



CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

*For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain
and for Self Determination*

July 3, 2009

CPA Supports Call for Independent Investigation in Mankayan Ground Subsidence

The Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) welcomes Benguet Gov. Nestor Fongwan's call for an independent investigation on the disastrous sinking and ground subsidence in Brgy. Poblacion, Mankayan. CPA also iterates the urgency of evacuating the residents of Poblacion to safer grounds, and for the immediate relocation of the Mankayan National High School and the Mankayan Elementary School. To gradually resolve this situation however, Lepanto Mining must first cease and desist all operations to prevent further destruction.

While these are addressed, we must not forget to take into account the liability of Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. (LCMC) in the environmental disasters in Mankayan, whether it admits it or not, especially this month which is marked the National Disaster Consciousness Month.

The CPA learned that while the community of Poblacion and municipal government are rushing to evacuate to save lives, Lepanto does not even bother to assist the victims of its profit-driven and extractive operations. Lepanto's greed for profit caused the disasters. And now that the people of Mankayan are in a state of calamity because of this, it is revolting that they are still the ones to have to spend for their safety and just let alone the LGUs to deal with this.

CPA supports the Benguet Mining Alert and Action Network (BMAAN) in the media briefing it made as to causes of the sinking, landslides and ground subsidence, and the iteration of recommendations based on the study of the National Institute of Geological Sciences ten years ago, such as the *reopening of abandoned or sealed tunnels of LCMC below the Mankayan Central School for inspection, relocation of residents, business establishments in the immediately perceived high-risk subsidence blocks/general areas, and the conduct of an information campaign among Mankayan residents, the municipal and provincial LGU to raise consciousness on the real threat to their lives and property.*

At this point, we ask the Mines and Geosciences Bureau why it is so quick to defend Lepanto on this issue. Lepanto's consistent denial of any accountability in the Mankayan environmental disasters have always been equally buffered by MGB's defense of the mining company. If the MGB knew of the fault lines and geological nature of Mankayan, why then did it still allow the underground bulk mining operations to go on, resulting in several decades of destruction? MGB is equally accountable for the environmental disasters in Mankayan because it consciously allowed these to happen and never in its history did it defend the communities who are victims of Lepanto-caused disasters.

We continue to seek public assistance to help save Mankayan from environmental disasters, and to save the people of Mankayan. No amount of justice for the victims can be attained without prosecuting Lepanto. Time and again, Lepanto should be held accountable. Enough of the disasters, #