

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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DENR
IN THE NEWS

Bamboo, mangrove projects await displaced mining workers

B. MADILANE B. NIBAYLOR

Hurrying to find alternative jobs for displaced mining workers, the government has identified several projects such as its bamboo and mangrove expansion programs that could employ a lot of people once implemented.

Some mining operators recently asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for assistance for their workers who lost jobs as a result of the environmental audit conducted on all metallic mining operations in the country.

The DENR had already shutdown at least 10 mining companies prior to audit results and suspended several others, displacing workers in the process.

In response, the DENR said it could tap workers of suspended mining firms for the government's planned expansion of bamboo and mangrove plantations to fight climate change and poverty.

"Plant bamboo, plant mangroves. Identify marine sanctuaries. I want you to be the first to benefit from the resources that you can find in your area before others do. I will help you," said Environment Secretary Gina Lopez.

Lopez urged the miners to be involved in more sustainable livelihood that does not only help the environment but also protect their families from the negative impacts of climate change.

She told miners and local government officials that she could not allow small-scale mining for the moment because it uses mercury that threatens the environment and public health.

"Small-scale mining is illegal, and you don't want to be caught or have the Ombudsman bar you from public service forever. I cannot help you if it

is illegal," Lopez said.

"Help us by growing bamboo and mangrove seedlings. We will fund it, but your earnings will be your own," she added.

During a recent climate change conference in Morocco where she joined the Philippine delegation, Lopez said the country will embark on a massive expansion of mangrove and bamboo plantations to strengthen the ecological and economic resilience of local communities in the face of climate change and its devastating impacts.

In 2010, an executive order was issued requiring the use of bamboo in at least 25 percent of desk and furniture requirements of public schools, as well as the prioritization in furniture and other construction requirements of government facilities.

Considered as one of the fastest growing members of the grass family, bamboo is also known to sequester as much as 400 percent of carbon per unit area, while giving off 35 percent more oxygen than other trees.

While its resilience and flexibility have made it an important construction material for furniture and houses, its different parts are also a source of pulp and paper products, as well as fiber and food.

Mangroves, on the other hand, have been seen as natural barriers against storm surges while acting as habitats for various marine animals.

Both mangroves and bamboo can also stabilize embankments and prevent erosion brought about by sea level rise, which is one of the identified impacts of climate change.

She also called on local government units to help in the preparation of a work and financial plan that the DENR could use as basis for budgetary allocations and monitoring purposes.

METRO

Keep crematory open, DENR asked

By **Dona Z. Pazzibugan**
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Manila City officials have promised to install pollution-control devices at the Manila North Cemetery crematorium as they asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to renew the facility's operating permit.

An environmental non-government organization earlier found out that the public crematorium has been operating without a permit for the last two and a half years. It has also not been complying with air pollution regulations under the 1999 Clean Air Act, it said.

The crematorium's permit to operate expired on May 13, 2014.

EcoWaste Coalition said the Manila City health department's reply to the notice of violations issued by the DENR Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) National Capital Region on Nov. 29 was "encouraging."

"We trust that all environmental control measures will be satisfactorily fulfilled to allow the crematory to resume its services in a manner that will not pollute the surroundings and harm the public health," EcoWaste national coordinator Aileen Lucero said.

Acting Manila health officer Benjamin Yson promised the

DENR-EMB that "corresponding fees and penalties shall be paid" although he asked for a reduction in the penalties since the facility provides free cremation for indigent families.

He also promised to register the facility as a "hazardous waste generator" and to install pollution control devices to bring down the crematorium's stack emission to "acceptable levels."

"The smoke stack's height shall be made higher and the cleaning device shall be installed accordingly," Yson said.

The Manila health department also said it would designate a pollution control officer to regularly submit monitoring

reports on emission levels, also vowing to conduct "regular laboratory tests" to determine the crematorium's pollution levels.

Lucero said Manila health officials should involve in the monitoring representatives from surrounding neighborhoods and buildings affected by the "thick dark smoke" emitted from the crematorium's stack.

EcoWaste said the crematorium's emissions directly affect vendors in the vicinity of the cemetery, commuters passing through Blumentritt Road, Dimasalang Street and Aurora Boulevard, residents of Barangay 370 and surrounding neighborhoods. INQ

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Sy eyes majority stake in Tampakan project

By Doris Dumlao-Abadilla
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The group of tycoon Henry Sy is keen on scaling up its stake in mining—notwithstanding a challenging local regulatory and global commodity environment—by acquiring a majority stake in Mindanao's vast Tampakan mine, touted as Southeast Asia's biggest untapped gold-copper reserve.

In an interview with the

Inquirer on Friday night, SM Investments Corp. chief finance officer Jose Sio confirmed ongoing talks for the SM group to invest in the Tampakan mine, now controlled by the Alcantara family following the pullout of Swiss multinational commodity trading and mining firm Glencore Plc last year.

"There are discussions," Sio replied when asked about rumors that SM had bought into the project, adding that no deal

had been finalized yet.

Sio said the group was interested in investing in natural resources. "If the global economy moves up, there will be demand for natural resources," he said.

Asked whether it was a majority stake that the group was looking into, Sio said: "It has to be, because foreigners, when they come in here and they want to go into natural resources, they also want majority."

Sio also said it was possible

that the SM group would not use any of its listed companies to take over the project. To recall, the SM group also invested in Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corp. a few years ago, coming in as a partner of the Ramos family.

As the Tampakan project last year reverted to Filipino hands, this also opened up the possibility for the Alcantara group to bring in as its partner a group with strong financial

muscle and a very long-term view on this investment.

Sagittarius Mines Inc., the owner of the Tampakan project, used to be 62.5-percent owned by Glencore while the remaining 37.5 percent was owned by Indophil Resources NL, which is, in turn, controlled by the Alcantara group through Alsons Prime Investments Corp. (Apic). Glencore's exit allowed the Alcantara group to consolidate its control of the Tampakan project by ex-

ercising its right of first refusal.

The Tampakan mining project is located about 50 kilometers north of General Santos City, a major growth center in Mindanao. The city is accessed by highways, a major deep water port and an international airport with the capacity to take commercial aircraft. The Tampakan site is estimated to contain 15 million tons for copper and 18 million ounces of gold.

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SY EYES MAJORITY STAKE IN TAMPAKAN PROJECT

FROM B2-1 While mining for now is but a small portion of the SM group's investment portfolio—and even deemed as a noncore interest—the prospective invest-

ment in Tampakan could catapult the Sy family into a major mining player.

“The scale of the mine itself will enable SM to become a regional or even a global player in the mining sector. It's a single

asset to start but big,” said Jose Mari Lacson, head of research at fund management firm ATR Asset Management. “It will be a source of long-term cyclical growth and more importantly, allow the group to become an

exporter. SM will earn dollars for the economy as opposed to using dollars.”

At present, however, the regulatory environment in the Philippines does not favor mining. The incumbent Environ-

ment Secretary Gina Lopez, is a staunch antimining advocate. Lopez has particularly cited the open pit mining in Tampakan as a project she would not allow under her watch.

The Chamber of Mines of

the Philippines counts the Tampakan project among the local mines expected to start within the next five to 10 years. It is expected to bring in total investments of \$23 billion or about P1 trillion. INQ

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Tañon Strait LGUs, stakeholders strengthen enforcement plan

CONCERNED government agencies, local government units (LGUs), fishing industry stakeholders and civil-society organizations (CSOs) reviewed and strengthened on Tuesday an enforcement plan to protect Tañon Strait from commercial, illegal and destructive fishing operations.

The recent Tañon Strait Protected Seascape (TSPS) Enforcement Summit reviewed and identified gaps to strengthen the Tañon Strait enforcement plan, and forge their respective commitments to strongly implement the plan in the next several years. The summit, attended by more than 120 participants, was held in Cebu.

"The participants represent key people in enforcement and respective agencies that are crucial in operationalizing the enforcement plan for Tañon Strait," said Daniel Ocampo, campaigns manager

One of the country's major fishing grounds, Tañon Strait lies between Cebu and Negros. It was declared as a protected seascape in 1988.

However, despite its declaration, commercial, illegal and destructive fishing operations still abound, depriving small fishermen in Cebu and Negros to benefit from its bounty. Tañon Strait is the largest marine-protected area (MPA) in the Philippines with an area of 5,182 square kilometers, more than three times the area of the Tubbataha National Park in Palawan. It is 160

5,182 sq km

The area covered by Tañon Strait, the largest marine-protected area in the Philippines

modest accomplishments.

As a result, "Tañon is slowly gaining reputation nationally and internationally on protection, management and enforcement" said Dr. Al...

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Tañon Strait LGUs, stakeholders strengthen enforcement plan



MORE than 50 million Filipinos depend on fish for food. The Philippines is the 11th producer of wild-caught fish in the world. As the center of marine biodiversity in the world, it holds the responsibility to save its oceans to ensure the protection of diverse marine habitats, and secure sustainable seafood supply for the future. DANIEL OCAMPO

should be sustained," said Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Central Visayas Director Emma Melana, as she emphasized the role of their agency in safeguarding the biodiversity of Tañon Strait.

Director Allan Poquita of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Central Visayas said the bureau will provide full support to the TSPS protected area office and the DENR and local government units to ensure that enforcement in Tañon Strait are sustained.

BFAR's support includes a donation of two patrol boats to the TSPS protected area office to help in

the approved general management plan of Tañon Strait, as well as the proposed measures for the operationalization of the enforcement plan. The participants reviewed and refined it, providing their inputs and commitments to implement it in the near future.

The TSPS protected area office and all other MPAs nationwide are under the supervision of the DENR under its Biodiversity Management Bureau. Other officials who served as resource persons during the summit were Assistant Regional Director Elias Fernández Jr. of the Department of the Interior and Local Govern-

as one of the front liners in enforcement activities, ensured they will actively participate in implementing the enforcement plan on Tañon Strait.

Staunch environmental lawyer Antonio Oposa enjoined participants to the singing of "What a Wonderful World" as a way to encourage all to make our world a better place to live in.

Other summit attendees included representatives from the Coast Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary, Navy, Army, National Bureau of Investigation, deputized park rangers and fish wardens; LGU officials from Tañon Strait coastal towns in Cebu and Ne-

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Lopez Group power firms help Central Luzon State University establish conservation area

ENERGY Development Corp. (EDC) and subsidiary First Gen Hydro Power Corp. (FG Hydro) have partnered with the Central Luzon State University (CLSU) to establish a conservation park within the government-owned school campus in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija.

Officials of EDC, FG Hydro and CLSU formalized their cooperation recently by signing an agreement, titled Partnership Commitment, for the project. The agreement mainly calls for cooperation in establishing and maintaining a tree-planting site within the university's conservation area, to be called the CLSU-EDC-First Gen Hydro BINHI Conservation Park.

CLSU's existing Conservation Park, which is part of the university's 658-hectare campus, now houses mainly ornamental plants and herbs. Under the agreement, an area within the park will be set aside for planting, conserving and propagating threatened Philippine native tree species.

EDC and FG Hydro, both Lopez

Group companies, are implementing the agreement as part of the Tree-for-the-Future module of BINHI, the nationwide reforestation and biodiversity conservation program of the Lopez Group being spearheaded by EDC.

The Tree for the Future, one of four BINHI modules, focuses on biodiversity conservation at the species level. The Tree-for-the-Future module aims to rescue and secure threatened premium Philippine native tree species by planting their seedlings in school grounds, public parks and other areas that provide a safe haven.

For CLSU, the agreement supports the program of its Institute for Climate Change and Environmental Management (ICCEM) to play an active role in the promotion of a healthy environment, biodiversity conservation and environmental researches. Commitments of EDC and FG Hydro for the project include providing the seedlings of threatened prime Philippine native-tree species

for planting in the Conservation Park, as well as technical assistance for the protection and maintenance of the planted trees.

Commitments of CLSU included providing a permanent tree-planting area within the Conservation Park appropriate and sufficient for threatened premium native trees; and undertaking the long-term protection, care and maintenance of the planted trees. CLSU through ICCEM has also agreed to turn over to EDC at least 50 percent of the seeds that will be harvested from the mother trees every fruiting season for EDC's seed bank or nursery.

EDC is the country's largest geothermal energy company with 1,169 megawatts (MW) in total geothermal-installed capacity. Subsidiary FG Hydro owns and operates the 132-MW Pantabangan-Masiway hydroelectric power plant complex in Nueva Ecija.

EDC is a subsidiary of Lopez-led First Gen Corp., the country's leading clean and renewable en-

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Report Group



ENERGY Development Corp. (EDC) and subsidiary First Gen Hydro Power Corp. (FG Hydro) have partnered with the Central Luzon State University (CLSU) to establish a conservation park featuring threatened Philippine native tree species within the government-owned school campus in Munoz, Nueva Ecija. Officials of EDC, FG Hydro and CLSU formalized their partnership recently by signing an agreement to open and maintain the CLSU-EDC-First Gen Hydro BINHI Conservation Park. Signing the agreement are (from left, seated) Maria Christine Mapanao, FG Hydro community relations coordinator; Tereso Abella; CLSU president; Ricky Carandang, EDC vice president; and Dr. Annie Paz-Alberto, director of CLSU's Institute for Climate Change and Environmental Management (ICCEM).

ergy producer with 3,470 MW in total installed capacity. Aside from geothermal and hydro, other clean energy sources—natural gas, wind and solar—provide the fuel to run

powerplants in First Gen's portfolio. CLSU is the oldest and largest state university in Central Luzon. As part of its program to play an active role in promoting a healthy

environment, CLSU earlier forged a separate agreement with EDC affiliate First Gen Energy Solutions Inc., for the supply of clean and green energy for CLSU's campus.

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DIARRHEA OUTBREAK

10 MANOBO TRIBESMEN DEAD IN DAVAO DEL NORTE

DAVAO CITY—At least 10 members of the Talaingod-Manobo tribe, including a tribal leader, died from what could be fatal cases of diarrhea, which has been sweeping *lumad* communities in Davao del Norte province since last month, according to a nongovernment organization.

Sagipp Network, an organization that provides educational and health assistance to *lumad* communities, said 20 sub-villages in the town of Talaingod has been hit by a diarrhea outbreak.

Initial reports said that 3,100 people have so far been taken ill. They are also suffering from pneumonia and other viral infections.

Majority of the disease-stricken residents are elderly and children, the group said.

Among those who died was Datu Gumbil Mansimuy-at who has a significant role in the council of tribal leaders in the Pantaron mountain range.

Gumbil died on Thursday while his 3-year-old child died the following day.

The tribal leader had been in the limelight this year when he granted a series of media interviews about the plight of the Manobo people.

—KARLOS MANLUPIG INQ

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Brgy leaders urge Davao City to create lumad database

By YAS D. OCAMPO

PAQUIBATO DISTRICT, DAVAO CITY – The heads of barangays in this far-flung district are asking the city government to push for a comprehensive database profiling of all indigenous peoples, or lumads, living in the 182 hinterland-barangays.

Paquibato is located at least two hours by car from the downtown area, but is still part of the 244,000-hectare city.

The proposal came even as the city government, itself, has already been finding it difficult to identify residents who are members of indigenous peoples groups.

Barangay Malabog Chairman Jesielito James Areja said that the move would benefit the lumads, whose dis-

tance from the downtown areas stymies the delivery of government assistance, such as social and medical services.

The current census data do not provide for data on memberships of IPs.

“The Comelec does not ask voters if they are Matigsalog or Ata-Manobo, just their names and residence,” Areja said.

Areja spoke to the Manila Bulletin during the Pamasko Halad sa Lumad event here, where the local government goes to the hinterlands to organize Christmas programs.

The city council had earlier urged the city government, with the help of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), to formalize the creation of a database for lumad settlers in the city.

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Energy department calls for foreign funding of global warming measures

THE Department of Energy (DoE) has asked the Climate Change Commission (CCC) for a plan to access international funding to help the country adapt to global warming, Energy Secretary Alfonso G. Cusi said.

"The Philippines has done a lot. So we are asking the developed countries, those who have money, to help us adapt," Mr. Cusi said.

However, he said he was not aware of any move from the developed countries to come up with ways for the Philippines to access funds to help climate-vulnerable countries adapt to climate change. He said he also do not know exactly how much is available for the country.

Mr. Cusi said the Cabinet discussed the issue "extensively" last week, during which the Energy department presented its stand on the country's pledge during the climate summit in Paris.

"I care for the environment. I am not anti-environment," he said. "In the Cabinet, officially I have the only department that has not concurred in the ratification of the climate [pact]."

He said discussions last week on the country's ratification of the climate deal extended past midnight.

"I cannot concur on the ratification of the climate change [pact] because that can be used against DoE in approving the kind of power plants that we are going to have," he said.

Mr. Cusi said the country's pledge to cut carbon emissions by 70% means reaching a level that has already been met — in 2015.

"What does it mean? *Wala na tayong gaganin* [We can't do anything]," he said, referring to curtailing the country's development.

Late last year, the country promised to bring down its emissions by 70% in on condition that it receives support from industrialized nations.

Those opposed to the pledge say the country's emissions are tiny next to those of developed countries such as United States or China, yet the Philippines promised a big cut.

— Victor V. Saulon

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LA NIÑA IS HERE, AMERICAN CLIMATE EXPERTS SAY

By **Ronnel W. Domingo**
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La Niña has finally arrived and, although weak, is expected to prevail until at least the end of 2016, according to American climate experts.

The United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa), said the climatic phenomenon—which brings above-average rainfall in countries like the Philippines—is expected to dissipate within the first quarter of 2017.

“La Niña conditions persisted during November, with negative sea surface temperature

anomalies present across most of the central and eastern equatorial Pacific,” the Noaa said in a public notice.

The agency was referring to cooler-than-average temperature readings on the Pacific Ocean’s surface.

“Given the current conditions and the model forecasts, the forecaster consensus also favors the continuation of weak La Niña conditions through [December to February],” the agency said.

Meanwhile, food production forecast in November suggests the likelihood that global as well as Philippine agricultural output would continue to expand. INQ

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New scientific climate study will impact investments

A NEW government-supported scientific study is bound to change the way institutional investors look at opportunities in the energy, urban services and transport sectors.

The Low Carbon Monitor (LCM) report by a climate science and policy institute, Climate Analytics, was launched by the United Nations Development Programme and the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) at the UN Climate Change Conference in Marrakech (COP22).

The report was called for by the governments of the Philippines and Ethiopia as chairmen of the CVF, and was previewed at the Philippine Senate in July this year.

The LCM report examines the benefits and opportunities of limiting warming to 1.5-degree Celsius as enshrined in the goal of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Specifically, the report highlights that "limiting warming to 1.5°C requires the rapid phaseout of coal and fossil-fuel power generation in favor of renewable energy in the power and transport sectors, significantly reducing ambient air pollution."

If developed countries are serious about transitioning to low-carbon economies, the rapid phaseout of coal and fossil-fuel power generation must be internationally internalized. To start, the accounting modalities for climate finance should subtract any and all coal funding. It is important to note that financing coal plants, regardless if they are marketed to be "high-efficiency," is not climate finance.

Though this may be unpopular or controversial with Japan and Australia, this is a necessary turnaround to stay within the bounds of a 1.5°C warming limit.

Before COP21 in Paris last year, Japan pledged \$10.6 billion per year in climate finance for developing countries from 2020. If coal finance is subtracted from climate finance, Japan may be in a situation where their climate finance contribution is negative or zero.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other climate financing instruments would be wise to follow suit and uncredit or give strict conditional offers and penalties to direct and indirect coal funders utilizing public climate financing. By doing this, we may be closer to reaching peak coal carbon dioxide emissions by 2020.

As the Climate Change Commission, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the National Economic and Development Authority look to translate and put the Philippines's nationally determined contributions on track to pursuing the 1.5°C limit, the national debate advances considerably.

On the other hand, the Department of Energy (DOE) is insisting on a coal-dependent pathway for the country. This is a dangerous precedent being set which can be devastating for the poorest and most vulnerable of people. Moreover, this precedent can be detrimental to the economy. The LCM report highlights an average annual percentage loss of per capita GDP of minus 0.2 percent in the 2030s and minus 0.4 percent in the 2040s.

The report also shows that ecosystem risks are material as "coal is a significant source of mercury and other toxic metals harming ecosystems.... It significantly reduces crop yields and diminishes food security. In India the annual cost of ozone pollution to agriculture has been estimated at around 3.5 million tons of foregone wheat production and 2.1 million tons of rice, which could have fed over 90 million people."

Planning agencies need supportive policy and control levers to take into account the imminent economic consequences of breaching the 1.5°C threshold, as well as the benefits of keeping to it. The report highlights that "producing energy from coal or oil creates the least possible jobs,