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SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 459

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by SENATOR RISA HONTIVEROS

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE NICKEL AND METALLIC MINING ACTIVITIES IN SIBUYAN ISLAND, ROMBLON, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF CONSERVING THE ISLAND'S ENDEMIC FLORA AND FAUNA, DEFENDING ITS COASTAL COMMUNITIES FROM LONG-TERM ECOLOGICAL DEVASTATION, AND PROTECTING THE RESIDENTS FROM THE VIOLENT INCURSIONS OF MINING COMPANIES

WHEREAS, Sibuyan island is a small island under the jurisdiction of the province of Romblon consisting of three coastal municipalities – Cajidiocan, Magdiwang, and San Fernando;

WHEREAS, its forest is touted by environmental groups to be “one of the densest forests in the world”, with an estimated 1,551 trees per hectare and its extraordinary flora and fauna has given the island the distinction of being “The Galapagos of Asia”;

WHEREAS, the island of Sibuyan is home to 700 vascular plant species; 144 species of trees, of which 33 are endemic to the Philippines and 2 are endemic to Sibuyan; 54 plant species, 83 fauna species, 130 bird including the Philippine Hanging Parrot, the Philippine Pygmy-woodpecker, and the Orange-bellied flowerpecker which are endemic to Sibuyan; 9 native terrestrial mammal species; 9 bat species including the critically-endangered Philippine tube-nosed Fruit Bat; and 16 reptiles. Further, researchers were discovering new species of animals in Sibuyan as recently as 2021¹;

WHEREAS, the mineral wealth of the island – specifically nickel -- has made it a mining hotspot and residents of Sibuyan have been fighting for almost two decades to stop mining exploration on their island²;

WHEREAS, on September 9, 2021, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) lifts its cease and desist order against Altai Philippines Mining Corporation (APMC), and on December 29, 2022, issued a mineral ore export permit to APMC, allowing it to bulk test 50,000 metric tons of ore;

WHEREAS, according to APMC's project description for scoping, the company is set to extract nickel for 25 years, and will build a waste dump, haul roads and access roads, settling ponds, a drainage system, among others;

¹ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/things-to-know-sibuyan-island-romblon/>

² <https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/timeline-mining-opposition-sibuyan-island-romblon/>

WHEREAS, this permit allowed the escalation of nickel mining activities in Sibuyan, although residents contend that the company failed to secure a barangay clearance, municipal business permit, foreshore lease contract with the DENR, and a permit to construct a private port from the Philippine Ports Authority;

WHEREAS, residents of Sibuyan have formed a human barricade since Sunday, January 29, to demand the suspension of mining in the island³;

WHEREAS, videos posted by groups Alyansa Tigil Mina and Living Laudato Si' showed local police dispersing the protestors that formed the barricade, resulting in injuries to at least two individuals;

WHEREAS, mining companies have a track record of violence in the area, and environmental advocates have found themselves at the receiving end of such violence, most notably anti-mining activist and local municipal councilor Armin Marin who was shot dead at a picket in 2007 allegedly by a security officer of Sibuyan Nickel Properties Development Corporation (SNPDC);

WHEREAS, nickel extraction is expected to become a touchstone geopolitical issue in the coming years, as the ban on nickel ore exports by Indonesia – home to 22% of the world's nickel reserves, has caused massive shifts in the supply chains of strategic products such as electric vehicles,

WHEREAS, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Alfredo Pascual stated that the Philippines was going to prioritize exporting processed nickel as a core economic strategy, a move seen to create pressure on the Philippines – as the world's second biggest nickel supplier, accounting for 11% of global mine supply – natural resources and ecosystems;

WHEREAS, on the other hand, China -- which remains the largest market of the Philippines' nickel exports -- is dealing with falling nickel sulfate prices due to continuing production cuts by downstream sectors, so the vaunted economic benefits may not actually be realized, even as the catastrophic ecological damage on mining communities like Sibuyan cannot be reversed;

NOW BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, to direct the appropriate Senate Committee TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION INTO THE NICKEL AND METALLIC MINING ACTIVITIES IN SIBUYAN ISLAND, ROMBLON.

Adopted,


RISA HONTIVEROS

³ <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2023/2/2/Sibuyan-Island-human-barricade-blocks-entry-of-mining-truck.html>