



Philippine Resources

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Flying the Philippine Flag at Mining Investment Asia 2017

By Patricia A. O. Bunye

At the recent Mining Investment Asia 2017 Conference on 28-31 March 2017 in Singapore, I was one of three Filipinos who proudly and determinedly kept the Philippine flag aloft notwithstanding the dire situation of the mining industry back home.

The mood in Singapore was considerably sober, reflecting the worldwide downturn, but also hopeful for an upswing, particularly in gold.

I had the privilege of participating in three sessions. First, as a panelist in the opening session on “Women in Mining: steps, strategies and best practices for gender diversity”. “Women in Mining” was a unique feature of Mining Investment Asia 2017. For the first time, an entire day was devoted to issues of women in mining.

In this panel, I shared the stage with Erica Rannestad (moderator), Senior Metals Analyst, Thomson Reuters Singapore; Yvonne Tan, HR Business Partner, Global Marketing & Supply, BHP Billiton Singapore [also the Leader of the Diversity and Statistics Team of Women in Mining and Resources Singapore (WIMAR SG)]; Dr. Gaomai Trench, Acting Assistant Director, Department of Mines and Petroleum, Western Australia; and Tim Duffy, President, PT Agincourt Resources Indonesia.

Among the topics discussed were: (1) the barriers to women specific to mining in Asia, i.e., what prevents women from entering the mining workforce, or deters them from climbing up the corporate ladder; (2) new, collaborative, innovative approaches of miners to be viable and profitable in a challenging operating environment; and (3) the role of collaboration and identification of best practices become a crucial component towards change of business models and best position the sector for future growth.

Second, I was given the opportunity to give a standalone presentation on the work of Diwata-

Women in Resource Development, Inc. (“Diwata”) in promoting dialogue on contentious mining issues in the Philippines, as well as its flagship project, Tanging Tanglaw: Turning IP Grandmothers into Solar Engineers”, which may be adopted by mining companies, not only to meet their social development management program obligations under the Philippine Mining Act, but also as a model for corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs.

Tanging Tanglaw (literally “Unique Light”) is collaboration of Diwata-Women in Resource Development, the Land Rover Club of the Philippines and the Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association, which involves sending older indigenous women (also known as “Solar Lolos”) to the Barefoot College in Tilonia, India to be trained to fabricate, repair and maintain solar panels.

Each pair of Solar Lolos is responsible for the installation, repair and maintenance of the solar panels in their respective communities.

A significant aspect of the project is that the community members shall voluntarily contribute what they were spending



on kerosene lamps, charging of cell-phones, and the like to a community fund which shall be administered by a Solar

Committee. This will teach them, among others, self-sufficiency.

The installation of the solar panels commenced at Bamban, Tarlac on 16 July 2016 and at Gala, Zambales one week after.

Incidentally, on 20 May 2017, the Government of Australia will officially turn over to the Tanging Tanglaw project partners the Rural Electrification Workshop (REW) built at the Bamban, Tarlac project site with a grant from the Government of Australia under its Direct Aid Programme (DAP). The REW is a critical component of our Tanging Tanglaw project as it serves as the Solar Lolos’ workshop and a community center.

Finally, I chaired the roundtable discussion on the Philippines. Sadly, in all the years I have been attending mining conferences outside the Philippines, there has been a noticeable and dramatic dip in the interest in the country.



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Duterte taps ex-AFP chief Cimatu as new DENR chief; Miners optimistic

By Jimbo Gulle

President Rodrigo Duterte has appointed former Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff Roy Cimatu as the new Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Cimatu is replacing former DENR secretary Regina "Gina" Lopez, who was rejected by the Commission on Appointments (CA) from her post in May. Lopez's 10-month stint was marked by her strong anti-mining stance, particularly her order to close down and cancel the contracts of some large mining firms.

Cimatu's appointment was announced by presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella.

Cimatu was earlier appointed by Duterte as special envoy for Overseas Filipino Workers refugees and special envoy to the Middle East.

The country's mining industry is optimistic with the appointment of the former AFP chief as the new environment secretary.

While the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) admitted that the new head is unexpected, the country's mining group is upbeat on how Cimatu would lead the department.

"It is quite unexpected because his name did not really surface last week. But as with any secretary, we will give him the benefit of the doubt," COMP Legal and Policy Vice President Ronald Recidoro told The Philippine Star.

"We will reach out to him and cooperate with him with whatever he plans for the industry. We hope to see him within the week, or as soon as he is available," he added.

The chamber is hopeful that the appointment will answer the industry's call for a DENR chief who has a balanced appreciation for environmental

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Compared to the enthusiasm that marked the years immediately after the La Bugal decision, the current interest is at best polite and lukewarm, which is not helped by the pronouncements and actions of the anti-mining DENR Secretary-Designate. Further, in the run up to Mining Investment Asia 2017, all attention back home was on the confirmation hearings of the Secretary-Designate,

which may perhaps explain why the Philippines had a small delegation of three to Singapore.

Nevertheless, Joey Leviste, Chairman of OceanaGold, raised the Philippines' profile by moderating the panel on the changing dynamic of the mining industry and uncovering value investment opportunities for investors, which kicked off the first main session day. His panelists included Ronald-Peter Stöferle, CMT Managing Partner & Fund Manager, Incrementum AG, Liechtenstein; Robin Griffiths, Chief Technical Strategist, ECU Group, United Kingdom; Nicholas Assef, Founder & Executive Director, LCC Asia Pacific, Australia; Andrew Heinrichs, Director for Acquisitions, Strategic Venture Fund, Hong Kong, and Robert Adair, Director, International Equities & Fund Manager, UOB Asset Management, Singapore.

Joey's panel tackled, among others, major questions affecting investment decisions; China's coal capacity cuts; and the effect of the Trump administration on mining investments.

Next year's Mining Investment Asia will be held on 13-16 March 2018. Would

the Philippines' mining industry have taken a positive turn by then? Abangan! ■

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MINING INVESTMENT ASIA.



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