

DATE : 01 JAN 2010

DAY : Tuesday

# **DENR**

**IN THE NEWS**

**Strategic Communication and Initiative Service**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Manila Standard

4-11  
PAGE  
LOWER

UPPER  
LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

01 JAN 2010

DATE

## 'Balloon drop' countdown out

By Joel E. Zurbano  
and Rio N. Araja

THE Okada Manila casino resort in Pasay City has decided to cancel its 130,000-balloon drop at Cove Manila on New Year's eve to break a world record in welcoming 2019.

It made the decision following a warning from Environment department officials who said they would not hesitate to press charges if the Guinness World Record attempt pushed through and harmed the environment.

The department praised Okada Manila's decision.

"It is, indeed, laudable on the part of

*Next page*

the various establishments for voluntarily canceling their "balloon drop or release" activities in the name of environmental protection," Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said.

Okada Manila's decision "is worth emulating not only by other establishments in this country but also in other parts of the world."

After Okada Manila's decision, at least two other establishments followed suit.

In a Facebook post on Monday, The Peninsula Manila said it will no longer have its balloon drop "as it is not in keeping with our sustainable luxury vision 2020 philosophy.

"We at The Peninsula Manila have traditionally celebrated welcoming the New Year with a party, but oftentimes it's all too easy for the celebrations to come with a big price tag for the planet," the hotel said.

In a statement, the Okada Manila management said it had coordinated with the Environment department to show that everything was in place to ensure there would be no negative environmental impact from the activity.

"[But] Okada Manila firmly believes and continues to maintain that the Balloon Dropping event will not harm the environment," the casino resort said.



Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
SINCE 1900

**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



01 JAN 2019

DATE

## Year-end report

# Closures mark DENR's actions in 2018, more seen in 2019

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR**

**F**or 2018, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) had to close down a lot of things — a world famous island destination, quarrying sites, and some mining companies. Now, things may look the same for the agency in 2019 but with a little bit of "opening up," according to a top environment official.

Environment Undersecretary Jonas Leones said that moving forward, the DENR will still not hesitate to order closures if it means saving the environment and the country's natural resources.

But he also said the agency will be more open in terms of working with local government units (LGU) in order to reduce the number of environment issues and incidents like landslides.

This, after the agency led the historical closure of Boracay Island, ordered the closure of all quarrying sites in the country, and issued final closure orders on several mining companies all in the span of a year.

Engaging the LGU officials, Leones said, has helped the agency resolve a lot of environmental issues in Boracay Island. The same goes with other incidents, including a couple of massive landslides, had to deal with over the past few months.

"We need to further educate LGU officials on environmental laws compliance and safety," Leones, who also serves as the agency's spokesperson, said.

### Boracay, cesspool no more

Earlier this year, President Rodrigo Duterte ordered what may have seemed too impossible and easily the worst case scenario for Boracay, home to thousands of businessmen, workers, and people who are all largely dependent on the island's tourism operations.

On April 26, the entire island, which the President had called a "cesspool", formally shuts down. It re-opened six months later after undergoing intensive rehabilitation.

"Boracay rehabilitation is one of our milestones albeit there are still more things to be done in the island," Leones said.

The challenge now, according to Leones, is how to sustain what the government did to Boracay and how to duplicate it in other tourism areas that could also

be facing environment degradation.

The next on the DENR's list are Palawan, Bohol, and Siargao.

"The LGUs already know that the ultimate sanction is closure," Leones said. "[Because of that] they are now cooperating with us more in terms of environmental law compliance".

### Quarry, mining woes

Fixing issues in the country's troublesome quarrying and mining sites also have a lot to do with dealing with LGUs, Leones said.

In October, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu had to order the closure of all quarrying operations in the country amid the deadly landslide that took place within Apo-Cemex Corporation and Apo Land and Quarry Corp.'s operations in Sitio Sindulan in Naga, Cebu.

The ban has already been lifted but the work continues for the DENR. Through Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), the agency is now intensifying its maps that will guide LGUs in terms of locations where they can relocate communities living near unsafe quarrying operations to safer grounds.

Preventive measures are also currently being applied to small-scale mining operations in the country.

As a start, Cimatu has earlier banned all the small-scale mining operations in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) shortly after dozens of miners in Ucab, Itogon, Benguet died due to landslides that took place in the area at the height of Typhoon Ompong in September.

The environment chief pointed out that the DENR is not at all against small-scale mining, saying the agency only wanted it "regulated and done properly."

He then asked MGB to provide technical assistance to the provincial government of Benguet in setting up a Minahang Bayan.

The declaration of a Minahang Bayan area is the government's way to "legalize" small-scale mining operations in the Philippines, which nets around P30 billion to P40 billion a year.

In November, however, Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA) President Walter Brown said that before the government works towards the declaration of more Minahang Bayan sites, it should first amend



**ROY CIMATU**

the law that allows it.

### Mining closure and suspension

In terms of monitoring large-scale mining operations, Leones said the DENR will be stricter in conducting its regular audit. This, according to him, could lead to more closure and suspension.

What will particularly make it more challenging for miners is the newly implemented policy on progressive rehabilitation, which aims to minimize the disturbed area of a mining project at any given time.

Philippine Nickel Industry Association (PNIA) President Dante Bravo said that because of this policy, among other things, the country's nickel ore shipment may go down by 10 to 20 percent next year from the 30 million wet metric tons (WMT) or 19.5 million MT of projected nickel output for this year.

Right now, the Philippines is still the largest supplier of nickel ore to China, the world's second largest economy.

"This year, we will start monitoring based on the new policies that were issued. We will be strict in monitoring environmental compliance. Miners need to reinvent themselves," Leones said.

In November, it was revealed that more than half of the country's operating metallic mines failed to score 'acceptable' in the mine audit done by the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC), which is co-chaired by Cimatu and Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez.

As of now, there are 48 metallic mines operating in the country, 30 of which are nickel, eight are gold, three are copper mines, three are chromite mines, and the



P-2

Closure mark DENR's actions in 2018; more seen in 2019

remaining four are iron mines.

26 of these companies faced multiple, overlapping reviews over the past year, starting with the suspension and closure orders imposed to them by former Environment Secretary Regina Paz Lopez.

To check the credibility of Lopez' orders, MICC had to conduct a review on all the 26 firms, while DENR had to resolve the motion for reconsiderations (MRs) filed to them by 13 miners who tried to dispute their closure and suspension orders.

The DENR eventually disclosed the highlights of the audit carried out by MICC. The review measured the companies' practices as acceptable (3.0), minor corrections needed (2.0), major reforms needed (1.0) and not acceptable (0).

The review assessed the practices of these miners in terms of legal, technical, environmental, social and economic aspects.

On average, Environment Undersecretary for Mining Concerns Analiza Rebuelta-Teh said no companies scored 3 or acceptable, while a lot of companies are in need of minor to major corrections.

Moreover, the DENR decided to keep Lopez's closure orders on three firms

and suspension orders on nine more companies.

#### Manila Bay, among other things

Moving forward, the DENR also wants to zero in on the rehabilitation of Manila Bay, the most polluted coastal water in the Philippines.

During the agency's last flag raising ceremony for the year, Cimatú told DENR employees that the agency has to be "temporarily reorganized" to address the problems in Manila Bay.

"The next war we are going to wage is against Manila Bay. The rehabilitation of Manila Bay is a very tall order not only for the DENR but also the other agencies in the mandamus," Cimatú said.

Out of the DENR's P24.7-billion budget for next year, P80 million will be used for the cleanup of Manila Bay.

Cimatú said that overall, the approval of the DENR's 2019 budget, albeit lower than its 2018 budget of P24.91 billion, would still allow the agency to deliver on the priority programs and projects geared towards the protection of the environment and the conservation and sustainable use of the country's rich natural resources.



P-1

## YEARENDER

# Mining industry still fighting for survival

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The local mining industry remains at a standstill, fighting for its existence and approval from both the administration and the public.

But the extractive sector's optimism is not waning as it continues to believe in its important contribution to the growth of the economy.

While President Duterte has shown signs of mellowing in his hostility toward the industry, he has also not issued any orders that could propel the growth of the sector.

In fact, lawmakers are pushing ahead with plans to further tax the mining industry on top of the doubling of the excise tax, which formed part of the new tax measure.

Yet the industry is still willing to carry the additional burden of being slapped with more levies even as it awaits government's decision on its request to reverse the orders issued by former environment chief Gina Lopez.

"The country is well mineralized and the industry, if allowed to grow, can contribute significantly to the country's economic development," said Gerard Brimo, chairman of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP).

"Three pending mining projects can bring the industry's exports to over nine percent of total exports and increase the industry's contribution to about 1.4 percent of the country's GDP (gross domestic product)," he added.

Metal exports are about \$4.05 billion or nearly seven percent of the country's exports while their contribution to GDP is P134.5 billion or 0.85 percent.

The industry also contributes 1.4 percent or P25.6 billion of the total taxes and employs 0.5 percent of the total workforce.

Nearly three years since the Duterte administration started, the industry continued to be haunted by the same old issues.

Among these include Executive Order 79 which called for the moratorium on new mining permits until a new mining tax regime is legislated.

In the first tranche of the tax reform program, the excise tax on mining doubled from two percent to four percent of gross output and yet the moratorium remains in place.

"With higher taxes, the moratorium on new mining projects should be lifted to allow the industry to flourish," Brimo said.

There also remains a perception that the indus-

try is not paying enough taxes.

Mining companies, no doubt, are still having a hard time changing the public's perception largely because Lopez was successful enough in painting the industry as the bad guy.

"We build roads, provide electricity and water. If there's someone doing rural development other than the government in a big way, it's the mining companies," Filminera Resources Corp. chairman Gloria Climaco said.

"There is no better example of development in remote areas that see very little of it than large-scale mining," Brimo said.

The bigger issue remains the ban on open pit mining.

"Banning open pit mining, which is practiced all over the world, even in the most developed countries, is tantamount to turning one's back on the industry. No other country has turned its back on the development of its mineral wealth," Brimo said.

"Open pit has been demonized by Gina that even the mention of the word is bad, but it is not," Climaco said.

COMP said the Philippines is losing P300 billion in potential revenues with the government's inaction on its request for the lifting of the open pit ban.

Three pending open pit mining projects stand to earn P303 billion in national revenue and some P40.4 billion in local government revenue. These gold and copper projects include the Tampakan mine in South Cotabato, King-King in Compostela Valley and Silangan mine in Surigao del Norte.

COMP said allowing the three projects to move forward would allow the country to be a major copper producer.

"These companies are not asking for subsidies, they are not asking for government investments. They are just asking to lift the open pit ban and that's it," said Joaquin Lagonera, president of Sagittarius Mines Inc-Tampakan copper gold project.

"We are not rushing this project but Tampakan has been trying to do this for the past 23 years. It is not as if we got the permit last week and we want government to push for it immediately," he added.

The Tampakan project is expected to yield P142 billion in combined national and local government revenues. Capital investment was set at \$2.5 billion.

Turn to B4



## DENR pitches EO on genetic resources

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

✉ @jonlmayuga

**A**n official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is pushing for a national policy to ensure fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from Philippine genetic resources.

A final draft executive order, titled "Strengthening the National Policy on Access- and Benefit-Sharing from the Utilization of Philippine Genetic Resources and for Other Purposes," or ABS, has been endorsed by the Cabinet Cluster on Climate Change led by DENR Undersecretary Analiza Teh to Malacañang and is now being evaluated by the Office of the Executive Secretary.

The draft EO on ABS has been reviewed and subjected to inputs from key national line agencies before its submission to Malacañang.

It is expected to be one of the Duterte administration's policy legacies that focus on upholding the country's interest in protecting, securing and benefiting from its genetic resources.

Teh, the DENR's undersecretary for Climate Change, acts as head of the Secretariat of the Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Disaster Risk Reduction Cabinet Cluster upon Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu's designation.

Teh expressed hope that the Office of the President will find the draft EO meritorious of President Duterte's approval.

The signing of the order will complement the enactment of the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (E-Nipás) Act, she said.

Both policies will strengthen the protection and conservation of the country's rich biodiversity through the protected management system, and ensures that the country will benefit from whatever economic gains from the exploitation and sustainable development and utilization of the country's natural wealth without compromising its ecological integrity.

The copy draft Executive Order on Access-and-Benefit Sharing obtained by the BUSINESSMIRROR revealed that it will promote scientific research that will tap into the country's rich biodiversity for purposes of, among others, developing life-saving drugs, beauty and wellness products and ensuring that the country and the community where they are found will have fair and equitable share from their benefits.

The E-Nipás law gives more teeth to the law meant to protect and conserve the country's rich biodiversity, imposes stiffer penalty and fine, encourages a more active local government units' role in the management of PAs and increases the number of protected areas covered by legislation from

13 to 107, ensures that the country, particularly the communities that help protect the country's rich biological diversity, will benefit from the genetic resources derived from their exploitation.

The Philippines is rich in biodiversity and its unique species of wildlife—both plants and animals—have active ingredients that could be developed into life-saving drugs or medicine, health and wellness products or even for food processing.

It was learned that the Office of the Executive Secretary is not keen on supporting the EO but is focused more on the passage of a bill on Access-and-Benefit Sharing of Philippine Genetic Resources filed by Occidental Mindoro Rep. Josephine Ramirez-Sato.

"We are still hoping for the [signing of the] EO because although there's already a bill filed in the House of Representatives, sometimes, it takes years before it becomes a law," Teh said.

"Right now, what we need is to start coordinating with various national government agencies to start working on ABS. Unfortunately, we don't have the mandate to do that without the EO," she said.

Teh said an important component of the EO is the conduct of a national inventory of the country's genetic resources to protect them from piracy.

Through Cimatu, Teh said the DENR will continue to push for the signing of the draft EO on ABS.



### *Editorial*

## Mga dalangin sa 2019

**H**INDI handa ang mamamayan sa pagtama ng kalamidad kaya marami ang napapahamak. Marami ang hindi sumusunod sa paalala at babala kaya maraming namamatay. Kahit paulit-ulit na pinagsasabihan na lumikas ang mga nasa gilid ng bundok dahil sa posibleng pagguho, hindi sumusunod. Kahit pinaalis na sa pampang ng ilog at sapa dahil umaapaw, marami pa rin ang sumusuway dahil para may malunod. Nangyari na naman ang trahedya nang manalasa ang Bagyong Usman sa Eastern Visayas, Bicol Region at Southern Tagalog noong Biyernes. Sa tala ng NDRRMC, mahigit 50 ang namatay dahil sa pagguho ng lupa at pagbaha. Dalangin ngayong 2019 na maiwasan ang trahedya sa pagtama ng kalamidad at matuto ang mamamayan na sumunod sa utos kapag pinalilikas.

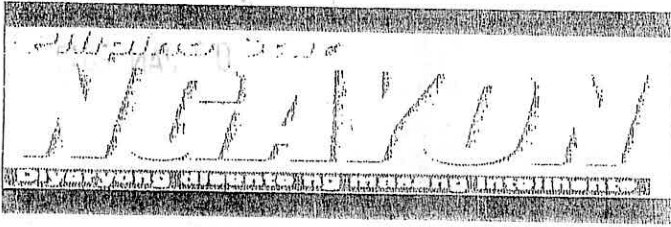
Nananatiling laganap ang illegal na droga sa bansa sa kabila ng kampanya ng pamahalaan. Halos araw-araw ay may naarestong drug pushers at users noong nakaraang taon pero wala pa ring pagkaubos. Ngayong 2019, dalangin na matapos na ang problema sa droga at matukoy ng PDEA at iba pang drug enforcement agencies ang source ng shabu. Dalangin na hindi lamang mga pipitsuing drug pushers ang mahuli kundi mga malalaking drug syndicates.

Laganap pa rin ang corruption sa mga ahensiya ng pamahalaan. Kahit marami nang sinibak si President Duterte dahil sa pangungurakot, patuloy pa rin ang katiwalian at pagnanakaw sa pera ng taumbayan. Dalangin na maubos na ang mga corrupt ngayong 2019 para ang mamamayan ang makina-bang at mabigyan nang sapat na serbisyo.

Marami pa rin ang walang trabaho sa kabila ng sinasabi ng pamahalaan na walang unemployment. Dalangin ngayong 2019 na makapag-create nang maraming trabaho para lahat ay maging masagana at walang magutom.

Malaking problema ang pollution sa bansa lalo sa Metro Manila. Marumi ang karagatan at mga ilog at ganundin ang hangin. Dalangin ngayong 2019 na ipayoridad ng DENR ang paglinis sa Manila Bay, mga estero at ilog at ang nakamamatay na hangin sa Metro Manila.

Dinggin sana mga panalanging ito. Amen.



DATE

UPPER HALF

PAGE

LOWER HALF

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE