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**COMMUNITY BILLBOARD**

## Mining claims threaten Abatan River development

THE Abatan River Management and Development Council (ARMDC) assured it would ascertain that any decision involving development affecting their common river resource would emanate from the people.

ARMDC Chairman and Catigbian Mayor Roberto Salinas told the media in a press conference for the Visayaswide Local and Regional Economic Development Forum here at the MetroCenter Hotel that their next step in the Abatan cluster is to come up with a river code that would detail the policies an investor will have to follow to use the river for their investments.

The LRED Forum took on Accelerating Economic Development through the Cluster Approach as a theme.

The forum also opened up a venue for Abatan River Cluster towns in Bohol and the South Maqueda Bay cluster in Southern Leyte to be the development planners' focus for generating models for cluster development replicas for the country, explains Department of Trade and Industry Regional Director Asteria Caberte.

The ARMDC is undertaking the development and promotion of the eco-tourism potential of the common resource shared by Cortes, Maribojoc, Antequera, Balilihan and Catigbian as a ladder for economic development in the area.

All these initiatives are bound by a common theme: environment protection and conservation through participative and sustainable eco-tourism, Salinas added.

The ARMDC believes that only by participative cluster development can they be assured of pooling common resources to make scant government development funds go farther.

Salinas reacted to the information that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has granted a mining concession in the mountains belonging to the Abatan watershed.

Another source bared that in the apparent belief of accelerated development, processes were cut short jeopardizing communities consent and violating government environmental compliance rules.

Salinas, who admitted knowing nothing about the mining grant, he it should unite the cluster towns into signifying a strong opposition to the claim.

He added the ARMDC would convene with the five mayors and the key development planners to lay down the guidelines to assure a no-nonsense grass-root participation in development plans.

The LRED, Salinas explained, is one approach that should ensure that the communities are given the ample chance to decide for their own resource utilization and it should be a sublime rule that should be an over-arching.

The LRED, promoted and facilitated by the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Private Sector Promotion Program of the German Development Corporation (GTZ) and adopted by the ARMDC is a bottom-up participatory planning process that builds on the comparative and competitive advantages of the local government units, a prepared material from the forum organizers bared. (PIA)

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**Voice of a QUIET MIND**  
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