

- [News](#)
- [Top News](#)

DENR staff monitoring chromite loading in Homonhon abandoned posts—Evardone

By
Jonathan L. Mayuga

April 20, 2020

AS a Chinese mining firm secured the green light from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to resume loading operation from Homonhon Island, Eastern Samar Governor Ben P. Evardone said quarantine protocols to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) was grossly violated.

Worse, Evardone said, the DENR personnel tasked to monitor the loading operation to ensure that health protocols are observed to prevent the spread of Covid-19 have abandoned their posts. He said the DENR left the Chinese crew and their local counterparts on their own.

According to Evardone a “lockdown” is currently in effect in the Eastern Samar.

He said as a policy, all foreign nationals coming from a Covid-infected country, such as China, should undergo the mandatory 14-day quarantine.

This, Evardone said, did not happen, even if the Chinese vessel docked at a mining port in Homonhon Island in the town of Guiuan, which came all the way from China, even passed by Davao region, which is also under lockdown.

He expressed dismay that the welfare of the people was set aside by the DENR in allowing the Chinese vessel to resume operation.

Worse, Evardone said as the DENR Region 8 and DENR Central Office gave Techiron Resources Inc. the green light to resume operations, preconditions set by the DENR

itself was not observed. He alleged that the personnel tasked to monitor the loading operation reportedly abandoned their posts two days after the company resumed the loading operation.

“I’ve received reports that one day or two days after the DENR allowed the loading operation to resume, the field personnel of the DENR tasked to monitor the crew abandoned the area,” Evardone lamented.

According to the governor, the DENR staff left early dawn on April 15 via a small boat docked at the pier.

“How can we be sure that the necessary health protocols, which the DENR itself has put in place, are observed when the personnel abandoned their posts?” he asked.

Evardone said he fears that with the quarantine and health protocols violated, the loading operation to the vessel, with 13 Chinese crew and four Myanmar nationals who did not undergo the mandatory 14-day quarantine, pose serious threat to the people on the island.

Regular

ON Saturday, the DENR Central Office had affirmed the decision of the DENR Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) in Region 8 allowing Techiron to resume its operation.

A statement by the DENR said Techiron is running “a regular mining operation.”

“The mine has been operating for more than three years, so there’s nothing unusual in this particular transaction,” a statement by the DENR said.

The DENR said that the continued operation of Techiron was based on the instruction from Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases that export-oriented businesses should not be hampered.

The DENR issued the statement to dismiss insinuations that the mine loading activities were made “secret” and timed to coincide with the enhanced community quarantine imposed in Luzon and other parts of the country to stop the spread of Covid-19.

The DENR said the loading operations were initially suspended just to make sure that “everything is in order.”

“After thorough investigation and the mining company secured all the necessary quarantine certificates, the DENR had no choice but to lift the suspension,” the statement read.

Opposition

However, the Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc. (PMPI), a network of nongovernment organizations, expressed opposition to the loading of Techiron’s mine ore vessel.

“It is but an evidence of the long-standing inclination of DENR and MGB to favor mining corporations’ interests over the people’s welfare,” a statement by the PMPI said. “The community, the local government and local church in the region have strongly appealed to the agency against mining operation in Homonhon Island, but it fell on deaf ears. As it stands now, the agency [DENR] chooses profit and revenue from mining over the possibility of the island people be subjected to risks of contracting Covid-19 by allowing the ship to dock and operate in Homonhon.”

PMPI’s statement quoted Barangay Captain Winefredo Gapate of Pagbabangnan as expressing disappointment.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/04/20/denr-staff-monitoring-chromite-loading-in-homonhon-abandoned-posts-evardone/>