

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DATE : 30 DEC 2016

DAY : Friday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

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Lopez asks miners to fund development

By Anna Leah E. Gonzales

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Regina Lopez asked large-scale miners to review their social development and management programs and adopt a more effective "sustainable integrated area development" approach to ensure that their operations bring sustained economic and social benefits to their host communities.

Lopez, in a recent dialog with community relations officers of some of the country's biggest mining companies, expressed hope the mining companies would take a hard look at SIAD approach as a key to strengthening the SDMP.

"What I want to do with the SDMP fund is for the DENR [Department of Environment

and Natural Resources] to jointly manage it with the mining companies and the community. I want to use their funds in the area development approach for more impact," Lopez said.

Lopez said she wanted to use the fund to improve the productivity of the area.

"I want it to be used to achieve area development, not as dole out, but for improving the productivity of the area," she said.

Among those present in the meeting were CROs of Oceana-Gold Philippines, Philex Mining Corp., FCF Minerals, Holcim Philippines and Lafarge-Holcim Aggregates Inc.

The CROs are the mining firms' frontliners, conducting consultations with communities affected

by their operations.

The dialog was the first of a series of nationwide consultations with mining stakeholders being conducted by DENR as it is currently in the process of reviewing the guidelines on the formulation and implementation of SDMPs by mining firms.

SDMPs are provided for in DENR Administrative Order No. 2010-21, which is the implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act No. 7942, or the Philippine Mining Act of 1995.

Lopez said a revision of the SDMP guidelines was necessary to address some concerns about the implementation of certain programs, including lack of community counterpart and weak coordination with local development plans, thus resulting in wastage of SDMP funds.

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Ex-senator: Firecracker mentality worsens climate change

BEFORE you light up that "five star," *kwitis* or "super *lolo*," you better think twice as studies show that carbon dioxide emission (CO₂) from firecracker explosions during New Year celebrations in urban areas increase to as much as 2,000 percent.

Former senator and secretary of the Climate Change Commission Heherson Alvarez, who had also served as Environment chief, on Thursday reminded the public that when they welcome 2017 with a bang in the expected traditional New Year firecracker fiesta, the clear loser is the environment.

"Our Oriental firecracker mentality, supposedly to ward off evil spirits, shows our disregard for the adverse environmental, public safety and health impacts of firecracker explosions that essentially add greenhouse gas emissions that heat the Earth, caused by flash gunpowder explosions and colorful toxic chemical stars," he noted.

As DENR secretary in 2001, Alvarez said the agency recorded a 2,000-percent increase in CO₂ emissions as a result of firecracker explosions.

He added it would be no surprise after 15 years that another such 2,000 percent greenhouse emissions hike is a real possibility.

At the United Nations COP22 in Marrakech last month, the former senator, also Earthsavers founder who was part of the Philippine delegation, said the pressure for decarbonization is even more crucial for small islands and archipelagic states that call for climate justice so as not to breach 1.5°C for survival.

A science report estimated that a continued fossil-intensive emissions scenario will frighteningly double the 2 percent estimated global heating tipping point to a 4 percent heating by 2060 because of carbon-cycle feedbacks by the overheated oceans of the world, Alvarez added.

He said a five gigaton (billion tons) gap in COP-Cancun's committed 48 gigaton carbon emissions reduction by 2020, which is equivalent to one year's global emissions in the

transportation sector, however, remains unsolved.

"By 2060, if man's folly would have altered the world's temperature by four degrees from pre-Industrial Revolution levels, the overheating would certainly accelerate the melting of the massive ice sheets in the Arctic and in Greenland," Alvarez warned.

This sea-level rise will cause intense flooding in low-lying areas like Metro Manila, Malabon City (Metro Manila), Guimaras and Cebu.

In 2060, more than 60 percent of the country's low-lying islands and urban coastal areas will be permanently submerged.

"Part of the political and public mindset change sorely needed is that firecracker mentality, which aggravates global warming. In the firecracker fiesta mode, the most vulnerable members of society, our children, end up paying the price of limbs, lives and livelihood loss including homes razed to the ground through firecracker-generated fires," Alvarez said.

But, he added, far more ruinous is the impact of global warming and climate change: the destruction of whole communities, human institutions and infrastructure.

A national ban on pyrotechnics and firecrackers is advocated by President Rodrigo Duterte, which Alvarez said is devoutly to be wished amid the lobby of manufacturers and importers.

The joint campaign of the Department of Health and the Philippine National Police to execute "IWAS Paputok" should be fully

supported by the public, according to him.

"The solution remains with city governments that have their priorities right. Davao has a total ban. Mandaue and Cebu regulate sales. Makati (Metro Manila) declared pipeline oil-polluted Barangay Bangkal as a 'no-firecracker zone' while [the cities of] Taguig and Pasay [both in Metro Manila] have centralized firecracker show sites," Alvarez said.

He added, "In order to preempt the four degree Centigrade heating by 2060, the pressure deep and early carbon cuts, which the Philippines pioneered at COP-14 in Poznan is now made possible by the global deal forged in COP 21 in Paris. But the grave danger remains that our own 'firecracker mentality' only adds senselessly to that dangerous gigaton carbon gap by 2020."

In 2008, Sydney, Australia made the decision to make its New Year's celebrations carbon-neutral.

Despite having 5000 kilograms of explosive devices and spending \$5.1 million on the celebrations, Sydney made a concerted attempt to make sure the environmental damage was mitigated.

It measured emissions from fireworks, fuels, electricity consumption and waste during the event and then purchased power and carbon credits.

"Of course, this is a cost-intensive remedy, so our solution may be to reduce our official fireworks and firecracker output. Filipinos are ingenious; tin cans, drums, trumpets, horns and other materials could be used to ring in the New Year," Alvarez said.

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Asian signature

The expert group raised concerns about the potential for shark and ray overfishing, and the need for a celebratory "signature" and a plan to be implemented by the government. It is noted that the shark population has been under pressure in recent years, and that the demand for shark fins and other shark products has increased in Asia and China. The group also noted that the demand for shark products is likely to increase as the population of sharks continues to decline, and that this could lead to a risk of overfishing and the potential for shark populations to collapse. The group also noted that the demand for shark products is likely to increase as the population of sharks continues to decline, and that this could lead to a risk of overfishing and the potential for shark populations to collapse.

However, the group must also be concerned about the impact of the shark and ray trade on the Philippines, as the country is known to have 60 and 10 species of sharks and rays, respectively.

And there is now a glimmer of hope, following Senator Juan Miguel "Migz" Zubiri's filing of Senate Bill (SB) No. 1245, otherwise known as the Sharks and Rays Conservation Act.

The proposed legislation seeks to prohibit, under penalty of imprisonment and fine, the sale of shark fins and rays in the Philippines.

Specifically, SB No. 1245 bans the catching, sale, transport, possession, and export of shark fins and rays or any part thereof.

Violators face a fine of up to a million pesos, or a fine of up to a million pesos, both, at the discretion of the court.

The bill also mandates the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, to categorize sharks and rays as endangered species.

Senador C. Obando, a barangay official of Pindangan West, Alcala, Pangasinan, urged Zubiri for his efforts to protect sharks, rays and other endangered species of plants and animals.

Obando said people across the globe, including Filipinos, should lend the support of the Senator from Pangasinan since the extinction of plants and animals would have untold consequences.

As proposed by Zubiri, let's also identify the habitats of sharks and rays so that these may be declared as protected areas.

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DSWD needs P614 M more to help Nina victims

By ALEXIS ROMERO and JAIME LAUDE

Typhoon victims need help and the government, along with other sectors, is trying to provide relief to affected areas.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) needs an additional P614 million to provide relief to areas battered by Typhoon Nina as other government agencies continue to provide help to those affected by the disaster.

Social Welfare Secretary Judy Taguiwalo said the amount would be used to provide family packs, emergency shelter assistance and other needs of survivors.

"We will be preparing a proposal for the emergency shelter assistance. So that it will be requested from DBM (Department of Budget and Management) because they are about to close their books for 2016," Taguiwalo said in a press conference in Malacañang yesterday.

The number of affected families continued to rise as regions submitted their reports, the DSWD said. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) reported that three persons died while 10 others went missing during the onslaught of Nina in the Visayas, Bicol and Southern Tagalog.

NDRRMC executive director and Office of Civil Defense (OCD) administrator Ricardo Jalad identified the fatalities as Roel Gregorio, 43, and Locela Periga, 60, of Quezon; and Lyka Mae Banayal of Parañaque City, one of the crewmembers of the sunken roll-on, roll-off *Starlite* Atlantic ferry.

Some of the missing are Ramil Pace of Eastern Samar; and Michale Merjan and Zaldy Merjan of Oriental Mindoro. All three were swept away in flashfloods that hit their villages.

Search is also ongoing for missing MV *Starlite* crewmembers identified as Oscar

Torregosa, Ronny Gargar, Adolfo Manalo, Edello de la Cruz, Jasper Endozo, Ronmark Hidalgo and Joven Cabrera.

All seven *Starlite* crew, according to Jalad, could have drowned after their vessel sank between Matuko and Isla Verde islands due to big waves and strong winds spawned by Nina.

But the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said it was not discounting the possibility that some of those in the ferry, including 11 cadets doing their on-the-job training on board the ship, could be trapped inside the vessel.

PCG Southern Tagalog district commander Captain Julius Caesar Victor Marvin Lim said they have yet to interview the 14 crewmen who were rescued as they remain focused on search and rescue operations.

Lim said their divers failed to locate the ship that sank on Dec. 26 near the vicinity of Balahibongmanoc Island in Tingloy, Batangas.

As of yesterday, the OCD said Nina destroyed P681.2 million in agricultural crops and infrastructure.

According to Sen. Loren Legarda, there are more than enough funds available for the relief and rehabilitation of the areas affected by the typhoon under the 2016 and 2017 national budgets.

Under this year's budget, Legarda said, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund still has up to P4.963 billion unused, which she said could be used to immediately start recovery and rehabilitation in affected areas. She said this would be carried over to 2017, where P15.755 billion was allocated by Congress for the fund.

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The Philippine Red Cross appealed for donations to help the families and communities affected by Nina. It said donations would be utilized to cover the cost of relief operations and maintain adequate provision of food items such as hot and ready-to-eat meals and non-food items such as blankets, plastic mats, mosquito nets, hygiene kits, jerry cans and tarpaulins.

The Church-run Radio Veritas reported that Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle called on parishes and churches to have a second collection during masses on Jan. 1, New Year's Day, which falls on a Sunday.

Caritas Manila executive director Fr. Anton Pascual said aside from the typhoon victims, part of the amount to be collected would be given to the estimated 1,000 families affected by the recent fire along NIA Road in Barangay Pinyahan, Quezon City. Caritas Manila is the social arm of the Archdiocese of Manila.

Pascual said they earlier gave P1.3 million in food and shelter assistance to the Archdiocese of Caceres in Naga, Camarines Sur, Diocese of Virac in Catanduanes and Diocese of Legazpi in Albay.

They also gave 600 relief packs, 200 thermos and 200 hygiene kits to the Diocese of Gumaca in Quezon province.

But the Caritas official said much help would still be needed for the Diocese of Legazpi while the Archdiocese of Lipa, Batangas is also asking for food assistance for the 1,934 families

fifth, sixth and seventh landfalls in Verde Island, Tingloy and Calatagan, causing flooding in some barangays.

The city government of Davao will extend P11 million in financial assistance to the victims of Nina, which forced thousands of people to abandon Christmas celebrations and flee to evacuation shelters in Catanduanes province and other areas in Bicol.

The financial assistance was approved by the city council following a special session on Thursday conducted upon the request of Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio.

Nina, which hit southern Luzon last Christmas, left more than 23,400 persons, 206,812 families in 813 barangays.

Of the affected families, more than 590,000 persons or more than 131,000 families were displaced. More than 154,000 people are still in evacuation centers as of yesterday. The typhoon also damaged more than 76,000 houses.

The DSWD and local governments have so far provided P46.55 million worth of assistance to affected communities.

Taguiwalo cited the need to reach island provinces and areas that are geographically isolated.

"If the roads are not yet cleared like in Catanduanes, there will be delays in the giving of goods... We are seeking the help of our colleagues from OCD to determine if we need to airlift goods," she said.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has deployed 30 chainsaws to help speed up the clearing operations in areas devastated by Nina.

DENR Undersecretary for Field Operations Isabelo Montejó said, "This is to assist our local government units (LGUs) and the Department of Public Works and Highways in the clearing operations and harnessing fallen trees cluttering roads, which affected the delivery of relief assistance to affected communities."

The DENR encouraged making use of the uprooted trees to build temporary shelters for typhoon survivors. It also promised to provide assistance to affected DENR employees.

Tall and big trees, including coconut, can be used to repair damaged buildings, houses

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and other structures.

Meanwhile, the DENR also directed regional offices in Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol and Eastern Visayas to conduct damage assessment in planting sites under the National Greening Program for possible rehabilitation and replanting efforts.

Warnings

Fishing boats and small sea vessels in Northern Luzon are still being advised not to go out to sea despite Nina's exit from the Philippine area of responsibility Wednesday.

The OCD said a gale warning had been raised in the seaboards of Batanes, Calayan, Babuyan, Cagayan, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Isabela, La Union and Pangasinan.

Rough to very rough seas are expected in these areas with a wave height of 3.4 to 4.5 meters. Larger sea vessels are alerted against big waves.

Disaster authorities have also raised flood alarm after Magat dam in Ramon, Isabela has breached its critical level fol-

lowing heavy rains yesterday.

The reservoir posted 193.17 meter water level which led dam management to release water at one of its floodgates by noon, said the National Irrigation Administration-Magat River Integrated Irrigation System.

With Evelyn Macairan, Rainier Allan Ronda, Michael Punongbayan, Ed Amoroso, Raymund Catindig, Rhodina Villanueva, Non Alquitran, Edith Regalado, Marvin Sy

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The free-market case for climate science

By Paul J. Ferraro

ARE you someone who has faith in the power of free markets? Then you should naturally accept the evidence that human activity is bringing about climate change.

Free and competitive markets work efficiently in large part because they are phenomenal information aggregators, gathering and sorting facts about consumer preferences and business production costs, and guiding market participants to engage in actions that provide benefits to both sides. Markets can easily help figure out the most efficient way to deliver coffee to people's homes, for example, or to reduce air pollution in cities. Markets also determine which ideas succeed (the iPhone, for instance) and which ones fail (Kool Kardashian Kard).

Likewise, scientific ideas thrive or perish in a marketplace of their own. Whereas participants in an economic market are rewarded for delivering goods or services well, participants in the marketplace of scientific ideas get rewarded for overturning conventional thinking. This is because the scientific method works not by proving theories but by disproving them. Scientists

pose and test rival explanations, and ultimately, the concepts that are disproven fall away while those that aren't prevail.

I myself have made a career of introducing such rival explanations in the field of environmental science. I've shown, for example, that the Endangered Species Act, when not accompanied by funding to help with species recovery, may put species in greater danger, not less. I've shown that the environmental and social impacts of national parks and reserves are much more modest than their proponents and opponents claim. And I've described how attempts to conserve water by improving the efficiency of irrigation may in fact increase water use. In short, like most scientists, I am rewarded when I disconfirm, not when I confirm, a way of thinking.

Like any other market, the market for scientific ideas has imperfections and frictions, but it is characterized by competition and by free entry and exit—hallmarks of the idealized free market described in any introductory economics textbook.

It's true that incumbent scientists, like incumbent businesses in all markets, try to set up barriers to new competitors. Review panels of incumbents vet new

ideas for academic journals and government research funding. But in time, such barriers are surmounted. Like those perfect markets in economics textbooks, scientific markets never leave "cash on the table"—they don't leave good ideas unexploited, not for long. Eventually those ideas spread widely.

After more than 25 years, the idea that human activity has led to greater greenhouse-gas emissions and, thus, greater climate change has won out over competing theories to explain how the Earth's climate system operates. Over time, the number of rival explanations has declined, rather than increased. And refinements to the dominant theory have strengthened, rather than weakened, the case for it. At a meeting I recently attended, the chairman of a university's department of Earth and planetary sciences announced that he would no longer hire scholars in climate science because "the science is done." While important measurements and observations will continue, the theoretical questions at the frontier have been answered.

There's reason to think the evidence for human-caused climate change is prevailing in the econom-

ic marketplace, as well: Property insurers and other profit-maximizing businesses with a substantial financial stake in the concept are taking actions that demonstrate they believe the evidence. They are working to create more accurate models of climate change and to price climate risk into insurance programs, even threatening lawsuits against actors who do not try to limit ongoing climate change. As we say in economics, revealed preferences are more convincing than stated ones.

Fundamentally, the concept of human-caused climate change has won out because alternative views—including arguments that the theory is a hoax spread by anti-growth and anti-technology Jeremiahs—contradict what competitive markets are demonstrating.

In the end, then, it is inconsistent to simultaneously accept that markets are powerful ways to allocate goods and services in the economy and also deny that human activity is causing substantial climate change. There's room to argue over the economic implications of climate change or the best ways to mitigate and adapt to it, but the scientific consensus is no longer a matter of debate. Bloomberg