

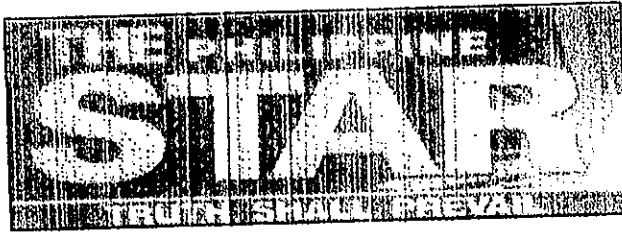
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DATE : 17 DEC 2016

DAY : Thursday

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IN THE NEWS



17 DEC 2015

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

'Phl should be active participant in COP22 Marrakech'

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

Citing the country's vulnerability to climate impacts, Environment Secretary Gina Lopez said the Philippines should have a greater role in discussions at the ongoing Climate Change Conference in Marrakech, Morocco.

"We should be sitting at the negotiating table. The Philippines cannot abandon its commitment to address the single greatest threat facing the planet today," Lopez said earlier this week.

She gave assurance that the Duterte administration will "pursue national development conscious of the responsibility to safeguard the people, the environment,

and the biodiversity from the negative impacts of climate change."

Lopez recalled the country's experience with super Typhoon Yolanda, which claimed thousands of lives and left widespread destruction in central Philippines in 2013.

The official left for Marrakech on Sunday to attend the first meeting of the

Parties to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Lopez was tasked by Malacañang to attend the summit, officially billed as the 22nd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP22).

The Marrakech conference, which runs from Nov. 7 to 18, is the crucial next step for governments looking to operationalize the new global climate deal adopted in Paris, France last year.

Lopez is expected to attend the Women Leaders and Global Transformation Summit in which world leaders will learn how women can be strong

solution providers to further sustainable development.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources chief likewise welcomed President Duterte's announcement that he finally decided to ratify the Paris Agreement after consulting with members of the Cabinet.

After achieving the threshold number of countries needed to ratify the Paris Agreement, the international climate pact started to take effect on Nov. 4.

Meanwhile, the Philippines is finalizing the amendment to the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Law or Republic Act 10121.

Ambassador Cecilia Re-bong, permanent representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, made the announcement as she highlighted the policy reforms and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) initiatives of the Philippines to strengthen resilience.

At the Geneva launch of the 2016 World Disasters Report held recently, Re-bong said that discussions and consultations are in full swing to amend RA 10121.

The sunset review of the PDRRM Law led to the incorporation of several features into an amendatory bill, in-

cluding a focus on strengthening local government units and capacity building for better disaster risk reduction and management.

"We need to have a change of mindset - from one that is reactive to one that is more proactive, more strategic and long-term," Re-bong said.

The Philippines also shared its perspective on how it is investing in building sustainable and resilient communities.

"For the Philippines, investing in resilience saves lives and money," she said, stressing this should be a collective effort and at all levels.

- With Pia Lee-Brago

PH presses G20 to honor climate funding pledges

BY BEN KRITZ

MARRAKECH, Morocco: A former Philippine Senator and Environment Secretary urged the members of the G20 group of nations to honor their pledges for climate mitigation funding, in a meeting of climate-vulnerable nations on the sidelines of the Conference of Parties 22 (COP22) climate talks here last week.

The Earthsavers Movement UNES-
CO Dream Center founded by Former Senator Heherson T. Alvarez was the lead convener of the "Tri-Continental Dialogue, De-Carbonization to Defy Disasters," an official side event in COP22. The forum was held in partnership with Tzu Chi Foundation, Climate Institute, South-South Cooperation Council (SSCC), Weather Risk Explore Inc., The International Theatre Institute (ITI-CIDC), Social Change Network and Ugandan Member of Parliament.

Addressing the forum, Alvarez who also served as Secretary of Environment and the Climate Change

Commissioner, urged G20 countries to fulfill their nationally determined contributions (NDC's) in order to help curb the suffering of climate-vulnerable countries.

Alvarez pointed out that on average, the GDP of G20 countries is \$4 trillion. This means that the \$100 billion contribution towards climate finance is miniscule. For instance, the European Union (combined GDP: \$18.4 trillion) would only have to contribute 0.54 percent of this amount. Additionally, the United States, whose GDP on average is \$17.4 trillion, would only have to contribute 0.57 percent.



■ Heherson T. Alvarez

"This contribution is measly compared to the national wealth that was created by countries who have historically emitted greenhouse gas emissions. If you look at the destructive impact of climate change, noting in particular Super typhoon Haiyan in my country, \$300 million worth of onslaught happened," Alvarez said.

"We need more technological capacity building assistance for developing countries and more carbon reduction from developed countries. Unless these values are changed, so that they become responsive to the threatened climate disaster, the meeting in Marrakech would be just

another meeting. It will not be a watershed as many have expected since Paris," Alvarez added.

"But," he said, "while we have been able to manage physical destruction, it is always far more difficult to address the invisible impact of disasters like the trauma of children who have lost their parents, of families who have lost homes and miserable fortunes. There are many people who have been emotionally dislocated. That is why the UN Green Climate Fund is so important - to help us develop fully the capacity to manage the peoples' grief, too."

Joining Alvarez in the panel were Lead Scientist and Founder of Weather Risk Explore Inc., Dr. Chi-Ming Peng, who explained the need to decarbonize to prevent the irreversible stage of climate catastrophe globally. Additionally, Debra Boudreaux, Vice President of the Tzu Chi Foundation, underscored the importance of changing our lifestyle in order to help those who are less fortunate.

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Business World

INCREASE YOUR BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Climate action and Asian energy realities

Planet Earth is estimated by geologists and other scientists to be 4.6 billion years old. In that period, the world has experienced a series of warming-cooling-warming-cooling cycles. So global warming and climate change (CC) have been there as natural (i.e., nature-made) and cyclical events. See dozens of paleo-climate data and charts that date back to thousands, millions and billions of years ago here: <https://wattsupwiththat.com/paleoclimate/>.

Yet for decades now, we have been bombarded by the United Nations and other institutions and individuals who deny nature-made climate change and climate cycle, deny that global cooling can take place after a global warming phase. Owing to such denials, anthropogenic or "man-made" climate change can only be fought via man-made and UN-directed solutions like large-scale and end-

MY CUP OF LIBERTY BIENVENIDO S. OPLAS, JR.

less subsidies to intermittent renewable sources.

Such is the dominant global belief and being formalized during the annual UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), like the Conference of Parties (COP) 22 meeting in Marrakech, Morocco from Nov. 7 to 18 this year.

The goal of the 160+ intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) is to "hold the average global temperature rise below 2 °C and 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels." (source: UNFCCC, "Aggregate effect of the intended nationally determined contributions: an update Synthesis report by the secretariat," May 2016)

It is another confused document from the UN.

For instance in Figure 14, p. 64, the "Key climate hazards identified in the adaptation component of the communicated intended nationally determined contributions" are the following, in order of "hazards."

Top 5: Floods, Droughts, Higher temperatures, Sea level rise, Storms.

Next 5: Decreased precipitation, Changes in precipitation timing, Vector/water-borne diseases, Increased precipitation intensity, Desertification/land degradation.

In short, the climate "hazards" for the planet according to the UN are more floods, less floods, and no flood; more rains, less rains and no rain; more storms, less storms and no storm. So regardless of the weather and climate, we should send more money to the UN and various government climate

bureaucracies, give them more power, more global climate travels and meetings. And they will demonize fossil fuels like coal and oil to "save the planet."

Such scenarios and proposals are very detached from the realities and needs of many countries, developed and developing alike.

Here are the data from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) released only two weeks ago (see table).

Almost all of the big and developed economies in the region have high reliance on coal and/or natural gas, among the most prominent fossil fuels in the planet. The Philippines in particular has low national electricity production compared to many of its neighbors in north and south east Asia, only 75 billion kWh in 2013. The country also has a very low per capita electricity production of only 690 kWh/person.

Over the past two weeks, I have attended several conferences and meetings and the subject of "expensive electricity" and "insufficient supply of power" would crop up naturally even if the events are not specifically focused on energy.

These events include the DTI's pre-summit consultation on FTAs and manufacturing in-

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

climate action and Asian energy realities

ELECTRICITY PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION
IN SELECT ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIES, 2013

Country/ Economy	Electricity production (billion, kWh)	Sources of electricity (% of total)				Oil	Electricity consumption (kWh/person)
		Coal	Natural gas	Hydro	Others*		
China	5,447.2	75.5	1.7	22.8	0.1		3,770
India	1,193.5	72.8	5.5	19.8	1.9		780
Japan	1,034.3	32.2	38.4	15.0	14.3		7,840
S. Korea	542.0	41.1	26.7	28.2	4.0		10,430
Taiwan	252.0	48.8	26.2	22.0	3.0		10,460
Australia	249.1	64.7	21.3	12.6	1.4		10,070
Indonesia	215.6	51.2	24.0	12.1	12.4		790 (2014)
Thailand	165.7	19.9	70.6	8.5	1.0		2,490
Malaysia	138.3	38.6	49.0	8.6	3.9		4,470
Vietnam	127.0	19.5	33.6	45.1	1.8		1,310
Philippines	75.3	42.6	25.0	26.4	6.0		690
Singapore	48.0	0.8	91.5	4.9	2.9		8,840
New Zealand	43.3	55.4	20.1	74.4	0		9,050
Hong Kong	39.2	74.8	24.5	0.2	0.4		5,930

SOURCE: INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY; ADB, KEY INDICATORS FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC 2016.
*INCLUDE NUCLEAR, GEOTHERMAL, SOLAR, WIND, AND TIDE/OCEAN ENERGY.

dustries last Nov. 3, pre-summit consultation on innovation and competitive industries last Nov. 4. One participant said that while garments are labor-intensive, textiles are energy-intensive and they can feel the pinch of high electricity prices.

Meanwhile, during the Philippine Economic Society (PES) annual conference at Novotel

Cubao last Nov. 8, the two sessions on energy economics and competition policy have also touched on these subjects including competition in power generation companies and monopolies in power transmission and distribution.

In the Agribusiness commercial legal and institutional reform (AgCLIR) roundtable at Makati

Shangri-La last Nov. 11, many agri-business enterprises in the country brought up the matter of high electricity costs.

Last but not the least, during the Asian Legal Business (ALB)-Thomson Reuters's Competition Forum at Dusit Thani in Makati City last Nov. 15, one of the speakers, Dr. Raul Fabella of UPSE mentioned pricing under

monopoly and duopoly or oligopoly, like in power distribution and generation.

The over-riding concern for the Philippines and other developing economies in Asia and the rest of the planet is how to hasten and sustain economic growth so that job creation and poverty alleviation can also be sustained. Having cheap and stable electricity is a major part in realizing this goal.

Forcing expensive and unstable energy sources to "fight climate change" as pushed by the UN and participating governments is contradictory to the above goal. After all, climate change from warming to cooling in natural cycles did happen in the past and continues to happen today.

Governments therefore, should be more realistic and not alarmist in pursuing that over-riding goal. Less ecological central planning, less energy rationing, less climate bureaucratism would be consistent with poverty alleviation. ■

BIENVENIDO S. OPLAS, JR. is the president of Minimal Government Thinkers and a Fellow of SEANET and Stratbase-ADRI.
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Lopez questions award for miners facing suspension

THE Environment secretary said the nomination for environmental awards of miners her department recommended for suspension reflects the lax criteria in use for the awards.

Referring to nominations for the Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award (PMIEA), Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez said in a text message: "The criteria for the awards are very different. For instance, whether or not there is siltation is not a factor in the awards; having an abandoned open pit for over 20 years is not a disqualification."

"(The award body) does not go down to the issues, down to the lowly farmer. It just talks to the mining staff and to whoever are presented by the mine," she added, noting the absence of "legitimate" civil society organizations' role in selection.

Miners nominated for the award which the audit identified for possible suspension are Marcventures Mining and Development Corp., Agata Mining Ventures, Inc., Hinatuan Mining Corporation — Taganaan, OceanaGold (Philippines), Inc., and SR Metals, Inc. — all for the Surface Mining Operation category. All but Marcven-

tures are also nominated for the implementation of their Mining Forest Programs.

The nationwide crackdown against miners with substandard environmental measures placed more than three quarters of the country's metal mines either facing suspension or under threat of such order. — **Janina C. Lim**

FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link <<https://goo.gl/1U1aty>>

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

OceanaGold bags 5 mining awards

OceanaGold Philippines Inc. won five mining awards during the 63rd Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference held in Baguio City.

The awards included the prestigious 2016 Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award, the highest award conferred by the Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA).

The PMIEA recognizes outstanding levels of dedication, initiative and innovation in the pursuit of entities involved in various aspects of mineral utilization.

The award was established in compliance with the policy that mineral exploration and mining operation shall be pro-environment and pro-people in sustaining wealth creation and improving quality of life.

OceanaGold Philippines also won the 2016 Safest Mining Operation (Metallic Category), Safest Surface Mining Operation, Safest Mineral Processing (Concentrator Category) and 3rd Runner-up for Best in Mining Forest Program.

"We are grateful for these awards for recognizing our efforts in establishing high standards in environmental protection, safety and health management and community development, but what's more important than public recognition is our continuous improvement and approval from our communities where we operate in that we're getting it right and doing it the right way," said Chito Gozar, senior vice president for Communications and External Affairs of OceanaGold Philippines.

OceanaGold Philippines' Didipio Mine in Nueva Vizcaya continues to operate without interruption and continues to be a partner of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in promoting responsible mining.

"OceanaGold's recognition with the Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award and four other mining awards are reflective of the deep roots in the company founded on 25 years of successful mining operations in New Zealand, one of the most environmentally sensitive countries in the world," Gozar said.

"OceanaGold has brought these same principles to the Philippines, where it has built a strong social license to operate based on the endorsement of the local communities," he said.

The company is strongly committed as ever to working closely with its many stakeholder groups to continue providing significant benefits and leaving a positive, long legacy, said Gozar.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

OceanaGold awarded for environmentally responsible mining

OCEANAGOLD Philippines Inc. is this year's recipient of the prestigious Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award, the highest award conferred by the Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA).

PMSEA organized the award in coordination with the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, an agency of the Department of Natural and Environment Resources (DENR), at the 63rd Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference held in Baguio City.

The PMSEA gives the award every year to outstanding mining companies in line with the call for the Philippine mining industry to promote and practice responsible mining.

It recognizes outstanding levels of dedication, initiative and innovation in the pursuit of companies involved in various aspects of mineral utilization.

The award was established in compliance with the policy that mineral exploration and mining operation shall be pro-environment and pro-people in sustaining wealth creation and improving quality of life.

OceanaGold Philippines's world-class operation in Didipio Mine was also awarded the 2016 Safest Mining Operation (Metallic Category), Safest Surface Mining Operation, Safest

Mineral Processing (Concentrator Category) and third runner-up for Best in Mining Forest Program during the same event.

"We are grateful for these awards for recognizing our efforts in establishing high standards in environmental protection, safety and health management and community development, but what's more important than public recognition is our continuous improvement and approval from our communities where we operate that we're getting it right and doing it the right way," said Chito Gozar, senior vice president for communications and external affairs of OceanaGold Philippines.

OceanaGold Philippines's Didipio Mine in Nueva Vizcaya continues to operate without interruption and continues to be a partner of the DENR in promoting responsible mining.

"As the award recipient in 2015 and this year, we believe the Didipio operation is the template for what President Duterte is seeking when stating his desire for a responsible mining sector within the Philippines," said Mick Wilkes, president and CEO of OceanaGold Philippines.

The Australian mining company remains committed to its responsible-mining mantra being a "partner, employer and gold company of choice."

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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FNI's stainless steel project faces close DENR scrutiny

By MADILAINÉ B. MIRAFLOR

The plan of Global Ferronickel Holdings, Inc. (FNI), the second largest nickel producer in the Philippines, to build a stainless steel processing plant in the country with a Chinese firm is not going to be an easy venture.

This developed as Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Regina Lopez has been adamant saying she remained not keen on any undertaking (a new project) that has anything to do with mining.

"If the processing plant will mean lengthening the life of an errant mine, then I'm not really interested," Lopez told Business Bulletin, reiterating that mining makes "people suffer."

During the state visit of President Rodrigo Duterte in China last month, FNI and China's state-owned enterprise Baiyin Nonferrous Group Co., Ltd. (Baiyin) have signed cooperation agreement to explore plans to put up stainless steel plant in the Philippines. The estimated total investment for the project is around \$500 million to \$700 million.

Jose Santiago Sta. Romana, Philippine Ambassador-designate to China was optimistic for this project to push through.

Sta. Romana said FNI's plan will be good for the country's manufacturing sector but he also acknowledged that certain issues have to be

resolved first between the DENR and the mining sector.

"Their plan is to produce a million tons of stainless steel, which will be consumed locally. [They will use our nickel ore] and process it because we are exporting it unprocessed. This is the start of the manufacturing sector," Sta. Romana said in an interview at the recent China Daily's China-Philippine Dialogue 2016.

"There is an MoU [memorandum of understanding] and it's out but they still have to go through the government permission. The idea, though, that processing what we mine is basically a good idea. Now if the mining has been stopped, then we have to resolve that," he added.

In the end, Sta. Romana expressed optimism that this can be resolved through series of inter-agency consultations.

Meanwhile, FNI President Dante Bravo told Business Bulletin that he is confident that DENR will allow the deal to proceed.

"This is in-line with government's policy to encourage value added processing," he said in a text message, adding that no timetable has been set yet as to when the project will start.

FNI and Baiyin will specifically cooperate and evaluate investments in value-added downstream projects in the Philippines, including evaluating the feasibility of constructing an integrated 200-series stainless steel plant in the Philippines with an annual capacity of one million tons using lower grade nickel ore sourced in the Philippines.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Mining operations in Zambales town nixed

BY MARY T. SUPNAD

IBA, Zambales – Unfazed by the filing of criminal charges, local farmers and fishermen have strongly opposed the possible resumption of operations of mining firms in the municipality of Sta. Cruz and maintained that the mining firms ruined farmlands and fishing grounds.

"May livelihood nga, mama-matay naman kami, over our dead bodies. Perhuwisyong na sila, sila pa nagdemanda, kapal ng mukha nila (It may be a source of livelihood, but it will also kill us. They are a

nuisance, they even had the temerity to file a court case. Shame on them)," said the visibly-irked Josie Ignacio of Defend Zambales, referring to the case filed by mining firms against Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez.

This development came after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Friday held a consultation/meeting on the "Implementation of Sustainable Integrated Area Development Management (SIADM)," to inform the public of the agency's programs and get their inputs on protection of the environ-

ment.

The meeting likewise tackled the reported resumption of operations of mining firms in Sta. Cruz, which was vehemently opposed by residents.

Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer Laudemir S. Salac informed participants that the government is looking at proposed projects which shall be submitted for funding by the DENR before November 30, this year.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Environment, IP issues hound mining industry

BAGUIO CITY: Environment and indigenous peoples' (IPs) issues continued to hound the mining industry as the annual national mine and safety meeting opened here on Wednesday.

Affected communities and survivors of mining-related disasters have suffered enough from how mining companies disregard the local population's safety and welfare and how the mining agency allows erring companies to violate rights of communities, the environmental alliance Center for Environmental Concerns-Philippines said.

Stakeholders in the country's mining industry were expected at the Summer Capital for the Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA)-sponsored 63rd Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference with the theme "63 Years of Responsible Mining... Moving Forward by Doing it Right."

Louie Sarmiento, PMSEA president, and Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) officials as well as other mining firm heads and executives led the conference opening.

South African Ambassador to the Philippines Martin Slabber, South Africa Deputy

Minister for Mineral Godfrey Oliphant and Philex Mining Corporation president and Chief Executive Officer Eulalio Austin will be the conference's special guests.

On Friday, mining companies, the MGB and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and other mining stakeholders will march down Session Road here for the Minerals Industry Parade, then proceed to the Melvin Jones grounds for the Mine Safety Field Demonstration and Field Competition.

A testimonial dinner and awards night will cap the week-long conference on Friday at the CAP John Hay Convention Center where winners of the Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award for best mining practices in the country, Best Mining Forest Contest, Safest Mines Awards and Best Mines Personalities will be awarded.

Lingering issues

On the heels of the annual mining industry conference, the Center for Environmental Concerns (CEC)-Philippines with various organizations reminded

the DENR to stand firm on its position against abusive mining companies:

"DENR under Secretary Gina Lopez's flagship must stay unyielding. More than ever, they need to make sure that through the Mining Audit directive, culpable mining firms be held accountable for [their] crimes against the environment and communities," Frances Quimpo, CEC executive director, said.

The CEC said that a year after Typhoon Lando hit the country, the town of Santa Cruz, Zambales is still reeling from its adverse effects--nickel laterite contamination in rivers, streams and other coastal areas as well as "red" mud flooding.

An alliance of Santa Cruz residents, blame their experience with nickel mining in the area.

"Until today, no mining firm has been held responsible despite the suspension of Santa Cruz-based mining firms like Benguet Nickel Mining Corporation (BNMI), LNL Archipelago Minerals Inc., Eramen Minerals and Zambales Diversified Minerals under DMCI."

The CEC observed that there have been

several flaws in a recent mine industry audit specifically because of lack of experts.

It cited acknowledgment by Leo Jasareno, DENR undersecretary and head of the mining audit team, that out of 41 operating metallic mines, only 11 passed the audit and 20 more were given 7 days to heed the DENR's inquiries.

"People's participation is what we need in order to efficiently audit these mining firms," Quimpo said.

"Mining communities and grassroots organizations are the primary stakeholders since they are directly affected and are

the ones who know the actual situation, especially the national minorities, who for the longest time are stewards of our mountains and forests," she added.

"The DENR's mining audit should first and foremost have teeth to run after destructive mining companies, and for Filipino communities to incessantly campaign for scrapping of the flawed Mining Act of 1995 and replace it with a pro-environment, pro-people People's Mining Bill," Quimpo said.

**THOM F. PICAÑA
AND LEANDER C. DOMINGO**

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DMCI Mining to further reduce its workforce

By JAMES A. LOYERA

DMCI Mining Corporation will be letting go of more of its remaining workforce after initially reducing it by 62 percent in the first nine months of the year on account of the protracted suspension of its mining units in Palawan and Zambales.

From 550, the nickel producer reduced its manpower complement to 207. This does not include the thousands of seasonal workers hired during production ramp up.

"Our hands are tied. We have no choice but to let go of most of our workers," said DMCI Mining president Cesar F. Simbulan Jr.

DMCI Mining's subsidiary Berong Nickel Corporation (BNC) received a suspension order from the Department of Natural Resources (DENR) in June this year due to the alleged discoloration of Barangay Berong's river system and tributaries.

The following month, Zambales Diversified Metals Corporation was served a suspension order due to "social issues."

"We are trying to retain as many

people as possible by assigning them to our environmental rehabilitation sites. But mine rehabilitation is not as labor intensive as nickel production so we simply cannot absorb all of them," added Simbulan.

In August, BNC employees staged a silent protest in front of the Provincial Capitol of Palawan, to urge the Provincial Government to help lift the suspension.

The employees, local residents and a group of indigenous peoples also submitted written appeals to President Rodrigo Duterte, seeking the reopening of the mine because "many lives depend on it."

Over 1,500 residents and employees and 424 indigenous peoples (IPs) signed the letters.

"We regularly communicate with our host communities and other stakeholders to update them on the situation. They know that we are doing our best to reopen the mine sites," said Simbulan.

According to DMCI Mining, they have submitted additional documentation to DENR to support their appeal to lift the suspensions.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

OceanaGold wins award as 'most environmentally responsible mining'

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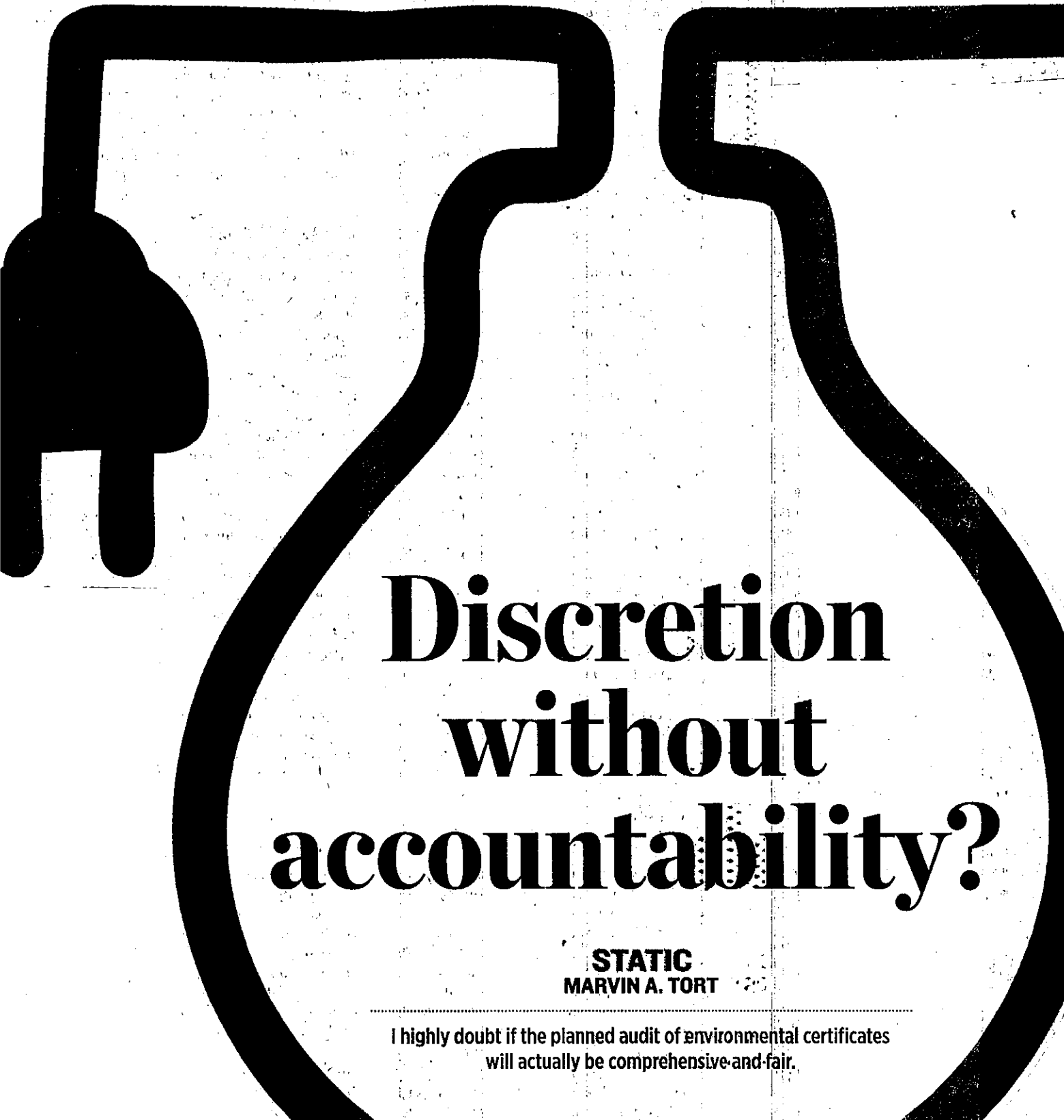
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Discretion without accountability?

STATIC
MARVIN A. TORT

I highly doubt if the planned audit of environmental certificates
will actually be comprehensive and fair.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Discretion without accountability

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is reportedly intending to start by next month a new audit, this time covering about 800 environmental permits issued to various projects. This is after the recent audit of the mining industry, which resulted in the closure and/or suspension of numerous mining operations nationwide.

I am all for a new audit, and remain supportive of DENR efforts to protect the environment and to conserve natural resources. However, I do not agree nor support how the mining audit was conducted, and in this line, highly doubt if the planned audit of environmental certificates will actually be comprehensive and fair. But, it is a start.

According to a news report quoting a DENR official, guidelines have been drawn up for the new audit, and that the initiative

may start with an initial list of the "most pollutive industries." The list reportedly includes coal-fired power projects that are in operation, under construction, have not started construction but already have environmental permits, and those with pending environmental permit applications.

My fear, even during the mining audit, was that DENR may be exercising discretion without clear accountability. In the bigger sense, halting mining operations for perceived violations, imagined or otherwise, can have adverse economic implications on host communities. At the end of the day, if the community suffers economically on the back of mistaken or misplaced zeal, what is the DENR accountability to them?

Tuesday night Metro Manila suffered a major power outage affecting big parts of the metropolis and some parts of Luzon Island. From what I heard, the blackout resulted from unexplained outage at two Batangas-based power plants: the Lopez family-owned Sta. Rita and San Lorenzo power plants, both of which I believe operate on natural gas.

Two plants out and a big portion of the metropolis is without power. That's how thin power reserves are, currently. So, if we choose to shut coal plants now, on environmental issues, with high electricity demand in the Christmas season and later on in the summer months, where should we expect electricity supply to go? Who suffers in the end?

DENR under Gina Lopez has made clear its dislike for coal even early on. What irritates me is the fact that any adverse regulatory action on coal by DENR — whether

er necessary or simply whimsical — will have the indirect consequence of possibly benefiting non-coal power producers like the Lopez family.

Worse, power companies will still have to seek administrative and legal remedies against what they may perceive as unwarranted action against them. These remedies take time, and it is quite possible that during adjudication of the issues that they will remain suspended or closed — whether as operating concerns or as plant under construction.

Again, where does this put power supply in the near future and in the long term? For sure, this will have impact on the economy and consumers. And, if at the end of the day, the DENR is found to be remiss or to have abused its discretion, what will its accountability be to the industries, the consumers, and the economy that it has unnecessarily damaged or prejudiced?

Coal-fired plants reportedly account for 31.5% of the country's installed capacity, and 34.2% of total dependable capacity as of end-December, with Luzon and Metro Manila as the main power users.

If we shut down coal, even temporarily, supply will certainly be short. Luzon and Metro Manila will suffer the most for it.

Frankly, I fail to understand the fixation against coal. In terms of ranking the most pollutive industries worldwide, while Big Oil may be considered top dog, the fashion industry is actually considered a major polluter, but we don't hear DENR or other government agencies going after textile and clothing manufacturers for environmental damage.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Discretion without accountability

In an August 2015 report by environmental activist group EcoWatch, which it released online, the group noted, "When we think of pollution, we envision coal power plants, strip-mined mountaintops and raw sewage piped into our waterways. We don't often think of the shirts on our backs. But the overall impact the apparel industry has on our planet is quite grim."

"Fashion is a complicated business involving long and varied supply chains of production, raw material, textile manufacture, clothing construction, shipping, retail, use and ultimately disposal of the garment... fashion carbon footprint is tremendous."

"Determining that footprint is an overwhelming challenge due to the immense variety from one garment to the next. A general assessment must take into account not only obvious pollutants — the pesticides used in cotton farming, the toxic dyes used in manufacturing and the great amount of waste discarded clothing creates — but also the extravagant amount of natural resources used in extraction, farming, harvesting, processing, manufacturing and shipping."

"While cotton, especially organic cotton, might seem like a smart choice, it can still take more than 5,000 gallons of water to manufacture just a T-shirt and a pair of jeans. Synthetic, man-made fibers, while not as water-intensive, often have issues with manufacturing pollution and sustainability. And across all textiles, the manufacturing and dyeing of fabrics is chemically intensive."

"Cotton is the world's most commonly used natural fiber and is in nearly 40% of our clothing... it is one of the most chemically dependent crops in the world."

chemicals and 25% of insecticides. Some genetically modified varieties, which are resistant to some insects and tolerant of some herbicides, now make up more than 20% of the world's cotton crop."

I am not against cotton, nor the fashion industry. Neither is EcoWatch, I believe. But, I highlight their report only to emphasize the need for us to see things from a broader perspective, and for regulators as well as the public to be open-minded and more discerning. There is much more to environmental protection and sustainable development than meets the eye.

Personally, I never realized that garments and fashion can actually be considered pollutive or damaging to the environment. Neither did I consider that cotton farming has its downsides. But EcoWatch noted that in Uzbekistan, which is the world's sixth leading producer of cotton, rivers that were diverted in the 1950s to provide irrigation for cotton production have dried up, resulting in the death of fisheries and communities relying on them.

"Over time, the sea became oversalinated and laden with fertilizer and pesticides from the nearby fields. Dust from the dry, exposed lakebed, containing these chemicals and salt saturated the air, creating a public health crisis and settling onto farm fields, contaminating the soil." EcoWatch noted. Even the

has been affected, it added.

At the end of the day, the Uzbekistan leaders in the 1950s who decided to divert the rivers to irrigate cotton farms, were ultimately responsible for irreversible damage to the environment and to the community. But, having acted and exercised discretion in line with their official duties in pursuit of what they perceived then to be the common good, there is no legal accountability to be expected from them. ■

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR-Zambales launches Enhanced NGP

By MART. SUPNAD

IBA, Zambales – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) recently unveiled its Enhanced National Greening Program (NGP) with various representatives from People's Organizations (PO).

In Zambales, the provincial DENR office held a workshop which focused on implementing program activities.

Zambales Governor Amor Deloso of the Province of Zambales graced the said meeting which was attended by representatives of NGP's 37 PO partners, Laudemir S. Salac, provincial environment and natural resources officer, Marife Castillo, community environment and natural resource officer of Olongapo City (CENRO-Olongapo), Raymond Rivera of CENRO-Masinloc, and DENR-Zambales' NGP staff.

In his speech, the governor highlighted the importance of coordination between LGUs and national department offices, the value of caring for one's own land and the value of environmental stewardship insisting, "Zambales is for the Zambalenos." He stated that the province of Zambales is blessed

with natural resources which everyone should take care of.

Deloso also asked the participants to maintain or improve the conditions of their NGP areas.

He then asked the participants' cooperation in improving the quality of land in Zambales and in greening Zambales' mountains for the next generations.

Salac said the "37 People's Organizations, mostly indigenous peoples and locals, are key partners in the implementation of NGP"

He added: "Do your best consistently in establishing and caring for your NGP sites in order to reap more out of it in the years to come and maximize the benefits of NGP. More so as NGP is extended through EO 193, NGP 2017 will have a different implementation approach, this time incorporating livelihood aspects."

Salac challenged the participants to prove that their respective plantations are evident and fruitful in relation to their payments. In turn, he assured that the department will support their efforts.

To date, PENRO-Zambales from 2011 to 2016 was able to plant about 12,697,777 seedlings on a total of 15,814.55 hectares.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR-Calabarzon intensifies environmental governance efforts

BY DENR/ALI S. LAGO

CALAMBA CITY — The regional office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Calabarzon (Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon) announced its intensified program on integrated area-based management approach on environmental stewardship to meet the priority thrust set by Environment Secretary Gina Lopez.

Executive Regional Director Reynulfo Juan said during the "Kapihan sa PIA" that the new pillars on environmental governance focus on establishing strong civil society orga-

nization (CSO) engagements in the region.

Juan emphasized that the grass-roots and integrated area-based approach institutionalizes community participation from the CSO, academe, media and other stakeholders starting from policy formulating, planning, implementing, monitoring, and impact auditing.

"While the department performs its two-pronged mandate on regulatory and development, we are now shifting towards the development aspect where taking care of our environment also entails making our communities happy and economically prosperous through

sustainable enterprises," Juan said.

Juan also said that part of these changes is transforming identified National Greening Program (NGP) sites into a ring of economic growth where children and communities can learn.

He said all identified NGP sites could be managed by the people's organizations, communities and civil society and the benefits from these undertakings will redound to them.

"The new approach also calls for both government through the DENR and the CSO as partners rather than the erstwhile critical and contrarian dynamics on most issues," Juan said.

Juan announced that the DENR is tapping the youth sector, volunteers and environmental "patrollers" to be "earth warriors."

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Illegal charcoal kilns destroyed

CATBALOGAN CITY — Members of the Catbalogan Community Environment and Natural Resources (CENRO) team has destroyed charcoal kilns in the towns of Villareal and Sta. Margarita.

CENRO Officer Mar Torres said in a press conference the more than 45 kilns called bulkan in Villareal and pugon in Sta. Margarita are illegal because they use mangrove for making charcoal. The

pugon in Sta. Margarita can produce more than 30 bags of charcoal in a single operation, Torres said.

The charcoal is shipped to Calbayog, Tacloban and Catbalogan where the demand is higher. CENRO said the kilns' owners have been identified and charges for violation of environmental laws are being readied against them.

A DENR casual employee said that in Villareal, children as young as first

graders are already experts in handling the bulkan which can produce at least two bags of charcoal.

Asked what alternative livelihood the DENR could provide the charcoal makers, DENR Officer Elpedio Simon said some P20 million has been set aside for the National Greening Program (NGP) in the areas where there are many illegal charcoal kilns.

"There are people's organization

here under contract with DENR for NGP, yet it is sad that they are still doing this," Simon said.

He urged the coastal barangays to stop destroying the mangrove that protects them once calamities occur. "It is absolutely illegal to cut mangrove species," Simon said.

He said mangroves are diverse ecosystems where fish, crabs and other marine life spawn. (PIA)

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Native knowledge tapped to preserve environment

ILOILO CITY — A P10-million research project seeks to tap traditional knowledge in preservation of ecosystems in Western Visayas.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR-6) has asked the University of the Philippines Visayas (UP Visayas) in Iloilo to do research for a book on the traditional knowledge systems of Panay and Guimaras Islands.

"The book will revitalize the core culture of Panay and Guimaras Islands. It will create an impact on cultural resiliency and sustainable development," said DENR-6 Regional Director Jim Sampulna.

DENR-6 has released an initial P5-million to UP Visayas, which will conduct field work to gather indigenous knowledge in Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, and Iloilo provinces.

The book is seen as vital in understanding the role of indigenous knowledge in pursuing policies on environmental preservation and climate change adaptations.

Sampulna added that the book on traditional knowledge systems is a pet project of Senator Loren Legarda, chairperson of the Senate's committee on environment. (Tara Yap)

Ilocos Sur mayor, official face suspension

VIGAN CITY, Ilocos Sur: The Sangguniang Panlalawigan (SP) here has recommended to suspend for 60 days Tagudin town Mayor Roque Jun Verzosa Jr. and a councilor pending investigation of criminal and administrative charges filed against them. Vice Gov. Eric Singson, SP presiding officer, said the suspension of the mayor and Councilor Arthur Chua will be implemented once Gov. Ryan Singson signs the resolution.

The Local Government Code, among others, states that the provincial board has the authority to recommend suspension orders for local officials facing investigation.

Versoza and Chua are facing charges for grave misconduct, gross insubordination, abuse of authority and conduct unbecoming a public official filed by employees from the business permits office – Noreen Sibayan, Gema Chiu and Joel Pastores – and Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO) Reymund Sinai.

The complainants said Versoza abused his power for not allowing quarry operators to carry out quarrying activities despite a permit issued by the PENRO office headed by Sinai.

Versoza, however, told The Manila Times that his action was based on the complaint of his town mates affected by the quarrying, which he described as illegal and the operators did not secure a new permit to operate in Tagudin and in the barangay (villages) where their operations are located.

Versoza, through a resolution and ordinance passed by the Sangguniang

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Coal here to stay, says DOE chief

**PH must balance pressing demands for energy security,
environmental sustainability and economic competitiveness**

By Daxim L. Lucas
@daxINQ

Coal-fired power plants will remain a permanent fixture—despite the strong lobby against them by environmentalists and proponents of other energy sources—because these could help the Philippines rapidly meet its growing energy needs cost-efficiently, the Department of Energy said yesterday.


At the same time, however, policy makers recognized the legitimate concerns of coal power's opponents and vowed to balance the concerns of all stakeholders in the country, according to Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi.

"The signs of the times seem to tell us that coal is here to stay," he said in a speech delivered at

the 2016 Coal Business and Policy Forum in Makati City, even as the energy chief stressed that the implementation of coal energy policy "must be done right" to address the criticism being leveled against it.

"One quarter says that 'clean coal' is the wave of the future, the game-changer in the coal-fired power industry," Cusi said. "However, another quarter argues the opposite; that it is not only a total misnomer, but is utterly impossible."

Data from the Department of Energy showed that coal power provides the single-biggest source of electricity for the country today. As of 2015, 45 percent of the Philippines' generated electricity came from coal—a sharp rise from the 1-percent share it had



**We have pledged
to actively
contribute to the
cause of climate
change mitigation**

Alfonso Cusi
Energy Secretary

when the country first began to use coal as a power source in 1981.

"And with new coal-fired power plants in the offing, the figure is expected to increase, or at the very least, remain so for a considerable period," Cusi said.

The energy chief noted, how-

ever, that the energy and environmental landscape has changed dramatically in the 35 years since coal power was first adopted locally.

"Growing concerns about the environment and climate change have triggered public clamor for clean and sustainable energy. As a dutiful member of the international community, we have pledged to actively contribute to the cause of climate change mitigation," he said.

"But then again, our country's social and economic circumstances have also changed," he added. "We are beset by the twin

have gone down on the international market and the bullish expectations in the US of a resurgence of its coal industry due to recent political developments might push prices even lower.

"Because of all these, we ineluctably find ourselves caught between the horns of an 'energy trilemma'," Cusi said. "We grapple with the difficult task of trying to find the balance among the equally pressing demands of energy security, environmental sustainability and economic competitiveness."

A key hurdle for the coal pow-

posed by another major player in the industry, First Gen Corp., which is controlled by the Lopez family from which the environment chief hails. First Gen's largest generation plants are powered by natural gas, which is the closest rival to coal—albeit slightly more expensive—in terms of cost structure.

Cusi said he believed, however, that coal has a role to play in the Philippines' so-called "energy mix," especially in providing cheap and reliable baseload power amid the country's steadily growing electricity needs.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

PH can't handle nuke waste, Duterte told

By Tonette Orejas
@ttorejasINQ

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Philippines has no capacity to manage and dispose of nuclear waste, a major reason the Duterte administration should drop a plan to activate the mothballed Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) in Morong town, the EcoWaste Coalition said on Wednesday.

"We urge our policymakers not to wake up the sleeping 'monster of Morong from its [40]-year slumber. It's better to keep the plant idle rather than to create a highly toxic problem that our country cannot handle," Rene Pineda, EcoWaste's clean air and renewable energy advocate, said in a statement.

"How do BNPP pushers intend to manage, store and dispose of the tons of highly toxic waste that will be generated when we cannot even effectively deal with our ordinary household discards?" he said.

He challenged BNPP advocates to inform the public where the radioactive waste would be stored to make it safe from earthquakes and volcanic hazards given Mt. Natib's status as an active volcano.

"Nuclear waste disposal is a huge problem even in highly industrialized countries like the United States," he said, referring to a warning by the US-based Union of Concerned Scientists that "the resulting waste-disposal problem has become a major challenge for policymakers...[as] nuclear fuel remains dangerously radioactive for thousands of years after it is no longer useful in a commercial reactor."

Pineda quoted Greenpeace USA as saying that "there is still no safe, reliable solution for dealing with the radioactive waste produced by nuclear plants."

"Every waste dump in the US leaks radiation into the environment and nuclear plants themselves are running out of ways to store highly radioactive

waste on site," Pineda said.

EcoWaste pushed instead for clean energy sources. "Instead of going nuclear, the Philippines should go all-out for clean, safe and renewable energy sources that are plentiful in our country," Pineda said.

Geologist Kelvin Rodolfo, in an updated scientific review, said BNPP proponents should study a June 2005 report of the US think tank Council on Foreign Relations on "Are Nuclear Spent Fuel Pools Secure?"

"Nuclear fuel becomes spent, or used, after it has been in a reactor for between about 4.5 and six years. The fuel is not actually exhausted at this point, but is no longer an economically viable heat source," the report said.

It said: "Every 18 to 24 months, about a third of the fuel of an operating commercial nuclear reactor is removed. The fuel is highly radioactive and continues to produce a large amount of heat through radioactive decay, called decay heat, after its removal." INQ