

# Forest destroyed after Lopez fired

PUERTO PRINCESA (SE): The sacking of Gina Lopez as the secretary of the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources has reaped immediate results, wrecking the plans of the president, Rodrigo Duterte, for a clean and healthy environment in The Philippines.

*Radyo Veritas* reported on May 19 that the Ipilan Nickel Corporation has now cut down a whole forest of 100-year-old trees in the last ecological frontier of Palawan.

“This is a tragedy, because Palawan is the last frontier, so we hope that our environment will be protected, especially the century-old trees,” Bishop Socrates Mesiona, from Puerto Princesa, was reported as saying.

*CBCP News* reported that thousands of trees in Brooke’s Point town were cut just days after Lopez’ appointment was rejected by the Commission on Appointments.

She took to Facebook in exposing what she called the massacre, saying that Ipilan Nickel did not have a permit to touch the trees in what is an area protected against clearance.

Over 3,000 hectares of agricultural land and 30,000 people in at least five barangays are affected.

Unlike Duterte’s bill on family planning which brought censures for members of the congress who did not vote in favour of it, he has not dared make a move against the powerful mining interests that scotched Lopez’ appointment to the environment department.

The provincial government in Puerto Princesa is planning to sue the mining company and demand the cancellation of its environmental plan permit and mineral sharing agreement with the government.