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## *Press Release*

### **Surigao del Sur Town Fights Big Bucks Mining Company!**

**Cantilan, Surigao del Sur, November 17, 2009:** About 2,000 thousand Cantilangnons converged at the triangle in the highway crossing in Brgy. Pag-antayan Monday morning, November 16, 2009 to install a checkpoint aimed at preventing (Marcventures Mining & Development Corporation) from transporting its ore to its illegally constructed stockyard in Brgy. Consuelo. It will be manned round the clock by the local police and volunteers.

The stockyard which is on the shoreline violates local ordinance No. 18-2008 prohibiting the construction of stockyards for the purpose of storing mineral ore within 500 meters of the shoreline and was constructed without a permit from the municipality.

Before the rally, at 8:30 a.m., Mayor Guardo and LGU officials and staff held a flag ceremony at the town kiosk. Thereafter, the mayor led a one kilometer march to the triangle passing through the MMDC offices. She was joined by around 500 placard bearing fisher folks, farmers, religious groups, teachers and students from Saint Michael's College. Waiting at the triangle were more farmers and students from Surigao del Sur Polytechnic College and Cantilan National High School. A mass was held by Fr. Pete Ubalde. He was assisted by priests from Carrascal - Fr. Paeng Batoliño; Madrid - Fr. Bebot Pastera; Parang - Fr. Ritchelle Espinola; and visiting priest, Fr. Tito Maratas who grew up in Brgy. Palasao, a rice-growing community. Fr. Pete in his homily appealed to the parishioners to be honest, sincere and open about their "anti-mining" stand. He also challenged the LGU to sustain the activity.

A program followed where the mayor exhorted everyone to join the cause, as it was the cause of the municipality. Vicente Iriberry, Vice President, Baywatch talked on the violations and inactions of the Department of Environment & Natural Resources (DENR) and challenged all those who wanted to join the 2010 elections to unite and not get into the trap of the mining companies to 'divide and rule' by pushing for two anti-mining groups to run for local elections. He also emphasized that the 2010 elections is neither about personalities, nor partisan politics but about Cantilan, the watershed, and life. Datu James Bat-ao spoke on the violation of IP rights, while Amping Ortega, President, Surigao del Surigao Irrigators Federation (SURIF) spoke about the opposition of the NIA and the Irrigators' Association. Gen. William K. Hotchkiss III (Ret.), President, Cantilan Bank, described the activity as "People Power in Action" He also shared about the role of a Cantilangnon during the EDSA revolution. He challenged everyone, if willing, to die for the cause as he is not only committed to support the cause in his personal capacity but the resources of the bank as well if only to stop mining in Cantilan. Hon. Junjun Sunga for his part, declared that "Cantilan is worth dying for" borrowing the words of Ninoy Aquino.



The activity is the first of a series of activities planned by the Multi-Sectoral Environmental Protection Task Force led by Mayor Tomasa Guardo to fight the mining company. Earlier in the week, Baywatch launched its Information & Education Campaign and aptly titled its slogan, “Bangon KanTilang, Mina Hunongon, Agus sa Tubig Padajunon.”

Although MMDC was issued a “Notice to Proceed” with its developmental activities by the Mines Geosciences Bureau Director Horacio C. Ramos, it does not have the necessary permits from the Local Government Units nor does it have endorsements from the LGUs, necessary requirements in the Philippine Mining Act. It also violated pertinent provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991, particularly Sections 26, *Duty of National Government Agencies in the Maintenance of Ecological Balance* and Section 27, *Prior Consultations Required*.

Cantilan, Carrascal and Madrid LGUs issued resolutions opposing the MPSA of MMDC because it is located in the watersheds of the rivers that supply the three towns’ irrigation systems and domestic water supply. The Sanggunian Panlalawigan refused to endorse their MPSA for the same reasons.

The Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC) granted MMDC mandates the mining company to delineate and exclude from its mining operation all areas within its MPSA that area declared as Watershed Forest Reserve. On March 23, 2009, President Gloria Macapagal – Arroyo issued Proclamation 1747 declaring that area where the mining site of MMDC is situated as Critical Watershed Forest Reserve.

MMDC is the respondent to the administrative case filed by the Irrigators’ Association, Baywatch, and Lovers of Nature Foundation with the DENR for violations of the Philippine Mining Act.