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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



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Demystifying the vanishing Palawan pangolin

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

WITH great enthusiasm, Shiela, Elvie and JR, young research assistants of the Katala Foundation Inc., have been braving the wilderness of Southern Palawan for months in search of the elusive pangolins.

Their mission: to know more about the pangolins before they become extinct.

Carrying nothing but backpack loaded with extra shirts, a towel, water, food, a notebook, pen and the all-important global-positioning satellite device and a satellite phone, plus camera traps, they trek unfamiliar terrains, climb trees, crawl under thick shrubs and tall grasses, cross rivers and streams, night or day, looking for signs—scratch mark, tracks or footprints, even feces left behind by the little-known scaly anteater or pangolin (*Manis culionensis de Elera*) that can only be found in Palawan.

The Philippines, an archipelago comprising of 7,641 islands and islets, is one of the megadiverse countries in the world. However, it is also one of the so-called biodiversity hot spots because of the rapid rate of biodiversity loss.

Experts say because of biodiversity loss that's aggravated by illegal wildlife trade, highly vulnerable endemic species the Philippines is known for may have become extinct even before their discovery.

Previously thought to be the Malayan or Sunda pangolin (*M. javanica*), the Palawan pangolin remains a mystery even to the indigenous people of Palawan, considered the country's last ecological frontier. While there is no

empirical data that would suggest the accuracy of their claim, as far as the upland communities are concerned, the Palawan pangolins are vanishing.

Commissioned to do research on the Palawan pangolins by the Protect Wildlife Project that is funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Southern Palawan, conservation efforts are focused on the Palawan pangolins because of the threat of illegal wildlife trade, with the hope of saving the critically endangered species before it becomes extinct.

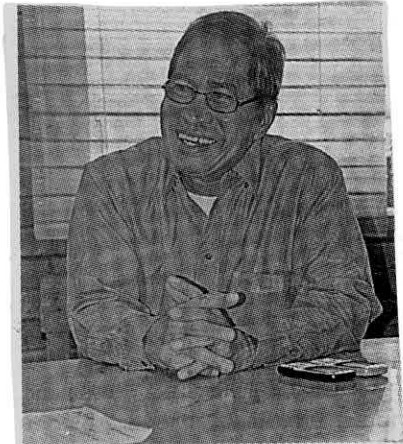
The Katala Foundation Inc. is expected to complete the research and come up with policy

recommendation to save the vanishing Palawan pangolin by the end of the year.

Mysterious mammal

IN funding the "Study on the Indicative Presence and Abundance of the Palawan Pangolin in Southern-Central Palawan," Protect Wildlife Project Communications Manager Lawrence San Diego said the Palawan pangolin is the only pangolin species endemic to a single country.

"The Philippine pangolin is a priority species for conservation of the Protect Wildlife Project," he said.



NELSON DEVANADERA, executive director of the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development. JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

This is because the Palawan pangolin is one of the least studied species of pangolin and there is very little scientific information available to properly manage its remaining population.

The study aims to determine the mammal's rate of exploitation and abundance in the wild to come up with policy recommendation and plan of action that will help protect and conserve this vanishing species.

So far, the study is focused on Victoria-Anepahan Mountain Range, which has a total land area of 510,520.66 hectares. The Victoria-Anepahan Mountain Range straddles Puerto Princesa City, Aborlan, Narra and Quezon towns. The area has been identified as an important habitat for biodiversity and endemic Palawan species, such as the pangolin.

The Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) and the Palawan State University are also embarking on research to know more about the diet of the Palawan pangolin, to aid in managing its population and, hopefully, come up with ways to boost its population on the island.



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Demystifying the Vanishing Palawan Pangolin

Nelson Devanadera, PCSD executive director, said samples of pangolin's feces will also be sent to Australia for laboratory testing. He said knowing the diet and nutrients of the pangolin's—basically, ants and termites—will help explain why it is now the most sought-after animal because of the belief that its meat and scale have medicinal value, hence, is now being hunted to extinction.

More important, he said, knowing what plant species the ants and termites eat, must be identified in order to protect and conserve them from various threats, and if possible, propagate them in other areas, to help protect and conserve the pangolin.

In the meantime, he said PCSD is working closely with various law-enforcement agencies to prevent illegal wildlife trade, not only of pangolin but other threatened species of Palawan.

What locals know

WHILE very little is known about the species, the Palawan State University has held interviews and focus group discussions with upland communities to gather information on sightings and presence of pangolins in their areas, its traditional uses and hunting techniques; and known practices on its collection and trade.

According to local communities, poaching and illegal trade of pangolin meat and scales persist. The meat can fetch for \$3 to \$5 a kilogram, while the scales can be sold for \$130 to \$190 a kilo.

While communities are aware that hunting and trade of pangolins are illegal, they continue to persist.

Meanwhile, the field research team from Katala Foundation had so far conducted ground sur-

veys in 12 200-hectare plots in the wilderness of the Victoria-Anepahan Mountain Range, entailing actual search, recording and measurement of pangolins in the wild and observing their forest habitats.

Initial results of the study revealed that from September to December 2018, the team recorded 14 pangolins—two of which are pregnant—in a total surveyed area of 800 hectares.

The ground surveys showed that slash-and-burn farming, charcoal making and timber poaching continue in forest habitats where the pangolins are recorded.

'Most illegally traded animal'

ACCORDING to the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), pangolins are the most illegally traded animal in the world.

Hunted for their meat and scales for use in traditional medicine, these shy nocturnal mammals may become extinct faster than elephants, tigers, rhinos and other iconic animals, whether in Africa or Asia.

There are eight known species of pangolins, four are found in Africa and four in Asia.

All pangolin species were listed in Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) of Wild Fauna and Flora Appendix I in 2016. The inclusion in Appendix I means the pangolins—all eight species including the Palawan pangolin—are threatened with extinction.

Under Cites Appendix I, the trade in specimens of these species are permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

According to EIA as many as 1 million pangolins have been illegally traded within Asia in the past 10 to 15 years.

Organized crime

IN the Philippines, the Palawan pangolin is also the most illegally traded animal and the perpetrators are well organized. Anti-illegal wildlife trade operatives believe that organized crime syndicates are behind the lucrative pangolin trade and are in cahoots with local communities.

Just last month, authorities arrested two fishermen and a van driver for transporting 10 live pangolins in Barangay Mendez Crossing East, Tagaytay City.

Arrested were Simfroso Cauntay Salazar, 53, driver and a resident of Kilometer 115 Talisay, Calatagan, Batangas; Jorlan Libertino Torquinada, 39, and Victor Cabuniag Equiza, 40, of P. Mabuhay Abaroan, Roxas, Palawan.

Rogelio Demelletes, a senior

management specialist and one of the anti-illegal wildlife trade operatives of the Philippine Operations Group on Ivory and Illegal Wildlife (Task Force Pogi) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said the fact that two of the suspects are from Roxas town is proof that locals are in cahoots with the members of the syndicate.

Deeper investigation

THE Task Force Pogi said the investigation on the illegal pangolin trade is without letup.

"We are still conducting a follow-up investigation. What we want is to identify the buyers and catch them," Demelletes said.

As for the arrested suspects from Tagaytay City, Demelletes said authorities have so far initiated inquest proceedings but cases have yet to be filed.

Asked what will be the next step for the DENR Task Force Pogi and its partner-law-enforcement agencies, he said: "We need to cut down at least one of the participants in the trade cycle."

Ricardo Calderon, the DENR's assistant secretary for Staff Bureau and concurrent Director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), underscored the importance of combatting the illegal trade on pangolin in Palawan.

He said the DENR continues to strengthen the capacity of law-enforcement agencies, including its own, and is coordinating with concerned government agencies and institutions to stop illegal wildlife trade, with particular focus on the Palawan pangolin.

"We are strengthening our wildlife enforcement in our seaport. In Palawan, we are coordinating with PCSD as they have jurisdiction over Palawan as per Wildlife Act. Wildlife trafficking is now a transnational crime and we have law-enforcement coordination at the regional level among 10 Asean member-states," he said.

Pangolins are very vulnerable. While they appear to be a sturdy species, these nocturnal, very shy mammals, are sure to die in captivity.

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Demystifying the Vanishing Palawan pangolin

Demelletes said three of the 10 recovered pangolins have already died because of stress.

"In the next few days, the remaining seven may also die because pangolins are hard to feed. But because they are evidence in court, we cannot just return them to Palawan," he lamented.

As authorities step up the various initiatives to know more about the little-known species, they are also racing against time to prevent the illegal wildlife trade to prevent

A RESEARCHER of Katala Foundation Inc. shows pangolin. The project was commissioned by the USAID-funded Protect Wildlife Project.
KATALA FOUNDATION/USAID-PROTECT WILDLIFE PROJECT



PALAWAN pangolin KATALA FOUNDATION/USAID-PROTECT WILDLIFE PROJECT





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DENR probes Ifma over ancestral domain of Mindanao tribal groups

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will look into the appeal of a group of indigenous peoples for the cancellation of a 28-year-old Integrated Forestry Management

Agreement (Ifma) the DENR awarded to a private agricultural company in Southern Mindanao.

In an interview, Director Nonito M. Tamayo of the DENR's Forest Management Bureau (FMB) said the review of the Ifma held by M&S Co. began after the filing of a petition for cancellation filed by the T'boli-

Manobo S'daf Claimants Organization (Tamasco).

Tamayo said he has referred the case to the DENR Regional Office to look into the complaint.

Tamayo, who led a review of all existing DENR land deals, including Ifmas in 2017 and 2018, said they found no violation on the part

of Ifma holders, including that of M&S Co.

"That was last year. Now, because of the complaint, we are referring the case to the region for review and recommendation," Tamayo said.

Gross violation of the terms and conditions of the Ifma is a ground

for its cancellation.

M&S Co., a holder of Ifma covering about 29,000 hectares of public lands for 28 years now, operates the Dawang Coffee Plantation in South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat.

Together with leaders of several nongovernment organizations under Task Force Tamasco, the group

and their supporters trooped to the DENR Central Office last week to file the petition.

Allegedly the Ifma, a government contract awarded to a private sector for the use of public lands, expired in 2016 but was allegedly extended without the consent of the concerned IP community.



SLOW IMPLEMENTATION COST GOV'T P10.7M

COA CITES 2 DENR PROJECTS FOR DELAY

By Patricia Denise M. Chiu
@PDMChiuINQ

The slow implementation of two foreign-funded projects of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has resulted in the government paying P10.707 million in commitment fee, the Commission on Audit (COA) revealed.

In its annual audit report of the DENR, the COA found that the Forestland Management Project (FMP) and the Integrated Natural Resources and Environmental Management Project (Inremp), both foreign-assisted projects, reported low physical progress, which caused the government to pay a commitment fee of P10.707 million for 2018.

The FMP, which is funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency, only posted a

76.15-percent accomplishment rate, vis-à-vis its 98.58-percent target for the end of the year.

38% completed

Meanwhile, the Inremp, funded by the Asian Development Bank, accomplished only 38 percent, compared to its year-end target of 78 percent completion.

Due to the delay in the implementation of the projects, the government was forced to pay a total of P10.707 million in commitment fees, of which P6.927 million went to the Inremp and P3.78 million for the FMP.

According to the report, a commitment fee is paid by a borrower to a bank or lender in exchange for the agreement to grant the loan at a later date.

The fee serves as compensation to the lender in ex-

change for the lender agreeing to set aside the amount of the loan, instead of utilizing it for other purposes, which could potentially earn income.

Both projects are overseen by the DENR's Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Services (FASPS).

In addition to costing the government money, the COA said that the delay also "defeats the project goals of inclusive growth and poverty reduction for the Inremp and integrating conservation and development-oriented activities with full participation and capacitation of local communities for the FMP."

The COA recommended that the DENR instruct its FASPS office to "conduct periodic reviews to ensure that bottlenecks and issues affecting the project implementation are immediately addressed." INQ



Bulacan airport project gets DENR clearance

OBANDO, BULACAN—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has issued an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) to the company that will put up a P734-billion international airport in Bulacan province.

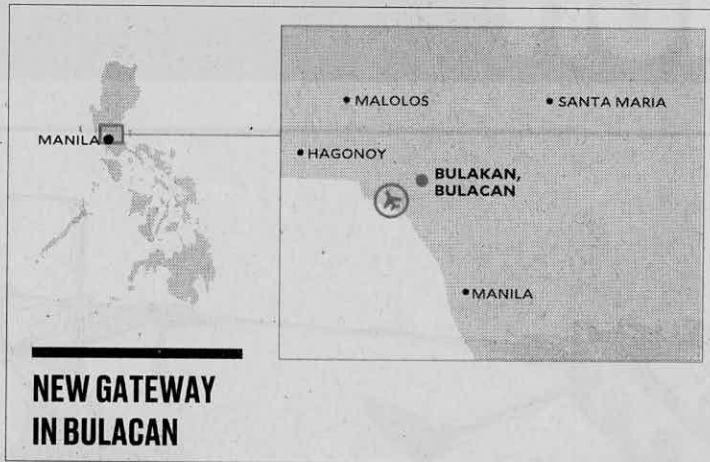
Lormelyn Claudio, DENR director in Central Luzon, said she approved on June 14 the ECC of Silvertides Holdings, a contractor of San Miguel Corp. (SMC), to develop 2,070 hectares in the coastal villages of Bambang and Taliptio in Bulacan town.

An ECC is issued to certify that a proposed project will not cause a significant negative environmental impact, as validated by DENR's environmental impact assessment review committee.

Silvertides has not specified the project that it will build in the area but Inquirer sources said the company had been contracted by SMC to acquire the fishponds from private owners to give way to the airport project dubbed "Aerotropolis."

International gateway

SMC earlier said it was readying construction teams for its proposed international air gateway in Bulacan. It said the project was the company's



NEW GATEWAY
IN BULACAN

SOURCE: Inquirer graphics

INQ GRAPHICS

answer to the worsening air traffic congestion at Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

The ECC issued to Silvertides required the company to strictly observe mitigating measures it presented in the environmental impact assessment.

Silvertides was also asked to come up with measures to address dust dispersion during the development.

Claudio said the construction's spoils and debris, including hazardous waste generated during construction and development phase, should be properly managed and disposed of

by Silvertides.

Local officials said Silvertides already acquired about 2,000 ha of fishponds in Bulacan. Residents in the project site raised concerns of heavy flooding and loss of livelihood when the construction for the project starts.

According to Philkairos Inc., which conducted the environmental impact assessment, the site is situated on a low ground and is flood-prone. The group has recommended building drainage canals during land development to mitigate flooding.

—CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE INQ



ACB LAUDS ASEAN ADOPTION OF BANGKOK

DECLARATION ON COMBATTING MARINE DEBRIS

THE recent adoption by the Asean heads of governments of the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris demonstrates the commitment of the 10 Asean member-states in protecting and conserving the region's rich marine resources."

This was emphasized by Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, executive director of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), as she lauded the Asean's call for collaborative actions to prevent and significantly reduce marine debris, particularly from land-based activities.

During the 34th Asean Summit held in Bangkok on June 22, the heads of states of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, through the Bangkok Declaration, recommended an integrated land-to-sea approach to prevent and reduce marine debris.

The Declaration also called for the strengthening of national laws and regulations, as well as enhancing regional and international cooperation, including on relevant policy dialogue and information sharing.

Lim said that marine pollution is a transboundary issue and its impact on marine

biodiversity is already evident with the plastics being found ingested by migratory marine species that travel across seas in the Southeast Asia and adjacent areas.

"The Declaration substantially contributes toward the achievement of Aichi Biodiversity Target 8, on bringing pollution to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity; and Strategic Goal C, on improving the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity. It requires regional efforts to combat marine debris, and considering that our rich marine biodiversity in the region contributes to food security, climate-change mitigation, and increased disaster resiliency for the people of the Asean, the Declaration provides more impetus and guidance for the ACB and development partners to strengthen our efforts to support the Asean member-states and the region to help ensure that this sincere resolve is reflected in cross-sectoral policies, and operationalised and realised on the ground," Lim explained.

She added that the Declaration will be an excellent benchmark in crafting Asean's contributions to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Lim said the Bangkok Declaration promotes mainstreaming of biodiversity and ecosystem conservation as it calls for coordination among Asean sectoral bodies to effectively address the multidimensional and far-reaching negative effects, as well as sources of marine debris pollution.

She added that the Declaration enhances the multistakeholder coordination and cooperation, including implementing joint actions and partnerships for addressing such challenge; and encourages private-sector engagement and investment in preventing and reducing marine debris,

including partnerships between public and private sector through various mechanisms and incentives.

The Bangkok Declaration also calls for the promotion of innovative solutions to enhance plastics value chains, and improve resource efficiency by prioritizing approaches such as

3R (reduce, reuse, recycle).

Lim cited the Bangkok Declaration for its call on strengthening research capacity and application of scientific knowledge to combat marine debris; accelerating advocacy and actions to increase public awareness and participation; and enhancing education for behavioral change toward preventing and reducing marine debris.

The Bangkok Declaration, she noted, demonstrates the complementarity of the Asean Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 which promotes the protection, restoration and sustainable use of coastal and marine environment.

Lim said it responds and deals with the risk of pollution and threats to such ecosystems, with the United Nations's Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and its Target 14.1 which seeks, by 2025, to "prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution."



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
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◦ RONDA PROBINSIYA ◦

BASURA SA BAGUIO NABAWASAN

BENGUET – MAKARAANG maselyohan ang kasunduan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at ang pamahalaang-lungsod ng Baguio, unti-unti nang numipis ang tambak na basura sa lungsod.

Una nang sinabi kamakailan ni DENR Usec. Benny Antiporda, naplantsa na ang ilang isyu sa basura noong tungo sa Baguio City.

Kabilang sa ikinokonsidera ay matapos ang composting machine at dapat isa ng ecological-tourism park ang tambakan.

Bukod dito, dapat ay nalinis na rin ang mga non-biogradable na basura sa lugar at nadala na ang mga ito sa sanitary landfill sa Urdaneta, Pangasinan.

Magugunita na naglabas ng cease and desist order ang DENR-Environmental Management Bureau Cordillera sa operasyon ng Irisan dumpsite dahil sa kaliwa't kanan na paglabag sa Solid Waste Management Act.

Inanunsiyo rin ni Antiporda na kabilang ang Baguio City sa mga tourist destinations na sasailalim sa rehabilitasyon katulad ng sa isla ng Boracay.



PMRT



PAGAWAAN NG KALDERO, KINANDADO NG DENR

PINASARA ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Bureau (DENR-EMB) ang pabrika ng kaldero na nagtapon ng masangsang na kemikal sa Marilao, Bulacan kamakailan.

Nakilala ang factory na Silver Bridge Metal Manufacturing Corporation matapos umalingasaw ang kemikal na itinapon nila sa bakanteng lote ng Brgy. Patubig.

Base sa report, natuklasan ang pagtatapon ng masangsang na kemikal matapos maamoy ng humigit kumulang 1,227 pamilya o 4,750 na residente na malapit sa lugar.

Agad na nagsagawa ng imbestigasyon ang kinauukulan sa pangunguna ng DENR at mga lokal na opisyal, kasama ang pulisya sa pangunguna ni Lt. Col. Amado Mendoza.

Sa imbestigasyon ng DENR-EMB 3 sa pangungu-

na ni Regional Director Lormelyn Claudio, napatunayang may paglabag sa Environment Compliance Certificate ang pagawaan.

Agad na naglabas ng cease and desist order ang DENR-EMB sa naturang pagawaan habang binigyan ng tatlong araw para magbigay ng remediation plan tungkol sa pagtatapon ng masangsang at hazardous waste.

Ani Claudio, nakitaan ng paglabag ang pagawaan dahil hindi dumaan sa tamang treatment ang aluminum slug bago ipahakot sa service provider.

Sinabi ni Ronald Gamit, production manager ng pagawaan na susunod sila sa utos ng DENR para mapanatili ang operasyon nito.

Patuloy ang ginagawang monitoring ng DENR sa naturang pagawaan at iba pang kompanya para protektahan ang kalikasan.

DICK MIRASOL III



THE EXHIBENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS SINCE 1900

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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CARTOON

08 JUL 2019

DATE

Angat Dam's water level drops to 161.34 meters

By **FREDDIE C. VELEZ** and **ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ**

CALUMPIT, Bulacan – Despite rains brought about by the southwest monsoon, the water level of Angat Dam dropped to 161.34 meters on Sunday.

Vice Governor Wilhelmino M. Sy-Alvarado said that with the rains, the water elevation of Angat Dam should be

more than 200 meters by this time.

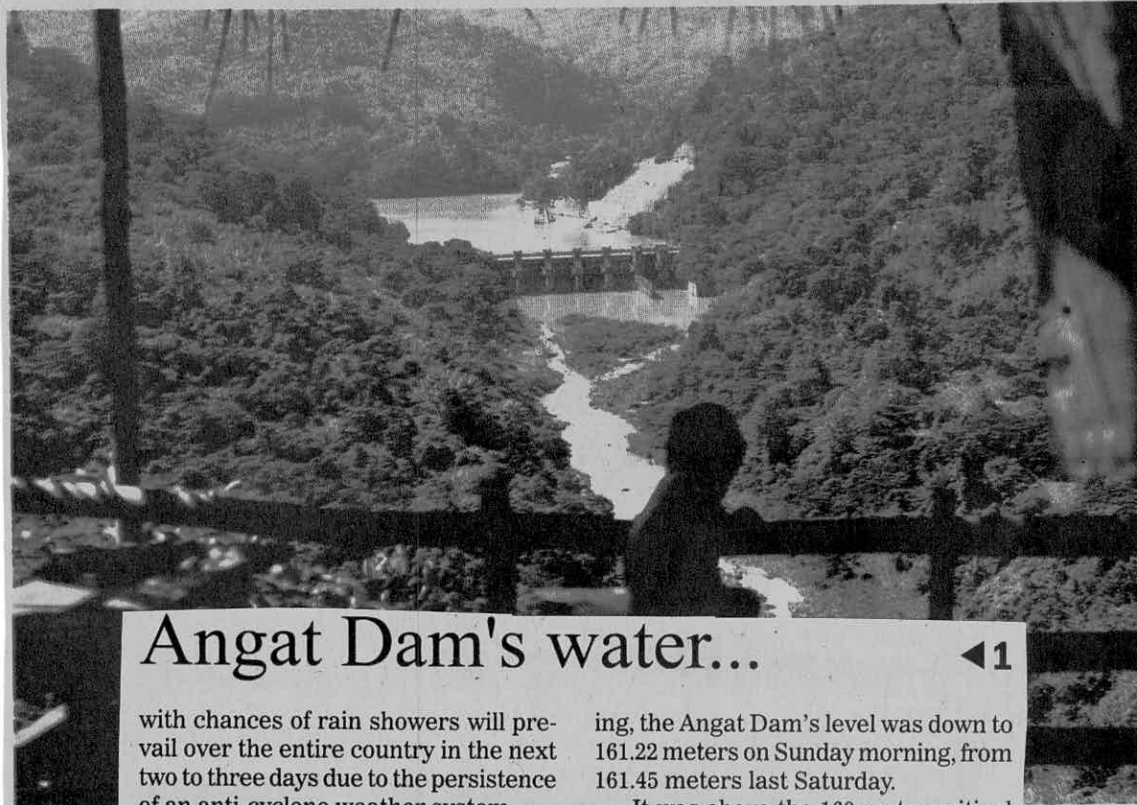
Citing Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office headed by Liz Mungeal, Alvarado said that from 161.69 water level last Friday and 161.45 last Saturday, the Angat Dam's water level dropped to 161.34 meters as of 8 a.m. on Sunday.

He said, although it's above the 160-meter critical level, it is still way below

the 180 meters of the dam's minimum operating level and in the high water level of 210.

The water level of Ipo Dam last Sunday was 99.50 meters, while Bustos Dam was 14.80 meters. Their normal water levels are 100.00 meters and 17.00 meters, respectively.

Humid days ahead
Warm and humid mornings ▶4



STILL CRITICAL
– The water level at Angat Dam continues to be closely monitored. Days of monsoon rains failed to bring the level back to normal. (EPA-EFE)

Angat Dam's water...

◀1

with chances of rain showers will prevail over the entire country in the next two to three days due to the persistence of an anti-cyclone weather system.

According to Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) weather specialist Gener Quitlong, the weather bureau does not see the formation or entry of a low-pressure area or tropical cyclone inside the country's area of responsibility until mid-week.

The ridge of a high-pressure area, an anti-cyclone weather system, will bring warm weather apart from isolated rain showers throughout the country, he said.

However, PAGASA advised the public that rains, especially during severe thunderstorms, could trigger possible flash floods or landslides over low-lying and mountainous areas.

Due to the lack of rain, Angat Dam's water level further declined on Sunday.

Based on the PAGASA's monitor-

ing, the Angat Dam's level was down to 161.22 meters on Sunday morning, from 161.45 meters last Saturday.

It was above the 160-meter critical level, but still way below Angat Dam's 180-meter minimum operating level and 210-meter normal high water level.

The National Water Resources Board (NWRD) is expecting the water supply to normalize during the peak of southwest monsoon or habagat season between July and September but the public is still encouraged to continue conserving water to help in the Angat reservoir's water level recovery.

This month, two to three cyclones usually enter or form inside the country's area of responsibility, which either move west or northwest of Luzon, based on the PAGASA's historical record.

PAGASA said the weak El Niño episode, which brought way below normal rainfall over most parts of the country will likely prevail through August, and has a chance to continue until the end of 2019.



Angat water level on the decline anew

BY VICTOR REYES

DUE to minimal rainfall, water level at Angat Dam, the main source of Metro Manila's water, has been on the decline for the last three days, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

PAGASA said Angat's water level was at 161.22 meters as of 6 a.m. yesterday, down by .23 meters from last Saturday's mark.

The agency's monitoring showed Angat's water level as of Saturday was at 161.45 meters, from last Friday's level of 161.69 meters, which was also down from Thursday's mark of 161.86 meters.

The dam's water level rose on June 30 up to Thursday last week due to rains brought by the southwest monsoon, enhanced by tropical depression "Egay" and other recent tropical cyclones.

Before June 30, Angat's water level had been on steady decline over the past months due to the El Nino phenomenon, a development that forced authorities to implement rotational water interruptions.

Angat's current elevation is just

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ANGAT

1.22 meters above the critical level of 160 meters. The dam's minimum operating level is 180 meters which officials may be attained if two to three tropical cyclones will come and bring rains.

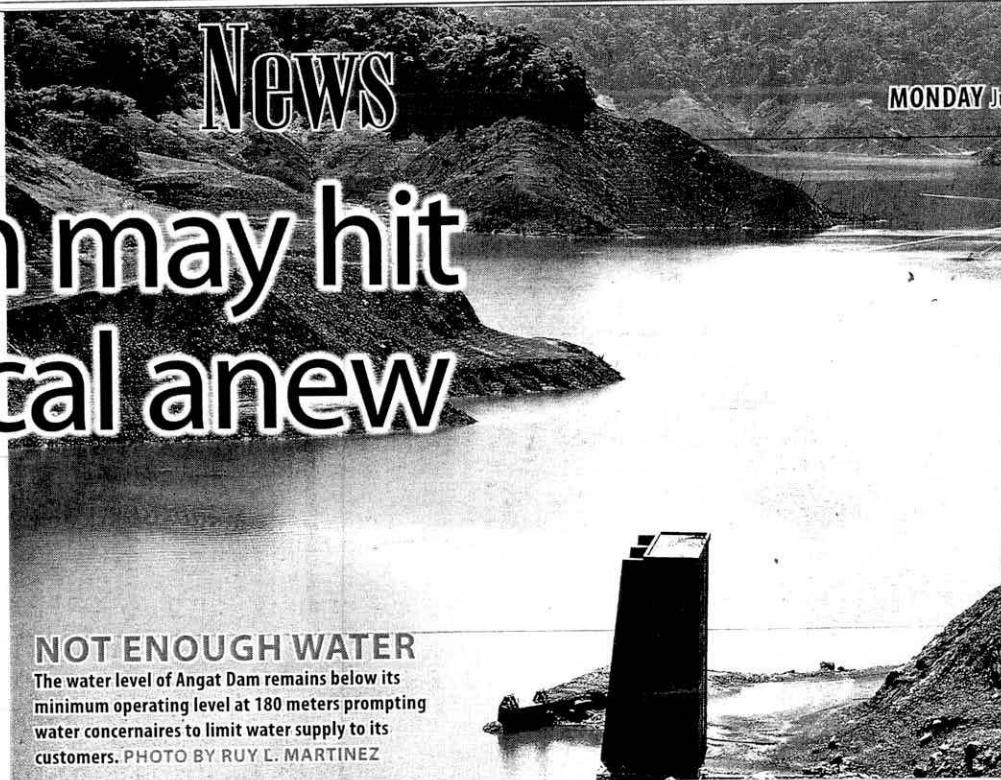
Angat's all-year low level of 157.96 meters was recorded last

June 29. The dam registered the all-time lowest water level in July 2010, hitting 157.56 meters during a similar El Niño phenomenon.

PAGASA said Metro Manila and the rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers mostly in the afternoon or evening due to localized thunderstorms.

B2

Angat Dam may hit below critical anew



NOT ENOUGH WATER

The water level of Angat Dam remains below its minimum operating level at 180 meters prompting water concessionaires to limit water supply to its customers. PHOTO BY RUY L. MARTINEZ

BY DIVINA NOVA JOY DELA CRUZ

ANGAT Dam could once again slide below the critical level of 160 meters if the “monsoon break” lasts for a week, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

On Sunday, Pagasa recorded Angat’s water level at 161.22 meters, slightly lower than the 161.45 meters the previous day. This came after the southwest monsoon moved away from the country on Thursday, signaling the start of the monsoon break.

Pagasa hydrologist Ailene Abelardo expects Angat’s water level to continue declining while the monsoon break persists.

“For the past days *kasi, walang nang pag-ulan sa watershed ng Angat. Yung pagtaas niya kasi noong nakaraang linggo dahil d’un sa mga pag-ulan sa area, and nag-stop yung*

mga pag-ulan sa watershed kaya nagkaroon ng pagbaba muli doon sa elevation ng Angat (For the past days, there had been no rain over the Angat watershed. Elevation at Angat has decreased as the rains around the watershed have stopped),” Abelardo said.

“*Itong elevation na ito ay mababa pa. So, ‘pag nagpatuloy po ito, possible siguro, more than one week, bababa muli yung elevation niya to 160 [meters] kapag wala pong pag-ulan dun sa mismong watershed (The current elevation is still very low. So, if [the monsoon break] persists for more than one*

week, it is possible that Angat will hit 160 meters again if there are no rains in over the watershed),” Abelardo added.

The water level at La Mesa Dam in Quezon City also went down slightly on Sunday at 72.36 meters.

The Angat and La Mesa Dams supply most of the water needs of Metro Manila.

In light of these developments, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) announced that no adjustments would be implemented until a steady increase

is observed to help the dams recover, as they are still far from the 180-meter minimum operating level and the 210-meter normal operating level. Water concessionaires have implemented schedule service interruptions after the NWRB reduced Metro Manila to 40 cubic meters per second (cms) allocation on June 19 and to 36 cms on June 22.

According to weather specialist Benison Estareja, the weather will be generally fair and that no heavy rains were expected across

the country for the next few days, and that it was uncertain when the southwest monsoon would return.

“*Hindi po natin ma-a-assure kung hanggang kailan ang monsoon break pero sa ngayon kasi nandun na sa may West Philippine (South China) Sea ‘yung habagat. So, pwedeng dumikit or pwedeng manatili lang doon (We cannot assure how long the monsoon break will last, but the southwest monsoon is currently in the West Philippine Sea. So, it could come near or stay out there),”* Estareja said.

Meanwhile, water levels in most of the other dams in Luzon have also decreased except for the Ambuklao and San Roque and Magat Dams, which increased by 0.05 meters, 0.02 meters and 0.37 meters, respectively. On Sunday, water level at Ipo was recorded at 99.50 meters, Ambuklao at 741.86 meters, Binga at 569.69 meters, San Roque at 232.21 meters, Pantabangan at 191.24 meters and Magat at 181.20 meters.

WITH REPORTS FROM FRANCIS EARL CUETO



FORECAST

PAGASA SEES FAIR WEATHER FOR MOST OF THE WEEK

By Jhesset O. Enano
@JhessetEnanoINQ

The low-pressure area off Palawan has dissipated and the ridge of a high-pressure area will bring generally fair weather for most of the week, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said on Sunday.

With the absence of rain, the water level in Angat Dam, Metro Manila's main source of water, has dipped to 161.22 meters at 6 a.m. of Sunday, from 161.45 meters on Saturday morning.

The dam's water level had earlier dipped below the criti-

cal level of 160 meters, but rainfall brought by Tropical Depression "Egay" and the southwest monsoon, or "habagat," helped the dam's water to top the critical level.

However, the water level is still far from its minimum operating level of 180 meters, and Manila Water said rotational water service interruptions for its customers will continue.

"Customers may continue to experience low water pressure to no water because of emergency adjustments being undertaken due to low reservoir levels," Manila Water said in a Facebook post.

No weather disturbances

were forecast to affect the country in the next 4 days, Pagasa said in a weekly weather outlook posted on its website.

But a moderate surge of the southwest monsoon will bring cloudy skies and scattered rainshowers and thunderstorm over Zambales and the western section of northern Luzon.

The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

By Thursday and Friday, Pagasa expects the southwest monsoon to weaken temporarily with the ridge of a high-pressure area becoming the dominant weather system. INQ



ESTADO NG ANGAT DAM AT SITWASYON NG TUBIG

ANG antas ng tubig ng Angat Dam noong ika-4 ng Hulyo (8:00AM) ay nasa 161.85 metro, mas tumaas ng bahadya tatlong metro kaysa sa pinakamababang elevation sa taong ito. Nakabawi ito noong nakaraang linggo dahil, tuloy-tuloy ang mabigat na ulan sa mismong lugar ng Angat Dam.

Gayunman, ang Technical Working Group sa Angat Dam Reservoir Operations ay nagpasyang panatilihin ang paglalaan ng 36 metro kubiko kada segundo (CMS) sa Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) para sa domestic water supply sa Metro Manila ngayong buwan ng Hulyo.

Ang kasalukuyang antas ay medyo mababa at malayo sa 180 meters minimum operating water level (MOWL). Tulad ng iniulat ng Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), mas hihina ang southwest mon-

soon, kaya isinasaalang-alang na walang masyadong ulan sa timog-kanluran mula Hulyo 3 hanggang Hulyo 16.

Ang pagpapanatili ng 36 metro kubiko kada segundo alokasyon para sa buwan ng Hulyo ay isang paraan upang matiyak na ang deposito ng tubig o natitirang tubig mula sa Angat Dam ay mai-secure ang pangangailangan lalo na sa domestic use at sa patubig para sa natitirang bahagi ng taon. Kung patuloy ang pagtaas ng lebel ng tubig, ang alokasyon ay iakma nang naaayon.

Ito ay isang prayoridad ng technical working group na binubuo ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB), MWSS at mga konsesyonaryo nito, National Irrigation Administration (NIA), National Power Corporation (NPC), at Angat Hydropower Corporation (AHC), sila ang naatasan pamahalaan ang tubig sa Angat Dam upang matiyak na may na sapat na tubig bago



ANG INYONG LINGKOD

DR. HILDA C. ONG

magtapos ng taong ito at masiguro kaya itong matustusan ang mga multi-requirement para sa domestic supply, patubig at enerhiya, hindi lamang para sa taong ito, dapat may sapat na supply hanggang sa unang kalahati ng 2020.

Ayon kay Dr. Seville David, Jr. Executive Director ng NWRB, ang lebel ng tubig as of July 6, 6am ay nasa 161.45, bahagyang bumaba dahil masyadong maulan sa may lugar ng Angat Dam. Ang lebel ng tubig sa Ipo Dam ay nasa 99.56m at 72.38m sa La Mesa Dam.

-ooOoo-

U.S. GOVERNMENT AWARD NEW GRANTS FOR REDUCING PLASTIC WASTE IN PHILIPPINE OCEANS

Ang U.S. Embassy sa Pilipinas at ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ay magbibigay ng dalawang bagong grants na nagkakahalaga ng Php20 milyon upang makatulong sa pagprotektang pagpapanatili ng kapaligiran sa dagat ng Pilipinas.

Ang Deputy Chief of Mission ng US Embassy sa Pilipinas na si John Law at DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda ang mangunguna sa pagbibigay ng mga gawad sa mga lokal na organisasyon sa ika-9 ng Hulyo, magsisimula ng 10:00 to 11:00 ng umaga sa Bulwagang Ninoy Aquino ng DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau sa Quezon City.

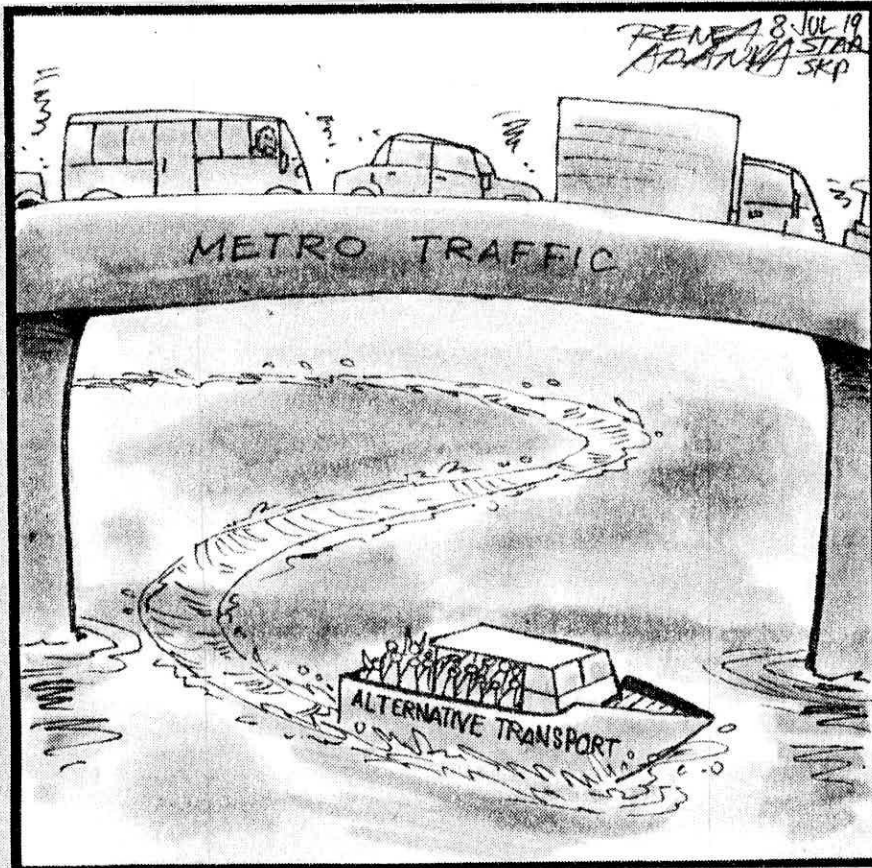
Ang mga gawad ay bahagi ng United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Municipal Waste Recycling Program na sumusuporta sa solid waste management at water recycling efforts ng mga kasaping bansa, kabilang ang Pilipinas.



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Utilizing waterways

The government is speeding up the development of Sangley Airport in Cavite to absorb general aviation and certain domestic flights from the congested Ninoy Aquino International Airport. The next problem that must be confronted is transporting plane passengers from Sangley to Metro Manila and nearby destinations.

Sangley, where the Philippine Air Force has a base, is located on the northern tip of the Cavite peninsula. The Manila-Cavite Expressway or CAVITEX, which connects Las Piñas to Bacoor City and Kawit in Cavite over Bacoor Bay, has drastically cut travel time between the two points, although the toll of P60 for just 14 kilometers has kept away most motorists, and traffic remains heavy along the old highway. From the CAVITEX exit in Kawit, however, it will be a slog to Sangley, with traffic also heavy on Cavite roads.

If the government wants to maximize the use of Sangley as a secondary airport, it must be developed into an integrated transportation hub. Providing train and point-to-point bus services for plane passengers going to Metro Manila and neighboring areas must be considered, even if such projects may take years to finish.

One proposal that can be realized in a shorter time is a commuter boat

EDITORIAL

service between Sangley and Metro Manila, integrated with the Pasig River ferry service, which is being revived. Ferry service can ease traffic congestion in Metro Manila, but the Pasig River and Manila Bay have yet to be fully utilized for this purpose.

Ten agencies are currently working on the Pasig River Convergence Program, with P2 billion allotted this year for reviving the river ferry service. Seventeen stations are being constructed, in addition to the 12 already operational along the 25-kilometer stretch of the river from Manila to Marikina. Smaller commuter boats are also being procured.

Like trains, ferry services have the advantage of being unimpeded by road traffic. They can also dramatically cut travel time between two points. People can commute to jobs and schools in Metro Manila, for example, even if they live in Bataan if there is an efficient ferry service in Manila Bay.

Traveling to and from Sangley Airport will be faster and can even be enjoyable on a ferry through the bay. Ferry stations can also stimulate commercial activity. Waterways are underutilized for mass transportation in crowded Metro Manila. The mega city and Sangley can use a ferry service.



HINDSIGHT

F. SIONIL JOSE



Why plant a tree

Ah, those venerable Chinese sages, their standards are so high and they are so demanding. They say one is not a man until he has achieved three goals – sired a son, written a book, and planted a tree.

But as that poet Joyce Kilmer said, "Only God can make a tree."

Whatever, I think these perilous times demand that each of us plant a tree.

I read in the papers the other day that the denudation of the mountains forming the watershed of the Angat Dam, Manila's main source of water, has caused the water shortage in Manila. Again, this illustrates the wanton nature of Filipinos, how we have become our worst enemy. A national effort now to plant trees not only in the Angat area but elsewhere is perhaps a little too late. Alternative sources of water must either be found or constructed immediately and will, of course, be very expensive.

Trees, water – they are so vital in life. Now and all through history, agrarian societies instinctively know why trees are important. The Ilokans almost always surround their houses with marunggay or fruit trees. Legend has it that one of the first Ilokano immigrants to Hawaii brought with him a marunggay stick, claiming it was a cane. He planted it, and that explains the abundance of marunggay trees in those islands.

Marunggay leaves are now established as one of the best sources of the minerals that the body needs. Way back in the 1950s, when I was traveling all over Mindanao, much of that island was forested. I went up the Agusan River to see huge forest trees had been cut down and floated down the river as logs, for direct export to Japan. Some Filipinos got rich despoiling our natural resources without replanting the barren land. It was the same in Northern Luzon. And so today, our forest cover is a mere 20 percent.

The Japanese, a very disciplined people, take good care of their forests and trees. For centuries, they have always used wood for their houses and their magnificent temples. In fact, the use of wood defines and gives character to their architecture. Very old trees, some several hundred years old, still stand in that country, the object of much love and veneration.

In contrast, we have very few old trees. Three of them – all acacias – were in Padre Faura, in Ermita, Manila. During the liberation of Manila, they were blasted by cannon fire. A couple of them simply rotted with age and neglect, and fell last year.

Sometime back, the agriculture champion and guru, Zacarias Sarian, gifted me with a macopa sapling from Malaysia. The tamarind and jackfruit trees I had planted in my yard had to be cut down when my wife enlarged the house to fit our seven children. I planted the sapling in a hole about more than a foot deep.

It grew quickly, and when it reached

five years old and still had not borne any fruit, I told it: If this year you still have no fruit, I'll cut you down. Sure enough, it did bear fruit, and with such abundance that there was more than enough to give to neighbors and friends. The fruit, greenish-maroon and as big as an apple, is sweeter than the native variety.

In the village where I grew up, the tallest tree was the Dalipawen. It had a trunk three times thicker than that of a coconut, and it was much taller, too, than the coconut, with short branches at the very top. Its flowers have a strong scent. Martins made their nests at the top and, at night, fireflies ignited it.

Spirits were supposed to live in the tree and, every so often, when someone got sick in the vicinity, prayers and offerings were made to it. The *atang* or offering was usually a plate of gelatinous rice cooked in coconut oil, and topped with a hard-boiled egg, betel nut, and a hand-rolled cigar. After the devotee had left we kids feasted on the *atang*, daring the spirit of the tree to make us ill. It never did.

Way back in the 1950s, as the Baguio visitor climbed up Kennon Road, they were greeted with the scent of pine perfuming the air. Baguio then had so many pine trees, which have since been felled but not replaced. The Baguio government is now engaged in replanting. But it's not Baguio only that needs replanting but also the entire Cordillera range.

The preservation of our forests is the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. It is hampered by corruption and incompetence, its forest guards often threatened and killed. The present DENR Secretary, retired General Roy Cimatu, needs assistance and more champions like Gina Lopez. Espousing tree planting brings neither votes nor money.

The Balete is an unusual tropical tree native to Southeast Asia. Its scientific name is *Ficus Benjamina Linn.* I used it as a motif and symbol in my novel, *Tree*. A story of growing up in a small Filipino town, *Tree* is the second novel in terms of chronology of the five-novel Rosales saga.

The Balete Tree grows as a slender sapling. I don't know where they come from but soon vines surround the sapling. They grow big, close in on the sapling, eventually suffocating it. The vines then become the trunk of the tree itself, for which reason the *Balete* is often called the strangler tree. It is an apt and fitting symbol for people and for institutions, even for nations, that are strangled to death by impoverishment and decay.

The Balete Tree is indeed an object metaphor for so many of us, and particularly for our leaders who, when elected, start green with promise and noble intentions. But within a few years, they are surrounded by panderers, by hypocrites, and by grasping, greedy friends and relatives. They are then strangled, never realizing they had betrayed not just themselves but also their country.





Poison in our midst

NAPALAT ang usok-lason polusyon na galing sa bansang Tsina na tinangay ng hangin papuntang Ilocos Norte, ayon sa isang pag-aaral na ginawa ng UP Diliman. Ito ay lason.

Bago ito, may pag-aaral din na inilabas na hindi na ligtas ang hangin hinihinga ng mga nakatira sa Kamaynilaan. Hindi ba matagal na itong nangyayari kaya hindi nga tumitigil ang ubot't sapon ng mga Pilipino?

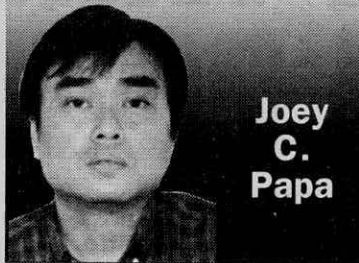
Sumunod naman ang ulat na kailangan ng trilyong puno sa buong mundo ang dapat itanim upang malabanan ang palubha nang palubhang global warming. Matagal nang ginagawa ito ngunit 'di naman mapigilan ng pamahalaan ang illegal logging hanggang ngayon. Pati mga watershed ay inaangkin ng mga magnanakaw ng lupa!

Tag-ulan na naman sa Pilipinas ngunit napakainit, napaka-alinsangan pa rin ng panahon. Sa Metro Manila, may tatlong bahagyang malalakas ngunit sandali lamang na ulan ang dumalaw sa mga kalun-surang ito.

Madalas na marinig na kailangan daw na sa mismong Angat Dam dapat bumagsak ang malalakas na ulan. Kailangan bang "iurong" ang Angat Dam sa Metro Manila kung may malakas na pagulan na mararanasan ang Kamaynilaan? Lintik naman!

Hindi ba puwedeng pag-aaralan

BANGON KALIKASAN



Joey
C.
Papa

ng mga eksperto sa rain catching technology at baka puwedeng gawin ang sistemang ito sa larger scale?

Umangat na raw sa critical level ang tubig sa Angat Dam. Ibig sabihi'y bumuti na. Ngunit marami pa raw walang tubig ang mga gripo nila sa ilang bahaging Metro Manila.

Marami nang naglalako nang "waste-to-energy" sa mga bagong upong pinuno ng lokal na pamahalaan. Ang Baguio City ay inalok na ng isang kumpanyang Hapon. Hindi raw burn technology ang produkto nila. Ngunit ang tawag nila sa kanilang incinerator ay waste-to-energy.

Mga halo-halong basura magiging enerhiya? Is it clean energy, tomodachi? I don't think so. How can mixed, dirty garbage release clean energy?

Baguio City Mayor Benjie Magalong should think ten times before he accepts the offer of the Japanese company. He should talk to envi-

ronmental experts such as Dr. Jorge Emmanuel and others. This is just an unsolicited advice for the good mayor.

The company needs to continuously haul garbage to have enough from which to get methane to generate enough electricity and make the business viable. When the existing garbage is processed, more garbage will be needed and if the garbage from Baguio will not be enough, other local governments might seek to bring their garbage to Baguio.

Mayor Joy Belmonte of Quezon City should also think a million times before considering an incinerator also in the closed Payatas garbage dumpsite which the previous administration entered into with a local company. It is also dubbed as "waste-to-energy" or an incinerator in disguise.

What I humbly suggest is massive composting of bio-waste and strict compliance with Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 and the Clean Air Act. RA 9003 invokes waste prevention and reduction through household- and barangay-based segregation and composting—environment-friendly practices which "waste-to-energy" facilities would discourage.

The other young new mayors should be careful with "waste-to-energy" peddlers.

(bangonkalikasan@yahoo.com)



Boracay bridge deal inches closer

By Miguel R. Camus
@miguelrcamusINQ

Conglomerate San Miguel Corp.'s (SMC) offer to build a bridge to Boracay Island could soon move forward with a key endorsement from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

SMC is due to bag an original proponent status from the DPWH within this quarter, said an official with knowledge of the matter.

As original proponent, SMC will have the right to match better offers and win the project in a Swiss Challenge process. The company will also need to obtain the final approval from the board of the National Economic and Development Authority, which is chaired by President Duterte.

The DPWH previously an-

nounced that SMC, a food, drinks and infrastructure giant, had submitted all the required documents for the bridge project. The DPWH's certification was made on Jan. 29, 2019.

The project was described as a "limited access bridge infrastructure project" that would link the main island of Panay in Malay, Aklan and Boracay, a popular destination for local and international visitors that was closed for six months last year under a rehabilitation program ordered by President Duterte.

The project is not meant to significantly increase the tourist load in the island but to instead allow the easier flow of supplies and the removal of waste.

"The bridge is not envisioned to cater to vehicular through-traffic, so as not to congest the is-

land, but will be provided with loading/unloading areas on both ends to process the movement of commuters, solid waste, goods and supplies," the DPWH said.

The project will cost P5.48 billion, including right-of-way, and will be undertaken by San Miguel Holdings Corp., SMC's infrastructure arm.

SMC also operates the Boracay Airport in Panay through concession-holder TransAire Development Holdings Corp.

SMC Holdings' other assets include toll roads such as the South Luzon Expressway, Metro Manila Skyway, Naia Expressway, Star Tollway and the Tarlac Pangasinan La Union Expressway. Its other projects include the Bulacan Bulk Water project, the Metro Rail Transit Line 7 and the Manila North Harbor project. INQ



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Second mining audit still pending

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR**

The second round of government-led mining audit, which aims to go after big mining companies, already has a budget but the memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) and the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) is still being finalized.

"The discussion with DAP is still ongoing," Environment Undersecretary for Mining Concerns Analiza Rebueta-Teh said. "We will know the start date of the audit as soon as the MOA with DAP is finalized".

To recall, MICC has also tapped the expertise of DAP to implement and manage the review process for the 26 mines ordered closed or suspended under the term of former Environment Secretary Regina Paz Lopez.

Aside from handling the review, DAP also facilitated the screening of consultants and experts who comprised the members of the five technical review teams (TRTs) that assessed various aspects of the mining operations that were under scrutiny.

Teh said that once the MOA

is out, the MICC — led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Finance (DOF) — will start drafting the work plan for the mining audit.

The DENR and the DOF are expected to release P10 million each to carry the review.

A DENR official said before that budget was "holding the continuation" of the audit.

During the first round of MICC-led mining audit, the DOF requested a budget of P50 million from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) for the conduct of the review.

As much as 17 mining companies will be reviewed in the second batch of MICC audit. Of this, 12 mining companies already passed the audit carried by Lopez in 2016.

Based on the list provided by the DENR, mining companies to be reviewed in the second round of audit include Philex Mining Corporation, Agata Mining Ventures, Inc., Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corporation, SR Metals, Inc., Apex Mining Company, Cagdianao Mining Corporation, and Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corporation.



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Isko pinuri ng DILG sa bagong programa at polisya sa Maynila

PINURI ni Interior Secretary Eduardo Año ang mahigpit na pagpapatupad ni Manila City Mayor Isko Moreno sa mga bagong polisya at patakaran sa siyudad.

Ayon sa kalihim, magandang simula ang paggamit ni Moreno sa mahigpit na political will para linisin ang masisikip

na kalsada sa Maynila, gayondin ang pagpapatupad ng iba pang kampanya.

Kabilang rito ang pagtanggap sa illegal street vendors sa Divisoria, waste management program, at kampanya kontra ilegal na pagsusugal.

Aminado ang kalihim

na kahirapan ang pinakamalaking hamon para sa administrasyon ni Moreno dahil sa dami ng illegal settlers sa Maynila.

Kaugnay nito nanawagan si Año kay Moreno na makiisa sa Manila Bay rehabilitation program dahil karamihan sa waterways na dinaraan ng polusyon ay nasa Maynila.

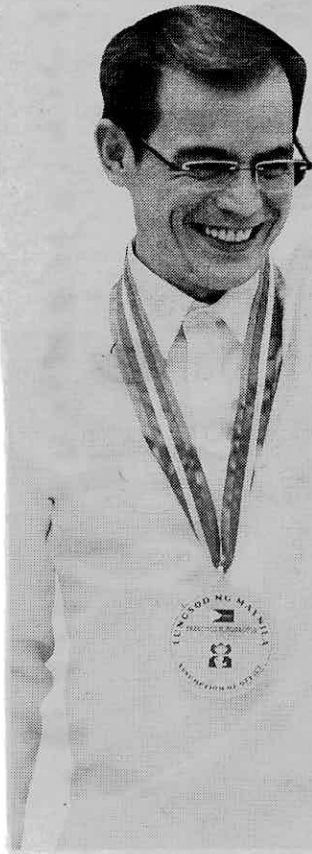


BAGONG MUKHA NG MAYNILA SA UNANG LINGGO NI MAYOR ISKO

Ni: Mia Billones



Mga naging aksyon



Hulyo 1

Matapos ang kanyang State of the City Address, agad na pinakilos ni Moreno ang mga tauhan upang linisin ang mga basura sa Lawton. Umabot sa 20 truck ng basura ang nahakot sa tinawag na bagong Smokey Mountain.



Hulyo 2

Sinuyod ni Mayor Isko ang Divisoria para tiyaking walang nakabalandrang mga vendor sa kalsada. Ibinunyag din niya na may nag-alok sa kanya ng P5 milyon kapalit ng pagpayag niyang makabalik ang mga vendor sa mga kalsada ng lungsod.

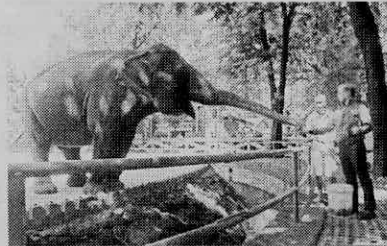
Iprinisinta niya sa media ang dalawang nagpapakilalang empleyado diumano ng city hall na nangongotong sa mga vendor sa Blumentritt sa Sta. Cruz.

Gamit ang pekeng resibo, naniningil ng P35 kada vendor sina Wilma Cortez, secretary ng Bagong Maynila Develop at Jeffrey Solomon, dahil umano sa utos ng kanilang organizer na si 'Puzon'.

Hulyo 4

Binisita ni Moreno ang Manila Zoo at tiniyak nitong makikipag-ugnayan sila sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources para muli itong mabuksan sa publiko.

Ibinigay din nito sa mga nakakulong na hayop ang mahigit 400 kilo ng botcha na nakumpiska sa Paco market.



Hulyo 5

Muling hinawakan ni Moreno ang maso para wasakin naman ang istruktura na nakahambalang sa sidewalk at nahaharangan din umano ang estatwa ni Roman Ongpin sa Binondo.

Hulyo 3

Pinangunahan ng alkalde kasama si Manila P/BGen. Danao ang pagwasak sa higit 70 video karera na nakumpiska sa lungsod. Nakipagdiyalogo si Moreno sa mga vendor na naapektuhan ng clearing operation. Nangako ito na may nakahanda silang programa para sa kanilang ikabubuhay na hindi naman masisira ang Maynila.



Hulyo 6

Binuo ang Manila Public Information Office complaint desk kung saan maaaring magsumbong ang mga residente.

Isang linggo pa lang ang nakalilipas pero naisakatuparan ng alkalde ang mga bagay na hindi umano nagawa ng mga nagdaang lider ng lungsod.

Nagpasalamat ito sa mga suportang tinatanggap nila kasabay ng pangakong hindi siya mananawa sa pagpapatupad ng mga pagbabago.

Para sa video ng report kaugnay sa mga unang linggo ni Moreno bilang alkalde, pumunta sa website ng **Abante** at mga social media account nito.



Tarlac residents say 'No' to cement factory

BAMBAN, Tarlac: At least 4,000 here staged a massive protest over the weekend against a proposed cement factory, citing the risk it would pose to the environment and the health of residents, especially children.

Diane Figueroa, president of the Concerned Citizens of Bamban, led the protest against the operation of

Big Boss Cement Factory in Sitio Panadakitan in Barangay Dela Cruz.

She said they were not against progress, but putting the health of their children at risk and the environment in danger would push them to "go out and show our resistance."

"Once that cement factory is established, the children of Bamban

will suffer," Figueroa said.

The area where the proposed cement factory will be built was once an irrigated rice field that was said to have been reclassified as an industrial zone.

Residents are also worried about the dangers the factory could bring to nearby agricultural areas and the

→ risk it would pose to their health since the factory will be just about 300 meters from their residences.

Meanwhile, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will hold a public consultation as a result of the series of protests.

Reports have it that there was no public consultation before the

cement company was allowed to construct its facilities.

Bamban officials have yet to make a statement on the issue. *The Manila Times* has been trying to get the comments of the owner of Big Boss Cement Factory, but he has not replied as of this writing.

JERRY M. HERNANDEZ



59.7B sachets may soon flood Metro

Coalition warns that lack of laws reducing consumption of single-use plastics may leave residents drowning in garbage

By Mariejo S. Ramos
@MariejoRamosINQ

If policymakers do not push for a legislative agenda to reduce consumption of single-use plastics, Metro Manila will soon be drowning in 59.7 billion plastic sachets, a coalition of environmental groups has warned.

A plastic waste generation data report from the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) showed that daily, the Philippines generated more than 163 million sachets, 48 million carrier bags, 45 million translucent or film bags and 3 million disposable diapers.

The total number of sachets generated in a year alone could leave Metro Manila's 63,600 hectares under a foot deep of sachets, said Beau Bacongus, GAIA regional plastics coordinator who presented the report during a forum in Quezon City on Friday.

Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Zarate pledged to prioritize the zero waste vision in the 18th Congress, but he said he would need to build alliances with similar-minded legislators.

"We hope we can craft legislative measures to protect our environment. We really have to confront this problem because some

of our legislators, even the executive [department], have been circumventing existing laws because they benefit from the garbage and plastic problem," he added.

Incineration not the solution

For Paul Connett, an American environmental chemistry and toxicology expert, incineration was not a sustainable solution to the country's waste disposal problem.

Connett said that there were associated risks that could arise from current waste incinerator proposals in Cebu, Davao, Baguio and Quezon City.

"If a politician in the Philip-

pinas talks about sustainability, talks about the need to shift to a circular economy, he cannot and should not talk about incineration. That's pretty straightforward," he stressed.

Connett instead pushed for community responsibility—or practicing reduce, reuse, recycle/compost—and industrial responsibility, which includes redesigning the processing and packaging of products.

"The trend in the 21st century is not to find better ways to destroy discarded materials but to stop making packaging and products that have to be destroyed—and that is the central

message of zero waste," he said.

Connett is in the country for a week-long lecture series on emerging technologies on zero waste management, which aims to engage lawmakers, local officials, lawyers and academicians on the issue.

Devastating effect

"It's not a question of going to Manila Bay and taking all the plastics out there and taking them to a landfill to be fed to incinerators. No. The solution is to stop making plastics which have no value and will only end up in rivers—to devastating effect," he said.

Glenn Ymata, senior cam-

paign manager of No Burn Pilipinas, said they welcomed the pronouncement of local chief executives in Manila, Mandaluyong, Las Piñas and Pasay to prioritize waste management in their respective areas.

"We have high hopes that these newly elected mayors will uphold the Ecological Waste Management Act and the Clean Air Act in their pursuit to address the garbage woes. We also hope the others will follow suit and not succumb to quick fix and false solutions being peddled by companies proposing waste-to-energy incineration facilities in the country," he added. INQ



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Timely legislation

SENATE Minority Leader Franklin Drilon has filed a bill seeking to ban the importation of waste to the Philippines, a timely measure in the wake of recent events that show the country has become a dumping ground for garbage generated by other nations.

In 2013, for example, a private Canadian company shipped 103 containers with about 2,500 tons of waste—mislabeled as recycling plastics—to the Philippines. Customs inspection, however, revealed that two-third of the shipment to be ordinary household garbage, including electronic waste and used diapers.

Efforts to send back the garbage took all of six years and put a strain on diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Canada, whose government seemed in no hurry to take back the waste. In the end, the Philippines prevailed and most of the waste material was shipped back to Canada, but only after the fetid garbage languished in a Philippine port for six years, and 34 containers had been disposed of locally, despite the objections of local environment groups.

Other countries such as Australia, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Japan have also made the country "a cross-boundary disposal site" of unwanted and toxic garbage.

"These incidents indicate that we have become a dumping ground for waste generated by other nations. We must fix our laws that allowed that to happen," Drilon said. "We must then prohibit the importation of all kinds of waste or scrap including recyclable materials. We should never allow our country to be a dumpsite."

Senate Bill No. 18, or the "Waste Importation Ban Act of 2019," imposes hefty fines of up to P15 million and jail terms of up to 12 years to make shipping garbage to the Philippines a most costly proposition.

The bill also targets recyclable

materials, because waste importers used them as an excuse to seek permission to bring their garbage into the country.

Under the proposed law, all waste imports must be returned immediately to its country of origin at the expense of the consignor or importer.

The group Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) observes that countries, especially in Southeast Asia, that do not have policies banning imports of plastic waste are at risk of being toxic dumpsites.

A report released in April 2019 shows plastic waste from highly-industrialized nations are rerouted to developing countries after China imposed a ban on importing and processing plastic waste in 2018.

Greenpeace, meanwhile, reports 178.88 percent jump in trash imports to the Philippines from 2017 to 2018—indicating that the time for legal and institutional action is now. We trust the 18th Congress gives this environmental protection measure the priority it deserves.



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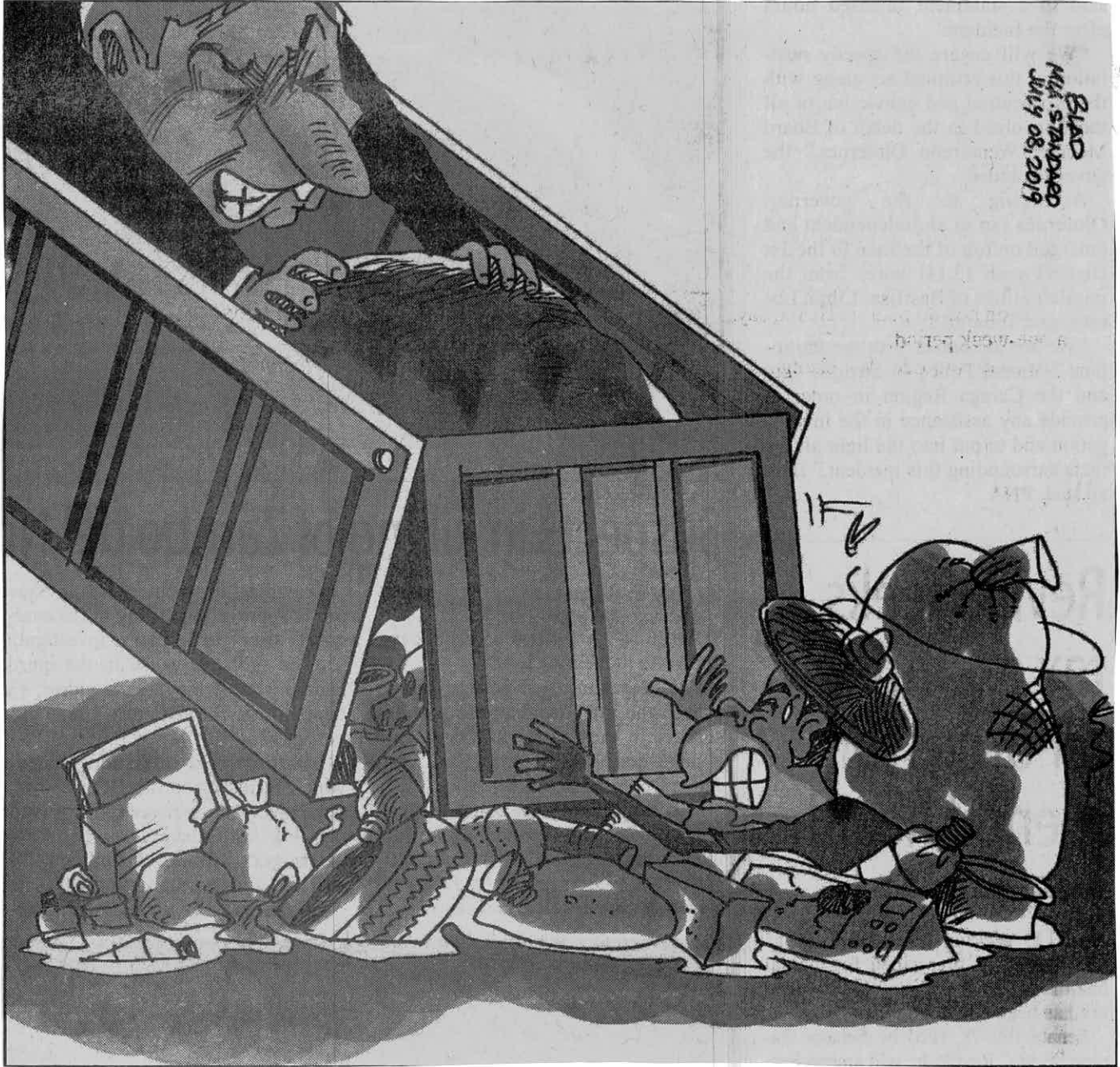
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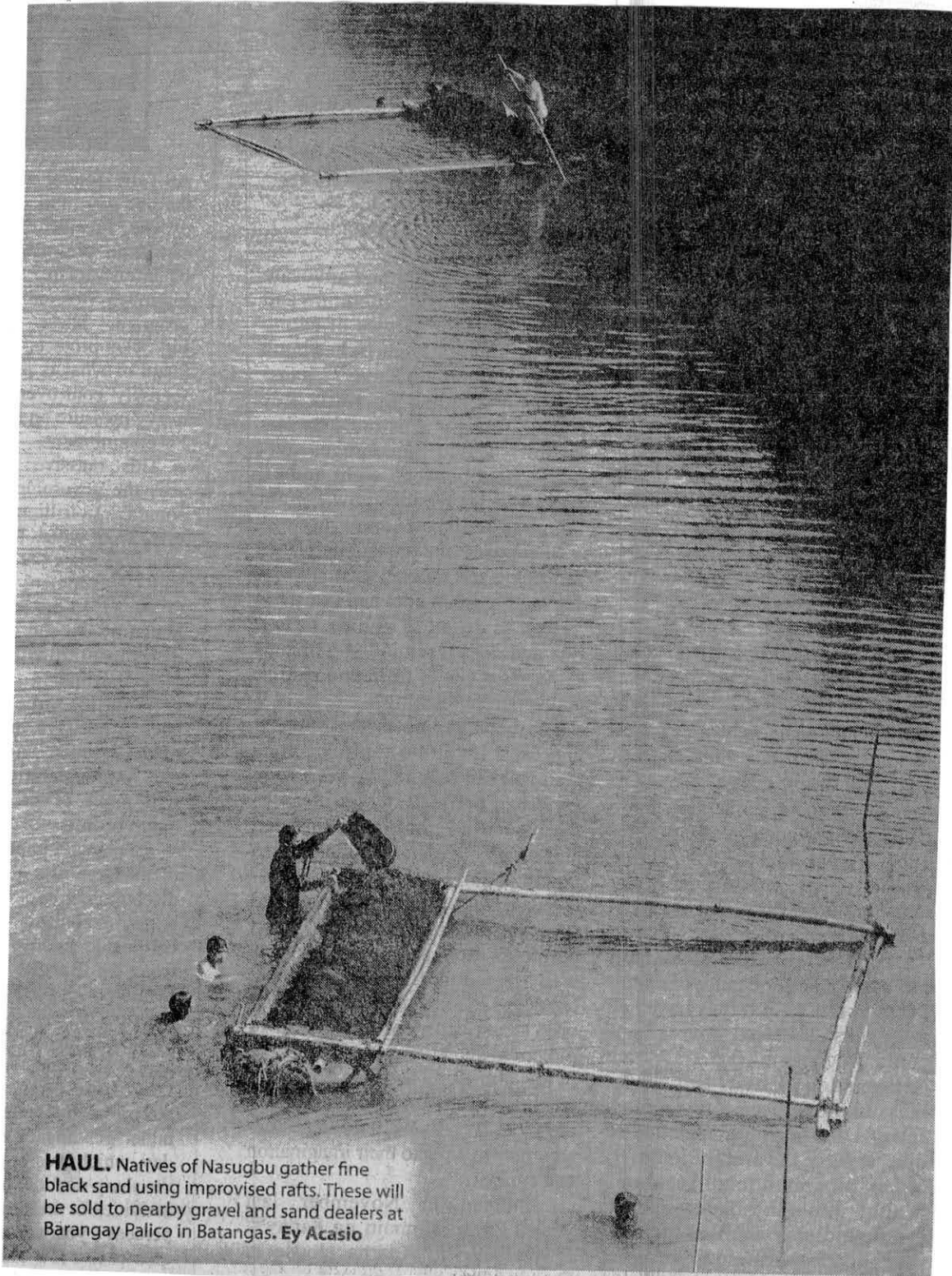
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HAUL. Natives of Nasugbu gather fine black sand using improvised rafts. These will be sold to nearby gravel and sand dealers at Barangay Palico in Batangas. **Ey Acasio**



Junior lawmakers urged to support bid to oust Duterte

By **Jhesset O. Enano**
@JhessetEnanoINQ

A militant fisherfolk group has called on junior lawmakers to support their bid to impeach President Duterte, whom they accused of violating the Constitution with his alleged verbal deal with Chinese President Xi Jinping that supposedly allowed Chinese fishermen in the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Violation of Constitution

Fernando Hicap, former Anakpawis party list representative and now Pamalakaya national chair, said his group would lead the filing of an impeachment complaint against Mr. Duterte when the 18th Congress convenes on July 22.

The complaint, he said, will be for the President's violation of the Constitution, treason and betrayal of public trust by "compromising the West Philippine Sea and the rights of the Filipino fisherfolk to China."

Pamalakaya said the alleged verbal deal violated Article 7,

Section 21 of the 1987 Constitution, which states that no treaty or international agreement shall be valid and effective, unless concurred by at least two-thirds of the Senate.

The administration's failure to protect its waters, particularly the EEZ, was also in violation of the government's duty as stated in Article 12, Section 2.

"This treasonous verbal agreement between Mr. Duterte and Xi has resulted to intensified harassment among the Filipino fishers, massive poaching within our fishing territory and environmental plunder and destruction of our resource-rich West Philippine Sea by China," Hicap said.

Sovereign rights

"We call on the newly elected representatives in Congress to stand with the Filipino fisherfolk in upholding our sovereign and territorial rights and to hold President Duterte accountable."

The votes of at least a third of the members of the House of Representatives are needed for an impeachment complaint to

be endorsed to Senate. Under the 18th Congress, this translates to at least 101 lawmakers.

Mr. Duterte has threatened to jail anyone who would seek his ouster.

He has repeatedly defended his softened stance against Beijing's aggression as his way to steer the country away from war, although Beijing has yet to categorically say if such conflict will indeed arise between the two nations.

Writ of kalikasan

Despite the threat, Hicap said they would proceed with the filing of the impeachment complaint to preserve the remaining resources in the West Philippine Sea amid the Duterte administration's neglect to protect it.

Another group of Filipino fisherfolk had filed a petition for writ of kalikasan and writ of continuing mandamus before the Supreme Court, seeking protection for the country's territorial waters while similarly accusing the administration of neglect. INQ



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FROM ISLAND RECLAMATIONS TO ILLEGAL FISHING TO MISSILE TESTING—WHAT'S NEXT?

THE report about the missile testing of China in the West Philippine Sea is quite disturbing. This action is beyond international norms and must be stopped soonest. The Chinese do not own that area. The international community should not be silent on this development that was done on Philippine waters. This is not disputed anymore, because there's a ruling by The Hague that the Philippines owns that territory.

From the ramming incident of the Filipino fishing boat in Recto Bank, to illegal fishing operations, and now this missile test. A lot is at stake here—not only the state of aquatic resources but the damage to Filipino lives and livelihoods.

And yet the Philippine government has made no concrete actions on this matter. Yes, we have the Coast Guard and Navy patrolling in the area. But how about being clear about our international policies, if there are any? Are we simply going to watch Chinese poachers destroy our re-

sources? Will we let them continue to rob us of about P33.1 billion annually from the damaged reef ecosystems at Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal and the Spratly Islands, mainly due to China's reclamation activities and illegal fishing operations?

Are we going to close our eyes and let them continue with these violations? Are we frightened by the fact that they already have missiles in our territory? I myself do not have anything in mind that can stop Chinese poachers; what I have right now is the desire to express a stand to protect our territory and let the authorities, the leaders of this nation, make the necessary actions, which is their duty. They are the ones mandated by our Constitution to protect our sovereignty.

At the end of the day, an ordinary citizen like me can only submit these concerns to the hands of our almighty God.

REGINE AGAPAY,
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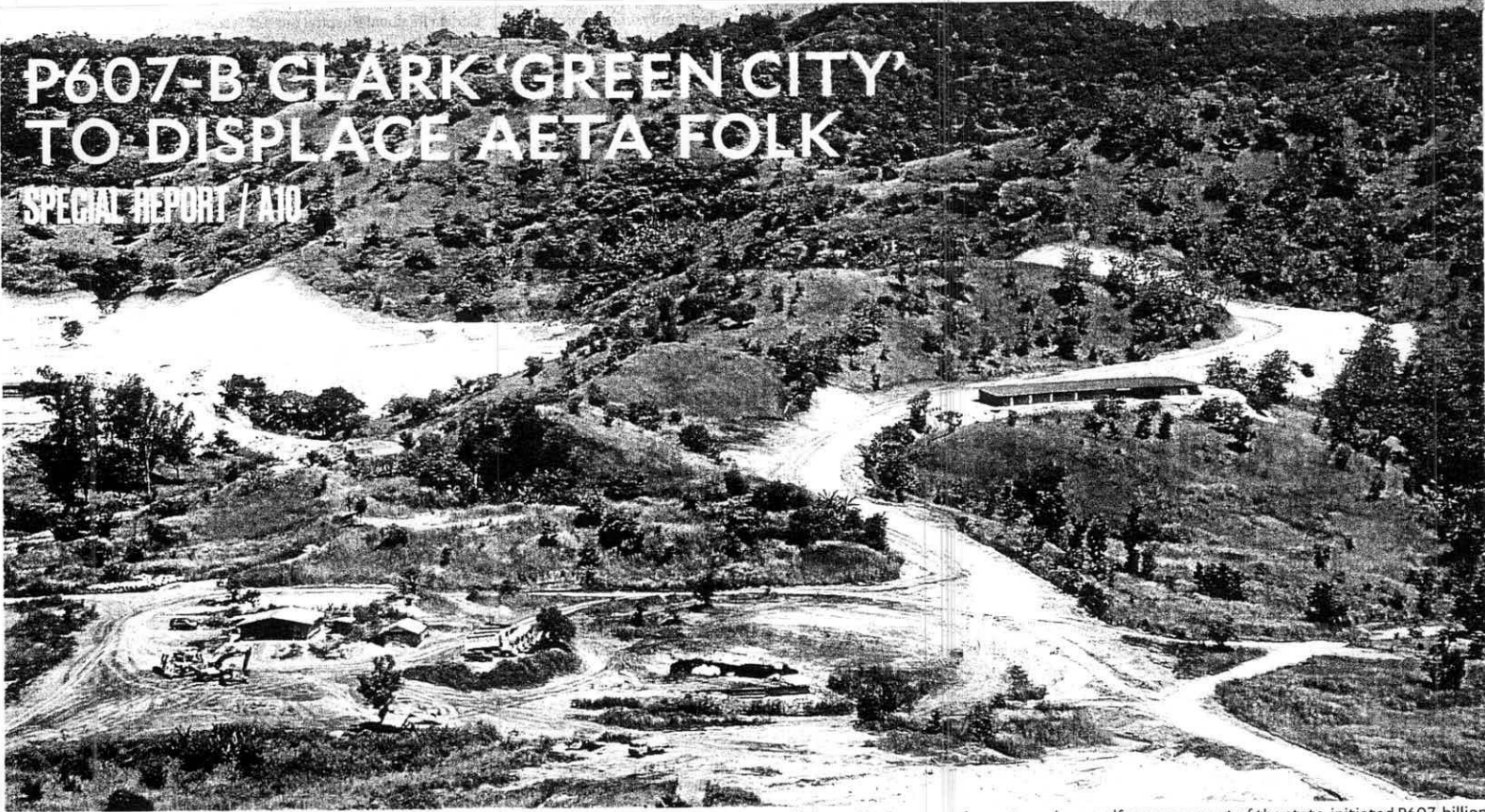
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P607-B CLARK 'GREEN CITY' TO DISPLACE AETA FOLK

SPECIAL REPORT / A10



GREEN TO GRIM The rolling hills in Capas town, Tarlac province, home of the Aeta for generations, are disfigured by heavy equipment carving a golf course as part of the state-initiated P607-billion "smart, green" metropolis dubbed New Clark City. —KATHLEEN LEILIMAYO/CONTRIBUTOR



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P607-B Clark 'green city' to displace Aeta communities

SPECIAL REPORT

By **Mariejo S. Ramos**
and **Krixia Subingsubing**
@Team_Inquirer

(First of two parts)

The plains and mountains of Capas, Tarlac, are tied to the stories of the Hungey, said to be the oldest Aeta tribe in the province.

Casimira Maniego, 68, looked out at the fields outside her home and remembered how her parents tended the green that had nurtured her and her five children. Everything she knows about the earth was passed on to her by her father, she said, the way it was passed on to her forebears.

"Our ancestors remain a part of our humanity," she said. "Their presence is entwined with our daily lives and our environment."

But their memories of home are in peril as the rapid development of the state-initiated New Clark City (NCC)—said to be the Philippines' first smart and green metropolis—edges closer into their land now being claimed as eminent domain.

The NCC is set to be inaugurated on Nov. 6, but tens of thousands of farmers and tribespeople living in the development area are still ignorant of the project's extent even as bulldozers have leveled their crops, according to a research led by the University of Glasgow (UG) in the United Kingdom and the University of the Philippines.

Displacement is imminent for the people who have tilled the land for decades, exposing them to the same disasters the NCC is being built to withstand.

P607-B metropolis

Located at the Clark Special Freeport Zone in Capas and Bamban, the NCC is a P607-billion metropolis touted as the country's first "climate-change resilient" city.

This resilience is rooted in the master plan governing the NCC's entire economy, said Vince Dizon, chair of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA). At its heart is clean energy and sustainable practices, which are expected to transform the way people commute and power their homes.

But a truly resilient city doesn't just manage its resources well; it also empowers the most vulnerable, said Red Constantino of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities.

An archipelago with long, meandering coastlines and a tropical climate, the Philippines is among the countries most vulnerable to both sudden and slow-onset impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise and ocean acidification, Constantino said.

Citing the National Urban Development Housing Framework, he defined resilience as "the ability of a locality and its citizens to withstand impacts and shocks, and to rebuild, reorganize or transform itself when necessary."

"[It] encompasses the entirety of development, not just infrastructure sturdiness against disasters," Constantino said,

adding: "Acting on both disaster and climate risks also presents an opportunity to improve food and water security, secure livelihoods, and spur both sustainable development and economic growth."

That's also the impetus that drives the NCC, Dizon said. Approved in 2015 during President Benigno Aquino III's term, the project is expected to complete Phase 1 in time for its hosting of the Southeast Asian Games in November.

The NCC is designed as an alternative to highly congested, poorly planned Manila. Modeled after green cities in Singapore and China, it was conceptualized by master planners from the Asian Development Bank, Japan Overseas Infrastructure Network, and Singapore's Surbana Jurong.

"The vision [for the NCC] was to be the first green, smart and truly resilient city, [and] the natural quality of the location gives it a strategically green and resilient character," Dizon said.

Manila, for one, is at zero to 80 meters above sea level (masl) and sits atop several fault lines. The NCC, on the other hand, is over 200 masl at its lowest and 800 at its peak.

Unlike Manila's haphazard land use and development, the NCC will develop only 40 percent of its land; the rest is for open space.

Development aggression

But Andre Ortega, a research fellow from UG who did a field investigation of areas covered by the NCC, said the project was a classic case of development aggression.

Satellite images would bear him out. In the course of 18 months, NCC contractors managed to turn hectares of green into concrete.

It's why Ortega and his team began countermapping the development in November 2018, peeling back the towns' geographical boundaries and borders to expose the narratives and historical accounts of their marginalized people.

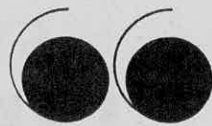
"Maps are the product of struggle," Ortega said. "The BCDA has [its] own map and [its]



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PUSHED BACK Aeta Mahawang families, who have called Mount Dalin home for generations, were pushed back to the fringes of Sitio Kalangitan in Capas, Tarlac province, as contractors of New Clark City, said to be the country's first smart and green metropolis, shaved parts of the mountain's forest cover. —KATHLEEN LEI LIMAYO/CONTRIBUTOR



The vision [for the New Clark City] was to be the first green, smart and truly resilient city, [and] the natural quality of the location gives it a strategically green and resilient character

Vince Dizon

Bases Conversion and Development Authority Chair

own master plan, a narrative about how it wants to project the place, and we also have our accounts in partnership with the community. [Counter]mapping is the tool to counterpose and contradict these narratives."

For six months, Ortega's team lived among some of the estimated 15,000 local farmers and 20,000 Aeta and Abeling from around 26 indigenous communities likely to be affected by the development.

The team listened to the residents' stories, and provided disposable cameras with which to take pictures of places they deemed crucial to their daily

routines. The team even identified landmarks that have yet to be mapped but were tied to the residents' lives.

What emerged, Ortega said, was a picture of generations of lowland farmers and Aeta in Tarlac: The earth gave them food, and the mountain covers protected them from the battering of typhoons.

Forbidden land

But when the NCC kick-started development in 2017, productive rice fields like those of "Michael" in Sitio Kamatis were abruptly cemented over to make way for concrete roads.

The sitio is the main site of

the ongoing construction for Phase 1, or the National Government Administrative Center.

The rice crops in Michael's paddies were nearly ripe for harvest when the backhoes came in 2018 and laid nearly a hectare of palay to waste.

He was paid around P300,000 for the land, which will become part of the ongoing Capas-SCTEx highway to link the town to the metropolis. But the lost crops would have been equivalent to 150 cavans of rice, he said.

Contractors also shaved certain parts of the forest cover of Mount Dalin in Sitio Alli, a small straw-hat mountain where the Aeta used to plant *ube* and tended farm animals.

The Aeta consider Dalin—"Tela Kaban" in their tongue—an ideal place for newly harvested palay to dry under the sun. The trails are level, and the summit is good for planting root crops.

Like most nomadic tribespeople, "Melba," an Aeta Mahawang in Kalangitan, equated comfort with the freedom to roam and to plant food.

Then the bulldozers arrived "noong ikatatlo (2017)," Melba said, and the mountain they called home for generations was suddenly "marked"—forbidden land.

They were pushed back to the fringes of the sitio. Suddenly they were cramped in a small area with little arable land. "Before, we didn't think about these things," she said. "We were free."

So Melba sent her two sons, aged 19 and 22, to work at the NCC construction site as laborers. But they worry that when construction for Phase 1 is done in August, they will also be out of work.

Redirecting rivers

In retracing the residents' geographical memories, the research team also found that the NCC's contractors had redirected the natural flow of Cutcut and Marimla rivers to make way for a 1.4-kilometer river park.

According to the NCC master plan, altering the rivers' flow based on a 500-year flood pro-

jection maximizes the socioeconomic value while minimizing harm on the ecosystem.

Dizon said check dams and edges along the river would create a permanent 45-hectare lake midstream, both a renewable water source for the city and the heart of a central park for Phase 2.

But Dr. Yany Lopez, chair of UP's geography department and Ortega's coresearcher, said these drastic changes disturbed the fragile ecobalance.

Residents, especially kids, have noted that certain birds, fishes and prawn, and even snakes were disappearing from the area, she said.

These changes are expected to compound the natural vulnerability of the NCC development, said assistant professor Ony Martinez, also Ortega's coresearcher.

For one, Aranguren, Kalangitan, Maruglu and Anupul—areas covered by the NCC development—are highly susceptible to landslides and flooding.

To determine this, the team overlaid the NCC development plan over the five-year flooding and landslide hazard maps by Project Noah of the Department of Science and Technology and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

To be fair, the NCC is not claiming to be climate change-proof, as Dizon noted.

But "what kind of resiliency is the BCDA trying to build in this aggressive development, which clobbered the communities' environment?" Martinez said.

Business-centric

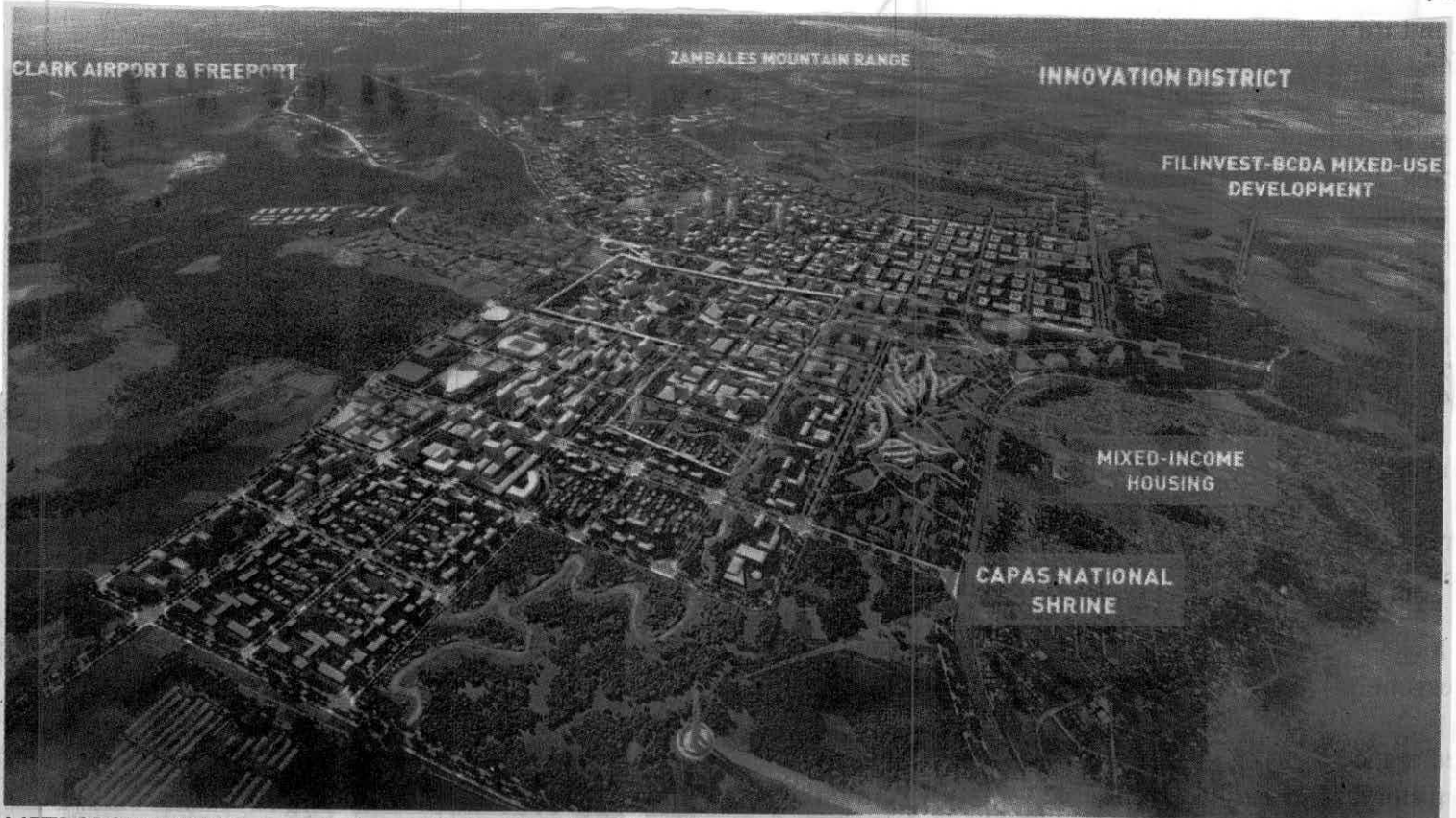
And there have been casualties. Last May, three young children were discovered dead in a pond that formed in a quarrying site for the NCC project.

"You're really changing the ecosystem and expecting that it would not have an impact on the surrounding area," Ortega said. "It's a schizophrenic development. You're trying to develop a green city but you're removing the green."

What's clearest from the NCC development is that it remains business-centric, with little to no input from the people who cultivated the land, he said.



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METROPOLIS RISING An artist's rendition of the New Clark City's land-use map. —BASES CONVERSION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Those at most risk are the Aeta, already the most displaced group in the country, whose living conditions and food security are threatened by this development.

Dizon said the BCDA had met with an Aeta group accredited by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) every month to make sure they "were not excluded from this development."

Part of their demands were access to water and roads, and for the BCDA to build schools in the community, he said.

Dizon also issued the assurance that no ancestral domain would be affected by the development, per the NCIP.

But this technicality masks the development's blind spot: the people whose stake in the land transcends state records. INQ

(To be concluded)

(Editor's Note: This story was written with the support of Internews' Earth Journalism Network.)



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Cable car study zeroing in on Pasig River, Baguio as possible sites

THE French government, which is conducting a feasibility study on a cable car system in the Philippines, is looking at the Pasig River and Baguio as possible locations, the Department of Transportation (DoTr) said.

Transportation Secretary Arthur P. Tugade told reporters last week about the potential locations.

"Somewhere (over the) Pasig River, *basta ma-address lang yung security ng Palasyo* (as long as Malacañang's security concerns are addressed). That's one... *Yung isang pinag-usapan* is Baguio (The other one is in Baguio)," he said.

The 450,000-euro feasibility study started in November by French consulting firms MDP Consulting & Engineering and Systra is scheduled to be completed within the year.

The French government offered to fund and do the cable car study "just to show they are interested," Mr. Tugade said.

Mr. Tugade noted that once the feasibility study is completed, the DoTr may open the construction of the cable car facility to the private sector. He added the French community is interested in taking part in it as well.

"*Pwedeng private yun... Yun ang pinipilit ko sa kanila. Maghanap sila* (It could be privatized. I'm telling them to find local partners)," Mr. Tugade said.

Earlier, he said he was considering opening cable car lines in Metro Manila to link malls, but he said mall owners have yet to agree to the plan.

He also brought up the idea of opening cable car routes to link Caticlan, Aklan to Boracay to help boosting tourism in the area. — **Denise A. Valdez**



Climate scientist pushes for safe high-rise buildings

By RAINIER ALLAN RONDA

One of the country's leading climate scientists has urged local government units (LGUs) to be at the forefront of ensuring that high-rise structures are safe and would not pose a threat in case of typhoons and earthquakes.

Glenn Banaguas, executive director of De La Salle Araneta University's Environmental and Climate Change Research Institute (ECCRI), said that LGUs should conduct due diligence on the structural integrity of buildings that have been adopted worldwide and implement the measures in their localities.

Banaguas cited China as an example, where they have implemented new reinforced bar or rebar standard rules, which also banned quenching and tempering of steel rebars.

According to an article by SP Global, the new rebar standard, which came into effect on Nov. 1, 2018 prevents water cooled bar disguised as hot rolled rebar from circulating in the market.

The changes in rebar regulations were triggered by the 2008 Sichuan earthquake that killed over 69,000 people and injured 374,176. The earthquake also rendered approximately 11 million people homeless.

Banaguas said that cities and municipalities have the power to approve or reject the construction of a high-rise structure in their respective jurisdictions if it does not adhere to the safety provisions specifically prescribed in the law.

He said that old infrastructure were based on the old national building code but there is a need now to incorporate the Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Reduction and Management

(CCA-DRRM) Strategies on the planning of structures.

Banaguas said what happened in Tacloban after Super Typhoon Yolanda hit the city and the entire Eastern Visayas in 2013 should serve as guide.

He said the LGUs should identify the most vulnerable areas and most at risk by checking the quality of buildings based on the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) that would make infrastructure climate proof.

Banaguas maintains that to avoid a repeat of the Yolanda disaster, high-rise structures nowadays should withstand more than 300 kilometer per hour winds.

To do this, LGUs should be strict in granting building permits. They should also be more cautious that only standard materials are used in the construction of high rises.

Banaguas says reports of prevalence of sub-standard steel in the market are a major concern.

"Generally, if there are some concerns on the methodology or process, it will be better to conduct more scientific tests and analyses," Banaguas said.

To ensure the safety of existing quench tempered steel in the market, Banaguas says there is always a way to do it.

"It has to be tested more. It has to undergo a series of tests," he added.

It was reported that after the 6.1 magnitude earthquake that struck last April 22, the Chuzon Supermarket that collapsed in Pampanga had used quench tempered rebars supplied by a local manufacturer.

Banaguas is an Outstanding Young Scientist of the Philippines conferred by the National Academy of Science and Technology.



Indonesia warns rich countries against exporting toxic waste

INDONESIA said it will crack down on trash imported from the world's richest countries after closer inspections showed it's increasingly the recipient of toxic waste materials.

Authorities at ports have boosted checks after a random inspection in May led to the discovery of more than 80 containers containing illegal waste from the United States, Australia and Europe. One of Australia's richest men has been dragged into the furor after a media report alleged a company he owned was responsible for a shipment that contained materials considered toxic under Indonesian law.

"This is a serious problem," Deni Surjantoro, deputy director of communications at Indonesia's customs department, said in an interview. Indonesian authorities are now planning tougher measures against companies caught importing illegal waste, and will announce them as early as this week, he said. The government will also partially identify companies involved in the illegal trade, Surjantoro said.

While toxic or contaminated materials have been found in containers from the US, Germany, Hong Kong and Australia, the US had been identified as the worst offender, Surjantoro said.

China syndrome

SURJANTORO said the problem began after a change in policy in China, which

had been the world's leading importer of recyclables. China last year began to restrict, and in some cases ban imports on environmental grounds.

"China's policy eventually led us to tighten our monitoring process, which eventually led us to identify containers that contain contaminated waste," he said.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* newspapers reported last week that Visy Recycling, a company owned by billionaire Anthony Pratt, was the exporter of a container that had been impounded in the Indonesian port of Batam. The shipment reportedly contained plastic waste, which is regarded as toxic in Indonesia. Visy didn't reply to requests for comments, according to the newspapers, and didn't immediately respond to a query by Bloomberg sent via its web site.

Importers of waste have 90 days to return the shipments back to the countries of origin from the day of arrival, Surjantoro said. Failure to comply will result in licenses being revoked and the importers will face investigations, he said.

Last month, Malaysia announced it was sending more than 3,000 tons of scrapplastics back to countries, including Australia, Canada, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and China. The Philippines took similar action in June, returning dozens of containers of waste deemed illegal back to Canada. *Bloomberg News*