, Panaligan said.

The northern Quezon section of the Sierra Madre is considered a hot spot for illegal logging operations.

Alfredo Palencia, provincial environment and natural resources officer in Quezon, said at least 289 cubic meters (122,500 board feet) of illegally cut flitches and lumber were seized by the DENR in different towns in the province from January to September. —DELFIN T. MALLARI JR., INQ

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Duterte, drugs and water

COMMENTARY

ERNESTO M. ORDOÑEZ

President Duterte should establish his legacy on two fronts: drugs and water. Drugs is obvious. But water is also important because it is part of the biggest global challenge today: the world's water wars.

Last July 14, National Geographic's Flora Parker wrote: "Underground water is pumped so aggressively around the world that land is sinking, civil wars are being waged, and agriculture is being transformed... Around the world, alarms are being sounded about the depletion of underground water supply. The United Nations predicts a global shortfall of water by 2030."

Economist Richard Damania of the World Bank states that without adequate water supply, economic growth in the most stressed parts of the world will decline by 6% of the gross domestic product.

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez knows this. She immediately ordered the creation of a National Water Roadmap soon after taking office.

Our farmers today face continuing losses due to water shortage. Countless children

suffer diseases because of unsafe water. Environmentalists rail against fossil fuels because environment-friendly hydropower is not being properly harnessed.

If Duterte effectively manages our national water situation, his legacy will also be for the world as it faces the dangerous global water crisis.

In 1999, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) attempted to formulate a national water plan. Not much happened because of inadequate top government support. In 2010, the National Economic Development Authority (Neda) worked on a water roadmap. However, this focused mainly on a network to supply water to different sectors.

NWRB executive director Seville David Jr. cited important elements missing in this roadmap. Examples are inadequate emphasis on water re-

source management, water allocation, structure development to collect and preserve water, hydropower for energy, and educating critical sectors on wise water use.

For her part, Secretary Lopez sees the link between deforestation and water scarcity. She has ordered bamboo planting in one million denuded hectares by 2022. Knowing the complexity of the problem, she has prioritized a comprehensive water roadmap formulation.

Last Sept. 14, David presided over the first water roadmap meeting. Attendees were mostly division chiefs from a few water-related agencies.

But the water crisis requires much more than this. Examples are the Department of Agriculture (DA) because of the water needed by farmers, the Department of Health (DOH) to prevent water-related diseases, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to prevent water waste, the Department of Energy (DOE) to harness hydropower, the Department of Education (DepEd) to educate our youth on proper water use, and the Local Government Units (LGUs) for

effective water disposal.

Most of the proposed amendments to the 1976 Water Code can be implemented through political will and without the need for long Congressional approval. Mr. Duterte can make this happen, as he did with the Freedom of Information via executive action.

The president must identify a water-positive initiative and partner this with his drug-negative thrust. He must lead in addressing this water challenge.

Mr. Duterte himself must mobilize the approximately 30 water-related government agencies to address the water crisis. Six years from now, he should be remembered not only for his national legacy in fighting drugs, but also for his global legacy in successfully addressing the water crisis. INQ

(The author is chair of Agri-watch, former Secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects, and former Undersecretary for Agriculture, Trade and Industry. For inquiries and suggestions, e-mail agri-watch_phil@yahoo.com or call telefax 8522112.)

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Enforce fisheries laws — BFAR

By Anna Leah E. Gonzales
and Sandy Araneta

STRONGER law enforcement are needed to achieve sustainable fisheries and seafood self-sufficiency in the Philippines, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources National Director Eduardo Gongona said.

Relatedly, the Angono, Rizal chapter of the fisherfolk group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) on Tuesday lamented that dumping waste and the landfill in the Angono part of Laguna de Bay are still ongoing even after dialogue with the Laguna Lake Development Authority and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"We have to maintain and protect our traditional fishing grounds. If we properly enforce our fisheries law, then we will have enough fish. We need action, and we need to do it now," Gongona said.

Lax enforcement resulted in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, he said.

Oceana Philippines vice president Atty. Gloria Ramos noted that at present, 56 percent of Filipinos' animal protein comes from fish and 93 percent of fish caught in the country are consumed domestically.

"Fish is not only a vital food source, it also provides livelihood for millions of Filipinos. For a country that is dependent on the seas for sustenance and livelihood, we certainly need to be more vigilant in protecting our marine resources," Ramos said.

At present, the Philippines ranks 11th in the world as a source of seafood, but destructive fishing practices caused a rapid decline of fish supply in the country.

"Strengthened law enforcement and sustainable fisheries management also protects the spawning ground of fish. If our fisheries were given time and protection to recover, they would ensure seafood security and result in increased incomes for marginalized fisherfolk, who are the country's poorest of the poor, and our coastal residents whose lives, income and culture are tied to our oceans," Ramos said.

Earlier, the government apprehended two fishing boats in Hagnaya Port, San Remigio in the northern part of Tañon Strait, which contained 19 thresher sharks and 70 buckets of fish believed to be caught using dynamite.

Tañon Strait is a narrow body of water between Negros and Cebu islands, and is the larg-

est marine protected area in the Philippines.

Ramos said the recent apprehension is a strong indication of strengthened enforcement to deter illegal fishing in Tañon Strait.

"With the apprehension of the vessels, we expect a case to be filed soon against the owner and the crew. The illegal fishing not only violates our fisheries and conservation laws, but also the Cebu Provincial Ordinance protecting all shark species in the province," she said.

Ramos said the protection of thresher sharks has gained global support as parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora voted in favor of listing these species in Appendix II, controlling their trade to ensure their survival.

"We are glad to note that the various national agencies are coordinating in the enforcement of fisheries and environmental laws, and exhibit strong resolve in apprehending plunderers of our oceans. This joint endeavor must be sustained, to restore fisheries abundance, and ensure the protection and conservation of our fisheries and natural resources and of course, the livelihoods of our people," she said.



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Carp in Laguna lake emasculated by pollution

Pollution in the Laguna de Bay is making the male carps in the lake lose their masculinity.

A study conducted by Michelle Grace Paraso of the University of the Philippines-Los Baños (UPLB) College of Veterinary Medicine found that a majority of the male common carp in the lake have shrunken testes compared with those of the normal male carp.

This indicated that they have been "feminized." This feminization shows that the carp was exposed to certain

types of pollutants, particularly estrogen.

Paraso said that this phenomenon could mean that carps can serve as biomarkers or tools for the detection of the magnitude of pollution in waterways.

Paraso's study, which was funded by the Department of Science and Technology-National Research Council of the Philippines (DOST-NRCP), evaluated carp as fish biomarker in determining the contamination of Laguna de Bay in four sites: Sta. Cruz and

By RAINIER ALLAN RONDA

Paete, Laguna (East Bay) and Taguig City and Muntinlupa City (West Bay).

A biomarker is an organism with a particular substance that may serve as indicator of some natural phenomenon like pollution and various biological pressures like infection and disease.

According to the study, changes in the reproductive conditions of carp are influenced by several factors, such as food availability, water quality and temperature.

Estrogenic contaminant or

pollutant is estrogen produced through unnatural means. The contaminants developed from chemical components obtained in an environment and they cause reproductive impairment in water organisms such as fish.

Paraso is an expert from the Veterinary Medicine Division of the DOST-NRCP.

His study is relevant as government pushes for a cleaner environment, especially in coastal areas where many people live and obtain their livelihood, the DOST-NRCP said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

ROBREDO, ET AL BLOCK MORATORIUM ON LAND CONVERSION

By Amy R. Remo
@amyremoINQ

Economic managers are thwarting plans to impose a ban on farmland conversion, warning the proposed moratorium will unnecessarily delay critical infrastructure and housing projects.

On the sidelines of the 42nd Philippine Business Conference on Wednesday, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia said he and four other

high ranking government officials have already signed a position paper stating their opposition to the planned land conversion moratorium of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). He said the position paper, already submitted to Malacañang, was also signed by Vice President Leni Robredo, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez and Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno.

The proposal seeks to sus-

pend the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural purposes and to review all land conversions, stock distribution and leasehold arrangements.

"(The moratorium) is going to be problematic for infrastructure projects... Some of the agricultural areas also are not suitable for any crop. We're going to prevent that moratorium," he said.

"We have the wide support from stakeholders including the Philippine Chamber of Com-

merce and Industry, the Foundation for Economic Freedom, many other economists, and colleagues from universities. (This paper) will be considered by the president and it would form part of the context as to whether or not the draft executive order (on land moratorium) will be signed or not," he added. Business leaders and local economists earlier warned the proposal could have an adverse impact on the government economic plans. INQ