

Mining ignored in election lead-up

By Richard Mills



FILIPINOS are justifiably proud of their democratic tradition that is one of the longest-running and most entrenched in the Asia region. Unfortunately, their enthusiasm for democracy can sometimes get out-of-hand during election time.

In the run up to the most recent Philippine elections, more than 100 people were killed while seeking political appointments or helping others who were. As bad as it seems, this tragedy wasn't considered that severe by local standards. The numbers were much higher in the previous election and the long-term trend seems to be toward less bloodshed rather than more.

Not surprisingly, the mining industry took great interest in the election results. Mining has been one of the most contentious political issues in Philippines over the past few years. The industry thought the election would be as much a referendum on mining as on the general politics of the nation. Miners steeled themselves in anticipation of abuse from politicians eager to gain advantage by attacking greedy foreign companies for exploiting the country, its people and so on.

Happily, politicians turned their back on the mining industry throughout the otherwise rowdy campaigning. It seems the mining industry has successfully turned the political tide. It was not so long ago that being a miner in the Philippines was a dangerous

assignment. Today, the mining industry seems to have become just another mundane business that gets no more attention than fruit growers or component assemblers.

Many feel that the pioneering efforts in social responsibility and environmental protection made by early entrants like Mindoro Resources, TVI Pacific and Oxiana have paid off. These and others have done world-class work and are now being rewarded grandly.

Most importantly, it is Filipinos receiving the lion-share of the benefits in jobs, roads, schools and clinics. The relentless progress at improving the investment environment in the past few years has been significant.

Filipinos seem justifiably proud at the recent attention their country has received by many of the world's greatest mining companies. Xstrata, Anglo American, BHP Billiton and others are now actively involved and say they have plans for mammoth investments.

Past complaints about permitting irregularities, political volatility and mine-site violence are giving way to concerns more characteristic of a normalized market like labour supply and equipment availability. The Philippines may be far from being a truly normalized environment but improvement and optimism continues to grow.

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MBMI to begin mining at Alpha

MBMI Resources' Philippine subsidiary has been granted all requisite mining and environmental permits to begin development and mining on the Alpha nickel property in Narra, Palawan, Philippines.

This enables the subsidiary to start the extraction, beneficiation and stockpiling of raw nickel products. Road construction accessing the permitted mining areas has begun and substantial progress has been made toward completing all infrastructure required to develop the project, including processing, stockpiling area, office complex, assay laboratory facilities and shipping facilities.

Subject to weather, shipments of direct shipping product to Asian consumers was expected to

begin at the end of the second quarter this year.

Initial revenues from the project will fund additional exploration and development programs on the property that will support the social and economic development of the local communities in the Narra region and the province of Palawan.

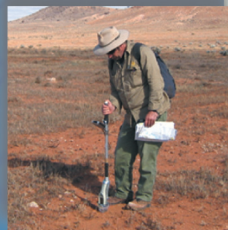
MBMI and its Philippine partners jointly control a 100% interest in eight nickel laterite projects in Palawan and Samar covering an area of 22,000 hectares where the objective is to develop a series of major suppliers of high-grade nickel products to the primary nickel consumers in Asia.

News sourced from International Mining Project News - www.im-mining.com

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