

DATE : 29 APR 2019

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**DENR**

**IN THE NEWS**

**Strategic Communication and Initiative Service**



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# DENR seeks to improve Boracay's water quality

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

@jonlmayuga

**T**HE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is working on a draft administrative order that will declare the entire island of Boracay and its surrounding waters a Water Quality Management Area (WQMA), one of the strategies identified to effectively enforce the Clean Water Act (CWA) of 2004.

The CWA (Republic Act 9275) specifies the designation of certain areas as WQMA using appropriate physiographic units such as watershed, river basins or water resources regions. Declaring the entire Boracay as a WQMA will help protect the island's surrounding waters against pollution, as well as its remaining wetlands, from further degradation.

This even as Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy A. Cimatu said the pollution-challenged Boracay Island in the Municipality of Malay, Aklan, keeps getting better a year after undergoing rehabilitation.

A Policy and Planning Technical Working Group is currently working on a draft administrative order that will place the world-renowned tourist spot under strict management regime, the top biodiversity official of the DENR told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

Crisanta Marlene P. Rodriguez, the chief of the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), said that the Policy and Planning Technical Working Group headed by Director Lourdes Ferrer of the DENR's Policy

and Planning Service has been holding meetings for the purpose.

Rodriguez even suggested to the DENR-BMB to help craft the administrative order to integrate some of the salient provisions of the proposed Boracay Critical Habitat. This, however, was stalled by the inaction of the Sangguniang Bayan of Malay on the required resolution endorsing the conservation measure to the DENR.

A conservation measure under RA 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, critical habitats are portions of land outside protected areas that have known habitats of threatened endemic species.

These areas are usually small, focusing on one or a few species, like Boracay, which has experienced an alarming drop in the number of fruit bats and insect bats, and visiting migratory birds because of habitat loss and unsustainable tourism practices.

To date, there are only six DENR-declared Critical Habitats by virtue of DENR administrative orders, namely:

1. Adams Wildlife Critical Habitat (AWCH) in Mounts Magnas, San Miguel and Linao in the Municipality of Adams, Ilocos Norte;
2. Carmen Critical Habitat in the coastal barangays of Vinapor, Gosoon, San Agustin, Cahayagan and Tagcatong, in the Municipality of Carmen, province of Agusan del Norte;
3. Malasi Tree Park and Wildlife Sanctuary Critical Habitat in Barangay San Antonio, Cabagan, Isabela;
4. Cabusao Wetland Critical Habitat in Barangays Pandan and Biong, Cabusao, Camarines Sur;

5. *Rafflesia schadenbergiana* Critical Habitat at Sitio Kalanganan, Barangay San Vicente, Baungon, Bukidnon; and

6. Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area, which covers the so-called lagoons of Parañaque and Las Piñas, also a wetland of international importance or Ramsar Site.

The Palawan Council for Sustainable Development has also established the Cleopatra's Needle Critical Habitat in the island of Palawan.

Rodriguez told the BUSINESSMIRROR that by declaring Boracay a WQMA, it will undergo strict management regime to be implemented by various stakeholders that will encompass needed measures for the protection of Boracay's critical habitats, like the roosting sites of Boracay's fruit bats—particularly limestone forests and cave-dwelling insect bats.

In a statement, Cimatu said much has changed in Boracay since the government started the rehabilitation.

"I am happy that we are able to sustain the gains we achieved since we reopened in October last year," Cimatu said on April 26, exactly one year, since the resort island was closed to the public for six months to pave the way for its rehabilitation from serious environmental damage.

Cimatu, who heads the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) in charge of the island's rehabilitation, said the coliform level in Boracay waters "has significantly gone down," based on the latest water-quality monitoring done by the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau.



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DENR seeks to improve Boracay's water quality

The environment chief noted that the highest coliform level recorded was only 40 most probable number per 100 milliliters (mpn/100 ml). The safe level is 100 mpn/100 ml for Class SB water that is suitable for swimming, skin diving and other recreational activities.

He also reported that there had been "no algae year-round," indicating that "it is really the dirty water which is causing what used to be a natural occurrence."

Cimatu said the entire stretch of Boracay's White Beach is already safe for swimming, and he was hoping the Bulabog Beach, which is now solely used for water sports, will also be declared "swimmable" soon.

So far, Cimatu said 51 establishments along the White Beach have their own sewage-treatment plants while others are now connected to the sewer line. Forty-two establishments in other areas of the island opted to have their own STPs, he added.

Cimatu said demolition orders have been served to establishments violating the 25+5 meter-easement rule along the White Beach and Bulabog Beach and almost all of them chose to self-demolish. Those who violated the 12-meter road easement were also ordered to remove their illegal structures.

He added that the construction of the Circumferential Road will continue.

"Last year, it would take tourists an hour to reach their hotels because of traffic congestion," Cimatu said. "Now it would only take 20 minutes because of the paved and cleared roads."

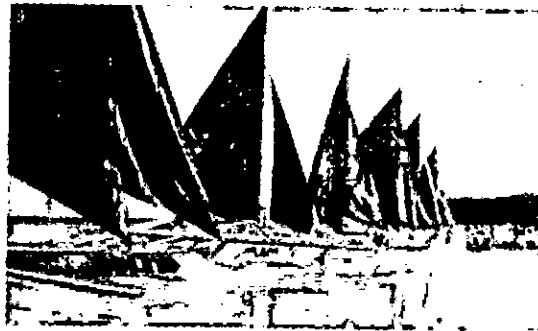


## #nationataglance

WESTERN VISAYAS: BORACAY, MALAY

### Cimatu outlines next steps in Boracay rehabilitation

DEPARTMENT OF Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy A. Cimatu has outlined the continuing projects for Boracay as the island resort marked the first year anniversary of its six-month closure in 2018 starting April 26. "Much has changed in Boracay since we started and I am happy that we are able to sustain the gains we achieved since



DENR PHOTO

**SAILS serve as the canvass for local artists during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Paraw Biniray Festival, one of the events during the first Boracay Sustainability Week celebration from April 26 to May 1.**

we reopened in October last year," Mr. Cimatu, head of the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) in charge of the rehabilitation program, said in a statement. Among the goals moving forward, he said, is declaring the Bulabog Beach, currently used solely for water sports, as "swimmable." He cited that the entire stretch of Boracay's White Beach is already safe for swimming with the coliform level down to a maximum of 40 most probable number per 100 milliliters (mpn/100 ml). The safe level is 100 mpn/100 ml for Class SB water that is suitable for swimming, skin diving and other recreational activities. Mr. Cimatu also reported that there had been "no algae year-round," indicating that "it is really the dirty water which is causing what used to be a natural occurrence." Plans are also underway to make Cagban Jetty Port an all-year round port. It is currently used during the Amihan or dry season from November to April as an alternate to Tagbisaan Jetty Port, which is used during Habagat or wet season from May to October. "Although we have reopened Boracay to global tourism, the rehabilitation of Boracay is not yet complete and remains a work in progress," he said, "What we have accomplished thus far has earned commendations, but building sustainability requires time as well as the continuing support of the people of Boracay." The BIATF is leading the celebration of the first Sustainability Week on the island from April 26 to May 1, which is intended to highlight responsible tourism in contrast to the "Laboracay" of the past, the annual Labor Day weekend marked by grand beach parties.



Founded 1859

# The Manila Times

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Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
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## Boracay 'better' a year after closure

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: The Manila Times is reprinting the article to correct the second paragraph, which appeared on the paper's April 18, 2019 issue as: "Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat said the Department of Public Works and Highways had finished repairing all the roads there.")*

BORACAY Island is back to its pristine state almost a year after it was ordered closed for rehabilitation, the Department of Tourism (DoT) said.

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat said the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) finished repairing all problems on the main roads.

The Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone was also on track in finishing the construction of a sewerage system, part of the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force's (BITF) Phase 2 of the island rehabilitation.

Businesses had also started to boom, Puyat said.

"Together with Aboitiz Foundation, we're doing a wetland [project], we are making it into a park, eco-tourism zone. There are so

many places to go to in Boracay, not just the beaches," she added.

The Tourism chief said coliform bacteria levels in Boracay waters were now down to zero from the very high level of 1 million most probable number.

The DoT attributed the progress to the relentless efforts of the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The DENR is also regularly doing the tests on the coliform level every two weeks to maintain the present condition of Boracay Island, especially during the peak season.

As of April 8, more than 339 hotels and tourism establishments have been reopened, accounting to more than 12,000 rooms.

Puyat also said respective hotels and resorts were told to supply potable water for both domestic and foreign travelers while local government officials were religiously monitoring the garbage.

"Garbage is continuously being monitored by the LGUs (local government units), we have ground enforcers who ensure that the tourists will dispose trash properly. Receptacles have

also been placed everywhere," she said.

While the BITF and the local government of Boracay have allowed parties since the reopening of the island last October, Puyat said there would be no more LaBoracay or any other beach parties this year.

LaBoracay is an annual summer beach party held in the island, dubbed as southeast Asia's own "spring break."

"*Bawal ang LaBoracay ngayon*, no drinking and no smoking in public places. So, that still stands. Actually there's a law — no smoking is an executive order and there's a local ordinance *na bawal talaga 'yung ganun sa beach*," she said.

She clarified, however, that some parties were allowed on Boracay "provided that establishments follow laws and existing ordinances that were in place even before the closure and rehabilitation."

Under existing local ordinances and national laws, smoking and drinking are not allowed in the public beach; parties must not be held within "25+5" easement; and the maximum allowed noise level is 55 decibels in nighttime for open areas. **NEIL JAYSON SERVALLOS**



# Boracay's flying foxes under siege

STORY BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)

**L**AST year, the Duterte administration earned a high mark and was hailed for the massive rehabilitation of Boracay, the country's top tourist destination in Malay, Aklan.

Characterized by massive road-widening projects, dismantling of illegal structures that encroached on beachfront, forestlands and wetlands; and the stricter enforcement of environmental laws and tourism rules and regulations, the rehabilitation was lauded as a success by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

A year later, after six months of closing the island to tourists from April 26, 2018, to October 28, 2018, for the massive rehabilitation of Boracay, it's no longer business as usual in Boracay.

Since its reopening last year, tens of thousands of tourists arrived to relax and enjoy the famous white-sand beaches and perhaps it's cleaner and safer, crystal-clear waters, less the noisy and all-night-long partying it was known for. Drinking and smoking in public places were also banned and the beach is a lot cleaner nowadays.

Was the rehabilitation effort a resounding success? Not quite.

## Bats under siege

THE island's rich biodiversity is under siege. Its unique ecosystems, from forests, wetlands, mangrove forests, seagrass beds, coral reefs in coastal and marine areas have suffered environmental degradation in the past.

Wildlife population, particularly bats, were on the decline because of unsustainable tourism practices, a reason Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu sent out a team of biodiversity experts in March last year to conduct a quick biodiversity assessment on Boracay Island.

Their mission was clear and well pronounced: Save Boracay's threatened species—the marine turtles that nest on its beaches, the puka shell that makes Puka Shell Beach sands uniquely cool, the long-tailed macaque, the migratory birds, and Boracay's other tourist attraction, such as the bats, the flying foxes or fruit bats, and their smaller cousins, the insect bats.

Incidentally, this year's Earth Day celebrations carries the theme "Protect our Species" which highlights the need to protect and conserve the country's unique species. Boracay has three known fruit bat species that roost on trees in the forest of Barangay Yapak. Beneath these limestone forests are caves, the home of Boracay's insect bats.

Just last month, however, the dwindling population of bats, particularly flying foxes or the giant fruit bats, revealed that the island's rich biodiversity is beleaguered.

## Habitat loss, hunting

AS early as January this year, the Friends of the Flying Foxes (FFF), a not-for-profit nongovernment organization formed to protect and conserve Boracay's flying foxes, have sounded the alarm bells over the dwindling bat population on the island because of various threats—from massive habitat loss because of development projects targeting the fruit bats' roosting sites to the unabated hunting for food by local communities on the island and in the mainland Malay town.

Through its president, Julia Lervik, FFF has written letters to authorities, including the DENR, the provincial government of Aklan and the local officials of the municipality of Malay, Aklan, to appeal the case of the vanishing flying foxes of Boracay.

In a letter to Nenette Aguirre-Graf, an honorary member of the Sangguniang Bayan of the municipality of Malay dated January 29, the group expressed concern over the huge drop in the number of bats from 2017 up to 2018.

During this period it was observed that destructive development projects and hunting for food continued on the island—even during the time when Boracay was supposed to be undergoing massive rehabilitation.

## Shrinking bat population

THE FFF started to conduct regular monthly monitoring of the bats' population between 2017 and May 2018, when the roost site was bulldozed by Mabuhay Maritime Express Inc.

It was during the intense monitoring when the drastic reduction of the bats' population was observed compared to previous years.

"On the 27th of May 2017, the largest number of bats counted on exit or fly out was estimated to about 2,425 individuals. Later that year, we conducted a roost count and revealed that at least an estimated total of 16 percent of the entire bat population counted were the globally endangered golden-crowned flying foxes and the rest of the percentage are shared mostly by the large flying foxes with that of the small-island flying foxes," Lervik said in her letter.

In 2018, the largest number the group estimated was on February 21 with 1,608 individuals.

Since then, the group had ceased to get any information because the island was closed from April to October, when the group was denied access on the flying foxes' roost counting area.



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## Boracay's flying foxes under siege

In another letter addressed to Commander Natividad Bernardino, Boracay Inter-Agency Rehabilitation Management Group, dated April 5, Lervik reiterated their appeal to look into the plight of Boracay's flagship species.

When the group was able to resume monitor the bat population, the biggest number they got in the nine times in their exit count was only 347 bats.

The group learned from local people and by observing the roost sites of the bats that for last year, and especially during Boracay's closure, the bats were hunted for food.

Also, the group said hunting on the mainland has also been recorded, supposedly by nets.

### Destructive projects

FFF, however, claimed that hunting was not the only reason behind the dwindling population of the bats on the island.

The destruction of the beach forest in June 2017 through bulldozing "without any permit," according to Lervik, had a negative impact on the bats.

Lervik said at the time of the destruction, the bats had already moved to their *habagat* roost site, thus, no immediate impact was observed in their numbers that year.

However, when the bats returned to mate in the puka shell roost site in April 2018, during the closure, their home, the trees, were gone resulting in what the group described as "disturbingly low counts" on April 5, 2019.

Moreover, Lervik added that in 2018, the property next to a big hotel owned by a politician was cleared of its forest cover, which has adversely impacted other wildlife, such as monkeys that have now moved near the roosting sites of the bats.

This, Lervik said, are causing a lot of disturbance to the fruit bats.

### Tourist-stressed bats

WHILE the bats have been observed last year to be constantly flying around their roost, indicating that they are being disturbed by other wildlife, other life forms also caused too much stress to the bats—the tourists.

In March and April this year, a large number of boats have been observed docking, with anchors, destroying the reefs and dropping off guests on Puka Shell Beach, Lervik said.

"When they signal their guests to return to the boat, the boat blows its horns repeatedly. Considering a large number of boats, and tourist arrivals and departures throughout the day, these generate a huge amount of noise that disturb the nocturnal bats," Lervik lamented.

Last, extremely loud music played by the boats docking and driving around Boracay's shores aggravate the problem.

"When the FFF visited the Balinghai Roost Site, multiple boats were observed docking [with tourists set] for snorkeling and playing loud music, which resulted in the bats flying around trees, instead of sleeping," Lervik pointed out.

### Critical habitat

SINCE many of Boracay's known roosting sites are critical habitats, FFF appealed to concerned government agencies, including the Malay LGU, to work together to establish portions of the island, including coastal areas, a critical habitat.

In fact, the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), then headed by Theresa Mundita S. Lim, recommended that portions of Boracay be declared as a critical habitat.

Recommended to be designated as critical habitat under Republic Act (RA) 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Protection and Conservation Act, or simply Wildlife Act, are all the remaining limestone forests on the island, the Puka Shell Beach, all bat-roosting sites and one of four existing wetlands on the island.

Various stakeholders, including owners of business establishments within the proposed 750-hectares Boracay Critical Habitat, have expressed their support behind the plan.

Cimatu has also vowed to sign an administrative order for the purpose of establishing Boracay Critical Habitat.

Besides establishing the Boracay Critical Habitat, FFF is also supporting the plan to declare vast coastal and marine areas

around Boracay Island, especially those near roosting sites of the fruit bats, as marine protected area in order to put them under a strict management regime that will regulate tourist activities.

### What happened?

ONE year after, however, the establishment of the Boracay Critical Habitat still hangs in the balance after the DENR required the Malay LGU, through the Sangguniang Bayan, to pass a resolution for the purpose.

The Malay LGUs inaction caused the delay, according to DENR-BMB Director Crisanta Marlene Rodriguez.

On April 23, the DENR's top biodiversity official said in a BUSINESSMIRROR interview that the Malay LGU through its Sangguniang Bayan promised to tackle the proposed Boracay Critical Habitat.

"Today, we were told that they will call a meeting to discuss the proposal to establish the [Boracay] Critical Habitat," Rodriguez said, adding that the DENR-BMB remains committed to the plan to establish the habitat plan.

If ever it will not push through, Rodriguez said they are looking at other conservation

measures that may apply to Boracay. One is placing the island under strict management regime as a Water Quality Management Area (WQMA) under the Clean Water Act of 2004.

She said the DENR's Policy Technical Working Group suggested to include areas covered by the proposed Boracay Critical Habitat in the proposed WQMA in Boracay since its coverage is the whole island.

According to Rodriguez, based on the proposal, the WQMA shall have the same governing board as the Boracay Critical Habitat.

Asked if the declaration of the entire Boracay Island as a WQMA will suffice to protect and conserve its rich biodiversity, including its endangered species, Rodriguez said: "That is our concern, too. We are currently reviewing the modified WQMA if the components of the Boracay Critical Habitat are there."

“The impact of the bats’ disappearance on Boracay will not only be felt on the island, but will also have long-term implications on communities in the mainland where they feed and disperse forest seeds.”

-LIM



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Boracay's Flying Foxes under Siege

## A matter of concern

LIM, currently the executive director of Asean Centre for Biodiversity, said the decline of the number of fruit bats on Boracay should be a matter of concern as it can also be considered a "symptom" of an underlying more serious environmental problem.

"Aside from the direct result of losing the potential value of these flying foxes for ecotourism, more important, they are also natural seed dispersers and pollinators for native fruit trees and contributing to expanding forest cover, including for areas that are not easily accessible to human planting," she pointed out.

Lim said the decline of the population of bats in the Philippines and other areas would easily impact on the capacity of forests to regenerate itself, translating to an irreversible reduction of water recharge from watersheds and reduced resiliency functions derived from healthy forest ecosystems.

"The impact of the bats' disappearance on Boracay will not only be felt on the island, but will also have long-term implications to communities in the mainland where they feed and disperse forest seeds," she said.

Reminding that the Earth Day 2019 theme is "Protect our Species," Lim said: "This is very much linked to the role of the other living things that we, humans, share the Earth with. The theme brings attention to the alarming decline of plants and animal species because of man-made threats. Much like the situation with the bats in Boracay," she said.



FRUIT bats in Barangay Yapak on Boracay Island FRIENDS OF FLYING FOXES





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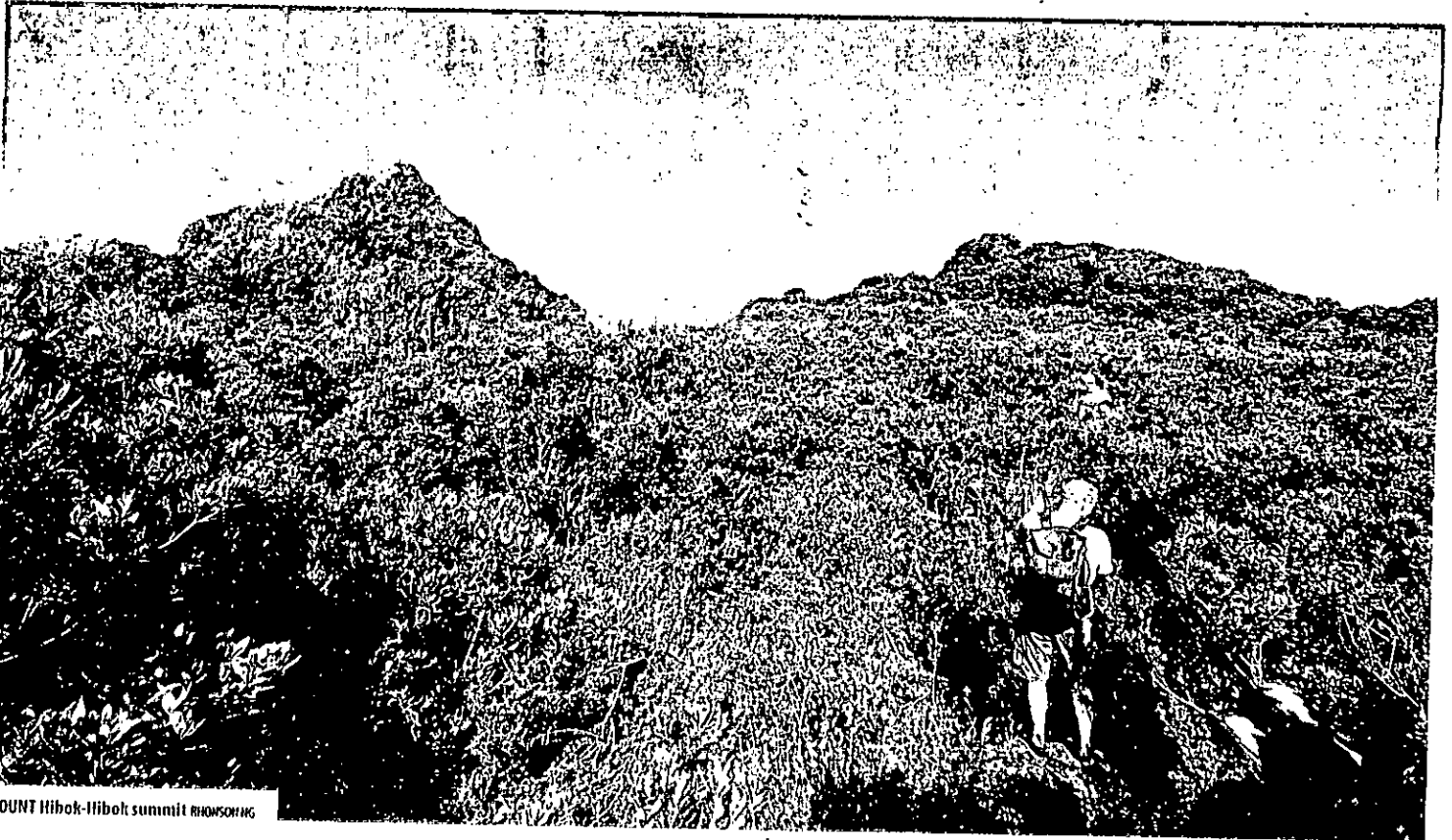
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**SINUSUBUKAN** ni Environment Sec. Roy A. Cimatu ang isa sa tatlong e-bikes na dinon-ate ng Star 8 Green Technology sa DENR para gamitin sa Boracay island. Ang e-bikes ay tumatakbo sa bilis na 100kph at 150km-range sa tinatayang 10 oras na paggamit. Gagamitin ang mga ito sa pagpapatrolya sa isla. Nakamasid si Star 8 Chief Operating Officer Jacob Maimon (kaliwa).



## Mountaineering to promote ecotourism in Camiguin



MOUNT Hibok-Hibok summit RHONSONG

**K**NOwn for its powdery sand beaches, waterfalls and hot and cold springs, Camiguin is looking up to its mountaineers to promote ecotourism in this charming island province.

This after the provincial government recently launched its "Climb Camiguin" campaign, which is aimed at showcasing its chains of volcanoes.

Mount Hibok-Hibok, Camiguin's iconic peak, and Mount Timpoong were recently declared by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Center for Biodiversity as an Asean heritage park.

Now officially known as the Mount Timpoong-Mount Hibok-Hibok Natural Monument, the two volcanoes are among the country's few protected areas, which is habitat to endemic flora

and fauna species found in only northern Mindanao.

"The province recognizes the potential of volcano tourism for driving the socioeconomic growth and development of the local community," said Camiguin Gov. Maria Luisa Romualdo during the event's launch with partner agencies Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The climb program, participated in by DENR personnel, local tourism stakeholders and social-media influencers, also explored a new and equally exciting trail in Itum village in the capital town of Mambajao.

The proposed new path is a 6-kilometer trek, which commences at the DENR Protected Area Superintendent (PASu) station in Mambajao and winds up to the summit

at 1,332 meters above sea level.

The PASu jump-off point teems with butterfly and avian life, while the whole trail is habitat to diverse flora, dominated by pitcher plants, wild romblon and giant rattan.

In the report by the Climb Camiguin expedition team submitted to the provincial tourism office, among the birds spotted are turquoise and rufous paradise flycatcher, purple-throated sunbird, yellowish white eyes, everett's white eyes, Brahminy kite, Philippine serpent eagle, yellow-vented bulbul and olive-backed sunbird.

Also spotted were the orange-bellied and red-keeled flowerpecker, coppersmith Barbet, Asian glossy starlings, and white-eared brown, zebra spotted, and the Philippine cuckoo dove, and the endemic Camiguin bulbul.

However, the DENR recently closed all National Parks under the supervision of the Protected Area Management Bureau due to the long El Niño dry spell to prevent forest fires and ensure safety of mountaineers.

Once officially opened upon the lifting of the ban by the DENR, it will help relieve the stress on the existing trails at Ardent Spring and Barangay Yumbing.

According to DOT Regional Director May Salvaña-Unchuan, mountain tourism is the latest product that the DOT-10 has introduced, in addition to farm, dive, faith and cultural tourism, where tour packages have been prepared.

She said that a major point they considered before launching the project was the crafting of vital legislation by local governments to ensure sustainable tourism in the Northern Mindanao region.



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## Environment protection spurs Army, DENR-8 teamwork

**By Kathleen Mae Bulquerin**

The 8th Infantry Division (8th ID) of the Philippine Army and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)-8 over the weekend renewed their ties to preserve and protect the environment in the region.

The 8th ID represented by Maj. Gen. Raul Farnacio and the DENR-8 led by Atty. Crizaldy Barcelo held a dialogue

during which they committed their mutual support towards environmental protection and livelihood enhancement of the communities in the area.

They also agreed to involve the local communities in the national greening program and in the protection and preservation of the environment to sustain ecological balance and biodiversity.

They intend to achieve their objectives through the community-based forest management scheme in which residents of the mountainous areas are encouraged to help in their initiative.

Barcelo expressed his gratitude to 8th ID for hosting the dialogue as a manifestation good working relationship between the two government agencies.





# Rhetoric or reality in reforestation

## COMMENTARY

ERNESTO M. ORDOÑEZ

**O**ur water crisis is too important to mistake rhetoric for reality. If we do not recognize this difference, our country will sink deeper into the hole of the water crisis that now grips our nation.

This is where 55 people die every day from water-related causes, and where 32 government water-related agencies are largely uncoordinated. Hopefully, President Duterte will soon sign an executive order that will address these problems.

On April 23, a news report stated that nongovernment Luntiang Pilipinas (LP) would plant 10 million trees in celebration of World Earth Day. It is unlikely the 10 million trees can be planted in just one or two days. The reality may be closer to the intention stated by LP's Michael Ubac: "Caring for the environment is a year round commitment, and the LP

program to plant 10 million trees is our contribution to this effort."

Private sector group Movement for Water Security (MWS) will ask LP for the details behind this effort, learn from LP's commendable practices and join hands with them. MWS has supporters from a wide variety of groups. Examples are from agriculture (Alyansa Agrikultura, Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food), industry (Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Federation of Philippine Industries), NGOs (Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts of the Philippines, Rotary Clubs, Green Architecture Advocacy, Kapampangan Development Foundation) and various sectors such as farmers, fisherfolk, rural women, large corporations and SMEs. Many of the MWS supporters already have effective reforestation programs, such as the Girl and Boy Scouts, and the Rotary Clubs nationwide which have made water security a priority for 2019.

The reforestation effort must address the disaster of 5.7

million hectares of denuded forests. In these areas, there are no trees that can hold on to rain water that comes, retain the eroded soil that runs off causing floods and damage to agriculture lands, and help produce the needed clouds that give us rain. For agriculture, the common sense view is that when you irrigate a hectare, you will double its yield. Unfortunately, the yield average is down to only 1.5 times, simply because there is lack of water available. This is largely due to our massive deforestation that

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## REFORESTATION REPORT

YEAR	AREA PLANTED	SEEDLINGS PLANTED
2014	334,302	205,414,639
2015	360,357	351,014,239
<b>2016</b>	<b>284,089</b>	<b>415,564,211</b>
2017	202,488	178,142,764
2018	132,741	123,067,668

SOURCE: [ngp.denr.gov.ph](http://ngp.denr.gov.ph)

INGO GRAPHICS

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has also dangerously diminished the water in our underground aquifers. Remember the global studies that showed that as early as 2030, world water demand will exceed supply by 40 percent.

There is much rhetoric about the government doing massive reforestation. The reality gotten from government statistics ([ngp.denr.gov.ph](http://ngp.denr.gov.ph)) shown in the table above shows a different picture, perhaps because of inadequate resources. While seedlings planted doubled from 205.4 million in 2014 to 415.6 mil-

Unlike some practices of planting trees for photo op purposes and leaving them to die (which DENR is now trying to control), these scouts have developed a system with community sharing so that the trees are nurtured to full development. This is real reforestation, not fake reforestation rhetoric. To prevent misleading communication and promote genuine development, the actual growth rate of the seedlings planted should also be reported.

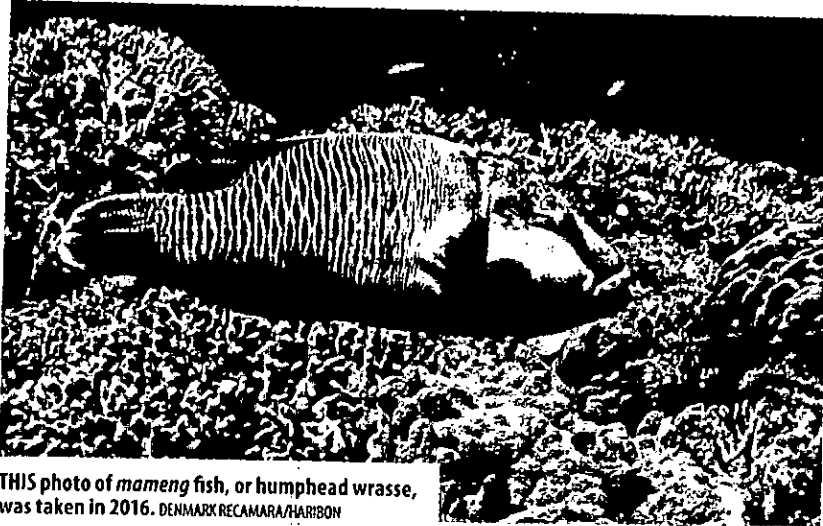
Sen. Loren Legarda inspired the creation of both the LP and MWS. It is this same inspiration that should now unify both the private and government sectors to stop deceptive rhetoric and instead achieve the needed reality of true reforestation in this time of water crisis and climate change.



The author is Agriwatch chair, former Secretary of Presidential Programs and Projects and former undersecretary of Agriculture and Trade and Industry. Contact him via [agriwatch\\_phil@yahoo.com](mailto:agriwatch_phil@yahoo.com)



## PHL CELEBRATES EARTH DAY TO END SPECIES EXTINCTION



THIS photo of *mameng* fish, or humphead wrasse, was taken in 2016. DENMARK RECAMARA/HARIBON

THE Earth Day Network (EDN) identified 2019 as a crucial year to protect species from extinction. Working in partnership with thousands of organizations, EDN's global campaign seeks to advance policies and international agreements for species protection.

According to the network, the world today is facing the greatest rate of extinction since we lost the dinosaurs over 60 million years ago. Unfortunately, this rapid loss is now caused by human activities including deforestation, pollution, hunting and unsustainable agriculture.

Over the past decades, the planet has experienced vast environmental degradation. Studies estimate that the Earth is losing plant and wildlife species at 1,000 to 10,000 times the normal rate. Insect populations have dropped more than 45 percent worldwide, while 40 percent of the world's bird species continue to decline.

In the Philippines, for instance, environmental organization Haribon Foundation estimated that over 10 fish species are in danger of being lost forever in the next 20 years due to overfishing and illegal fishing. This list includes the staple *talakitok* and *maya-maya*.

"The variety of life in the ecosystem, or biodiversity is crucial to our survival and resilience as communities. Yet, despite its fundamental importance, the world's biodiversity is being lost faster than ever," lamented the foundation.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List identified various plant and animal species that are at different risk levels in the country. For example, the *pili* nut, which can only be found in the Philippines, has been considered Vulnerable, which means it is facing high risk of extinction in the wild.

The *tawilis*, which is the only freshwater sardine in the world, has been recently on the headlines after reports of its steady population decline. It is now considered Endangered due to overfishing, illegal fishing and water-quality deterioration.

The *pilandok* or the Balabac mouse deer, which may only be spotted in Palawan, has been categorized as Endangered; it faces threats such as poaching, hunting and habitat destruction. Finally, the Philippine eagle and the *dulangan*, or rufous-headed hornbill, continue to be classified as Critically Endangered, facing extremely high risk of

extinction in the wild.

"The good news is that the rate of extinctions can still be slowed, and many of our declining, threatened and endangered species can still recover if we work together now to build a united global movement of consumers, voters, educators, faith leaders and scientists to demand immediate action," said Kathleen Rogers, president of Earth Day Network.

According to Haribon, restoring and protecting the homes of species are tantamount to ensuring their survival. Habitat restoration such as planting native trees like *narra*, *kamagong*, *talisay* and *antipolo* not only ensures there is home for our biodiversity, it also builds greater stability against climate-change effects. Enforcing strong legislation for protected areas and critical habitats are key to protecting species at risk and the habitats we share together.

The Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan envisions that, "by 2025, biodiversity is restored and rehabilitated, valued, effectively managed, secured, maintaining ecosystem services to sustain healthy, resilient Filipino communities and delivering benefits to all."

The annual Philippine Earth Day Celebration, through the Earth Day Network Philippines coalition, in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, will be held on April 28 in Obando, Bulacan.

Last year, the local Earth Day event was conducted in the Harbour Square, Cultural Center of the Philippines Complex with theme geared toward ending plastic pollution. This year's campaign focuses on raising awareness on the state of the country's biodiversity, and the important link between species and habitat protection.

The main activity will commence with a volunteer-led coastal cleanup drive in one of the island barangays of Obando. This will be followed by a simultaneous bike tour around the town area and a yoga session by Iskon.

The Sandiwang Festival, or the "Isang Diwa sa Pagdiriwang ng Kalikasan," will also be held, allowing various religious groups to express their faith and aspirations for the environment.

Different groups also get to showcase their environmental cause through an advocacy fair. Finally, a commitment signing will be held in support of transforming a barangay of Obando into a zero-waste community.



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**BOSES ng PINOY, MATA ng BAYAN**

**MATAPOS** ang Earth Day noong nakaraang linggo, naranasan sa ating bansa ang ilang serye ng pagyanig kung saan inihalintulad pa ito ng mga opisyal bilang pagpaparamdam ng Earth sa atin. Gayunman, bilang mamamayan, dapat nating bawasan ang basurang naiipon natin, lalo na kung karamihan dito ay plastik. Mga besh,

narito ang ilang 'Earth friendly' tips upang mabawasan ang basura na naiipon natin, araw-araw:

**1. BRING REUSABLE BAGS.** Ika nga nila, maikokonsidera bilang stress reliever ang paggogrocery. Pero, nakai-stress kapag hindi keru ng paper bag ang mga ipinamili mo kaya wala kang choice kundi gumamit ng plastic bag.

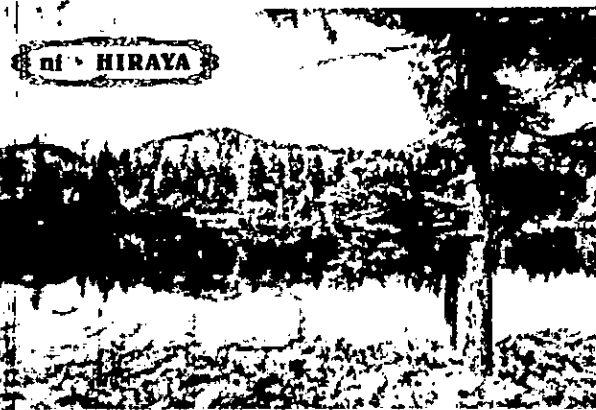
Gayunman, maaaring maiwasan ang paulit-ulit na pagbili ng plastic bag tuwing mamimili kung

gagamit ka ng reusable tote bag. Mainam na paglaging magdala nito dahil siguradong marami pa itong puwedeng paggamitan.

**2. BUY IN BULK.** Nasanay tayong mga Pinoy na bumili ng mga pang-araw-araw na pangailangan natin nang

*Lalo na at nakaramdam tayo ng sakuna noong mga nakaraang linggo...*

## EARTH FRIENDLY TIPS UPANG MABAWASAN ANG MGA BASURA SA LANSANGAN



naka-sachet o 'tingi', partikular sa shampoo, sabon at iba pa dahil isa itong paraan ng pagtitipid.

Yes, besh, nakatitipid tayo kahit papaano, pero mas malaki ang matitipid natin kung bibili tayo ng maramihan o nakabote. Kung mas kaunting pagkaging ang nagamit, ma-

babawasan din ang basurang itatapon natin. Okie?

**3. INVEST IN HIGH QUALITY PRODUCTS.** Walang masamang bumili ng mas murang produkto o kagamitan, pero, kung madali itong masisira, siguradong itatapon at papalitan natin ito

kaagad, agree?

Kung afford naman natin, besh, mabuting maginvest tayo sa mga gamit na mayroong magandang kalidad dahil siguradong mas matagal itong magagamit at hindi natin ito basta-basta itatapon.

**4. STOP BUYING BOTTLED WATER.** Kapag nauuhav tayo, napakadaling bumili ng bottled water sa mga tindahan o convenient store at kapag naubos na ang laman nito, madali ring itapon ang bote.

Sa kabila ng convenience na ito, wala itong naidudulot na convenience sa ating kalikasan dahil kung gaano kadaling bumili at magtapon ng plastic bottles, hindi ito ganu'n kadaling i-decompose.

Upang maiwasan ang paulit-ulit na pagbili at pagtatapon, mabuting gumamit ng water tumb-

ler na puwede mong dalhin tuwing lalabas ka ng bahay.

**5. RECYCLE & REUSE.** For sure, may mga pagkakataong hindi natin maiiwasang bumili ng mga produkto na nakalagay sa plastic container. mabuting huwag kaagad itapon ang container o plastic bag dahil siguradong puwede pa itong magamit sa ibang paraan.

Halimbawa nito ay ang paggamit ng plastic bags bilang garbage bag, pagre-refill ng containers at iba pa.

Sa totoo lang, kailangan talaga nating maglaan ng extra effort nang sa gayun ay makatulong tayo sa ating kalikasan.

Gayunman, siguradong magiging worth it ang lahat ng effort na gagawin natin para sa ikabubuti ng ating kapaligiran.

Hindi man natin kaagad mabawasan ang basurang naiipon natin, matuto tayong magtapon sa tamang basurahan at hindi kung saan-saan lamang. Gets mo?



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# Catholic couples tapped for PH-wide green project

**By Rio Araja**

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources is partnering with a Catholic movement—Couples for Christ—for a project seeking to plant one million trees under the government's expanded national greening program.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said a partnership with non-government organizations is "vital" to achieving the goals of program.

"We are glad that an organization such as the CFC, a church-based organization, is helping us in our goal to protect the environment by taking part in the ENGP," he said.

The DENR-CFC partnership was formalized through a memorandum of agreement signed by Cimatu and CFC-Philippines president Michael Ariola.

Under the arrangement, the CFC has committed to contribute to the national reforestation effort by planting one million forest tree seedlings from 2019 to

2021, and maintaining and protecting the planted seedlings during that period.

The DENR is tasked to give technical assistance to CFC in terms of identifying the forestlands where the seedlings will be planted, conduct survey, planning and mapping, and identify the suitable tree species that should be planted in the areas concerned.

The ENGP is the continuation of the previous National Greening Program, and was signed under the Executive Order 193 in 2015.



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**BOSES ng PINOY, MATA ng BAYAN**

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## Illegal logger noon, nagtatanim na ng mga puno ngayon

**M**ARAMI nang puno ang pinutol upang tayuan ng bagong imprastruktura at establisimyento. Isa ito sa mga itinuturong dahilan ng mga pagbaha tuwing bumubuhos ang ulan.

Matatandaang, ipinagdiwang noong Abril 22 ang Earth Day at bilang paggunita, 100 dating iligal na namumutol ng mga puno ang lumahok sa pagtatanim ng mga puno sa Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.

Mula sa pagiging illegal logger, naging magsasaka na ang mga ito nang magtanim ng 1,000 saplings ng mga uri ng puno na matatagpuan lamang sa naturang probinsiya.

Sila rin ang nakatoka sa pag-aalaga ng mga ito hanggang sa lumaki at tuluyang maging puno.

Para sa mga indibidwal na may iligal na gawain noon, magandang simula ito upang makabawi sa kalikasan.

Bilang mamamayan, hindi lamang tuwing Earth Day natin ipinakikita ang pagpapahalaga at pangangalaga sa ating kalikasan.

Ngayon pa lang, mabuting pangalagaan ito upang makita ng susunod na henerasyon ang natural na kagandahan nito.





# CIMATU PANGUNGUNAHAN ANG OFWs REPATRIATION SA LIBYA



TRIPOLI – MULI na namang itinalaga si Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu para magiging tagapagligtas ng Filipino na nasa ibang bansa.

Sa pagkakataong ito, pangangasiwaan ng kalinangang pagpapauwi sa mga overseas Filipino worker sa Libya.

Una nang nagsagawa na ng emergency meeting ang Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) at Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) upang pag-usapan ang kalagayan at repatriation ng mga

OFWs sa nasabing bansa.

Magpapadala ang pamahalaan ng composite team na binubuo ng mga opisyal ng DOLE, DFA at DENR sa Libya upang mag-asikaso sa pagpapauwi sa mga OFW na apektado ng mga kaguluhan.

Magugunitang kinumpirma ni Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III na inatasan ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na mamumuno sa composite team si Cimatu.

Ito ay dahil bihasa na ang dating AFP chief of staff sa repatriation ng mga OFW kahit noon pa mang nakaraang mga administrasyon.

Batay aniya sa assessment ng DFA, lumalala ang nagaganap na civil war sa Libya ngunit nananatili pa rin sa alert level 3 na nangangahulugang patuloy ang total deployment ban.

Sa ngayon pinaghandaan ng DOLE ang pagtaas pa sa alert level 4 dahil kung sakali hudyat na ito para magsagawa ng force repatriation sa mga OFWs na umaabot sa 1,000 sa Tripoli.

Kinumpirma naman DFA Undersecretary Elmer Cato na isa na na-

mang OFW ang sugatan matapos na tamaan ng pagsabog ng mortar sa compound kung saan sila nagtatrabaho sa isang oil at gas services provider.

Ang kasamahan umano ng Pinoy na isang Sudanese national ay minalas nang mapuruhan sa nangyaring pagsabog.

Ang pag-igting ng Libyan crisis ay bunsod na rin ng deklarasyon ni Gen. Khalifa Haftar na unti-unti na ang pagkubkob nila sa kabisera na Tripoli mula sa UN-backed government ni Prime Minister

Fayez al-Serra.

Nagpapatuloy ang counter-offensive ng government forces kasama na ang air strikes laban sa sumusugod na Libyan National Army (LNA) ni Haftar.

Sa pinakahuling datos, 220 katao ang nasawi sa patuloy na paglala ng sitwasyon sa naturang bansa.

Si Haftar ay dating army officer na itinalaga noong taong 2017 bilang LNA chief sa ilalim nang naunang internationally recognised government na nakabase sa lugar ng Tobruk.

Lumakas ang loob ni Haftar na makuha ang pamumuno dahil sa ibinibigay umanong suporta sa kanya ng Russia, Egypt at UAE. **PMRT**



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## ***DILG, DENR lead fun run for Manila Bay***

The Departments of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) yesterday led a fun run to raise awareness to protect the environment.

DILG Undersecretary Epimaco Densing said the activity dubbed "Takbo para sa kalikasan" was in support of the government's battle for Manila Bay.

More than 20,000 runners from different government agencies and private sector joined the activity along Roxas Boulevard.

"This endeavor hopes to gather support for the cleanup of Manila Bay," DILG Assistant Secretary Marjorie Jalosjos said.

Densing said they target to rehabilitate the bay until 2030.

He said informal settlers living along the shoreline from Manila to Cavite remain the biggest obstacle in the bay's rehabilitation.

Coca-Cola, which sponsored the event, encouraged the public to recycle bottles and cans to address the garbage problem.

- Rey Galupo



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# Manila Bay run draws thousands

Event rallied people to join cleanup

By Charles Gideon Cantos

The Manila Bay rehabilitation program has acquired a fitness flavor as thousands of runners yesterday joined the "Tukbo Para Sa Kalikasan" fun run which fired off at 4 a.m. at the Burnham Green of Quirino Grandstand.

The event was organized by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and various private companies.

Participating were personnel from the Philippine National Police, Bureau of Fire Protection, DILG, MMDA and private sector workers.

Co-organizer was the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources, which is spearheading the cleanup of the bay and the river systems and creeks serving as its tributaries.

The waters of Manila Bay had been tested to be heavily polluted but months of rehabilitation had improved latest test results.

A cleanup of the beaches had also made people swimming at Manila Bay a common sight although the Department of Health has warned against it.

DILG Secretary Eduardo Año said the fun run rallied more people to join the cleanup of the bay.

The southbound lane of Roxas Boulevard, from Katigbak Drive to Quirino Avenue, was closed momentarily to traffic during the event.





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# Daily Tribune

www.DailyTribune.com

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THE Manila Bay rehabilitation program is expected to last past President Rodrigo Duterte's term.



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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
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# MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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## Tons of trash collected from Pasig River

By **ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ**

The Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) has collected 500 sacks of garbage weighing around 15,000 kilograms in total during a half-day cleanup along the Pasig River last Saturday.

PRRC Executive Director Jose Antonio Goitia blamed the large volume of floating solid waste coming from Manila Bay as the main source of the garbage in Pasig River.

The agency said large volumes of waste coming from Manila Bay have originated from cities, municipalities, and provinces surrounding it.

PRRC said that since Manila Bay is usually on high tide at this time of the year, waves of garbage are washed onto the Pasig River.

"This is a natural phenomenon most especially observed during summer due to the changing weather conditions," it added.

In a cleanup drive along the Pasig River, particularly in the waters near Lawton and Parola in the city of Manila last Saturday, PRRC was able to collect around 15,000 kilograms of garbage in 500 sacks in just half a day of cleaning the river.

Sixty PRRC personnel comprised of its river warriors, patrols

and watch, and other employees helped in the manual cleanup.

PRRC is expected to resume the collection of garbage along Pasig River on Sunday. "It (cleanup) will continue in the coming days until the volume of garbage entering the river is significantly reduced," it pointed out.

Meanwhile, Goitia is calling on

the public to be more responsible in disposing their waste and help maintain the cleanliness of Pasig River, as well as the Manila Bay.

This year, the historic bay is also a focus of the comprehensive rehabilitation program of the inter-agency Manila Bay Task Force led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.



# Angat Dam dips below critical level

**But NIA gives assurance supply can meet water needs of metro residents, rice farmers**

**By Patricia Denise M. Chiu  
and Carmela Reyes-Estropo**  
@Team\_Inquirer

The water level of Angat Dam in Bulacan province, which supplies about 90 percent of the water requirements of Metro Manila and nearby provinces, has fallen below its critical level.

On Sunday, the water elevation at the dam dropped to 179.83 meters above sea level, breaching its critical low level

chief of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA), said the dam's water can still meet the irrigation requirements for rice crops in Bulacan and Pampanga and the domestic water needs of Metro Manila.

Starting May 1, the irrigation supply to 17 towns in Bulacan and four towns in Pampanga will be reduced to 20 cubic meters per second, Robles said.

The National Water Resources Board allots 36 to 40

of 180 masl, based on information from the dam operator.

The weather bureau's hydrologist, Ailene Abelardo, said that while it was normal for water levels at dams to fall during the dry season, the weak El Niño and the lack of rainfall had also contributed to the lower water level.

#### Rains expected in May

However, Abelardo said the weather bureau had forecast up

to 185 millimeters of average rainfall in May.

"If that entire amount of projected rainfall will fall, it's possible that can help maintain the water level and not let it fall too quickly," he said.

**Irrigation supply**

The weather bureau earlier said the rainy season could come as late as the first week of June.

Felix Robles, water control

#### Reduction schemes

But Robles said so far, the 20 cms are enough to supply the irrigation needs of some 20,000 farmers in Bulacan and Pampanga.

In March, water concession-

aire Manila Water Inc. started implementing pressure and supply reduction schemes, which resulted in water service interruptions in several parts of the metropolis.

On April 15, Manila Water started operating its Cardona water treatment plant which would boost water supply by 50 million liters a day. By August this year, the company expects to increase the supply to 100 million liters. INQ



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THE EXHIBENT OF THE PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
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# MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



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## Angat Dam's water level falls below minimum operating level

By **ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ**

Angat Dam's water level has fallen below its 180-meter minimum operating level on Sunday amid the lack of rainfall over the watershed area.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) recorded the Angat Dam's water elevation at 179.97 meters around 6 a.m. Sunday, down by 0.35 meters from last Saturday's 180.32 meters.

According to the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), they will be prioritizing Metro Manila's domestic water needs over irrigation and power generation.

Under the water regulator's protocol in the release of water from Angat Dam, water releases for irrigation needs in Bulacan and Pampanga will be temporarily halted or reduced once the dam's level falls below its 180-meter minimum operating level.

Earlier, NWRB Executive Director Sevillo David Jr. said lower water allocation will be implemented for irrigation in Central Luzon starting May 1 to preserve the supply for Metro Manila's

domestic water requirements during the dry season.

The Board has approved a reduction of allocation for irrigation from an average of 35 cubic meters per second (cms) in April to 10 cms in May.

The NWRB will maintain the 48 cms allocation for the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System for distribution to its concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water.

David pointed out that the lower water allocation for the National Irrigation Administration "will not have significant impact on irrigation as they (farmlands) are near the harvesting period."

The NWRB official reiterated his call to the public to continue to conserve water amid the continuous decline in Angat Dam's water level due to the dry season and El Niño.

Angat Dam is the main source of 96 percent of Metro Manila's domestic water requirements and irrigation of about 27,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga.

Its normal high water level during the rainy season is 212 meters.



## Angat Dam dips below critical level

By **LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON**

The water level in Angat Dam, Metro Manila's water source, has dipped to critical as El Niño continues to persist in the country.

The latest update from state weather bureau Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) showed Angat Dam elevation at 179.97 meters, which is below the 180-meter minimum operating water level.

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said it is expecting the water level to go down to 178 meters in the next two days.

The lowest water elevation this year is expected at 173.13

meters by the end of May, but it will gradually return to normal in June at the onset of the rainy season.

Metro Manila residents are advised to conserve water to reduce the demand from Angat, prevent the rapid decline of the water level and contribute to its recovery.

The NWRB has decided to reduce the allocation for irrigation to ensure that the 48 cubic meters per second (CMS) or 1,450 million liters per day needed by Metro Manila will be provided.

Last month, allocation for the National Irrigation Administration was at 40 CMS. This was reduced to 35 CMS for April. Starting this May,

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## Angat Dam From Page 1

allocation will only be at 10 CMS.

Allocation for the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, on the other hand, will remain at 48 CMS.

Maynilad Water Services Inc. has assured there will be no shortage in supply in its service areas.

"The NWRB retained water allocation for MWSS at normal levels for the month of May so we don't see any supply crunch for the west zone concession within that month," Maynilad spokesperson Jennifer Rufo said.

"At any rate, we continue to prepare our facilities for pressure management assuming NWRB is forced to

reduce allocation by June," she added.

The prevailing Angat Operations Rule states that when water level in the dam reaches below 180 meters, water releases shall be made on the following order of priority: municipal use, irrigation use and river maintenance.

Located in Barangay San Lorenzo (Hilltop) in Norzagaray, Bulacan, Angat Dam supplies 97 percent of Metro Manila's water needs and powers the Angat hydroelectric power plant.

The 131-meter-high dam impounds water from the Angat River that subsequently created the Angat Lake.





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# Angat water level below critical mark

BY DIVINA NOVA JOY DELA CRUZ

The state weather bureau said that as of 6:00 a.m., Angat had fallen to 179.97 meters, breaching the minimum operating level of 180 meters and well below the normal high water mark of 210 meters.

► **CriticalA2**

**T**HE water level at Angat Dam, the main source for Metro Manila, fell below a crucial mark on Sunday as the dry season and an ongoing El Niño continued to affect the country.

CRITICAL FROM A1

## Angat water level below critical mark

The supply of potable water to Metro Manila consumers is not expected to be affected, however, with authorities already having scheduled a reduction in irrigation allocations.

Next month, water releases for farmers will be reduced to 10 cubic meters per second (cms), down from 40 cms and 35 cms in March and April, respectively. The allocation for the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), on the other hand, will be maintained at 48 cms.

The National Water Resources

Board, however, has urged the public to conserve at least 4 liters of water or a total of 48 million liters daily to reduce demand on the Angat reservoir, which supplies 90 percent of Metro Manila's water supply.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) expects Angat's water level to fall to as low as 173.5 meters in May given expected rainfall during the dry season, the impact of El Niño and projected consumption.

The weather pattern has already

affected much of the country, but the weather bureau said some relief could be expected next month from increased rains.

"Ang forecast kasi natin, maulan na sa May (Our forecast is that it will be rainy in May)," Pagasa Senior Climate Specialist Rusy Abastillas said.

"Maraming areas ang magkakaroon ng near normal rainfall condition kaya nabawasan 'yung ating... potential for dry spell and drought (Many areas will experience near normal rainfall condition, lowering the potential for

dry spell and drought)," he added.

As of April 21, 22 provinces in Luzon, 11 provinces in the Visayas and 8 provinces in Mindanao were said to be suffering from droughts. Meanwhile, 23 provinces were experiencing dry spells.

Next month, only 17 provinces are expected to remain in drought, while 3 provinces will continue to be hit by dry spells.

Most of the areas that will continue to be affected by droughts are in Luzon: Bataan, Metro Manila, Cavite, Marinduque, Romblon, Albay, Camarines Norte, Cama-

rines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate and Sorsogon. In the Visayas, the 6 provinces expected to remain in drought are Aklan, Biliran, Eastern Samar, Leyte, Northern Samar and Western Samar.

Mindanao is expected to be free of El Niño conditions as rainfall normalizes. Last week, eight of its provinces were declared to be hit by droughts: Zamboanga

del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Misamis Occidental, Davao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

Abastillas, however, said that the effects of the "weak El Niño" could still prevail until August as some areas would experience below normal rainfall.



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# Manila Standard



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**WASTE NOT...** Maintenance man waters the plants along Agham Road in Quezon City unmindful of the fact that Angat Dam, which supplies 96 percent of potable water in Metro Manila, is nearing its critical low level. Authorities call for conservation measures. **Manny Palmero**



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# Duterte threatens to dump garbage on Canada beach

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Duterte yesterday threatened to dump garbage on a beach in Canada if the Canadian government fails to act on the waste sent to the Philippines.

Speaking during the opening of the Palarong Pambansa in Davao City, Duterte stressed that he would not allow Canada to turn the Philippines into a dump.

"They seem to be turning us into a dumpsite... Next

week, if you don't remove (the waste), I will dump them on your beautiful beach," he said.

"We are not a garbage dump. The Filipinos are not scavengers," he added.

Chronic Plastics Inc., a company based in Valenzuela, imported more than 50 shipping containers of waste from Canada in 2013. Environment groups have expressed alarm over the shipment, saying the waste could harm the health of local residents living near the dump sites.

Last Tuesday, Duterte ordered customs officials to return to Canada the trash sent to the Philippines in 2013, even threatening to wage war with Ottawa if the problem is not addressed. He said he was ready to personally go to the north American country to dump the garbage.

Canadian Ambassador John Holmes has said his country was ready to take back the garbage shipped to Manila and has formed a working group to act on the

issue.

Malacañang was not satisfied with Canada's response, saying the decades-old ties between the Philippines and Canada would be put at risk if the Canadian government does not take back the waste.

"The 70 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries will be put to naught if Canada (does) not act with dispatch (on)... the resolution of this undiplomatic episode to which we

take outrage," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a statement issued last Thursday.

"That it even considered performing such outlandish disposal of its garbage to an ally is dangerously disruptive of our bilateral relations," he added.

## 'You will go to hell'

In the same event, Duterte also reiterated that he would not condone any corruption under his watch.

"I do not want oppression.

I do not want corruption. *'Pag nahuli kitang ganun, mauuna ka sa impierno talaga* (If I catch you, you will be the first to go to hell). You will go to hell. *Pero susunod ako. Mapuno tayo roon* (I will follow you. Hell will be filled)," he said.

Duterte also threatened to kill drug syndicates and to combat the drug menace in the last three years of his term. He also urged the youth to get into sports, saying it would help them stay away from narcotics.

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Dan Steinbock A4

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## Canadian waste, exported pollution

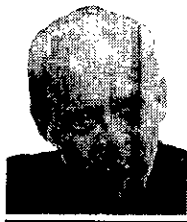
Recently, President Duterte slammed Canada for sending waste to the Philippines. Yet, the challenge is huge. Exported pollution from the advanced West penalizes the rest of the world and distorts climate gains.

PRESIDENT Duterte's statement ensued after environmental groups' renewed calls for Canada to take back the waste sent to the Philippines in the Aquino 3rd era, some six years ago.

According to the Pacific Center for Environmental Law and Litigation (PCELL), Ontario-based Chronic Inc. shipped 40-foot containers to the country in 2013, which is considered "illegal traffic" under Article 9 of the Basel Convention. More than 100 shipping containers arrived in Philippine ports around 2013-2014.

The toxic discovery, made on Mindanao, is the third (known) time in recent years that the Philippines has served as a dumping ground for hazardous foreign trash. South Korea has been the culprit on two occasions. Like the Philippines, South Korea and Canada are signatories to the Convention.

In the 2017 Asean Summit, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged to Duterte that "Canada is working hard to resolve the issue." Trudeau portrays himself as a committed proponent of



DAN  
STEINBOCK

carbon tax at home and of climate-change struggle internationally.

Yet, little progress has been achieved.

### Exporting pollution

Effective since 1992, the international Basel Convention was created to reduce the movements of hazardous waste between nations and to prevent the transfer of hazardous waste to the Third World.

Yet, it failed to contain the fatal practice. As a result, China, in the summer 2017, imposed a ban on more than 20 types of waste imports, including recyclable plastic. As it became effective in January 2018, the waste plastic commodity market took a hit and behind-the-façade dumping likely intensified elsewhere — as waste shippers sought to escape

regulatory penalties at home.

In the early 1990s many advanced economies still refused to take responsibility for the waste in the "Third World" saying they had little or nothing to do with it. The statements relied on research claiming that only 4 percent of hazardous wastes that came from OECD countries were shipped across international borders.

In reality, recent studies of carbon trade indicate that 25 percent or more of the world's total emissions have been offshored into less-wealthy economies. Here's the bottom line of the "pollution haven hypothesis": When major advanced economies set up factories or offices abroad, they often look for the cheapest option in terms of resources, labor, land, and material access. Consequently, environmentally unsound practices expose vulnerable developing economies, which tend to have less stringent environmental regulations.

For instance, when Americans turn spent batteries to be recycled, they often end up in Mexico, where the lead is extracted by crude methods that are illegal in the

US, due to tougher environmental standards on lead pollution. To avoid costly regulation at home, US battery industry exports the lead to Mexico, which thus serves as America's "pollution heaven."

Today, there is increasing awareness of the detrimental impact of CO2 pollution on the world climate, yet countries vary widely in how they design and enforce environmental laws. That allows some multinational firms to look "environmentally friendly" in their advanced economies, even as they dump waste into less prosperous economies, which are then charged for pollution.

According to new research, firms headquartered in countries with strict environmental policies perform their polluting activities abroad — in countries with relatively weaker policies. Typically, these effects are stronger for firms in high-polluting industries and with poor corporate governance characteristics.

Although firms export pollution, they nevertheless emit less overall CO2 globally in response

► Steinbock A5



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■ STEINBOCK FROM A4

## Canadian waste

to strict environmental policies at home and use it as a "resource" for new green technologies — two birds with one stone, if you will.

### Pollution gains in the West, penalizing the rest

Here's the dilemma: The US and particularly the EU, have made major strides in reducing greenhouse gas emissions at home. But when international trade is taken into account, advanced economies have effectively "outsourced" a big bulk of their carbon pollution overseas, by importing more steel, cement and other goods from factories in China, emerging Asia and elsewhere.

The UK, the first industrializer, cut its domestic emissions within its borders by one-third between 1990 and 2015. However, if these figures are reassessed in terms of emissions from imported steel, the UK's total carbon footprint has actually slightly increased. In the same period, progressive advanced countries, such as Japan and Germany, cut their own emissions, but doubled or tripled the carbon dioxide they offshored to China.

As long as no coordinated, long-term international effort is undertaken to address all contributing factors in climate change, key stakeholders, including multinationals, will find ways to partially circumvent strict environmental regulations in their wealthy home markets,

while moving production capacity into relatively poorer emerging and developing economies.

When President Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Accord, had vital environmental regulatory practices dismantled and then began the push for "made in America" coal and steel (his trade hawks have deep ties with the steel industry) and started oil exports for the first time in decades, he virtually ensured that environmental progress in the 20th century America will be undermined in the 21st century.

Yet, the problem is an old one. In 1992, Jim Puckett of Greenpeace, coined the term "toxic colonialism" for the dumping of industrial waste from the advanced West onto the territories of emerging and developing countries.

Environmental pollution has not disappeared from the advanced West; it has been exported to more vulnerable economies.

*Dr. Dan Steinbock is the founder of Difference Group and has served at the India, China and America Institute (US), Shanghai Institute for International Studies (China) and the EU Center (Singapore). For more, see <http://www.differencegroup.net/>*

*The commentary is based on Dr. Steinbock's recent presentation on the economic and human costs of exported pollution and toxic colonialism.*

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Canadian waste, exported pollution



**HINDI** basurahan ang Pilipinas.

Sinomang dayuhang magtatangkang magtapon ng basura sa Pilipinas, magbantay-bantay.

Ipababalik at ipabalik ng administrasyong Duterte ang basura sa pinanggalingan nito.

### **BASURA MULA CANADA**

Kaugnay ito ng basurang itinapon ng mga Canadian sa ating bansa noon pang Agosto 2013-Enero 2014.

Ikinarga ang basura sa 103 container van at binubuo ito ng mga plastic, electronic parts, nabubulok at 'di nabubulok na basura sa kusina, damit na mga diaper na may dumi ng tao, kemikal at iba pa bagama't idineklarang purong plastic para sa recycling umano.

Nakita ang mga basura sa ilang container van na binuksan ng Bureau of Customs makaraang walang kumukuhang consignee o importer na kumuha sa mga ito.

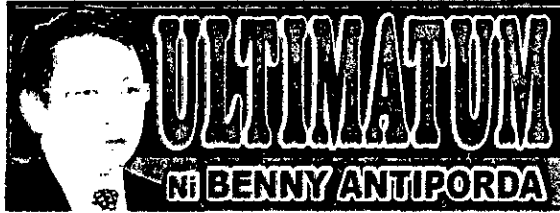
Agad na nagsampa ng kaso ang BOC laban sa importer na Chronic Plastics Inc. sa sala ni Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 1 Judge Tita Bughao na nagdesisyon noong Hunyo 30, 2016 na pabalikin ang basura sa Canada at gagastusan ito ng importer.

Habang nagtatagal, bumaho at umalingasaw na ang mga basura sa Manila International Container Port at tumatagas ang nagtubig na basura kaya itinapon ang laman ng 26 container van sa Tarlac landfill habang ang marami sa mga ito ay inilipat sa Subic Freeport.

### **MGA PALUSOT**

Dalawang beses nang pumunta si Canadian Prime Ministre Justin Trudeau sa Pinas.

Noong 2015, hindi inungkat ni Pangulong Benigno Aquino III kay



## **PINAS, 'DI BASURAHAN NG IBANG MGA BANSA**

Trudeau ang problema kahit pa tinawagan na noon ni dating Davao City Mayor at ngayo'y Pang. Rodrigo Duterte na makipag-usap.

Nitong huling pagpunta ni Trudeau sa Pilipinas sa ginanap na Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit Meeting noong November 2017, inilabas ni Pang. Duterte kay Trudeau ang isyu.

Nagsabi si Trudeau na wala siyang magagawa dahil parehong pribadong kompanya ang nag-usap at wala pang batas ang Canada kung paano resolbahin ang pagtatapon ng basura ng mga taga-Canada sa ibang bansa.

Nitong 2018, sinabi ni Trudeau na "baka" pupwede nang maibalik ang basura sa Canada pero problema umano kung sino ang gagastos.

Habang lumilipas ang panahon, tila nagpapalipas din ng oras ang Canada o sadyang minamaliit ni Trudeau ang liderato ng Pilipinas sa isyu sa pag-sasabing maliit naman umano ang bulto ng basura dahil nasa 2,500 tonelada lang at hindi toxic.

Anak ng tokwa, hindi ba malaki ang basurang ipinalaman sa 103 40 footer container van na basura at hindi ba toxic at hazardous ang basura nang magsimulang mabulok at umalingasaw?

### **PINABABALIK NA NI DIGONG**

Nitong nagdaang mga araw, nagbabala na si Pang. Digong na ipasasakay na nito sa mga barko at ibabalik sa Canada ang mga basura makalipas ang isang linggo kung hindi pa aaksyon ang Canada.

'Saka ngayon nagngaga-

ngawa ang Canada na gumagawa na sila ng mga hakbang para maresolba ang isyu.

Ngayon ay mismong mga Canadian environmentalist at iba pa ang nagtutulak kay Trudeau na kunin na ang mga basura.

### **MAGALING ANG SOUTH KOREA**

Kaiba ang nangyari sa basurang 6,500 toneladang basura na itinapon ng South Korean company na Green Soko na tinanggap ng kompanyang Verde Soko sa Pilipinas at inilapag sa Mindanao.

Hiniling ng Pilipinas sa South Korea na kumilos para bumalik sa kanilang bansa ang basurang tinatakan ding plastic pero ire-recycle sa Pinas.

Tumugon agad ang South Korea, nagpadala ng mga opisyal nito at ininspeksyon ang mga basura.

Nagsimulang kunin ng South Korea nitong Pebrero 2018 ang mga basura at saka kinasuhan ang Green Soko.

### **SERYOSOHIN**

Seryoso ang Pilipinas sa giyera sa basura at isa lamang ang pagpapabalik ng basurang Canada sa mga hakbang nito para unti-unting malinis ang buong bansa mula sa basura.

May mga tagumpay na ang Pilipinas laban sa basura gaya sa Boracay at Manila Bay at dapat gawin itong tuloy-tuloy kahit pa sa mga basura ng ibang bansa.

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Anomang reaksyon o reklamo ay maaaring iparating sa 0922840-3333 o i-email sa banti-porda@yahoo.com.



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A father looks on as artists apply finishing touches on an art installation depicting a blue whale killed by ingestion of plastic materials, at the Cultural Center of the Philippines grounds in Pasay City on Saturday. AP

THE PHILIPPINE STAR  
**metro**

EDITOR: DULCE A. SANCHEZ

MONDAY, 1 APRIL 29, 2019



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# 'Dead Whale' art installation at CCP for Earth Day 2019

The Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) presents a reworking of the "Dead Whale" for its 2019 Earth Day Outdoor Installation currently on view at the CCP front lawn, aimed at urging more people to talk about what can be done regarding plastic pollution.

For the CCP's "The Cry of the Dead Whale" installation, a new element has been added — a dead baby whale inside the belly of the dead whale. A representation of the millennials (the generation that will inherit the future of our oceans), it is both a statement and a question directed at the target audience. It aims to jumpstart discussions on whether generations to come would still get to enjoy or experience the wonders of the ocean. It wants people to ask questions such as: "Will our marine animals, particularly our whale, go extinct soon?" or "Will our grandsons and granddaughters ever get to know living sea creatures?" or "What can I do?" or "Am I ready to give up plastic?" or "Where can I start?"

A supposed "dead whale" was seen on the shores of Naic, Cavite on May 11, 2017, which was in fact an art installation. What looked like a dead whale from afar was really made of plastic waste up close.

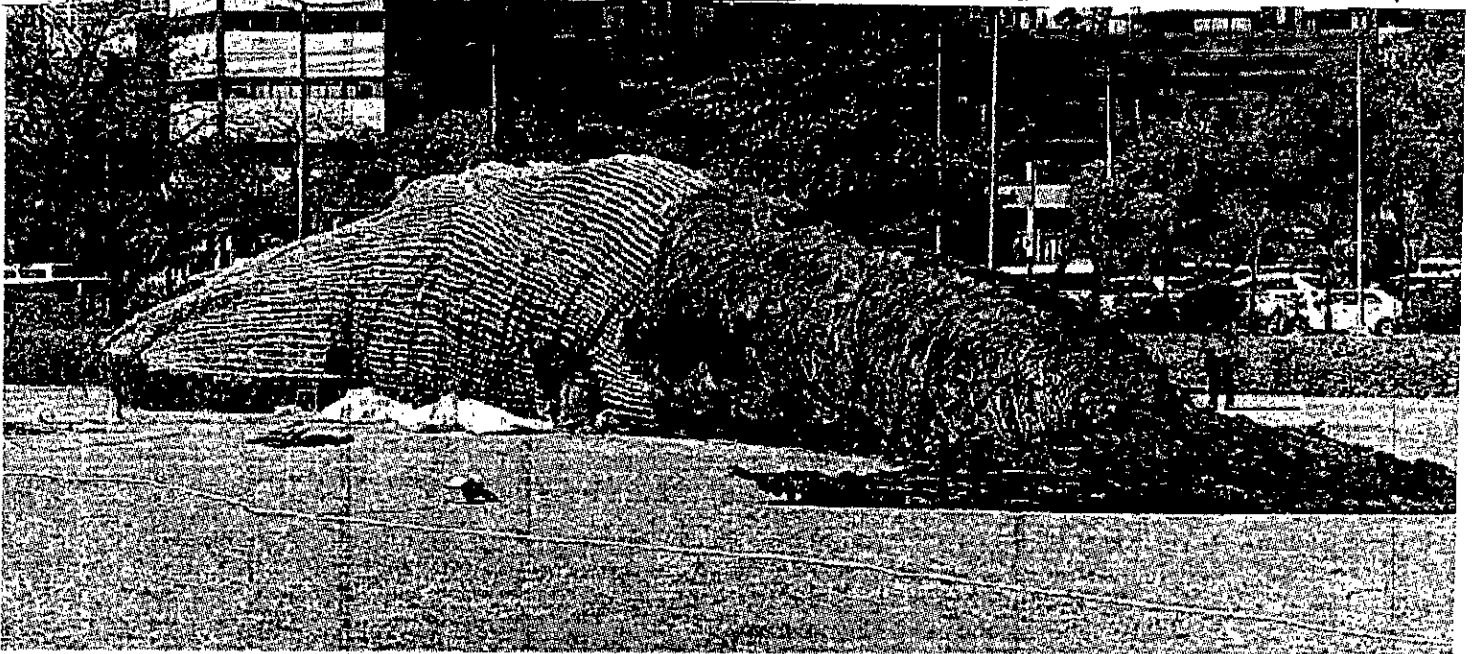
The Philippines ranks third in the list of countries with the most plastic wastes going into the oceans. To address the issue, and with a very limited budget, the strategy taken was a disruptive, monumental execution that effectively spread the message on the worsening case of plastic pollution. The sculpture

was unveiled on the shores of one of the most polluted water bodies in the country — the Manila Bay.

The original "Dead Whale" installation in Cavite, a collaboration between a non-governmental environmental organization and Dentsu Jayme Syfu led by creative director Biboy Royong, was displayed for only three days and was dismantled immediately to prevent the plastic waste used from going into the ocean. Mounting the "Dead Whale" for a longer period of time will give more

people a chance to experience what it might feel like to encounter, or be confronted by, a decomposing whale victimized by the increasing presence of plastic in our oceans.

"The Cry of the Dead Whale" may be viewed at the CCP front lawn until May 26. For information, call the Visual Arts and Museum Division, Production and Exhibition Department at 832-1125 loc. 1504/1505 and 832-3702, mobile 0917-6033809, email [ccp.exhibits@gmail.com](mailto:ccp.exhibits@gmail.com) or visit [www.culturalcenter.gov.ph](http://www.culturalcenter.gov.ph).



"The Cry of the Dead Whale" installation at CCP





# Earth Day after Easter

**T**he April 22, 2019 Earth Day followed this year's Easter Sunday, raising hopes that people are going to continue working for the common good by caring for our only home—a resurrection after a crucifixion, with people following the example of Jesus Christ.

Started in 1970 as an international effort to raise environmental awareness, Earth Day was followed by the Unesco Declaration on the Role of Religion in the Promotion on the Culture of Peace (1994).

This document recognized every human being's "inescapable responsibility for the well-being of the entire world ... [where] we face a crisis which could bring about the suicide of the human species or bring us a new awakening and a new hope."

Indeed, all great religions embrace a common Golden Rule.

Much later in this new millennium, the Holy Father Pope Francis issued "Laudato Si," an encyclical letter of 246 paragraphs to begin dialogues with all people, "On Care for Our Common Home."

"Laudato Si" translates as "Praise to you," the first line of a canticle by St. Francis praising God with all of his creation.

It deals with the destruction that humans render to the environment and fellow men; it probes deep into the philosophical, theological and cultural roots of this phenomenon, summarizing the collective ideas of wisdom keepers of the human species.

## Signs of the times

Glaciers melting faster than anticipated. Wildfires simultaneously occurring with winter storms in another end of a continent. Droughts and record rainfall in another. Disappearing species just as new ones are found even in a country as environmentally challenged as



## MAPPING THE FUTURE

FEDERICO 'POCH' M.  
MACARANAS

the Philippines.

*Homo sapiens* producing ever sophisticated tools to manage their everyday life, more than domesticating fire for them to cook and digest food beyond their natural form—which "inadvertently opened the way to the jumbo brains of Neanderthals and Sapiens ... and gained control of an obedient and potentially limitless force ... choose when and where to ignite a flame." (Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* p. 13)

Where is the common good today as the 4th Industrial Revolution surges forward when many Filipinos still are unaware of its many implications?

Former President Corazon Aquino, in a Smithsonian Institution speech (Washington, D.C. November 1989) on the occasion of an environment exhibit of the Philippines, focusing on its marine resources and the coconut as the tree of life, noted: "The destruction of the Earth has gone so far that we have started to notice changes in what man believed were eternal verities: the limitless hospitality of the Earth for human life and the permanence of its scenic grandeur..."

She rightly pointed to the two major solutions to the problems: "the rapid reduction of the emissions of

greenhouse gases in the industrialized North, and the reversal of alarming trends of deforestation among the poor countries of the South."

## Beyond usual indicators

Today, the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 have embraced an understanding of the roots of environmental destruction noted in "Laudato Si."

Corporations have set up systems of integrated global responsibility reporting that include environment and people concerns for efficiency, equity and sustainability across generations—but such adoption is the exception more than the rule.

Some states within federal systems opt out of the national view of purported global leaders that climate change is a hoax, and continue implementing Paris Accord agreements to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, and to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Economists of old stripes have come to grips with non-market forces shaping the well-being of people; more Nobel laureates are given to those exploring neurosciences and psychology, biology and its interphase with digital and physical engineering for artificial intelligence, machine learning, etc.

Yet some people believe that they can be saved through planning at their limited levels—without a perspective higher than mere material targets. Bhutan has long reminded mankind that gross national happiness makes us more fulfilled than traditional counting of beans harvested and consumed.

People relations with each other and nature do matter.

The richest eight people in the planet have amassed wealth equivalent to that of 3.6 billion poorest people, five of them in technology

businesses. In a winner-takes-all world, be it in business or politics, traditional corporate social responsibility cannot substitute for discussions of universal basic income, the human rights to information, the dignity of civilized discourse and the genuine care for our common home.

## Lighting a new fire

The fire that collapsed the spire and burned the roof of Notre Dame, the finest Gothic church architectural showcase in Paris, reminds us of the fragility of all human structures as climate change rages all over the planet.

Asian Institute of Management president Jikyeong Kang at last week's Earth Day celebration in Makati quoted Aquino most memorably:

"A blue pearl is a rare find in the earth's ocean. So is a planet like ours in the universe. The chance of finding another Earth in all its vast reaches is less than one in a billion trillion trillion ... That blue pearl in the void, so soothing to the eye, is flanked by two glaring red planets, whose soaring temperatures and raging, lifeless surfaces hint at the future of the planet."

President Kang urged the participants to light a new fire: FIR3—the fourth industrial revolution in three Es to save the planet through its applications in Environment, Enterprise development and Education. INQ



This article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines, or MAP. The author helps in the May 27-28, 2019 MAP-AIM Management Educators Workshop with the theme on the 4th Industrial Revolution to be held at St. Paul University Philippines in Tuguegarao. Feedback at <map@map.org.ph>, <fmmacaranas@hotmail.com> and <fmmacaranas@gmail.com>. For previous articles, please visit <map.org.ph>



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THE EXHIBENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
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# MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER.



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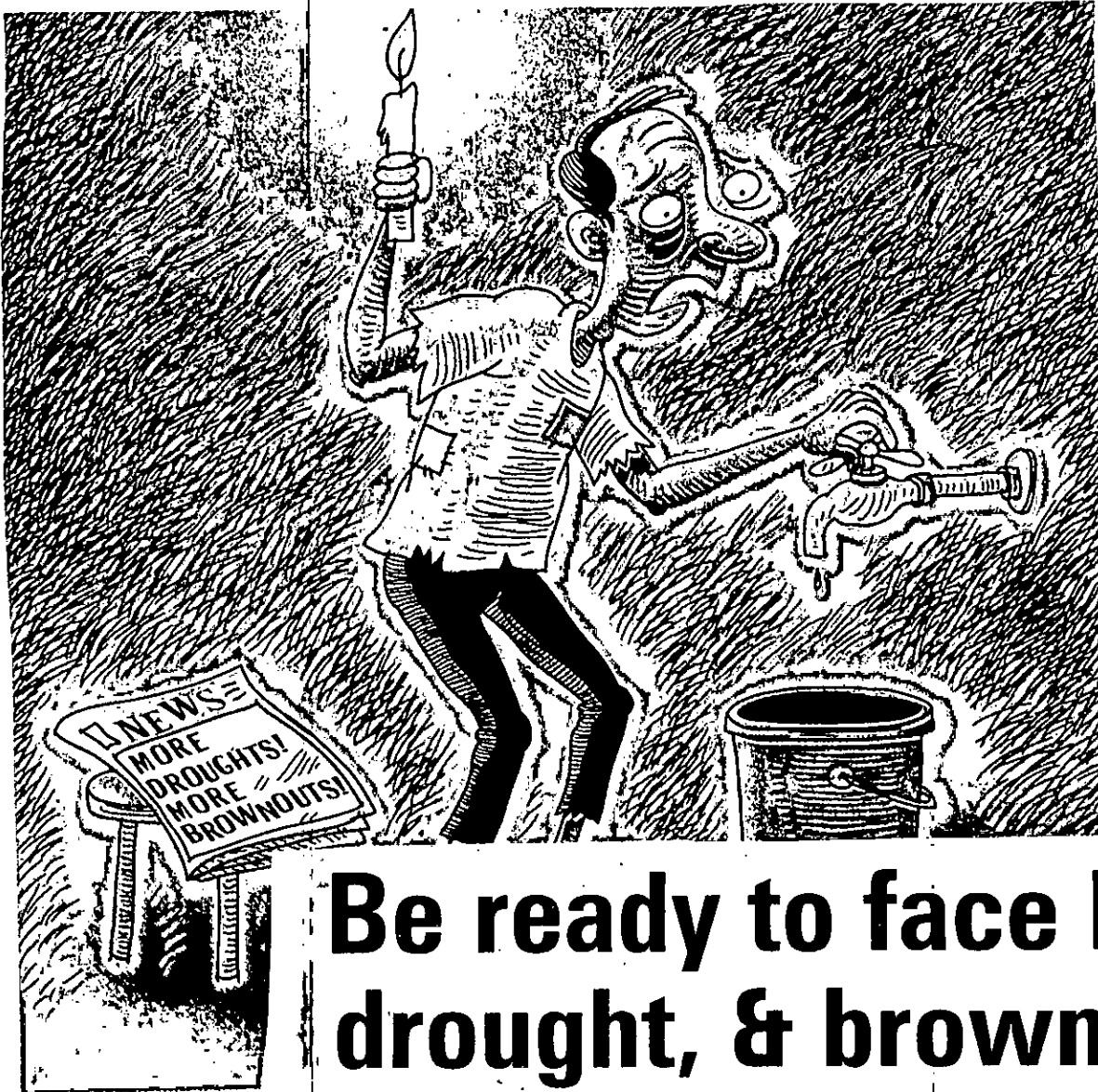
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## Be ready to face heat, drought, & brownouts

**W**E had a number of unusually strong earthquakes last week – in Pampanga and Zambales on Monday, in Eastern Samar on Tuesday, then in Davao and Batangas on Wednesday. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are part of life in this country, which is on the Pacific Ring of Fire. Typhoons are also ordinary parts of our life, as we are right in the path of these annual weather disruptions moving from the Pacific to Asia.

For now, we have to endure the heat of summer and its effect on two of our most basic needs – water and electric power for our households, factories, and offices.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said Wednesday that Metro Manila and 16 provinces in Luzon and Visayas are facing drought conditions around the end of May. Bohol, Cebu, and Southern Leyte will have a dry spell, a slightly less severe condition than a drought. We used to have rains, beginning in the last week of May, but not this year because of the El Niño spreading its heat from over the Pacific.

Because of the drought, the water level in our

dams has steadily gone down. The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said the water level at Angat Dam, which supplies 96 percent of Metro Manila's water needs and irrigation for 27,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga, was down to 181.63 meters last Wednesday, way down from its high level of 212 meters during the rainy season. It was expected to breach the minimum operating level of 180 meters this weekend, at which time, the release of water for irrigation water will be reduced. The water supply for Metro Manila stays, but the alert is on.

Also because of the summer heat, the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) said the demand in the Luzon grid has now exceeded the supply, so there will now be rotating brownouts in various parts of Luzon and Metro Manila. The recent earthquakes also forced unplanned outages in some power plants.

The summer heat, water shortage, power shortage – we should be ready to take all these coming problems in stride. They may be considerably intensified this year because of El Niño, but we have always survived these conditions in the past and we will again.



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
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## FOCUS

# Climate change puts pressure on oil industry

**PARIS:** The oil industry, under mounting pressure from environmental activists to react more quickly to counter climate change, has begun to change its strategy, but is struggling to convince critics it is doing enough.

Last week, activists, responding to a call from the Extinction Rebellion group, laid siege to Shell's London headquarters, whose windows were smashed.

Several days later, hundreds of activists blocked several symbolic sites in France, including the headquarters of oil giant Total.

"They are mastodons whose business model is based on fossil fuels and which don't want to shift one iota because up until now they've made money that way," said Cecile Marchand, who heads up climate activities of the French branch of the Friends of the Earth network of environmental protection groups.

"The activities of these multinationals are not at all regulated today, and they should be if we are to be serious about the idea of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees" Celsius, she added, referring to the goal laid out in the 2015 Paris climate deal.

The pressure isn't only coming from environmental activists.

"Investment funds are now requiring oil and gas companies to explain how climate change might affect a company's value," said David Elmes, a professor at Warwick Business School.

"This is driving some companies to be much more transparent about the emissions they cause and their plans to reduce them," he added.

### Oil to gas

The big actors in the sector — BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Saudi Aramco, Shell, Total and others — have banded together in the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI), which has a billion-dollar war chest to fund initiatives to reduce climate change emissions.

The companies are trying to limit their methane emissions, which escape when fossil fuels are taken out of the ground and transported.

Along with agriculture, the energy industry remains a key source of methane, which causes more warm-

ing than carbon dioxide.

Other energy giants are trying to counterbalance their carbon footprint, like the Italian group ENI, which has promised to plant vast forests.

Chief Executive Officer Claudio Descalzi has said "our objective is to achieve net zero emissions in our upstream business by 2030" via emission reductions and offsets.

The industry has also taken on board a strategic shift toward using more natural gas — which has a lighter carbon footprint than oil — as well as producing electricity via renewables like wind and solar.

Shell recently surprised observers by declaring its ambition to become the world's top electricity producer by 2030.

### 'Evidence' lacking

But some environmental groups point to the fact that energy companies are still pouring most of their investments into pumping out more fossil fuels.

"These companies want to continue exploiting fossil fuels as long as possible," said Marchand. "For them, climate change doesn't matter."

While the spectacular plunge in oil prices in 2014 led to a drastic cut in investment in exploration and development by energy firms, such spending is on the rise again.

Plans by oil and gas majors to spend \$4.9 trillion on fuel exploration are incompatible with the goal of the Paris climate deal to limit the rise in global temperature rises, according to an analysis released last week by the pressure group Global Witness.

"The evidence that people are looking for is whether companies are shifting the billions they invest each year away from fossil fuels," said Elmes.

"While some companies are making commitments to do so ... the percentage being invested in non-fossil fuel businesses are still small," he added.

To achieve the Paris targets, oil consumption needs to begin declining dramatically in the next couple of years, according to estimates by the International Energy Agency, which would only be possible by a major shift by the transportation sector towards electric vehicles.

AFP