

# Manila's ex-mayor becomes Philippines' mining minister

IN A SURPRISE move, the Philippines' mining secretary has resigned to take over the country's energy portfolio and will be replaced by the former mayor of Manila, Lito Atienza.

Former secretary Angelo Reyes was well-regarded by the sector for his "extremely energetic and active" approach, Metals Exploration plc chief executive officer Jonathan Beardsworth said.

Metals Ex has two copper, zinc, silver and gold projects in the Philippines. Mr Beardsworth told *Mining Journal* that Mr Reyes had not been forced out of the position, but rather had moved into the energy ministry vacancy following a cabinet reshuffle.

Mr Reyes, a former defence minister, only served in the position for two years. Robert Gregory, Rusina Mining NL's

BY MICHELLE GIGLIO

managing director, said the resignation was unexpected – especially given that only last week, the minister had addressed miners at the Manila Gold Club. "A lot of people are surprised that only a week later things have changed," Mr Gregory said. Rusina is a nickel-laterite explorer in the Asian archipelago.

"We thought secretary Reyes would stay on ... which would have been good for a period of stability in the mining industry," he said.

Both chiefs had strong praise for Mr Reyes' recent move to delegate authority for the approval of explora-

tion permits to regional bodies. "He did what he said he was going to do, which is commendable," Mr Gregory said.

Mr Beardsworth said he hoped the new minister would be able to further streamline the bureaucratic process to make it easier to work in the country.

New secretary Lito Atienza, 55, recently finished three consecutive terms

as mayor of Manila. The former architect will have to work hard to expand the Philippines' mining sector, said to have US\$3 trillion of unexplored mineral wealth and is yet to fulfil its potential.

Lito Atienza, new mining minister

