



Silsilah Dialogue Movement  
Silsilah on Radio: Padayon Ta!

Every Tuesday from 5-6 PM at DXRZ-AM 900 KHZ.  
You can phone in your questions at tel# 991-4441.

# OASIS of DIALOGUE and PEACE



1st Week - February 3, 2010

Every Wednesday Silsilah will publish in this paper its own section called OASIS of DIALOGUE and PEACE. It is the hope of Silsilah that this section will be, like the desert oasis, where news about its activities can be shared, where ideas can be exchanged, and that it will be a source of delight for those who come to it.

Welcome to Silsilah's OASIS of DIALOGUE and PEACE. Comments are welcome at email: [silsilahdialogue@gmail.com](mailto:silsilahdialogue@gmail.com)

## The Advocacy for an Immediate and Long Term Good: The Preservation of the Ayala Watershed

For two years now Rigid Aggregates Mining Corporation (RAMC) has been making its level best to get the City of Zamboanga to grant its application to conduct exploration and operation activities within the Ayala watershed area. The permit has not yet been given, thanks in no small part to the efforts of several groups to block the grant of this permit. Although Silsilah was the original oppositor it has since been joined by other groups, notably the Zamboanga City Water District (ZCWD), the Industrial Group of Zamboanga, Inc. (IGZI) and a farmers' cooperative. The ZCWD already utilizes deep wells to supply the residents of Ayala with piped water; several IGZI members operate canning factories in Ayala in which thousands are employed; the farmers' cooperative depends on a continuous supply of clean water for their farming activities. The operations of these three sectors will be greatly threatened if the water coming from the watershed will be compromised by the operation of a mining company.

In spite of the efforts of the oppositors/petitioners against the grant of the permit to RAMC, the government of the City of Zamboanga has not changed its stand of "no opposition" to the RAMC application. Thus the oppositors, which may be referred to as the Advocates for the Preservation of the Ayala Watershed, has undertaken a new tack in this campaign.

Two information sources on the issue have been prepared – one a sourcebook which can be used by groups and institutions to instruct their own people, and a pamphlet which can be more for individual use. Both carry the title **The Imminent Destruction of the Ayala Watershed** and carry facts and significant, relevant information on the issue. Objective and accurate information goes a long way in getting people to look at a situation as it should be looked at. This was the hope and the rationale that led to the publication of the two materials.

On January 29, 2010 at the Silsilah Center in downtown Zamboanga City the two materials were launched. In attendance at the launching were the petitioners, concerned residents of the impact barangays, other concerned individuals supportive of the cause, and members of the media.

Atty. Laisa Alamia, one of the two legal counsels of the oppositors, referred to several Philippine laws that if applied as intended by the respective legislation, will clearly resolve the matter in favor of the position taken by the petitioners. Among these are the Clean Water Act; the Clean Air Act; the NIPAS Law; the Climate Change Law. There is also a memorandum circular between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) defining the responsibility of both government offices to take care of the environment including the watershed. Atty. Alamia stressed strongly that *"We are not opposing the mining company; we are for the protection of the Ayala Watershed. ...[we] question the implementation of the mining act. I don't want to dwell on the reasons why the [pertinent government offices] are acting in a highly irregular manner. It is just very unexpected for them to act this way when all the evidence shows that they should have acted the right way."*

The open forum at the launching was actively participated in by the attendees. There were many among them who could not understand why many in the concerned government offices would not represent their expressed position on the issue, nor represent their interest. Much was said about continuing the effort and bring before the decision makers of the city their grievances on the threat to their source of potable water. Many ideas were shared as to how to pursue the issue within the legal and democratic framework, not the least of which is through the ballot. This was of particular interest since there is a coming election at both the national and local levels in May 2010.

The advocacy for the preservation of the Ayala Watershed is not directed only to the immediate good but for the good of the coming generations.