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Satellite images lead to mining bust in Misamis

At least 16, including 5 Chinese, nabbed in gov't raid along Iponan River in Opol town

By the Inquirer Staff
@Team_Inquirer

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Satellite imagery played a crucial role in busting an illegal mining operation that destroyed more than 7 hectares of forests in Misamis Oriental province.

A composite team of personnel from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Army's 4th Infantry Division raided a mining site along the Iponan River in Opol town on May 13.

The operation led to the arrest of at least 16 people, five of them Chinese, and the seizure of equipment used in gold extraction activities that employed the sluicing method which is highly destructive to the land and brings heavy siltation to the river.

The mine site is located in the boundaries of Cauyunan and Nangcaon villages in Opol but it can be easily accessed through Barangay Pigsag-an in Cagayan de Oro City.

Lawyer Ban Mikhael Pacuribot, legal chief of DENR regional office in Northern Mindanao, identified the arrested foreigners as Mingshi Meng, Shen Chuangao, Pan Jiquan, Lou Jian Hui and Yuan Yin Lin.

Also nabbed were locals Ariel Gasal, Rengie Baricutro, Randy Salcedo, Ranold Paderan, Elmer Dagsaan, Manuel Bahiani, Orlando Duwang, Rachel

Saavedra, Ricky Castillo, Christopher Dagsaan and RJ Besonia.

The suspects, who were taken to the NBI detention facility in Cagayan de Oro, are facing charges for violation of several environmental laws, including Republic Act No. 7942 or the Philippine Mining Act, RA 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act and Presidential Decree No. 705 or the Forestry Reform Code of the Philippines.

Authorities also seized six excavators, a fuel tanker, a boom truck, a mini dump truck, industrial water pumps and other mining equipment and materials.

On May 10, the City Local Environment and Natural Resources Office wrote agencies comprising the Task Force Kinaiyahan here, among them the DENR, to report about illegal logging and mining activities along the Iponan River.

Using tech

According to the DENR, its regional office first received reports of the illegal mining activities of the still unidentified company.

"The reports were then confirmed through DENR's satellite imagery at the DENR Central Office," the agency said, adding that the satellite image allowed them to monitor and observe the mining sites, and eventually confirm and track the activities of the suspects.

It said the satellite images "showed massive excavations and

forest destruction" in Iponan River.

"Under [Environment Secretary Maria Antonia] Loyzaga, whose major thrust on environmental protection and natural resource conservation includes the creation of a national environment and natural resources geospatial database, the DENR has been using current and emerging space science and technology applications across the country," the agency said.

"Early this year, the DENR partnered with the Philippine Space Agency to develop and generate maps, systems and tools that could monitor forest areas using satellite remote sensing, artificial intelligence and geographic information system," it added.

In light of the raid, Loyzaga called for greater vigilance against illegal extractive activities that destroy the country's already fragile environment.

The 60-kilometer long river snakes from the hinterlands of Iligan City down to Opol and through Cagayan de Oro before draining into Macajalar Bay. The mountains along the river, especially in the hinterlands, have been the subject of massive illegal mining activities in the last two decades.

In 2012, authorities arrested two Chinese for operating an illegal mine site along the river but the charges were dismissed on a technicality. —REPORTS FROM RYAN D. ROSAURO, JANE BAUTISTA AND JORDEENE B. LAGARE INQ



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SATELLITE IMAGES
LEAD TO CLOSURE OF
ILLEGAL MISAMIS MINE
REGIONS / A7

ENVIRONMENT SURVEILLANCE At least 16 people, five of them Chinese, were arrested on May 13 as authorities stopped an unauthorized mining operation that had damaged about 7 hectares of forest land in Opol, Misamis Oriental. A satellite image (lower right) led to the discovery of the site, alerting the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). —PHOTO FROM DENR



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18 suspects, including 5 Chinese nationals nabbed in illegal mining op in Misamis Oriental—DENR

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

AUTHORITIES uncovered an illegal mining operation in Misamis Oriental and arrested 18 suspects, including five Chinese nationals, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) reported on Thursday.

The authorities confiscated several heavy equipment used in the illegal mining operation.

The illicit operation, the DENR said, damaged some 7.6 hectares of land along the Iponan River in Opol town. Satellite imagery also showed massive excavations and forest destruction in the area.

A raid carried out by joint operatives from DENR Region 10 on Saturday, May 13, was led by Regional

Executive Director Henry Adornado and DENR Undersecretary for Field Operations-Mindanao Jose-lin Marcus Fragada, together with personnel from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau and agents of the Northeastern Mindanao Regional Office of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

The team was also joined by members of the Philippine Army 4th Infantry Division Special Forces.

The field team of Adornado, who immediately ordered a surveillance that confirmed the illegal activities, first received reports of the illegal activities.

"I hope that the recently conducted joint operation and the succeeding monitoring and rehabilitation efforts will bring about positive changes and bring to life

again the Iponan River," DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said in a statement.

"I am calling on concerned government agencies, other stakeholders, and the communities along the Iponan River and elsewhere in the country to take consistent active measures to combat illegal mining operations in their area," she added.

The suspects were brought to the detention facility of the NBI Northeastern Mindanao Regional Office at Capitol Compound, Cagayan de Oro City, and are now facing charges for violation of several environmental laws, including Republic Act (RA) 7942 or the Philippine Mining Act, RA 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act, and Presidential Decree 705 or the

Forestry Code of the Philippines.

Adornado also explained the mining operation has no pertinent permit. An investigation is ongoing to determine who is financing the illegal activity.

The DENR's satellite image allowed the different government agencies to monitor and observe mining sites, and confirm and track of their activities.

The DENR has been using current and emerging space science and technology applications across the country to combat illegal activities.

Early this year, the DENR partnered with the Philippine Space Agency to develop and generate maps, systems, and tools that could monitor forest areas using satellite remote sensing, artificial intelligence, and geography.



Villar wants plastic straws banned

SEN. Cynthia Villar on Wednesday filed Senate Bill (SB) 2209, an act mandating all restaurants, hotels, inns, fast food centers, eateries and similar establishments to ban the use of drinking plastic straws.

In filing SB 2209, Villar said plastic pollution, particularly from single-use items like drinking straws, poses a considerable challenge to a balanced and healthful ecology.

The lawmaker, who chairs the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, said the straws, being nonbiodegradable, persist in the environment for centuries, causing significant harm to diverse species and human health.

However, she added that metal, paper, or bamboo straws offer sustainable alternatives to plastic straws.

"Having other choices besides plastic straws make it both possible and urgent for us to make a change. This switch to greener options is an important move we could make now to ensure a sustainable future," Villar said.

The measure targets an ample reduction of the nation's plastic footprint, reflecting a concerted effort to align everyday practices with the constitutional commitment to safeguard our environment.

It also provides penalties to serve as a deterrent against noncompliance. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources will draw up the implementing rules and regulations.

JAVIER JOE ISMAEL



DOE releases guidelines on offshore wind development

By Alena Mae S. Flores

THE Department of Energy on Thursday released the implementing guidelines on Executive Order No. 21 which establishes the policy and administrative framework for offshore wind development.

Under the guidelines, permitting agencies are guided by the different stages of an OSW development project and the activities necessary for its successful and efficient implementation.

The DOE said permitting agencies need to identify and submit the complete list of appropriate permits and clearances. These include all requirements, fees and procedures, including the detailed process flow diagram on or before June 18, 2023.

The DOE will then integrate into the Energy Virtual OneStop Shop system all the identified processes, which will be used by all permitting agencies, including the local government units, in processing the applications for permits from OSW developers.

These permitting agencies include the Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Agriculture, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Justice, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of National Defense, Department of Public Works and Highways and Department of Trade and Industry.

Other agencies are Department of Transportation, Bureau of Customs, Bureau of Immigration, Bureau of Internal

Revenue, Bureau of Quarantine, Energy Regulatory Commission, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, National Grid Corporation of the Philippines, National Mapping and Resource Information Authority, National Power Corp., National Transmission Corp., Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. and concerned local government units.

EO 21 was issued to hasten the rollout of OSW projects by mandating a policy and administrative framework for the optimal development of OSW resource through a clear and streamlined process and timelines that eliminate red tape, facilitate efficient permitting process and promote greater investment in OSW projects.



MWC to complete ₱8.2-B Calawis water system in Antipolo by June

By JAMES A. LOYOLA

Manila Water Company, the East Zone water concessionaire, expects to complete the construction of its ₱8.2 billion Calawis Water Supply System Project by June 2023.

In a statement, the firm said the raw water for this facility comes from the Tayabasan River, located in Brgy. Calawis, Antipolo City. This area is part of the Upper Marikina Watershed, which Manila Water is helping to grow and maintain.

The Calawis Water Supply System Project is projected to provide additional 80 million liters per day (MLD) of treated water to 919,784 population in Antipolo City and nearby towns.

At present, while preparing to commence full operations, the facility is already able to supply treated water to some areas of the city including the Antipolo Government Center.

The Calawis Water Supply System Project is composed of the 80 MLD water treatment plant (WTP), pumping stations, reservoirs, and 21 kilometers of primary transmission line.

The WTP used Degremont Compact Units (UCD), which are prefabricated, modular water and wastewater treatment plants engineered for efficient production, transportation, and installation.

This technology significantly reduces footprint requirement and time for con-

struction.

The project also used pipe-jacking technology, a trenchless method of installing pipes, on a portion of the pipelaying contract and for the two river crossings to bring potable water to the customers.

Manila Water Senior Project Manager Engr. Vince Siat said the project required the valuable cooperation and buy-in of key stakeholders in order to successfully complete and operate the project.

"Manila Water was able to establish good relationship with relevant Local Government Units, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Public Works and Highways, the affected Indigenous People- the Dumagat Remontados of Antipolo City, and the National Commission of Indigenous People which enabled us to proceed with a successful development of the project," he noted.

Siat added that, "The Project team has ensured that the project complies with all necessary laws and regulations emphasizing the company's adherence to social and environmental sustainability."

The Calawis Water Supply System Project is part of the company's Water Supply Masterplan, which aims to ensure water security and supply reliability in the East Zone for the next decades, while lessening dependence on Angat Dam.



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CLIMATE ACTION PROTEST — Climate campaigners hold a protest action against Japan and the G7 in front of the Japan Embassy in Pasay City on Thursday, May 18, 2023, for continuing to encourage investments in fossil fuels, including natural gas, and false solutions, such as hydrogen, ammonia, and carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies. Protests were also held in other cities in Asia ahead of the G7 Leader's Summit from May 19 to 21 in Hiroshima, Japan. (Arnold Quizon)



Explain fish kill in Pola, BFAR asked

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) should explain incidents of fish kill in Pola, Oriental Mindoro more than two months after the sinking of motor tanker *Princess Empress* caused an oil spill.

In a radio interview, Mayor Jennifer Cruz said BFAR has yet to issue an explanation on the cause of the fish kill.

"We are asking BFAR to give us an update on the incidents of fish kill in some barangays. We have been asking for an explanation for more than two months. We have yet to be furnished the results," she said.

Yesterday, she said eels were found floating in the coastal waters of Pola.

Cruz said the ban on fishing and other activities in the waters off Pola should not be

lifted amid these incidents of fish kill.

Cruz said Pola is still affected by the oil spill.

"If you dig in the sand, the oil is still there. That is why we know that the shores are still affected by the oil spill as the sunken ship is still there," she said.

"For more than 76 days, there are no activities. That is why we are asking for alternative programs for our fisherfolk as we cannot depend all the time on the cash-for-work of the Department of Social Welfare and Development," Cruz added.

She appealed to other government agencies such as the Department of Trade and Industry and BFAR to fulfill their promises of providing alternative livelihood to affected fishermen.

- Bella Cariaso



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Weather in transition to rainy season – Pagasa

By **ROMINA CABRERA**

From a scorching summer, the country is currently undergoing a transition period to the rainy season that may begin in the next weeks, according to the state weather bureau.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said the recent bouts of rain across the country might signal the start of the wet season soon.

Weather forecaster Victoria Torres noted that they have monitored more rain showers over the past week due to the southwesterly wind flow – a weather

system that prevailed over the western section of Luzon in past days.

The onset of the wet season could be from the last week of May to the middle of June.

Today, the intertropical convergence zone and localized thunderstorms will bring partly cloudy skies over parts of the country.

PAGASA said Metro Manila and the rest of the country would see isolated rain showers or thunderstorms as it warned of possible flash floods or landslides during severe thunderstorms.

The heat index today may reach 45 degrees in some parts of Visayas and as high as 42 degrees in Metro Manila.