

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

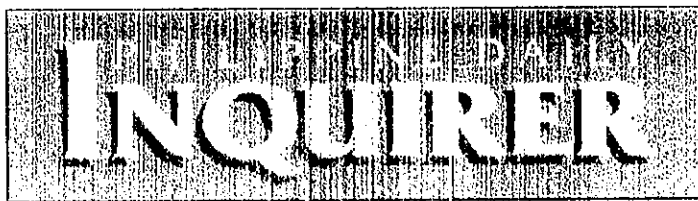
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DEMILITARIZATION OF COMMUNITIES AT HEART

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' MEET WITH GINA TURNS INTO 3-WAY TALK WITH AFP CHIEF

By Jaymee T. Gamil
@jaymeegamilINQ

Indigenous peoples (IP) calling for the demilitarization of their communities had a chance to air their gripes directly to the military chief yesterday during a dialogue with Environment Secretary Gina Lopez at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.

The indigenous peoples from across the Philippines are holding a weeks-long campout on the campus of the state university to bring to national attention their plights in their communities.

Lopez listened to various concerns—from calls to close mining sites to demands for justice for the killing of indigenous peoples in the past year.

When she heard that one of the calls of the indigenous groups was to demilitarize their communities, she phoned Gen. Ricardo Visaya on the spot and put the Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff on speaker phone to allow him to explain the military's side.

Visaya explained to the indigenous peoples: "The soldiers assigned to your place are

not there to disturb you but to respond to the presence of the NPA (New People's Army) who are exploiting you."

"It's not militarization. When you speak of militarization, the military interferes with the barangay—how your place is to be run. They just guide you. They will just teach you so there will be quiet and happiness," Visaya said, to increasing murmurs from the gathered tribal folk.

'The NPA recruit lumad'

From Agusan del Sur province, where he was at the time, Visaya said, "Each encounter with the NPA, those who are killed are lumad. The NPA recruit lumad. We don't want you to join them."

Lopez, upon hearing the reactions of the indigenous people's leaders, told Visaya that "they're concerned the military is killing civilians."

Visaya responded: "There are lumad who die because they joined the NPA." This was met with jeers from the crowd, which gave way to cries of "berdugo!" and chants of "militar sa kanayunan, pagbayarin!"

Earlier, Lopez assured the indigenous peoples about

Visaya: "He's for you... He doesn't want the militarization of ancestral domains. If something happens after he says it's enough, you just contact him, or contact us. Let's fix it.... So we will work together."

Cancel permit, stop violence

Minda Dalinan, representing the B'laan tribe from South Cotabato, noted the perceived link between mining in their area and the military presence. "Cancel [the permit of] Sagittarius Mining. If it's cancelled, the violence from the military and police will stop."

She also spoke out against the heavy-handed response to the indigenous peoples' rallies in Metro Manila over the past week. "Despite the violence we suffer in the countryside, they still inflict violence on us in Metro Manila. What does the AFP and especially the police want? Why don't they allow us to say what we feel?"

A rally by the IPs at AFP headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, was met with a water cannon. At the US Embassy in Manila, tear gas canisters were lobbed and a policeman ran over protesters with a van. INQ

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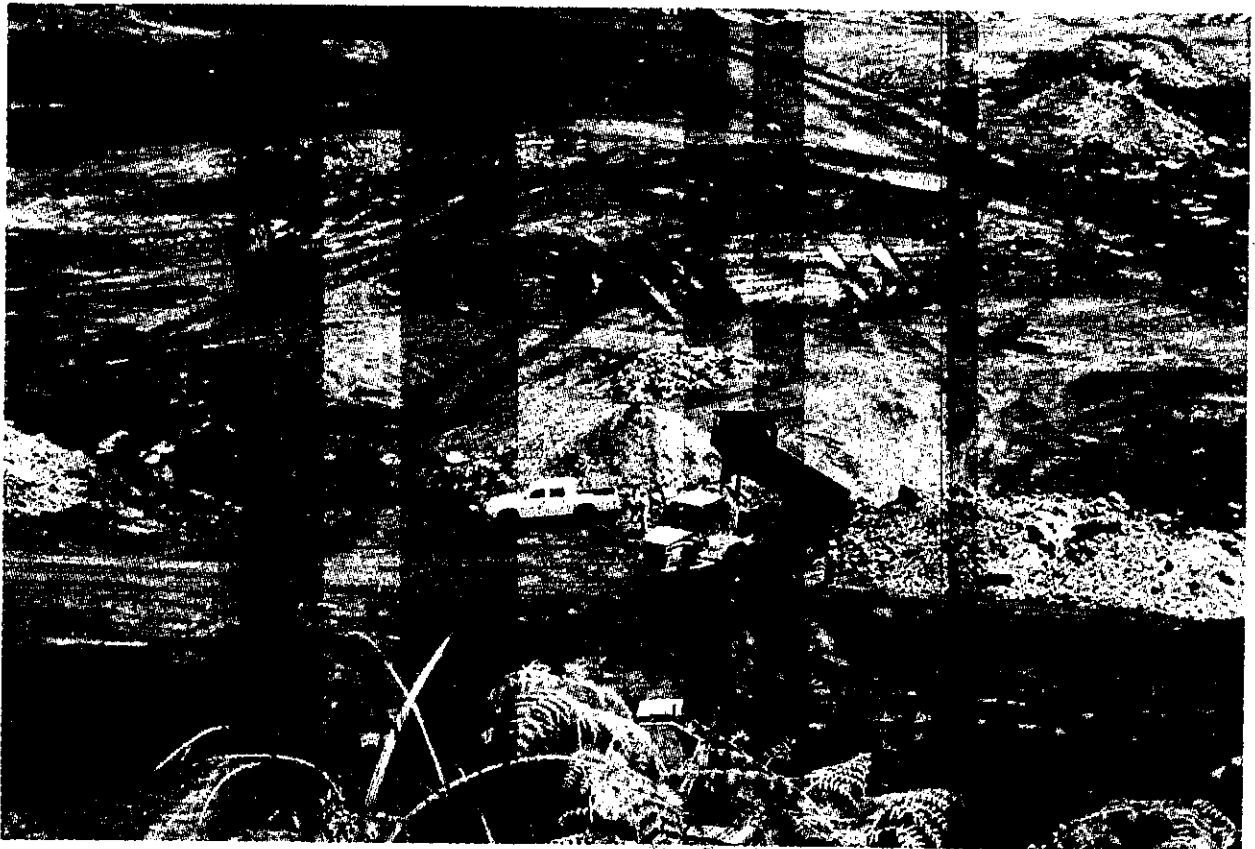
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Review of Mining Act to favor communities



The review of the Mining Act will ensure that affected communities are favoured in revenue sharing, areas affected by disasters due to mining operations are rehabilitated and "No-Go-Zones" identified.

BY ANGELA CELIS

THE Philippines is pursuing a two-track strategy for mitigating the adverse effects of irresponsible mining, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) said.

Rosemarie Edillon, NEDA deputy director general said that the first strategy already done by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is the comprehensive audit of mining sites.

Second is the review of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, which covers revenue-sharing to favor affected communities, rehabilitating areas affected by disasters due to mining operations, identifying "No-Go Zones" and issuing liability insurance to cover damages in mined-out

Malaya

Business Insight

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REVIEW

indigenous peoples (IPs), children, women and workers, during a dialogue with the United Nations (UN) Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights held last September in Geneva, Switzerland.

"The Philippines accords special attention to the plight of its IPs - the sector that is most affected by the mining industry. We are thus continually seeking to empower our IPs and communities through consultation processes, and in exercising the principle of free, prior and informed consent," Edillon said.

"By engaging our IPs, we hope to strengthen the implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, which mandates the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples to act on cases involving the violation of the rights of IPs," she added.

Meanwhile, Edillon also talked about efforts of the government to promote cultural heritage and diversity.

One initiative among many, she said, is the National Endowment Fund for Culture and the Arts, which disbursed P602.6 million in 2015 for art festivals, publications and documentation, research and development, and restoration and preservation of cultural heritage.

The Philippine delegation also affirmed its commitment to protecting and strengthening the family, drawing special attention to women and children.

"Actions are being taken on bills that aim to amend the Family Code, underscoring the need for more equality in the family decision-making process," Edillon said.

"The new administration has vowed to protect women's rights, and also called for the full implementation of the Philippine Magna Carta of Women down to the barangay level," she added.

According to Edillon, the Anti-Rape Law of 1997 is also undergoing legislative scrutiny to be more responsive to the realities that confront rape and potential rape victims.

Furthermore, the Philippines presented to the Committee its efforts to stop human trafficking.

From 2010 to 2016, the convictions in trafficking in persons (TIP) increased eight times in number, NEDA said. The average trial duration of TIP cases has also been significantly reduced from five years to two years.

Last November 2015, the Philippines led the negotiations towards adopting the Asean Convention in Trafficking in Persons and its accompanying Regional Plan of Action for 2016 to 2020.

On workers' rights, Edillon said the Philippine government has completed the Human Resource Roadmap for 2016 to 2022, which contains labor supply and demand information as well as strategies for improving human resource competitiveness.

"The Philippines highly values decent work as a means to spur collective development and progress. This is crucial as we address concerns of unemployment and underemployment in the Philippines such as skills shortage and job mismatch," Edillon said.

She also mentioned the amended Migrant Workers Act which provides for integrated support services for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), a 24/7 assistance facility for them in host countries and a reintegration program for returning OFWs.

The recently concluded dialogue with the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is part of a regular review of the 164 states that ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

THE STANDARD

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Marcventures nickel mine remains fully operational

By Anna Leah E. Gonzales

MARCVENTURES Holdings Inc. said its nickel mine in Surigao del Sur remains in full and active operation.

Marcventures Holdings said in

a disclosure to the stock exchange while unit Marcventures Mining and Development Corp. already received a copy of the letter from the Environment Department, the letter merely informed the company of the major findings from the audit

conducted without any mention of suspension or instructions to reply.

"Notably, the same letter also advises MMDC that the DENR shall be forwarding the soonest the pertinent audit report for MMDC's guidance," Marcven-

tures said.

Marcventures said that so far, MMDC had not yet received the detailed audit report.

MMDC is one of the 20 mines which were recommended for suspension due to several violations.

The Environment Department said the company had not yet implemented the planting of 3 million seedlings imposed as penalty for mining outside areas covered by its partial declaration of mining project feasibility.

"We are confident that we will be able to refute the findings mentioned in the said DENR letter since they mostly refer to alleged deficient documents or programs which were already submitted for appropriate action of the DENR," Marcventures said.

"We assure our stakeholders of our commitment to comply with and support the efforts of the DENR and the Philippine government to ensure that mining will be made in a responsible manner in compliance with existing laws and regulations and with due regard to the well-being of our host communities," Marcventures said.

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Manila committed to UN climate goals – ambassador

PHILIPPINE Ambassador to the United Nations Teodoro Locsin Jr. on Monday said the country is committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the global body.

"Today, we stand ready to advance the SDGs championed by the UN, knowing that the world body must constantly seek to advance human progress wherever possible – even while it must constantly put out wars, end conflicts and respond quickly to disasters and humanitarian crises," Locsin told the audience at the inauguration of an exhibit on SDGs at the SM Mall of Asia in Pasay City (Metro Manila).

He said the Duterte administration is committed to growth strategy that "weds economic development with environmental sustainability and social inclusion."

As new UN ambassador, according to Locsin, he was always asked on how receptive the community is the international to President Rodrigo Duterte's tirades against the United States, European countries and even the UN itself.

"You can say anything you want but you can never attack the UN because the Philippines is [a member of the] United Nations. We are part of the UN and we will continue to be. We are highly regarded because of the peace-keeping forces [contributed by the Philippines and which the UN deploys to areas of armed conflict]," he told reporters in a chance interview.

Locsin said the attacks of Duterte against the UN on the issue of human rights "will not affect the relationship of the Philippines with the UN and



UN DAY Teodoro Locsin Jr., Philippine Ambassador to the United Nations, shares a laugh with Ola Almgren, UN Resident Coordinator in the Philippines, during a United Nations Day program held at the Mall of Asia in Pasay City (Metro Manila) on Monday. Almgren was guest speaker at the event. PHOTO BY ROGER RAÑADA

other nations.

"At the UN, the forum is there so people could talk [but not on] fighting," he added.

Locsin likened Duterte's attacks to "cha-cha diplomacy" where "you turn left to China, right to Russia and turn around back to facing the US anew."

He disclosed that he met Duterte only once who told him what to "do" and not mind defending him and just do his job

"for the country."

Locsin said he will have to stay here in Manila for a while and not attend to his job as UN ambassador in New York where the world body is headquartered.

The ambassador added that the UN is helping attract businessmen to invest in the Philippines knowing fully well that they can provide decent work, more income for the poor, access to good health programs and a stewardship approach

to use of resources.

Also present at the inauguration were UN Resident Coordinator Ola Almgren, Assistant Secretary (Office of the Cabinet Secretary) Evelyn Cruzada, former senator Hershenson Alvarez, SM senior vice president for marketing communications Millie Dizon, former Climate Change commissioner Yeb Sano and CNN hero Efrén Peñaflorida.

JAIME R. PILAPIL

The Manila Times

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■ The EcoWaste Coalition, a non-profit watch group on harmful chemicals in products and wastes, urged consumers of wet wipes, especially those used for babies, to watch out for products containing a restricted preservative. ECOWASTE COALITION PHOTO

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Pasig River ferry service may soon reach Rizal

By ANNA LIZA VILLACAYAREN

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) is looking at the possibility of extending the Pasig River Ferry System to coastal municipalities in Rizal province.

Tim Orbos, MMDA General Manager, said connecting Metro Manila to neighboring provinces through major waterways would benefit residents there.

"We are looking at expansion beyond Metro Manila. Like in Taytay, imagine it will take you two hours from Taytay to Makati. We are talking here of 45 minutes travel time via Pasig ferry," said Orbos, citing that during the time

of national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, ferry boats also served as a means of transportation.

On Monday, Orbos unveiled two new ferry boats at the Guadalupe station in Makati City for the Pasig River Ferry System.

The two new ferry boats bring to 14 the total number of vessels connecting the 11 stations along the Pasig River, from Pasig City up to the City of Manila.

Orbos said he will talk to Department of Transportation (DoTr) Secretary Arthur Tugade and officials of the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) about the project.

The agency's immediate plan, Orbos said, is opening terminals

in Marikina and Eastwood, Quezon City.

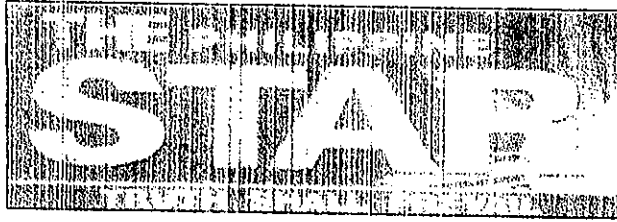
"Delaying the opening of stations in Marikina and Eastwood is 'dredging works,'" said Orbos.

Orbos said the MMDA hopes to inspire the private sector in managing the ferry system.

"The role of the government is to open up the routes. Hopefully when it becomes successful, the private sector should come in already," said Orbos.

Thinking ahead, Frisco San Juan Jr., new MMDA deputy chairman, said they are looking at opening 30 stations around the lake.

"We can have stations in Calamba, Laguna, Rizal," said San Juan.



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MMDA eyes 30 more Pasig River ferry stations

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) is planning to expand the Pasig River Ferry system by adding 30 more stations around the Laguna de Bay to help decongest traffic in the metropolis.

MMDA deputy manager Frisco San Juan Jr. said they plan to build seven stations in Rizal and another station at the Marikina River.

MMDA chief Tim Orbos said he would seek a meeting with the Department of

Transportation (DOTr) and Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) for the expansion of the ferry system.

"It's in our list of priorities to expand the Pasig River Ferry system. I will talk to DOTr Secretary Arthur Tugade and

the LLDA on the matter," Orbos said.

Orbos believes that the expansion project will reduce travel time by two hours from Taytay, Rizal to Metro Manila and by at least 30 to 45 minutes from Marikina to Manila.

To date, the Pasig River Ferry system has 11 stations in Metro Manila.

Orbos led the launching of two more ferryboats yesterday at the Guadalupe station in Makati City.

—Robertzon Ramirez

MMDA to open 30 ferry terminals

By Joel Zurbano

THE Metro Manila Development Authority is planning to open 30 Pasig River Ferry terminals to accommodate more passengers in the eastern part of Metro Manila and in the provinces of Rizal and Laguna.

Of the 30, seven terminals will be constructed around the Laguna Lake and in the City of Calamba, said MMDA deputy chairman Frisco San Juan.

"This will be built in the coming years," San Juan said.

The MMDA made the announcement during the launching of two new fiber glass fer-

ries at the Guadalupe Station in Makati City on Monday.

The arrival of new boats, capable of carrying at least 15 passengers, including crew, brings to 16 the total number of operational ferries.

"Our main objective really is to help the people find an alternative mode of transportation and to ease traffic in Metro Ma-

nila," said MMDA officer-in-charge Thomas Orbos.

"Hopefully, we are looking to go beyond Metro Manila. In Taytay, you can imagine it will take you two hours from Taytay to Makati and we are talking 30 to 45 minutes," he added.

Orbos said he will be having a meeting with Department of Transportation Secretary Arturo Tugade and officials of the Laguna Lake Development Authority soon to discuss the opening of new terminals.

"The role of the government is to open up the routes. Hopefully when it becomes successful, the private sector should come in already," Orbos said.

Aside from Rizal and Laguna,

the MMDA will also open soon the new terminals in the areas of Eastwood in Quezon City and Riverbank in Marikina City.

"We are encouraging the people to try our ferry system. We can help in the environment and at the same time our travel will be faster, like from here to Manila it will take you less than an hour. So, please help us, the more that we use it, the more that we'll become viable," said Orbos.

MMDA records showed that the total ridership of the ferry system has reached more than 150,000 as of December last year.

The MMDA revived the Pasig River system in 2014 as a means to decongest Metro Manila's major roads.

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Newsbits

- **11 sacks of corals seized in Lucena**

LUCENA CITY, Quezon — Eleven sacks of assorted corals taken from reefs were confiscated by elements of the 403rd Philippine Maritime Group (403PMG) and the local "Bantay Dagat" in Purok 11 Ilaya, Barangay Dalahican, here, last weekend. Tanggol Kalikasan identified the harvester of the corals as a certain Mateo I. Taneo, 60, a local resident. PO1 Meynard P. Abel of the 403PMG said Taneo had intended to transport the corals for sale allegedly at the Cartimar Shopping Mall in Pasay City. (Danny J. Estacio)

Environment groups rally against coal plants' proliferation in PH

Various environment groups have been continuously asking the Duterte administration to stop building coal-fired power plants.

The Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ), which led a recent rally, called attention to the 20 coal-fired power plants currently under construction and the 19 more government-approved coal contracts that are in the pipeline.

"A lot of countries, including the US and EU (European Union) countries, are already phasing out coal. How come coal is now booming here in the Philippines?" Glenn Ymata, Energy Campaigner of PMCJ said.

"Developing countries like the Philippines have now become the dumping ground of coal," he said.

"They are now dumping their old technologies and pollution onto us."

Ymata said the rest of the country should follow the example of Ilocos Norte and Batangas, whose local governments have pledged to stop issuing permits for coal-fired power plants in their provinces, and instead pursue renewable energy sources like wind, solar, hydro, and geothermal.

"There is too much coal in Batangas. We need to better take care of our environment," Batangas governor Hermilando Mandanas said during a recent interview on ABS-CBN.

It can be recalled that in his inau-

gural address after winning the May 11 elections, Mandanas promised he would no longer allow coal plants in the province. "We will not allow any more power plants using coal as fuel, and we will protect and conserve our natural resources in Batangas by prohibiting commercial mining," he said.

Batangas has the largest power plants that run on natural gas, considered the cleanest form of fossil fuel. These plants have a combined capacity of 2,797 MW.

Three of these plants – the 1,000-MW Santa Rita, 500-MW San Lorenzo, and 97-MW Avion – are owned by subsidiaries of First Gen Corporation, the country's leading clean and renewable energy company.

The other natural gas-fired power plant is the 1,200-MW Ilijan combined cycle power plant.

Another natural gas plant – the 414-MW San Gabriel owned by a separate First Gen subsidiary – is awaiting the release of its certificate of compliance from regulators. Once San Gabriel starts commercial operation, the combined capacity of natural gas-fired power plants in Batangas will reach 3,200 MW.

One of its municipalities, Calatagan, also hosts the 63.3-megawatt Calatagan Solar Farm, the biggest solar farm in Luzon, which was inaugurated last year.

The Manila Times

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Bulusan generates pyroclastic flow

LEGAZPI CITY, Albay: Bulusan volcano ejected pyroclastic flow in two consecutive explosions recorded on Monday.

Mount Bulusan erupted twice in eight minutes late on Sunday afternoon that rocked the towns of Irosin, Bulusan and Juban in Sorsogon province and other nearby towns.

The eruptions generated earthquakes, the first at 3:31 p.m. and the second eight minutes later, and lasted for a total of 15 minutes based on seismic records.

The first eruption originated from the summit crater and produced dirty-white to grayish ash column 2.5 kilometers high that drifted west-southwest.

This also generated small pyroclastic flow that cascaded down slopes approximately two kilometers from the summit.

Bulusan's last eruption associated with pyroclastic flow was recorded some 30 years ago.

Traces of ash from Monday's eruptions were noted in the villages of Gabao, Bulawan, Gulang-Gulang, Monbon, Cogon and Tinampo, all in Irosin town, while 0.5 millimeter thick ash was found in Barangay Bolos, Irosin and Barangay Caladgao in Juban town.

Ed Laguerta, resident chief volcanologist in Bicol of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said the thickest ash (1 millimeter) fell in Barangay Putting Sapa, Juban.

The volcano later exhibited a smaller eruption, originating from the southeast vent and producing a dirty-white to grayish ash column 500 meters above the vent.

Bulusan volcano has four craters.

A Phivolcs report said that rumbling sounds were heard in Gulang-Gulang, Tinampo, Monbon, Mapaso in Irosin town, while rumbling sounds accompanied by sulfur smells were experienced in Aniog and Putting Sapa, Juban.

For the past 24 hours, Bulusan's seismic monitoring network recorded a total 33 volcanic earthquakes most of which occurred before the eruptions.

A noticeable increase in sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emission to 578 tons a day was measured on Monday morning prior to the eruptions.

A few days ago, Phivolcs officials enforced a two-kilometer extended zone over Mount Bulusan in the southeast vents that pose a potential source of eruption close to the populated villages of Mapaso, as well as San Roque village in Bulusan town.

They said small-volume but hazardous pyroclastic density currents can potentially be generated by stronger steam-driven or phreatic eruptions and may travel down the Malunoy and Mapaso rivers, endangering the villages as well as Barangay Patag, Irosin.

RHAYDZ B. BARCIA

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ANG DIARYO NG MASA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

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Mt. Bulusan matigpit na muno-monitor

NAGDAGDAG ng mga kagamitan at instrumento ang Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology upang matulong sa pag-monitor sa sitwasyon ng Bulkan Bulusan na patuloy sa pagbuga ng usok, inilalat kahapon.

Ayon kay Dr. Ed Laguereta, resident volcanologist ng Phivolcs, lahat ng mga instrumento na ang kanilang itinatagdag para mas mabantayan pa ang gas at ang sitwasyon sa loob ng naturang bulkan.

Mahigpit din nilang bina-

bantayan ang mga naitatalang volcanic quake ng Bulusan dahil posibleng magresulta sa mas komplikado pang sitwasyon.

Maliban sa naitatalang lin-dol, kinakailangan din aniyang bantayan ang maraming vents ng bulkan kung saan dito lumalabas ang mga abo lalo na kapag nakataraon ng phreatic eruptions.

Samantala, nag-abiso si Laguereta sa mga residente na malapit sa paanan ng bulkan na manatili muna sa loob ng kanilang mga bahay lalo na ang may mga sakid dahil na rin sa posib-

leng epekto na dalhin ng abo na ibinuga nito kahapon.

Nagsimula na ring kumuhap ang Phivolcs ng sample ng abo mula sa Bulusan para mapag-aralan ito at maiham-ling sa mga abo na ibinuga ng bulkan ng nakaraang phreatic eruptions nito.

Nanawagan naman si Laguereta sa mga residente na manatili kalmado at sumunod sa abiso ng mga otoridad upang makuwas sa anong epekto na dadatnin ng mga aktibidad ng Bulkan Bulusan.

MARY ANNE SAPICO

Mt. Bulusan's two eruptions

Sunday cause ashfall in Irosin and Juban

BY ELLALYN R. DEVERA

Small pyroclastic flow and traces of ash were observed from the slope of Mount Bulusan and nearby communities following two phreatic eruptions last Sunday afternoon.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said the two events were recorded as explosion-type earthquakes, first occurring at 3:31 p.m. and second occurring at 3:39 p.m. Both eruptions lasted for a total of 15 minutes.

The first eruption originated from the summit crater of Mt. Bulusan, which produced a dirty-white to grayish ash column 2.5 kilometers high, which then drifted west-southwest.

Phivolcs said this particular event generated small pyroclastic flow that

cascaded downslope approximately two kilometers from the summit.

Meanwhile, traces of ash were found in the villages of Gabao, Bulawan, Gulang-gulang, Monbon, Cogon and Tinampo in Irosin town, while 0.5-millimeter thick ash were found in the villages of Bolos in Irosin, and Caladgao in Juban town.

The thickest ash about 1-millimeter thick fell in the villages of Putting Sapa in Juban.

The second eruption, which was much smaller, originated from the south-east vent and produced a dirty-white to grayish ash column that reached 500 meters above the vent.

Phivolcs said rumbling sound was heard in Gulang-gulang, Tinampo, Monbon, Mapaso in Irosin town, while rumbling sound accompanied by sulfur smell was observed in Aniog and Putting Sapa in Juban.

Furthermore, Mt. Bulusan's seismic monitoring network recorded a total of 33 volcanic earthquakes during a 24-hour monitoring period. Most of which occurred before the eruptions, Phivolcs pointed out.

Office of the Civil Defense (OCD) Bicol and Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (RDRRMC) chief Raffy Alejandro said the ashfall is also being monitored in the nearby province of Masbate.

Farming communities have raised concerns that thick ash could damage their crops for this season. (With a report from Niño N. Luces)

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

ASCENT JOINS IP CALL FOR FREE FOREIGN POLICY

The Assert Socio-Economic Initiative Network in the Philippines (Ascent) condemns the violent dispersal of national minorities by the Philippine National Police in the morning of Oct. 19, 2016.

The right to self-determination is a guaranteed right under the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Therefore, this should be enjoyed by national minorities in the country.

The IP (indigenous peoples) call for an independent government foreign policy free from external intervention is not only a call for support for national minorities, it is also a call for government to steer for the country a course free from agreements and treaties that are detrimental to the interest of the Filipino people.

Yet, this call by the national minorities for self-determination and against foreign intervention was met harshly by state security forces. Unnecessary force was used against the protesters, and lives were placed in danger because ranking police officials would rather protect the seal and embassy of a foreign country than the lives of the citizens they have sworn to serve and protect.

We laud the government's action temporarily relieving police officials who were involved in the incident. However, Ascent believes the move is not enough. State agents responsible for the bloody clash must be held accountable, and justice for the national minorities



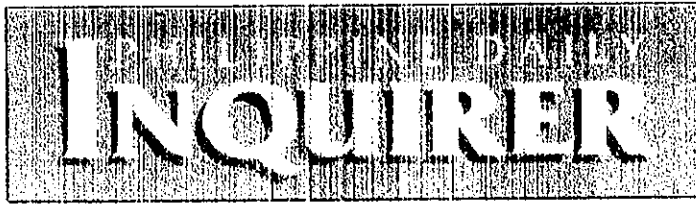
Activists perform a tribal dance during an indignation rally held at the University of the Philippines to protest the violent dispersal of national minorities demonstrating in front of the US Embassy last Oct. 19.—GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

should be served.

Ascent and its member organizations have been working for years with different national minority groups in implementing development projects that uphold their right to self-determination. Ascent continues to support their call, as well as the push for an independent foreign

policy so that the Filipino people may be truly free to chart their own course to development.

RENMIN CRISANTA VIZCONDE, spokesperson, Assert Socio-Economic Initiative Network in the Philippines



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Discriminating against national minorities

Much has been said about the violent dispersal of protesters at the US Embassy last Oct. 19, which left scores injured, and compelled even the leadership of the Philippine National Police to relieve dozens of policemen involved pending investigation.

We cannot, however, lay this issue to rest without belaboring one essential point—the incident is a blatant case of discrimination against our national minorities.

First, the facts obscured by the hype of blood and adrenaline: The protest was led by an alliance of national minorities. Since early October, various indigenous tribes and Moros from all over the country have been holding a protest caravan, marching from their ancestral lands to participate in a historic “Lakbayan ng Pambansang Minorya” (Caravan of National Minorities), which aims to highlight the plight of the Moro and indigenous peoples, especially the militarization and plunder of their ancestral lands.

In an unprecedented and never-before-seen move, the various tribes formed a historic alliance: Sandugo, which translates to a “blood compact.” It was an alliance that sought to amplify the voices of those in the margins, uniting them under one common call—to assert their right to self-determination and peace.

On the fateful day of the violent dispersal, Sandugo mobilized a thousand minorities, together with supporters from Metro Manila, to raise the national minorities’

COMMENTARY

MARJOHARA TUCAY

grievance against the United States. For the Moro and indigenous peoples, Washington is one of the primary causes of turmoil in their communities.

Leaders of the national minorities point out that their fight for self-determination—or the struggle to uphold their own sociopolitical and cultural identities—cannot push forward if a superpower like the United States continues to lord over the Philippines’ politico-economic scene. Such intervention has brought a multitude of woes: US war games and military installations wreak havoc in ancestral lands; Oplan Bayanihan, which they stress is an offshoot of the US Counterinsurgency Guide of 2009, continues to militarize their communities and slaughter their kin; and Washington’s corporate interests and economic policies—especially in mining and other extractive industries—serve only to plunder their tribes’ lands.

The fight of national minorities is as much political as it is economic. They are waging not just a fight for their own tribes but also a fight to assert the rights and demands of their socioeconomic classes—their right to land, decent jobs, higher wages, and equal opportunities. Tribal communities, after all, have suffered the

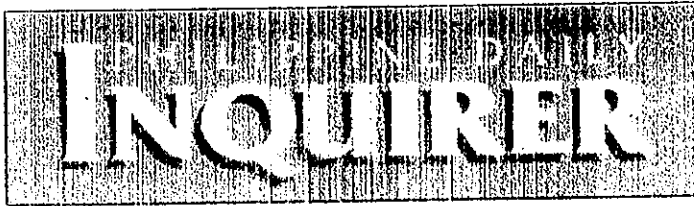
hardest from decades of underdevelopment and backward agriculture caused by Washington’s politico-economic dictates on our nation.

National minorities have every right to protest in front of the fortress of what they consider as a primary antagonist. Yet when violence ensued, albeit from the ranks of the brutal police force, there are those who dare question the motive of the protest. Never mind the fact that historically, national minorities that comprise up to 20 percent of the population remain to be the most economically, politically and socially marginalized sector of Philippine society.

Under the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965, of which the Philippines is a party to, “racial discrimination” is defined as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”

And that is what state forces exactly committed when they plowed through the protesters. That is the same discrimination committed by those who question the capability of the Moros and indigenous peoples to fight.

Marjohara Tucay is the national president of Kabataan Party-list.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

PARIS ACCORD

INDUSTRY GROUP BACKS DU30 STAND VS CLIMATE PACT

By Amy R. Remo
@amyremoINQ

A local business group has backed President Duterte's stand against the international climate accord signed by the Philippine government earlier this year, saying the pact would hamper the country's industrialization efforts.

According to the Federation of Philippine Industries, it agreed with Mr. Duterte, who had said he would not allow the country to be dictated upon by countries like the United States and those in Europe.

Mr. Duterte had said that the country's industrialization should not be stymied by climate change mitigation policies, principally in the energy sector.

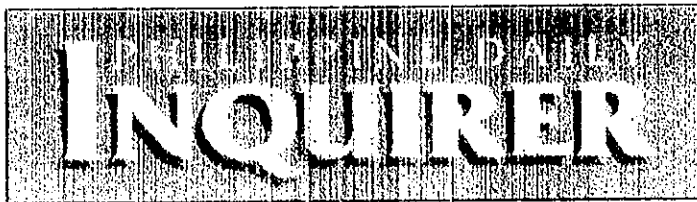
In a statement, FPI chairman Jesus Lim Arranza said this was the same position held by the group, as he pointed out that the Philippines' contribution to greenhouse gas emissions was merely 0.3 per-

cent—a figure that was “negligible” and could be very well mitigated and sequestered by the country's reforestation, efficient energy mix, better traffic management, among others.”

“Hence, Mr. Duterte's stand is correct because it is the advanced countries such as the United States and Europe, among other states, that pioneered in massive greenhouse gas emissions and yet the low country emitter such as the Philippines is being made to shoulder a big burden in mitigation that prejudices development,” Arranza explained.

Under its commitment to the landmark climate accord signed in New York in April, the Philippines will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 70 percent up to 2030.

This agreement was adopted by 196 countries that participated in the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change held in France in December last year. INQ



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

MARITIME DISPUTE WITH CHINA

FISHERMEN ON SCARBOROUGH: THANK YOU, MR. DUTERTE, BUT...

By Gabriel Cardinoza
and Allan Macatuno
@Team_Inquirer

DAGUPAN CITY—Fishermen from Pangasinan province were happy President Duterte discussed Scarborough Shoal issue with his Chinese hosts during his state visit last week, but said that access to the rich fishing ground should not be conditional.

"We had long waited for the President to say this. Now we see hope," said Charlito Maniago, barangay chair of the fishing village of Cato in Infanta town, home of 30 fishing boats that frequent the shoal.

Jowe Legaspi, Cato barangay councilman, said there should be no conditions on Filipino fishermen going to fish at the disputed shoal in the South China Sea.

When he visited Cagayan on Sunday, Mr. Duterte said he and Chinese officials spoke about issues related to the rich fishing ground, among them about allowing Filipino fishermen into the shoal and preserving its lagoon.

Scarborough Shoal, also known to Filipinos as Panatag Shoal and Bajo de Masinloc, is a

triangular chain of reefs and rocks surrounding a 46-kilometer lagoon (spanning an area of 150 square km). It is about 240 km southwest of Infanta, Quezon.

China seized the shoal after a two-month standoff with the Philippines in 2012 and has since barred Filipinos from fishing there.

Invoke ruling

Legaspi on Monday said President Duterte should invoke the July 12 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, instead of heeding the dictates of the Chinese government.

The tribunal ruled that China's claim had no basis in international law and that it had violated the Philippine sovereign right to fish and explore for resources in waters within its 370-km exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea or West Philippine Sea.

Legaspi was one of the 16 Infanta fishermen who asked the United Nations in September last year to direct China to respect their rights to their traditional fishing ground at the shoal.

Maniago said the possibili-

ty the shoal's lagoon would soon be off limits has disturbed the Infanta fishermen because that is where the fish abound.

Legaspi said fishing outside the shoal's lagoon had always been dangerous, especially during low tide when fishing boats risk hitting the coral.

"What they should ban are illegal fishing [methods], like cyanide and blast fishing, which were rampant in the 1990s because no one stopped them," he said.

Lost courage

In Zambales province, fishermen said they would rather err on the side of caution than risk their lives as they venture out to the West Philippine Sea, despite Mr. Duterte's assurances.

"We've lost the courage to go back to the shoal because the Chinese Coast Guard remains hostile towards us," said Aniceto Achina, 40, boat captain of fishing vessel "JJM."

"It's also disheartening that our government has neglected us. We've lost an important source of income," he said on Monday. INQ



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Back to Panatag? Put it in writing

By EVA VISPERAS

LINGAYEN – A local executive of Pangasinan province is set to file a board resolution urging President Duterte to put on paper his assurance that Filipinos can fish again in Chinese-occupied Panatag or Scarborough Shoal and let concerned parties

sign it.

Fourth district board member Jeremy Agerico Rosario told local reporters yesterday that he and fellow Pangasinenses are happy to hear the President's announcement after his Beijing trip that Filipino

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fishermen can gain access to Panatag Shoal.

Rosario said those who go there for their livelihood are from Pangasinan towns like Infanta, Dasol, Bolinao and other coastal areas.

He said the sea dispute has affected the local fisherfolk's livelihood badly, as Chinese fishermen would often shoo them away.

"There are many people from Pangasinan who are really affected, and

we were even witness to some cruelty whenever they go there," Rosario said.

In his visit to typhoon-stricken Tuguegarao, Cagayan last Sunday, the President told the locals: "We'll just wait for a few more days. We may be able to return to Scarborough Shoal, and our countrymen may be able to fish there again."

Saying the local fisherfolk are pinning

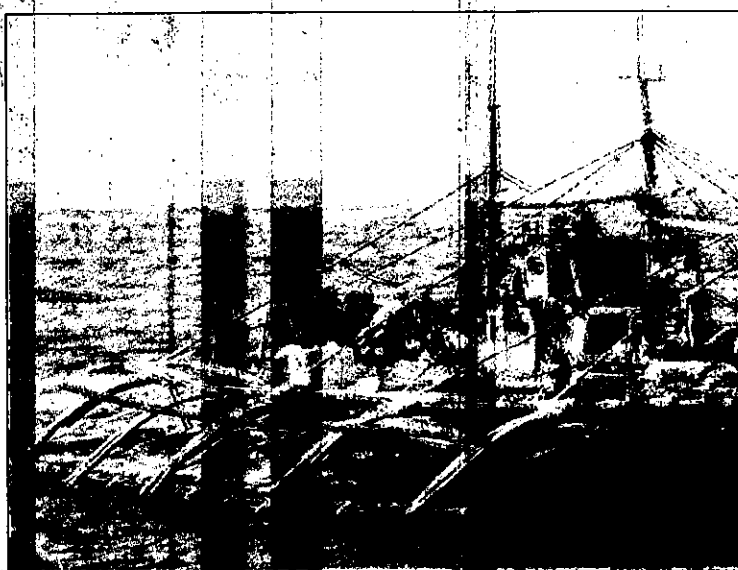


Photo provided by Renato Etac shows Chinese Coast Guard members (wearing black caps and orange life vests) approaching Filipino fishermen off Panatag Shoal on Sept. 23, 2015. AP

men from Pangasinan can continue with their livelihood."

Rosario said the Pangasinan provincial board would hold a "question hour" next session, inviting affected fishermen to shed light on their experiences while fishing at Panatag Shoal.

"Rest assured that we will do something out of this effort to hear directly from them and to possibly do whatever