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Nation

Mining company 'adopts' a mountain in Vizcaya

By Charlie Lagasca
Monday, June 18, 2007

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya – A mining company exploring mineral deposits in a remote community in the province has launched its "Adopt a Mountain" project to re-green and rehabilitate areas denuded by small-scale loggers and miners.

The project of MTL Philippines Inc., a subsidiary of the London-based Metal Exploration, in 12 sitios in Runruno, Quezon town was in response to President Arroyo's call for an environmentally pro-active mining industry and to create the image of a more responsible and sensitive mining sector.

MTL Philippines has been granted a clearance to explore minerals like gold, copper and nickel.

Melanie Valenciano, MTL supervising community development officer, said hardwood and fruit-bearing trees have been planted in at least 10 hectares in the project site.

She said the project will ultimately cover 40 hectares in 12 Runruno sitios, among them Kinalabasa, Marangad, Dipilipig, Tayab and Malilibeg, which will also be planted with seedlings at a labor cost of P25,000 per hectare.

Last November, some 14,000 seedlings worth P62,000 were planted by Runruno residents in an area of nine hectares.

"This endeavor will be able to create employment in the area as some 10 to 15 people will be needed per hectare to replant the mountain with trees," said barangay councilman Genaro Balallo.

"This is a unique endeavor in that while other mining firms rehabilitate only after extraction or commercial operation has started, MTL will be rehabilitating the area at the same time it is conducting exploration activities," Balallo said.

Last summer, at least 80 local students were provided with jobs to plant forest and fruit-bearing tree seedlings.

MTL, assisted by the local folk, put up a nursery last year where seedlings are being propagated for the re-greening program.

MTL executive Ernie Mendoza said the "Adopt a Mountain" project is being undertaken in partnership with the Department of Labor and Employment and Department of the Environment and Natural Resources, the municipal government, and the village council.

To sustain the project, 11 schools in Quezon town would link up with the MTL-founded Runruno Livelihood Foundation for their "Plant for Life" drive whose activities would complement the "Adopt a Mountain" project.

"The fact that there are mining firms giving importance to the re-greening of the environment is something very laudable, especially now that the environment is more in danger of further degradation," Vice Gov. Jose Gambito said.

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