

Vizcaya town, village councils back mining exploration project

Provincial board's resolution stopping firm's project assailed

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QUEZON, Nueva Vizcaya – The sangguniang bayan of this mineral-rich town has unanimously endorsed the exploration project of FCF Minerals Corp. (MTL Philippines Inc.) in Barangay Runruno here.

In resolutions addressed to President Arroyo, Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Lito Atienza, Mines and Geosciences Bureau Director Horace Ramos and Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Carlos Padilla, the Quezon municipal council and the Runruno barangay council have expressed full support for the British-backed exploration project in this town.

In a memorandum of agreement signed two years ago between the sangguniang bayan of Quezon and FCF Minerals Corp., it was stated that the municipal council of Quezon would allow the exploration project in Barangay Runruno. In return, the mining company would provide jobs and undertake development projects not only in the mining village but in the whole Quezon town as well.

"Through its development arm Runruno Livelihood Foundation (RLF), the company has been extending support for the community not only in terms of employment but also rescue assistance during calamities, such as typhoon 'Paeng,' that devastated the town last year," said Quezon Mayor Aurelio Salunat.

"Contrary to the assertions of small pockets of opposition, we discovered during an actual inspection at the exploration site that their claims were not true. We have proven that the exploration company has been observing in good faith what has been stipulated in its exploration permit and the pertinent provisions of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995," said Runruno Barangay Chairman Dodoy Rafael.

The company and the sangguniang bayan have been partners in the development of the mining village and the whole town, it was claimed.

It has provided community development, scholarship programs, infrastructure projects, feeding programs, medical missions, reforestations, environmental protection, livelihood undertakings, and education, local officials said.

"Practically, all our scholars trained in cooperation with TESDA have already been employed. Our reforestation and 'adopt a mountain' programs have attained great



success," said RLF community relations manager Merlanie Valenciano.

The resolutions passed by the municipal and barangay councils run counter against a provincial board's resolution seeking stoppage of the exploration project in town.

"I am disappointed that no less than my party mates in the sangguniang panlalawigan, armed with a resolution, were the ones who tried to shut down the very source of livelihood and legal income for my people," said Salunat.

"How can they come up with such a resolution when they have not even seen the explorations area?"

"We are afraid that the President may believe in what have been claimed in the provincial resolution, and that is why our sangguniang bayan and Barangay Runruno council have passed resolutions to counter the claims of the Nueva Vizcaya board," Quezon Vice Mayor Virgilio Savedra said.

Meanwhile, Board Member Patricio Dumlao Jr. expressed apprehension over attempts by some sectors which are demanding the Nueva Vizcaya provincial board to suspend or ban large-scale mining in the province.

"Before attempting to lodge protest against any large-scale mining project for whatever reasons, we should understand that these projects are supposed to have met all the prerequisites of the mining law being enforced by Mines and Geosciences Bureau, and that's why they were allowed to conduct any mining activity in any part of the country," Dumlao said.

"We should be thankful that Nueva Vizcaya is blessed with rich mineral resources which attract foreign investments to our province," he also said.



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