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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

An orchid for Gina

By NOREEN IZABEL A. JAZUL

An atypical orchid species recently discovered in Bukidnon was named in honor of the person seen as “a true *rara avis* for environment,” Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary, Gina Lopez.

The white flowers of the *Grastidium ginalopeziae* symbolize the glimmer of hope Lopez has given to the country's environment sector.

“She [Lopez] has given hope to the Philippines and the rich natural resources that our country has,” Dr.

Miguel David de Leon — one of the discoverers of the *ginalopeziae* — told The Manila Bulletin when asked why his team named the flower after the Environment secretary.

Naturalist and conservationist De Leon added that Lopez has done “so much” in “very little time” as the DENR chief.

The conservationist also lauded Lopez for addressing problems in the country's environment that was not given a lot of attention in the past that resulted in rampant deforestation, unsustainable mining, and destructive farming and harvesting practices.

“[Among the past DENR Secretaries] only Gina Lopez had a vision, and it's not just a vision, she's actually doing [something about] it. Even in the implementation of existing laws, like the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act (Republic Act 9147). Nobody has really implemented it in its fullest extent. I've seen how her vision and her efforts have actually penetrated far-flung areas,” said De Leon.

Grastidium ginalopeziae is the latest addition to the endemic and native flora of the Philippines. According to De Leon, the species was “serendipitously” discovered near a creek last year.

“[After trekking] we went down to a creek to cool down and we saw this specimen and we took pictures in situ (on site) and then we showed the pictures to Jim Cootes [the undisputed authority in Philippine Native Orchid Species]. We confirmed it is indeed a new species,” he shared.

According to Dr. De Leon, what makes *ginalopeziae* distinct is that its flowers remain open in good condition for up to five days unlike the flowers of other *Grastidium* species which usually remain open for only one day.

Based from the *Die Orchidee* (Orchideen) Vol. 3 (01) 2017 journal, *Grastidium ginalopeziae* is “endemic to the Philippines, and grows only in the mountains of Bukidnon in Mindanao.”

The newly named orchid species is



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An Orchid for Gina



**GRASTIDIUM
GINALOPEZIAE** — The
latest addition to the
endemic and native
flora of the Philippines.
(Photos by Dr. Miguel
David De Leon)

often seen "thriving one to three meters above the ground, occasionally on branches overhanging running water, in windy locations between 1,100 to 1,300 meters above sea level."

Besides the *Grastidium ginalopeziae*, De Leon and the Cootes Study Group also discovered eight other species in the forests of Bukidnon — one of which called *Bulbophyllum migueli* was named after De Leon himself.

The other seven species are: *Dendrobium geigeri*, named in honor of one macro photographer Daniel Geiger; *Thrixspermum fernandeziae*, named after Town & Country

magazine editor Yvette Fernandez; *Dendrobium schettleri*, named after Orchideen Journal editor Roland Schettler; *Dendrobium derekcabactulanii*, named after Cootes member Derek Cabactulan; *Dendrobium reypimentelii*, named after famous pant breeder Rey Pimentel; *Glomera gastrodioides*; and *Bulbophyllum anascaputum*.

Lopez joins President Duterte (*Robiquetia dutertei*) and Benigno Aquino III (*Epicrianthes aquinoi*) among the Filipino leaders who were honored with an orchid species endemic to the Philippines by the Cootes Study group.

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EAGLE FREED IN SARANGANI'S 'LAST FRONTIER'

A REHABILITATED juvenile Philippine Eagle was recently released to its habitat less than a month after being found in Mt. Busa, a key biodiversity area in Maitum town in Sarangani.

The eaglet, named Sarangani Pride by Senator Manny Pacquiao, was found dehydrated and malnourished in the upland village of Batian on Jan. 2 and was brought by the municipal government staff to the Philippine Eagle Center in Davao City.

The release team is composed of Philippine Eagle Foundation director for conservation Dr. Jayson Ibanez, PEC executive director Dennis Salvador, Maitum OIC-Merro Nanette Nacional, CENRO-Kiamba Jhing Guilao, DENR Region 12 representatives, and

Sarangani Information Office.

Salvador said the eagle was released on the basis of its health and physical conditions. During its rehabilitation, an X-Ray result showed an embedded pellet in its left groin and had to be nurtured into prime condition.

A team of biologists will be monitoring the bird's condition for 10 days.

"Our staff will be monitoring this eagle post-release via satellite and radio transmitter. We want to make sure that this eaglet will be accepted back by its parents and fed until it fully fledges," Salvador said.

According to Sarangani Environmental Conservation and Protection Center executive director Emma Nebran, the forest

where the eaglet was released is considered the last frontier of the province.

"Mt. Busa is the remaining forest we have here in Sarangani, and we must protect, conserve and preserve the biodiversity that we have here," she revealed.

She added that the Provincial Government, headed by Gov. Steve Solon, supports efforts in protecting Mt. Busa and has allotted funds to support conservation initiatives in the area.

The 114,000-hectare Mt. Busa, which covers the towns of Maasim, Kiamba, and Maitum, is threatened by land conversion (to farmland), kaingin (slash-and-burn), wildlife hunting, illegal logging and mining.

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Gina Lopez

Everything came to a head when she announced the shut-down of 23 mines, saying many were operating in watersheds. A bold move by the environment secretary who said the companies could appeal her order with President Duterte. It later turned out that the team that reviewed an audit of mines recommended the suspension of operations, not closure, of the mines. But Lopez didn't budge. She said it was "time for social justice." The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines pleaded their case with Malacañang. On the same day that Lopez said she would sign the closure order, Presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella assured the miners they would get due process. But she declared that her order was nonnegotiable and that this had the backing of the President.



Carlos G. Dominguez III

The finance secretary is no stranger to controversy, given his long years in the government and the private sector. But the latest one that he has found himself in the middle of has caught the attention not only of the local players but also the international business community, given the far-reaching impact of the order of Environment Secretary Gina Lopez to shut down 23 mines and suspend operations of another five. Dominguez, as head of the economic cluster of the Duterte administration, has made no secret of his concern over the orders issued by Lopez. But he emphasized that he was not "against" Lopez. He earlier told business journalists: "Nobody is challenging her order, at least I am not. We are just saying, 'What is going on?'"



Responsible stewardship must include mining

The recent announcement of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources leadership on the closure of large-scale mines and the suspension of operations of others is yet another indication of the failure to differentiate between being an advocate and a regulator. Since the change in administration, the DENR has been practically focusing on just one thing: large-scale mining.

In the Stratbase ADR Institute publication "Thinking Beyond Politics," Dr. CP David, holder of a PhD in environmental science and geology from Stanford University, observed, however, that:

"It must also be noted that illegal small-scale mining is responsible for the significant environmental damage being charged to the mining industry at large today. Small-scale mining is largely unregulated, both from an environmental and fiscal perspective. Small-scale miners generally do not have environmental protection or mitigation systems in place, and hardly pay the taxes due to the government. In fact, the term 'small-scale mining' has become a misnomer because a lot of operators cannot be considered 'small' as defined in the law."

Moreover, changing the rules or the policies in the middle of the game can never work in any industry or sector. Doing such comes at a much higher price in the context of mining and the Philippine environment. Again, David has his take, thus:

"Any industry, especially in the case of mining where the project cycle extends to more than two decades, requires a consistent

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DINDO MANHIT

policy framework where investments are not threatened by subsequent arbitrary modification. Otherwise, the country will not be able to attract legitimate miners, and so risk losing its resources to illegal mining with the concomitant severe degradation of the environment."

Clearly, then, the bias against large-scale mining will not result in environmental protection, but rather further degradation, to the detriment of ordinary Filipinos. Of course, this outcome is contrary to the avowed objective of the mining audits to promote "social justice."

Worse, the rule of law seems to have been brushed aside in the conduct of these audits. For one, the impartiality of the audit teams is questionable, with antimining NGOs as influential members. Transparency in the process, as well as the results, has been very poor. The mines concerned are in the dark as to the bases by which they are audited, and the results of such audits.

It is unfortunate that the fears of the mining industry upon the change of administration have become a reality. It is now confirmed that there is failure to transcend being an advocate fighting for a single cause and becoming a regulator looking after and uniting all the stakeholders. To this David calls for consensus-building:

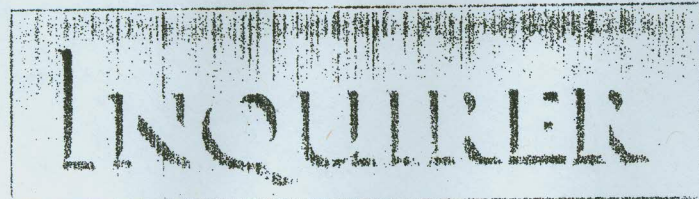
"A tri-sectoral approach, involving government, the private sector, and civil society, will provide a platform for collaboration among relevant stakeholders, all essential cogs in environmental policy-making and implementation. This inclusive approach will hopefully help in pinpointing where the fulcrum should stand between economic development and environmental protection.

"There is no recourse, therefore, but to believe in the power of collaboration.

"The [next] government must lead the way in harnessing the resources and innovation of the private sector, the knowledge of the academe, and the advocacy of NGOs; and build synergy from these. This is the only way toward a responsible stewardship of the environment that meets the needs of both present and future generations."

The DENR leadership should be reminded that it is part of this administration, which promised the Filipino people better lives. In order to fulfill this commitment, the President is pushing for the country's industrialization, and mining cannot be taken away from that equation. It should be obvious that the country needs mining that can be linked to mineral processing and down to allied industries, such as manufacturing, in order to generate jobs, increase revenue streams, and, ultimately, boost the economy. This development can never be realized with myopic and irrational leadership.

Dindo Manhit is the president of Stratbase ADR Institute.



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MINERS' RESCUE TEAM ON STANDBY

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) said on Saturday their members have pooled their resources to help the rescue and relief work in Surigao City after it was struck by a 6.7-magnitude earthquake.

COMP chair Art Disini said relief goods were being prepared by the mining firms based in Surigao del Norte for distribution to affected residents. Mine workers trained in rescue missions are on standby to help, he said.

COMP offered its assistance

despite an order from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to shut down or suspend the operations of some of its members.

Nickel Asia Corp. and CTP Construction and Mining Corp. reported no casualties among their workers and residents in their areas. Nickel Asia said its facilities suffered no damage while CTP officials were still making an assessment.

CTP chief executive officer Carlo Pimentel said emergency

response teams from his company were coordinating with the Bureau of Fire Protection on ways they could help in postdisaster efforts.

He said CTP was prepared to provide temporary shelters and clean water.

Presidential Communications Secretary Martin Andanar said local disaster and social welfare officials were closely watching the situation in the province. —WITH REPORTS FROM

LEILA B. SALAVERRIA INQ

DENR's daring, mining's crisis

I WAS one of many who thought Gina Lopez was one of President Duterte's more daring choices as far as picking members of his cabinet was concerned. A staunch environmentalist, she was a welcome decision for Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) secretary, after decades of seeing our natural resources go to waste in the hands of big business, oligarchs, capitalists all in the name of investments and "development" as every government before this one has claimed.

I thought: finally, someone who could shake the system up a bit – if not completely turn it upside down – if only so we can have a different, more honest conversation about the state of our environment. Finally, I thought, someone who would have the interest of communities, including the Lumad, as foremost on her agenda.

And while I am not blind to the limits of Secretary Lopez's push for eco-tourism, as I saw the people she started bringing into the DENR, I thought: certainly, there will be more to her plans for the environment than eco-tourism. Between Ipat Luna and Philip Camara, she was off to a good start.

The daring of DENR

Expectedly, large-scale, long-term mining projects topped the list of DENR's major concerns. The expectation is not only borne of Secretary Lopez's history as an environmental advocate, but also borne of an awareness of the countless studies and research that highlight the degradation of the environment in the hands of irresponsible mining projects.

I was personally banking on candidate and President Duterte's strong stand against mining. After all, just as he insists on fulfilling his promise of a drug war no matter the public outcry, so should we be able to expect a fulfillment of his promise to stand against irresponsible mining.



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KATRINA
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One imagines it was the President's pronouncements as well that encouraged DENR to do what no other DENR has done in recent years: dare close and suspend mines found to be non-compliant and in violation of existing laws. The Results of the Technical Review on the Mining Audit Report

released on the DENR website lists down each mining project's violations based on existing laws, rules, and regulations, which is also the basis of its violation of its Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC).

More specific violations under these laws are not discussed in these publicly released documents, though one imagines these would appear in the Mining Audit Report itself, which has yet to be made public.

The pushback of miners

The pushback against the closure orders was of course expected. In the February 2 press conference, it was mentioned that companies could appeal the DENR decision within 15 days, and ultimately take their appeal to the President himself.

But the mining companies were not going through that process. Instead we saw the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) going to the media, questioning the mining audit's lack of transparency and due process, asserting that it is unfair that there are anti-mining activists who were part of the audit itself, and questioning the "bias and partiality" of Secretary Lopez who is an anti-mining advocate.

They also had an easy ally in the media, which lost no time highlighting the refusal of Secretary Lopez to release the audit report to the press (Rappler.com, 3 Feb), and the manner in which the delivery of information was handled at the press conference (Inquirer.net, 4 Feb).

By February 6, the COMP was asking the President and the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) to step in. By February 7, Malacañang says the President and members of his Cabinet had agreed to intervene. By February 9, the MICC released Resolution No. 6 stating that it will "create a multi-stakeholder review" to advise DENR on "the performance of existing mining operations." That resolution was a direct response to

the mining companies' claim of no due process.

Silencing conversation

One agrees that the DENR could've handled the announcement of the mining audit results better. Reports should've been released to the mining companies before the press conference. DENR could've also had scientists explaining the environmental degradation, a lawyer explaining the violations, LGU officials speaking of the social cost.

But COMP could also do better than to sound like a whiny brat of a sector that's used to getting its way. The notion of a biased audit because there were anti-mining activists involved begs the question: would it not be a bias for mining companies if no activist was there at all? The assertion that it's a problem that the DENR Secretary stands against mining is another conundrum: is that to say that we've had pro-mining secretaries all these years?

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DENR'S DARING, mining's CRISIS

SILENCING CONVERSATION

And when COMP insists that the closure of 23 mines is equal to Secretary Lopez "finally revealing her true bias: to stop all mining in the Philippines" (BusinessMirror, 6 Feb), do they deliberately fail to point out that 12 mining companies passed the audit, with one suspension deferred pending the DENR Secretary's personal visit to the site (GMANewsOnline, 2 Feb)?

In the course of discrediting Secretary Lopez, what the concerned mining companies have evaded in fact, is the task of responding to those audit results and the violations they are charged with. What they are refusing to address are the questions we should all now be asking about these mining companies, given environmental degradation and social cost. Sure, we should talk scientific assessments and jobs lost, but certainly we contextualize the good in the bad and vice versa, toward finally deciding on what truly matters and towards what end.

Only then can we even begin to grapple with the monster of a crisis that is irresponsible mining in this country, because contrary to what the mining sector says, that is the bigger crisis. Not at all a DENR that has finally found its balls.

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Stakeholders' review of mining operations set

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has promised to work with the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) for a multi-stakeholder review on the performance of existing mining operations in the country.

The council, co-chaired by DENR Secretary Regina Lopez and Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, convened Thursday to address the issues on due process, unemployment and revenue loss for local and national government raised by mining groups against the closure and suspension orders issued to 28 mining companies.

After the meeting, the council, pursuant to Executive Order (EO) 79, issued Resolution No. 6 which states that the "MICC shall create a multi-stakeholder review and advise the DENR on the performance of existing mining operations in consultation with local government units (LGUs)."

The review will be based on the parameters set in specific mining contracts and on pertinent laws, "taking into account the valid exercise of the State's police power to serve the common good, especially the poor."

It further stated that "those found guilty of violating mining contracts, laws and regulations, after observance of due process,

shall be meted the appropriate penalty under relevant laws."

The resolution also indicated that those who will be affected by the suspension or closure order, either directly or indirectly employed by mining contractors, shall be assisted by the government through its livelihood and transition plan.

The MICC also agreed that no mining activity should be allowed in watershed areas.

The MICC is co-chaired by the chairpersons of the Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation and the Economic Development clusters of the Cabinet.

Other members are the Justice secretary, the chairperson of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, and the president of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines.

Last Feb. 2, Lopez ordered the closure of 23 mining operations and suspended five more for various violations that resulted in the degradation of surrounding rivers and other water bodies, including agriculture, and affecting the health and livelihood of communities.

The result of the audit has been criticized by the mining sector who said the audit lacked due process and would lead to the loss of employment and livelihood for affected communities.

They also said that the closures would result in loss of tax revenues for the local and national governments.

Peace by Piece

PEACE and Justice should walk hand in hand. Never a step ahead of each other. Sincerity, trust and respect will help push them faster to the desired end. Any attempt to distort this will just increase travel time.

DENR's chief Gina Lopez Roy's decision to close down 23 mining firms may be too harsh a move especially in the eyes of the business sector. To her credit, she was chosen by the President to do exactly what he wants her to do. It's Gina's way of saying "wala tayong problema umayos lang kayong lahat."

Let's face it. Too many mining firms have been abusive for decades guided by profits, disregarding rules and regulations at the expense of its workers and those living around their areas of operations. They did not care a bit about toxic wastes and the disruption of the ecosystem - the air we breathe, erosion and aquatic life. Time to end this foolishness.

I wish that the CBCP will practice what we hear during mass - "let us offer each other the sign of peace" instead of being harsh critics taking sides on every political issue that tend to encourage differences and disagreements.

POLICE Chief Ronald dela Rosa has signed an order dismissing 99 policemen after they were found guilty of using illegal drugs, an official said Friday. These men are now scared hearing forceful and loud knocks in their domicile in the wee hours of the night. Most likely, it may not come from a



MIRRORLESS

ROLLY G.
REYES

pizza delivery guy.

One key approach that should be used in a peace pact should be a "constitutive substantives," which will reflect its strengths and weaknesses, virtues and shortcomings that will propel future meetings.

A "good" agreement should result in durable peace because a "bad" agreement will result in delays, setbacks, or even the collapse of the entire peace process.

One angle or another approach should be sustainability of the stringent requirements that the peace process may require.

The provisions of an agreement should always meet these criteria: precision of wording, technical feasibility, international legitimacy, and detailed implementation timetable.

A mediator or negotiator should be duty bound to ensure that negotiations between the parties meet these high standards, even if it means standing up to impatient cynical bystanders and some members the parties themselves.

They should promote a process of gradual accommodation between the peace agreement and realities on the ground, which is the only path towards a lasting peace.

The last point to consider is, of course, relevance to the United Nations. The organization is often called upon to be the senior international actor in the implementation phase of a peace process.

This is on the correct assumption that it possesses a variety of assets, including technical expertise, financial resources, international legitimacy, peacekeeping troops and implementation experience.

But sometimes, we have the incorrect assumption that it has the power to enforce agreements reached or guarantee physical security. For the organization to be successful in this implementation role, it is important that it be able to identify in each case what kind of challenges are likely to emerge during implementation - be it as a result of formal requests from the parties or as a consequence of the terms of the settlement plan - and ascertain whether it is equipped to meet them.

It is convenient to say that thousands will be unemployed if mining firms are closed down. We should mention as well the nation's treasury losing export revenues.

But why are we totally blind to the fact that MILLIONS of lives in the future will be lost when the environment will be ultimately destroyed?

Are we not taking for granted short-sightedly the irreparable damage being done to our surroundings all because of money?

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PEACE by PIECE

I want the peace process to continue of course. Who would not want to live unbothered by clashes that make your movement always at risk. Peace will always be elusive in this mortal world.

Both sides should understand that peace negotiation is a thorny path and wounds are acquired along the way. That is why the sight of our beautiful flag soaring in the sky should be the primary and the ONLY image that they should keep in their minds.

Humility, good faith and unity should be consistent in every step. Suspicion, political ambition, or malicious intention to get ahead of the other should be trashed if a good result is targeted.

We should take note that we now have a government that is willing to listen and forget the past. The revolutionaries should sincerely take advantage of this rare opportunity. Both sides have gained so much in such a short time and it will be a waste to scrap what both parties have achieved.

We all know the countless lives that we had to sacrifice in the pursuit of kinship under one flag. The irony is that both parties want the same thing: the upliftment of the lives of our countrymen. So why fight?

Let us end the bloodbath. Let us start anew as one for the sake of our children, grandchildren and the future generations to come.

Good work, good deeds and good faith to all.

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DENR binanatan ng PSE

MAKARAANG umani ng batikos ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources mula sa Kongreso at iba pang departamento ng pamahalaan sa pagpapasara nito ng malalaking kompanya sa minahan, umalma na rin ang Philippine Stock Exchange.

Sinabi ni Philippine Stock Exchange President and CEO Hans Sicat na nakababahala ang ginawa ng DENR na pag-aanunsyo ng biglaang closure order o pagpapasara ng mga minahan bago pa man mabigyan ng paalaala ang mga kompanya ukol dito.

Dahil sa pangyayari, isang araw makaraan ang anunsyo ay humiling na ang mga kompanya na ihinto ng PSE ang pagsalang sa stock trading ng mga sapi ng mga kompanya na ikinadiskaril ng operasyon na rin mismo ng PSE.

Malaking bahagi umano sa bentahan at bilihan ng sapi ang nanggagaling sa mga mining company at malaki umano ang papel nito sa operasyon mismo ng PSE.

Isa pa, bigla umanong nagtaas ang halaga ng nickel sa pandaigdigang merkado na nakasama naman sa ibang negosyante na nangangalakal at nangangailangan ng mga nickel.

Pinuna pa ng PSE ang ginawa ng DENR na palatandaan ng hindi magkakatatag mga hakbang ng mga sangay ng pamahalaan para sa maayos na pagtakbo na ekonomiya.

DOF UMANGAL DIN

Nauna rito, umangal ang Department of Finance sa pangyayari sa pagsasabing magkakaroon ng hindi magandang bunga ang kautusan ng DENR gaya ng pagkawala ng buwis na inaasahang makokolekta ng Bureau of Internal Revenue.

Kung magtatagal umano ang problema, tiyak umanong magbubunga ito ng kakapusan ng koleksyon sa buwis at kung ganoon ay kakapusan din ng pondo para sa iba't ibang proyekto ng pamahalaan.

300,000 MAGUGUTOM

Sa kabilang banda, sinasabi ng mga mambabatas na malaking dagok umano sa mga empleyado o manggagawa ang pagsasara ng mga minahan.

Mayroon umanong mahigit sa 60,000 pamilyang obrero o nasa 300,000 katao ang madidiskaril ang pamumuhay sa pagsasara ng nasa 23 minahan sa iba't ibang bahagi ng bansa.

Walan naman umanong malinaw na programa mismo ang DENR kung paano ilalagay sa ibang hanapbuhay ang mga natanggalan ng trabaho at ngayo'y nagsimula nang maghirap at magutom ang mga pamilyang obrero

MAPANIRA TALAGA - DENR

Sa kabila ng mga puna, nanatiling matatag naman ang DENR sa pagsasabing tama lang ang ginawa nitong desisyon na ipasara ang mga kompanya makaraan ang isang buwan pagsusuri sa mga operasyon ng mga ito at kung nilalabag ng mga ito ang mga batas para sa tama na pagmimina.

Napatunayan umano naging mapanira sa kalikasan ang mga mining company sa pagpatag sa mga bundok, pagkalbo sa mga kagubatan at kawalan ng mga tamang pasilidad o proseso para hindi masira ang kapaligiran.

Matatandang hindi mabilang ang reklamo ng mga mamamayan sa paligid ukol sa pagkasira ng kanilang mga hanapbuhay sa sakahan at paghahayupan dahil sa operasyon ng mga minero.

Nagtatapon umano ng mga keminal ang mga minahan na nakasisira maging sa kalugan ng mga mamamayan.

Naging malala na rin umano ang mga nakatatatag na pagbaha na may mga kasamang putik sa mga bayan-bayan at madalas nang magkaroon ng mga landslide sa pagkakaroon ng mga lindol at malalakas at matagalang ulan at bagyo.

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MINERS SCRAMBLE TO HELP GOVT

DESPITE the crisis it is facing due to the disputed closure of 23 mines, mining companies on Saturday pooled their resources, activated emergency rescue teams and dispatched them to Surigao City after it was struck by a 6.7-magnitude earthquake Friday evening.

Chamber of Mines of the Philippines chairman Art Disini said relief goods are already being

prepared by the mining firms to be distributed to the affected residents while mine workers professionally trained in rescue missions will be at hand to help government operations.

Among the companies in the area, Nickel Asia Corp. reported that no mine worker or resident in their host communities perished or were hurt during the earthquake. It also reported zero

damage to its facilities.

Another nickel miner Marcventures Mining and Development Corp. has also dispatched its 10-man emergency rescue team to Surigao City to help in rescue operations.

CTP Construction chief executive Carlo Pimentel said their mine workers and residents in host communities are safe but it

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MINERS... From A1

is still assessing its facilities.

Emergency response teams from CTP are already on standby and are coordinating with the Bureau of Fire Protection and partner government agencies to see how the company could ably assist in post disaster efforts.

According to Pimentel, CTP will see to providing immediate needs such as temporary shelters and clean water.

He assured that mining companies in Surigao are working hand in hand to help our *kababayans* in need.

Meanwhile, Silangan Mining also reported no major damage or injuries to Silangan facilities and personnel. Their emergency rescue teams are on standby in case needed.

Meanwhile, Philippine Stock Exchange president Hans Sicat said Friday the Department of Environment and Natural Resources should be more cautious in its regulatory actions, following the closure of 23 mines in the country that could affect 1.5 million Filipinos.

At a press conference of the Philip-

pine Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Taguig City, Sicat tagged the announcement of DENR Secretary Regina Paz Lopez of closure and suspension of 28 mining firms as "worrisome trend" and "very irresponsible move."

"What we saw last week, we believe that there was a surprise announcement in media of a suspension, closure of mining firms including those companies that are publicly listed. We thought this is actually a worrisome trend, if not, a very irresponsible move from the DENR," the PSE chief said.

"This creates a huge issue for those operating the stock exchange," he added.

Sicat mentioned that the announcement of the DENR has created confusion in the market, while global prices of nickel have increased by 7.0 to 8.0 percent when the result came out.

"It's interesting that an announcement from a particular agency can move global prices," he said, noting the importance of consistency in government policies. **PNA**

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'GREEN JOBS' ISINUSULONG

ITINUTULAK ni Senador Sonny Angara ang pagpapatupad ng 'Green Jobs Law' para mapunan ang kawalan ng trabaho ng mga manggagawa mula sa mga minahan na ipinasara ng Depart-

ment of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Sa pagdinig ng Senado, sinabi ni Angara na maaaring gamiting alternatibo ang 'green jobs' para matulungan ang mga manggagawa, ka-

sabay ng pag-restore sa mga lugar na ginawang minahan.

Plano umano ni DENR Secretary Gina Lopez na ibalik bilang ecological zones ang mga ipinasarang minahan dahil sa laki ng pin-

salang iniwan ng mining firms sa mga komunidad.

Kabilang sa epekto ng minahan ang pagtagas ng kemikal sa mga ilog, pagkaputol ng mga punong kahoy, pagguho ng lupa at iba pa.

VICKY CERVALES

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

**GINA LOPEZ DAPAT
SUPORTAHAN**

NAPAKAGANDA ng pinaggagagawa ni DENR Sec. Gina Lopez na pagbabaklasin ang mga lisensiya at operasyon ng iba't ibang mining companies na matagal nang sumisira sa ating magandang bansa.

Matagal nang pina-patag ng mga ito ang mga kabundukan at kinakalbo ang mga kagubatan na ang resulta ay matinding pagbaha, landslide, pagkatuyo ng mga ilog at pagkawala

ng mga matitirhan ng iba't ibang hayop na nananahan sa ating kalikasan.

Hindi na sana natigil ang pandarambong sa mga kalupaan at yaman ng kalikasan kung hindi pa naiupo ang isang Gina Lopez na malalim ang pagmamahal sa kalikasan.

Nagpatuloy na sana ang pagyurak sa mga kabundukan at mga kagubatan sa buong Pilipinas at patuloy na sanang binurahan ng titirhan at ka-

buhayan ang mga katutubong Pilipino kung hindi pa nangialam ang isang Gina Lopez.

Pihadong inaaral na ng mga kalaban kung papaano kokorapin ang butihing kalihim ng DENR.

Ipipilit nila ang kagustuhang magpayaman habang winawasak naman nila ang buong bansa.

Ganyan kagahaman ang mga ulupong na ito na ang tanging importante lamang ay



MASAlamin
ni Ed Cordevilla

ang pagtaba ng kani-kanilang balsa.

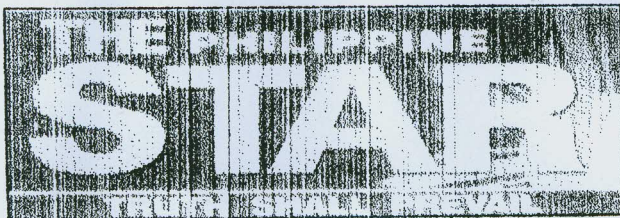
Wala silang pakundangan sa pagpatay sa kalikasan makatunghay lamang ng kayamanan na ipalalamon nila sa henerasyon ng pamilya nila habang nakatunghay at lalo lamang naghihirap ang taumbayan.

Sa usapin ng buwis ay 'negligible' ang kontribusyon ng mining sector, gayundin sa

usapin ng paglikha ng pag-eempleyo.

Naniniwala ang MASAlamin na higit pa ang magagawa ni Lopez upang makalikha ng trabaho para sa daan-daang libong Pilipino imbes na umasa sa pag-mimina.

Ito na ang panahon ng pagbabago at nakatutuwa na may isang Lopez na nakikipaglaban para sa kalikasan at mga katutubong Pilipino.



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Formalize small-scale mining, NGO urges gov't

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

An environmental group is urging the government to formalize the local small-scale mining sector, which accounts for 60 percent of the country's total gold production.

Non-government organization Ban Toxics said the government should consider small-scale mining as an economic activity that can benefit communities and reduce poverty.

"Formalization of the sector is a first step that leads to better regulatory and monitoring mechanisms and improved labor and environmental practices," Ban Toxics program manager Evelyn Cubelo said.

Upon assumption of her post, Environment Secretary Gina Lopez emphasized that all small-scale mining activities operating outside the Minahang Bayan were illegal in nature and should be stopped immediately.

A Minahang Bayan centralizes processing of minerals within a zone where the government will be able to monitor gold production by small-scale miners better.

It helps the government curb illegal mining and mitigate the adverse environmental impacts of indiscriminate mining operations in the country.

At present, there are only three existing Minahang Bayan in the country, located in Masbate, Davao Oriental and Samar.

There are about 300,000 to 500,000 small-scale miners operating in 40 mineral-rich provinces nationwide, majority of which operates outside the Minahang Bayan.

Furthermore, the group is calling on the government to address the challenges in the sector by strengthening the ability of small-scale communities to understand and improve their situation.

"The sector can be transformed into a responsible venture and the miners themselves are clamouring for it," Cubelo said.

Small-scale miners are also asking the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to initiate a roadmap and provide alternative livelihood to mining communities which operate outside of Minahang Bayan areas.

"Ordering the immediate shutdown of small-scale operations without a transition period clearly goes against the thrust of the DENR," Cubelo said.

"The DENR needs to approach poverty-driven small-scale differently from large-scale. DENR should look at small-scale mining with a developmental approach. Communities must be given a transition period and must be guided to adopt less destructive mining methods in the short-term," she added.



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Gov't reforestation program: Planting the right trees

The government has put up a tree seed center (TSC) in Minglanilla within the 123-hectare Cebu Experimental Forest (CEF) which should ramp up support for long term reforestation up to 2028.

This TSC is the first in Visayas and follows the one that was set up in Bislig, Surigao del Sur. Both were established by the Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB), an attached agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

"The prospect of reforestation in Visayas region is bright because the tree seed center will not only be for Region 7 (Cebu) but for the whole Visayas," said ERDB executive director Henry Adornado.

The TSC is part of the forest nursery modernization program in line with the enhanced National Greening Program (NGP) aimed at massively producing quality, disease-free seeds. It has a laboratory that may be used for testing germination of seeds. The Visayas TSC is just waiting for an occupancy permit to start operation.



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Planting the right trees

Availability of a variety of tree species will be enhanced as the TSC as the facility will do seed exchange, according to Alicia Lustica who heads the ERDB research center in Cebu.

The CEF itself is situated in the Philippines' first reforestation project which is now century old. This is the Osmena reforestation project, also the country's oldest reforestation as established in January 1916 and was a 2,710-hectare forest reserve area ran in earlier times by the Vatican known as the Friar Land Estate.

Based on ERDB records, as of June 2015, Region 7 alone had seed collection and supply of 1.222 million.

Seed requirements will increase as Executive Order 193 mandated the extension of the NGP up to 2028 which envisions a wood and agroforestry product self sufficiency set at an annual production target of 750,000 hectares of timber, 60,000 hectares of coffee, and 300,000 hectares of fuelwood.

The production of wood and paper products is estimated to be worth \$900 million yearly.

Partners that may use Visayas TSC's seed production are DENR-ERDB's own provincial, city or municipal envi-

ronment and natural resources offices (ENRO), state universities and colleges or SUCs, community and people's groups, and private, industrial tree plantations.

The TSC has a seeder area where seeds are sown into containers, and are watered through misting for growth. Germinants are turned into seedlings in the growing area. In the hardening area, sunlight allows for drying of the seedlings for sturdiness.

ERDB has been conducting research in CEF since June 1986, covering bamboo, rattan, dipterocarps (hardwood and tropical trees), narra, endemic tree species, neem, tiger grass, flowers, and honey production. It is also a site for training ENRO researchers on cave ecotourism and forest conservation.

Despite being considered a national heritage and a protected and forest reservation area, it is faced with threats of illegal logging.

"Our forest is still threatened by illegal tree cutting and charcoal extraction. Informal settlement, farming, wildlife hunting, sand, gravel and black stone extract and bamboo harvest are also threats. We need valuable community partners to fight the threats."

The top 10 tree species here are teak, gmelina, lumbang,

lanutan, narra, antsoan dilau, Genguét pine, banaba, and auri.

The CEF site is a biodiversity-rich area. It is home to faunal species as Kokok (Philippine coucal), Alimokon (White eared browndove), Tamsi (sunbird), Maya (Munia), Tikling (Moorhen), Pugo (Buttonquail), Manatad (Common Emerald Dove), Toktor (Barber), Punay, Siloy (Cebu black sharma), Ngiwng (Grass owl), Sayaw (Swift), Kikik (Koel), Gitgit (Swallow), Tagmaya (Bulbul), and Uwak (crow).

"Very native wildlife community in CEF depends on unique plants, caves, rivers, and creeks."

ERDB received a mandate to put up forest TSCs under NGP. It now has a TCP in Los Banos, Laguna. It is also building TSCs in Loakan, Baguio City; Pagbilao, Quezon; and Tagum City, Davao del Norte.

"Seeds collected from the established seed sources—seed production areas and individual plus trees (SPAs and IPTs)—nationwide will be submitted to forest TSC for processing and certification before it will be distributed to different stakeholders," said ERDB.

IPTs are materials in breeding and are selected and crossed with each other as part of producing superior tree breeds.

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● **Hot logs seized**

BUTUAN CITY – The provincial and municipal anti-illegal logging task force of the police and municipal environment and natural resources office (MENRO) confiscated illegally-cut forest products in Agusan del Sur yesterday. In a flash report to the regional command and tactical operation center of Police Regional Office 13 (PRO 13) based here, the anti-illegal logging task force confiscated 6,815 board feet at Sitio Manga, Barangay Tagbayagan, in Rosario town. The discovery of the abandoned illegally-cut forest products came after concerned villagers reported their presence to the Rosario Municipal Police Station (MPS). Rosario MPS is still conducting investigation to identify the owner while the seized forest products are in the custody of Rosario MENRO-LGU. (Mike U. Crismundo)

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Eco group calls for 'immediate return of S. Korean garbage

The EcoWaste Coalition, a waste and pollution watch group based in Quezon City, has thrown its weight behind a move to quickly ship back illegal trash shipments from South Korea that entered the country through the Port of Cebu.

Through a statement, the group conveyed its support to the position made by Bureau of Customs Cebu District Collector Elvira Cruz and Environmental Management Bureau Regional Director William Cunado for the immediate shipment of the unlawful trash imports to its origin.

The trash shipments amounting to 5,000 metric tons of mixed wastes, misdeclared as "solid granular particles of wood chips and

synthetic resin," arrived in the Port of Cebu last January 20 on board *M/V Christina* and were consigned to Moving Forward Global Trading Inc.

"We laud and back the Customs and environmental authorities in Cebu for acting fast to ensure the return of the unsorted wastes from South Korea to its sender without delay," said Aileen Lucero, national coordinator, EcoWaste Coalition.

"We are one with them and with the people of Cebu in asserting that our nation is not an open dumpsite for the world's garbage," she declared.

"The swift and unequivocal action by the authorities will send

a clear signal to all people behind the illegal waste trade that dumping is not allowed in the country," she added.

"The perpetrators should be charged in court and punish to the fullest extent of the law to deter similar incidents in the future," said.

"This dumping incident is reminiscent of the still unresolved shipment of mixed household rubbish from Canada," she lamented.

The EcoWaste Coalition expressed its hope that the illegal waste imports from South Korea would leave the country in just few days and not suffer the same fate

as the mixed waste imports from Canada.

Some 103 container vans of mixed household garbage from Canada disguised as scrap plastics for recycling arrived in Manila ports some time in 2013-2014 and providently intercepted by the customs authorities.

In 2015, 26 of these garbage-filled containers were illegally disposed of at a private landfill in Capas, Tarlac, while the rest are still languishing in Manila and Subic Ports. On June 30, 2016, a Manila Regional Trial Court ordered the return to Canada of 50 of these garbage-filled shipping containers. To date, the court order has yet

to be implemented.

Also, the EcoWaste Coalition commended the concerned citizens of Barangay Tingub in Mandaue City for reporting the reeking garbage to the authorities.

"We thank and salute the residents of Barangay Tingub for their vigilance, which helped in bringing the unlawful dumping to light," Lucero said.

"Aside from removing the garbage left at a warehouse in Barangay Guizo and at a vacant lot in Barangay Tingub, the importer should ensure that the affected areas are safely disinfected to prevent any health risk to the public," she said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

EcoWaste joins calls to ship trash shipment back to Korea

By MARS W. MOSQUEDA JR.

CEBU — EcoWaste Coalition, a multi-sectoral group advocating sustainable solutions to waste, climate change and chemical issues, promptly and fervent backed calls to quickly ship back to Korea illegal shipments of trash that entered the country through the Port of Cebu.

The group conveyed its support to the position made by Bureau of Customs Cebu District Collector Elvira Cruz and Environmental Management Bureau Regional Director William Cunado for the immediate ship-

ment of the unlawful trash imports to its origin.

The 5,000 metric tons of mixed waste materials, misdeclared as "solid granular particles of wood chips and synthetic resin", arrived at the Port of Cebu last January 20 on board M/V Christina, consigned to Moving Forward Global Trading Inc.

"We laud and back the customs and environmental authorities in Cebu for acting fast to ensure the return of the unsorted wastes from South Korea to its sender without delay," said Aileen Lucero, EcoWaste Coalition national coordinator.

"We are one with them and with

the people of Cebu in asserting that our nation is not an open dumpsite for the world's garbage," she declared.

The swift and unequivocal action by the authorities will send a clear signal to all people behind the illegal waste trade that dumping is not allowed in the country, she added.

"The perpetrators should be charged in court and punished to the fullest extent of the law to deter similar incidents in the future."

EcoWaste Coalition expressed hopes that the illegal waste imports from South Korea would leave the country in just few days, unlike the mixed waste shipments from

Canada.

Some 103 container vans of mixed household garbage from Canada, disguised as scrap plastics for recycling arrived in Manila ports some time in 2014, which were intercepted by Customs authorities.

In 2015, 26 of these garbage-filled containers were illegally disposed of at a private landfill in Capas, Tarlac, while the rest are still languishing in Manila and Subic Ports.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Raising awareness for water security and sanitation

STORY BY STEPHANIE TUMAMPOS | *Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR*

OVER 15 million people in the Philippines have no access to clean and safe water.

Beyond this, the water supply for Filipinos is seen to be lesser in the coming years, as climate change and overconsumption have greatly affected the country's water resources.

"We feel like we have a lot of source of water, so we take it for granted," Elisea G. Gozun, Climate Resiliency team leader of the USAID Be Secure Project, said in an interview with the BUSINESSMIRROR at the sidelines of the Media Forum on Water Security and Climate Change at a hotel in Makati City.

"Well, we don't have a lot [of water]," said Gozun, a former environment secretary.

The Security for Resilient Economic Growth and Stability (Be Secure) Project is an initiative of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It works with various stakeholders at the national level and in six areas around the country to improve water security and resilience to climate change.

According to Gozun, in a study by the World Bank on the *Philippine Environment Monitor* in 2000, "the findings show that we [the Philippines] are second to the lowest on per-capita availability [of water]".

The urgency to take on water security to the next level of awareness of the Filipino people is a fact, she said. "Until when will we have water?"

This led Gozun to tackle a more important issue concerning water security—the effects of climate change. "We can't have water security, unless we consider the climate hazards," Gozun said. "You can't plan on water, you can't manage it effectively, unless you think about the climate impacts," she added.

Bringing the case of the Philippines, Gozun said the country has different climates in each parts of the country. But "the good news is that Pag-asa [Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration]

has downscaled the international assessment of the International Protocol for Climate Change on weather and climate in the Philippines on the provincial level," she said.

Water security for Gozun is simple. "It's not even rocket science!" she said. The problem with the Filipinos, she said, is that the people forgot the old ways of storing rainwater for other use, like using it for watering plants in the household. The new system has changed the Filipinos, she said, they forgot how to store and manage rainwater and save it for dry days.

"When we're planning on water, we forget to include how we will deal with rainwater. It can actually be on our roof or on the runoff surface," she said. "Instead of experiencing flood, you can have rainwater storage."

Another issue the USAID Be Secure project is addressing is water sanitation. Ramon Alikpala, senior technical adviser of Be Secure Project, said Filipinos have misconceptions on water sanitation.

"Very few communities have septage treatment, and there are only a few communities that have access to proper sewerage in the country," said Alikpala in an interview with the BUSINESSMIRROR at the sidelines of the media forum. He added that, in other cases, houses and establishments

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AND SANITATION

have pipes but with no treatment plant. "That's the biggest problem, and that's one of the biggest pollution factors," he said.

The Be Secure project also wants Filipinos to understand that in order to have a constant supply of safe water, one must also pay for the water he or she discharges.

"The [people's] mind-set has to be changed," Alikpala said. "People are willing to pay for water coming out of their pipes, but they don't understand why they have to pay for water they're throwing away."

Without water and proper sanitation, the effects on health and even on food supply will be greatly affected, he said. Eighty-five percent of water is used by agriculture in the country, and the rest is used in industrial, commercial and households.

If there is water shortage, the agriculture sector, the farmers will suffer the most. "Our law requires providing and prioritizing consumption over anything else and that means, our farmers will have to suffer and our food security will be at stake," Gozun said.

"We ask you to make people understand, [become] aware and learn what the solutions are," she said. "Water security and sanitation must be a way of life, as we cannot survive without of water," she added.

US\$1.2-B coal-fired power plant up in Subic

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT: It's all systems go for the US\$1.2 billion 600 megawatts (MW) coal-fired power plant project here with construction to commence in the next few months, the project proponent said. an official of Redondo Peninsula Energy, Inc. (RPE) said.

In a press briefing held at the Subic Park Hotel here, Redondo Peninsula Energy, Inc. (RPE) Vice President and Head of External Affairs Reynalita Santana, told members of the media the construction of the power plant, which will be in two phases, will begin within the first six months of this year and is expected to be completed in 2020.

She said additional power to be generated by the plant will help achieve energy security for the country and promote national and local economic development.

"The project will provide direct and indirect jobs to host communities, stimulate local industries, contribute to the social upliftment of direct impact zones through social development programs and corporate social responsibility activities," Santana said.

The power plant, to be located at Redondo Peninsula across the Subic Bay Freeport is a consortium led by Meralco Gen which owns 47 percent, Aboitiz Power Corp. and Taiwan Cogeneration International Corp. with 25 percent each and Meralco Pension Fund with a 3 percent stake.

The project, according to Santana, is expected to be completed in three-and-a-half years and will generate some 2,000 jobs during the construction period plus 100 additional jobs to the residents during its operation.

"The 55-kilometer transmission line interconnection from the power plant site to Hermosa Substation in Bataan has been approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission

and the rights-of-way for the transmission for phase 1 from the RP Energy site to the Hanjin Substation has been secured," Santana said.

Santana added the project started as early as 2007 but because of the opposition to the coal-fired power plant, the project's time table has been delayed.

With the Supreme Court lifting the Writ of Kalikasan in 2015, construction of the power plant resumed. It is expected to provide the much-needed additional source of power by early 2020.

Coal fuel will be imported from Australia.

The official also said that RP Energy "will follow the strict environmental compliance requirements."

Santana said the engineering, procurement and construction contract has been signed with Doosan Heavy Industries and Construction Co., Ltd. Of South Korea and Azul Torre Construction, Inc. while the Board of Investments (BOI) has issued a certificate of registration for the project on June 1, 2016.

The registration entitles RP Energy to duty-free importation of equipment, materials and spares used for the power plant for a period of five years from date of registration and also income tax holiday for four years from commercial operation.

Of the 300MW initial power output of the plant, 225 MW will be sold to Meralco while Aboitiz Energy Solutions, Inc. will get 75MW, she said.

The project met serious opposition in the past years from residents and other environmental advocates in communities around Subic Bay, saying it poses serious risks to the environment and the people's health and livelihood and far outweighs its purported benefits for the community and the people.

PATRICK ROXAS

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20 of 96 proposals get go-signal

PRA identifies reclamation ventures

By CHINO S. LEYCO

The Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) has identified 96 reclamation ventures in varying stages of evaluation or approval along with 487 unauthorized projects that the government plans to either seek reimbursement from or take back the lands through forfeiture proceedings.

Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III said that PRA has already given the go-signal to 20 of the 96 projects, which could potentially generate hundreds of billions of pesos worth of public assets and help modernize some of the country's most vital ports.

The PRA, Dominguez said, is also open to unsolicited proposals to enable the private sector proponents to partner with the government and share their innovations and technologies to help build "economically and environmentally sustainable property developments."

"Being an archipelago, we actually have less land between mountainside and shoreline for cultivation and habitation than it might seem. As our population continues to grow, pressure on the land assets will continue to rise," said Dominguez.

"We have hundreds of thousands of Filipinos residing in hazardous areas. These are areas along steep slopes, riverbanks and shorelines vulnerable to flood surges and landslides. We urgently need new and safer areas to be developed for habitation," he added.

Said Dominguez: "At present the PRA has identified 96 reclamation projects in various stages of the evaluation and approvals process. In addition, the agency has identified 487 unauthorized projects for which government is seeking reimbursement or forfeiture of the land."

"About 20 reclamation projects are ready to commence in the near future.

These projects will potentially produce hundreds of billions of pesos worth of public assets and help modernize some of our most vital ports," he said.

In addition, he said, "consistent with overall policy, the PRA is now open for unsolicited proposals. This will allow private sector proponents to bring in their own ideas and partner with the government to build economically and environmentally sustainable property developments."

Dominguez said new land is needed to supplement the available space for new roads and ports. "This will have an impact on the congestion of our cities and the growing lack of space for schools and residential buildings. Reclamation will provide

for these," he said.

He said the PRA, which has the power and authority to dispose idle public lands and enter into contracts, will play a key role in expanding the land area that the country needs to fill these ever-growing requirements.

Dominguez pointed out that the PRA is no longer confined to the Manila Bay area as it was during most of the past 40 years as its responsibilities now covers various projects in nearly all our major port cities.

"With the correct leadership and an imaginative blueprint, the PRA holds the potential for enlarging the amount of reclaimed land available for residential and commercial development. This agency is a land source and a major provider of assets

to support our development goals," he said.

Dominguez commended the PRA for constantly updating the knowledge and skills of its core of engineers on modern dredging and reclamation technologies, and upgrading this state-run firm's capacity to monitor its projects.

He likewise lauded the PRA for initiating programs that would open opportunities for public-private, as well as public-public partnerships, which will enable the agency to be pro-active in developing "critically important projects" with local government units nationwide.

"I sense the energy and commitment of the entire agency to be an active contributor to our nation's

progress. I can only encourage you to carry on with your visionary blueprint," Dominguez said.

The PRA, formerly the Public Estates Authority, was created 40 years ago to serve as a clearinghouse for the disposal of idle public lands and the reclamation of key areas.

Mandated by law to be self-liquidating, the PRA has produced assets and revenues for the government by reclaiming land and converting these into valuable real estate. The 1,500-hectare Manila Bay Reclamation Project is considered as the PRA's foremost achievement.

Dominguez said that on top of functioning as a clearinghouse, the PRA "now has the additional task of protecting foreshore areas such as Tacloban."

"The 1,500-hectare Manila Bay reclamation project now known as Bay City is the PRA's crowning glory although, I am told, a long list of important projects will be built over the next few years," he said.