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# Black sand mining in the Philippines

AS A MATTER OF FACT By Sara Soliven De Guzman (The Philippine Star) | Updated December 8, 2014 - 12:00am

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Cagayan is said to be Enrile country. People say that nothing happens in Cagayan without Enrile's blessing. Like Cagayan, there are countries that are identified with politicians. I'm sure you can name those provinces and match them with families who have sort of own power that has got to change!

Amidst all the innuendos about Enrile's involvement in certain projects and other allegations of anomalous practices in Cagayan, Enrile remained brazen about everything, even during the DOJ at one point to go ahead and investigate.

Who is the mastermind behind Port Irene? My guess is as good as yours. It's a tricky arrangement. I hope the government is getting more individuals benefitting from it. Many people in Cagayan talk about corruption done by a group who is highly supported by big people. How under the supposedly watchful eyes of our current president?

What about the controversial CEZA breakwater project to protect Port Irene that cost extremely high? In my further research about the project from Philippine Port Authority that shows that at a 3-meter elevation the breakwater project would cost around P614,341.00 per linear meter will cost around P1,070,087.00 per linear meter. What is strange and dumbfounding is that the CEZA construction of the breakwater per 1,000-linear meter (1kilometer) breakwater. This is equivalent to P5 million per linear meter (a far cry from the PPA estimate of P614,341.00 per linear meter). This project is the price of 7 Iloilo Convention Centers and no one has pursued questioning it? How come?

COA records do not show any irregularities in this breakwater project. From day one, it seems that everything is in order and no overpricing is it in government to check 'overpricing' costs of projects? Why doesn't anyone in government question any overpricing? Why does the project is done? Susmariosep!

Did the Sta. Elena Construction and Development Corporation go through some scrutiny before the project was awarded to them? What are the companies that bid for this project? What is Sta. Elena's track record? The breakwater project is a superstructure which usually requires a stockholders equity of P90 M and an inventory of heavy equipment amounting to around P90 M (leased or owned) according to Accreditation Board. Is Sta. Elena an AAA construction company?

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Local folk in Cagayan Valley often talk about black sand smuggling. This is a big business with Chinese and Koreans as the major investors. Not unless, Filipinos are in the shadows. Why is the local government allowing this? What has DENR got to do with this?

Studies by environmental groups in areas with black sand mining showed that mining operations contributed to the depletion of fisheries, erosion of land and sea level rise in riverside communities. Town folk cannot sleep because of the noisy operations.

The local office of Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) in the province is conducting operations to stop magnetite mining. However, further investigation shows that people's livelihoods and safety are the legal mining companies.

Last April, an illegal black sand mining deal that went awry was cited by authorities as a factor in the killing of Gonzaga town Mayor Carlito Pentecostes Jr., a modern-day Robin Hood known for his alleged role in black sand mining operations in several coastal barangays in the municipality.

In June of this year three towns of Cagayan – Aparri, Buguey and Lallo were treated to the good news that the MGB national office suspended the Minerals Processing and Sharing Agreement (MPSA) of mining companies which had been extracting black sand minerals in the area. If this were true, then indeed it will be good for the people of these municipalities. I just hope that it really means the end of illegal black sand mining operations in this part of the country. But I also wouldn't be surprised if the so-called "midnight contracts" or the misleading "dredging permits" issued by local government units may resurface after a few months.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau Region 02 (MGB R02) through MGB Regional Director Mario Ancheta affirmed the end of black sand mining along the shorelines of Cagayan province. He made an assurance that black sand mining in Cagayan is already stopped with the issuance of corresponding orders. Rehabilitation efforts in mining areas have also been ordered.

Ancheta said that by the end of 2014, MGB hopes to see no traces of black sand mining operations in Cagayan referring to 10 China based mining firms whose permits were canceled last September.

There are many black sand mining operations going on around the country. In Zambales, the mining operation involves the extraction of magnetite iron ores from lahar sands found at the base of Mt. Pinatubo. The Aetas have abandoned their traditional farming as they are lured by the easy money offered by the mining operators. They gather black sand by the use of a magnet block and the operators would buy the black sand they have collected at a measly amount of 40 centavos per 50kg sack. The Aetas are forced to produce 800 kg to 1 ton of black sand per day.

Last year, Advocates for Community Health conducted a medical mission in one of the areas affected by the black sand mining operations. The group found a growing number of cases of skin and lung diseases attributed to the black sand mining and noted other related diseases such as severe eye irritation and hernia. What is even more disturbing are reports that parents are bringing their children to the mining area.

The island of Camiguin in the Babuyan Channel, the site of the singing humpback whales has also been threatened by alleged black sand mining. This will surely have harmful effects on the marine biodiversity in the area. Residents say that black sand mining operations have been going on since June of last year.

In 2012 Public officials and concerned citizens filed with the Supreme Court a petition for the Writ of Kalikasan against President Aquino, other government officials, and Altamina Exploration and Resources, Inc. in connection with "large-scale mining operations" of magnetite ore in the Ilocos-Pangasinan coastline.

They fear danger to the lives and property of residents, massive residential displacement, saltwater flooding, landslides, weakening or destruction of the natural defenses and barriers of coastal communities, and the loss of fishing livelihood rights due to the exploration and mining operations.

By the way, why do government officials seem to be the very first ones to encourage the destruction, exploitation and abuse of our natural environment? In a "midnight mining deal" a few years ago, Arroyo's Executive Secretary Leandro Mendoza and Altamina Exploration and Resources, Inc. signed a Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) on June 29, 2010, for black sand mining covering an area of over 9,588 hectares in the coastal and offshore areas of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur and Pangasinan.

Shouldn't it be the role of our local and national government to protect the environment from those exploiting our natural resources? I urge the senators to create a law to completely stop black sand mining in the Philippines so that all these culprits can be incarcerated.

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[uragunako](#) · 7 hours ago

and the black sand went to China...utot mo Enrile!!!!

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[rev clouds](#) · 8 hours ago

If we at the other end of Luzon Island don't want illegal sand mining in Cagayan, what can we do about it if the Cagayan people themselves let their valuable sand depleted? They want that to happen so they should suffer the consequences.

One more thing, activists have no say to this issue as the violators are their kind - communists.

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[Machong Tsismoso](#) · 9 hours ago

Binaril si Pentecostes ng NPA during flag ceremony.

Also, maqka-sosvo si Enrile at asawa ni Ballsy sa black sand mining. Sabi na maa

...magka-...  
taga Cagayan, kinausap daw ni Enrile ang mga mayor at sinabing, "Kung hindi kayo ang gagawa, may ibang gagawa."

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**rmdiz** · 13 hours ago

Kahit nakakulong ang hari ng Cagayan maraming galamay iyan. Sana putulin ng gobyerno ang tentacles pero malabo dahil magkakasama mga magnanakaw.

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**waraykaon** → rmdiz · 10 hours ago

Sana hindi lang tentacles kundi pati testicles para hindi na dumami ang ganyan uri ng buwaya ng katihan.

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**wilms1963** · 14 hours ago

40 cents per 50kg of mneral....anak ng .... anong klaseng pamahalaan ba tayo meron dyan...sobrang pang gagahasa na yan sa kalikasan....at sobrang pang aapi na rin yan sa mga katutubo...maawa at makonsensya naman kayo...

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**ealbay** · 16 hours ago

how sad to see our minerals are being exploited....what happened to the people supposedly to guard our mineral resources are being BLIND BY THEIR GREED....

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