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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



PHL to host Asean senior forestry officials meet

SOUTHEAST Asia's top forestry officials will gather in the Philippines this month for the 22nd Asean Senior Officials on Forestry (ASOF) Meeting that aims to strengthen regional forestry cooperation.

The meeting, from July 15 to 20 in Makati City and organized by the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), will bring together forestry leaders from the 10-member Asean to discuss measures toward sustainable forest management and addressing transboundary forest threats.

It also marks the start of the country's yearlong chairmanship of the biggest forestry conference and initiative in the region.

From July 15 to 16, the Asean Working Group on

Forest Products will hold its 22nd meeting with focus on enhancing regional cooperation on forest products development, and getting Asean countries align with global standards that address the environmental, social and economic integrity of regional forests and forest resources. The meeting also supports the development of medicinal and aromatic plant industries, including their conservation and sustainable use.

The six-day ASOF event will end with an international seminar on current issues affecting forestry and forest products, which carries the theme: "Forestry Beyond Forests."

The topics include Payment for Ecosystem Services, ecotourism as a viable mechanism in sustaining biodiversity, and the benefits gained by forest communities from PES.

PES is an instrument designed to change practices of people that damage the environment so that they can provide valuable services to others and help improve environmental conditions.

In forestry, PES may involve entering into an arrangement with people or groups where they will be paid a certain amount to plant trees instead of cutting them down. This gives them a source of income while they help increase forest cover.

Forests contribute to the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations. These include SDG 6, Clean Water and Sanitation for all People; SDG 13, Climate Action; and SDG 15, Life on Land.

As of 2010, the Philippines's total forest cover was estimated at 6.840 million hectares.



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METRO'S
HERITAGE
TREES RESIST
TIME DEV'T

METRO / A2

TREE HUGGERS Weekend playtime for these three boys means exploring the towering "dita," a heritage tree at Batasan Hills in Quezon City. —LYN RILLON



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Editor
Anne Stephanie R. Aguilan

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

METRO

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SAN JUAN'S PRIDE The two rain trees at Santuario del Sto. Cristo Parish were declared heritage trees on April 25, 2016. —LYN RILLON

Metro Manila's green, living sentinels

DENR declares 29 heritage trees that have withstood calamities, rapid urban development

By **Jhesset O. Enano**
@JhessetEnanoINQ

In present-day Quezon City, "Tandang Sora" stands tall and mighty, more than a century after Philippine revolutionaries fought for independence from Spanish colonizers.

Local historians had named the duhat tree—a fixture for decades on the grounds of Kaligayahan Elementary School in Novaliches—after Melchora Aquino, the Grand Woman of the Revolution. According to community lore, this was where she set up her makeshift clinic to tend to wounded Katipuneros.

Old tales also identified the tree as a lookout point for guerrilla fighters, as they planned their attack on the Japanese Army's garrisons during World War II.

A silent witness to wars, disasters and a dictatorship, Tandang Sora has been declared by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as one of Metro Manila's "heritage trees," recognized as historical and cultural icons in the communities they have stood watch over (See related story below).

In cities where rapid development engulfs individual identities and collective memories, the towering trees also serve as enduring guardians of memory.

Most found in QC, Manila

At present, there are 29 heritage trees in the National Capital Region (NCR), spread out over nine cities and one municipality, with the majority found in Quezon City and Manila.

The trees are recognized under a memorandum order issued by the DENR in 2009 which defines a heritage tree as any healthy native or endemic, exotic, rare, threatened and endangered species, with a minimum girth or circumference of 100 centimeters.

Unlike the so-called "centu-

ry" trees, they need only to be at least 50 years old. More importantly, they should have historical, cultural and aesthetic value.

That final, yet most crucial, criterion is met courtesy of the anecdotes of "oldies" in the community, or those who know of the tree's history.

"It is difficult to find these trees, particularly here in Metro Manila," said forester Carlito Castañeda, chief of the Protected Area Management and Biodiversity section under the DENR-NCR's Conservation and Development Division.

"Some were devastated by wars, earthquakes and typhoons. The resilient ones are really the ones that remain standing," he added.

Even the places in Metro Manila named after trees are lost on a lot of people, Castañeda noted. Many are unaware that kamuning, bangkal, sampaloc, cupang, anonas, calumpang and maypajo are not just street names, but actually tree species.

That lack of awareness showcases the disconnect between nature and the public, particularly the over 12 million who call the metropolis home.

Road to progress

But even as the DENR wishes to save as many trees in bustling cities, often the road to progress takes precedence.

"Many trees are really af-

ected by the construction of roads, mass transport or [the privatization of properties] in Metro Manila," Castañeda said. "As part of [owners'] rights, they can apply for permits to take these trees down and we can't stop them simply in the name of environmental protection."

The heritage tree program is seen as a solution to what may turn into the unabated



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STREET LANDMARK Motorists can't miss the sampaloc tree in the middle of the street in Project 3, Quezon City. —LYN RILLON

of the few remaining trees in NCR, where green spaces continue to shrink at a fast rate.

Once selected through a nomination and validation process, a tree is given a permanent marker bearing its name, a brief description and significance.

To ensure its safety from destruction and development, an agreement will also be inked between the DENR and an assigned caretaker, usually the institution where the tree is located, if not the local government.

Most of the declared heritage trees in the Metro are located inside institutions that have equally withstood the test of time, such as schools, churches and even cemeteries.

With imposing trunks and a thick foliage, these trees are also heavily linked to traditional stories and folklore that are unique to Filipinos. For some, these mythical tales have actually allowed their survival, scaring off even the most daring tree cutter.

Mr. Brown

For instance, many believe that old trees are inhabited by a *kapre*, a bearded giant who smokes a huge pipe. Perhaps the most famous is "Mr. Brown," a mischievous *kapre* who reportedly resides in Malacañang

Palace's heritage tree, a balete.

Mr. Brown's supposed presence in the tree, which has outlived numerous Spanish governors general and American civil governors, has spooked even some of the residents in Malacañang, including sitting presidents.

Other heritage trees, meanwhile, serve as the persisting link to their communities' changing identities through time.

Remaining reminder

Standing right in the middle of Narra Street in Project 3, Quezon City, a majestic sampaloc tree may seem out of place. But it was actually one of the few remaining reminders of what the area used to be before housing projects took over: A vast forested area connected to the lower Marikina watershed area.

Beyond their environmental purpose, the trees also help unravel stories and histories otherwise untold.

And while their work is no easy task, Castañeda expressed hope that local governments would further include green spaces in development plans, as they moved forward to progress.

"We hope to encourage decision makers to preserve what they still have," he said. INQ



TANDANG SORA This duhat tree at Kaligayahan School in Novaliches, Quezon City, has been named after national heroine Melchora Aquino. —RICHARD A. REYES



CAMPUS STAR An acacia tree stands tall on the Philippine School for the Deaf grounds in Pasay City. —LYN RILLON



GREEN GUIDE

WHERE TO FIND 'TANDANG SORA' AND THE OTHER HERITAGE TREES

To protect the remaining trees in Metro Manila, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) pioneered the Heritage Tree Program in 2009. Below is a list of the 29 trees which have been included in the program and their locations:

1. *Kamagong*, Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Quezon City
2. Acacia, St. Theresa's College, Quezon City
3. Duhat, Kaligayahan Elementary School, Quezon City
4. Balete, Malacañang Palace, Manila
5. Narra, Fe Del Mundo Medical Center (Children's Hospital), Quezon City
6. *Baliteng-baging*, Lichauco Heritage House, Sta. Ana, Manila
7. Sampaloc, Narra Street, Barangay Amihan, Project 3, Quezon City
8. Indian rubber tree, San Francisco High School, Quezon City
9. Duhat, Star Woods Manufacturing Inc., Karuhatan, Valenzuela City
10. Dita tree, University of the Philippines Manila
11. *Botong*, Philippine Women's University, Jose Abad Santos Memorial School, Quezon City
12. Acacia, Philippine School for the Deaf, Pasay City
13. Acacia, Tomas Earnshaw Elementary School, Sta. Ana, Manila
14. Betis, Manila North Cemetery
15. Narra, Manila North Cemetery
16. Ipil, Manila North Cemetery
17. Dita, Batasan Hills, Quezon City
18. Kamagong, House of Representatives, Quezon City
- 19-20. Rain trees, Santuario del Sto. Cristo Parish, San Juan
21. Rain tree, Shoe Museum, Marikina City
22. Rain tree, Our Lady of Abandoned Parish Cemetery, Marikina City
23. Mango tree, Alabang Elementary School, Muntinlupa City
24. Rain tree, Tata Dune Catholic Church, Barangay San Dionisio, Parañaque City
- 25-28. Narra, *Tangisang bayawak*, Dita and Antipolo, all found in Amparo Nature Park, Caloocan City
29. Mango tree, San Roque Parish Church, Pateros

—SOURCE: DENR-NCR INQ



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Children look on as government workers clean up the Estero de San Antonio Abad in Malate, Manila on Saturday. Mayor Isko Moreno and Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu are scheduled to meet this week to discuss plans to rehabilitate the polluted waterway, which drains directly into Manila Bay.
EDD GUMBAN



Creek settlers' relocation assured

By Rochelle Acse

Manila Mayor Francisco "Isko Moreno" Domagoso yesterday assured informal settlers displaced by the Manila Bay rehabilitation program that they would be provided proper relocation.

Domagoso issued the assurance as he met the other day Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu to discuss the status of the bay rehabilitation and how the city government can assist the national government in the undertaking.

According to the mayor,

the 50 illegal settlers will be relocated to Tala, Caloocan City by the National Housing Authority by the 26th of July.

"While the creeks are being cleaned, the DENR has the heart for our poor countrymen so their families are not affected," Domagoso said in Filipino.

Cimatu told Domagoso that the DENR is focusing on cleaning up the tributaries whose water end up at the Manila Bay.

The DENR chief said they are planning to demolish fences near the creek to open more space for garbage trucks and people.



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BULGAR

BOSES NG HASA, HATA NG BAYAN



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ITINUTURO ni Manila Mayor Isko ang baradong waterway dahil sa basura nang inspeksiyunin nito ang Estero de San Antonio Abad sa Malate kung saan lilinisin ito upang hindi na makarating ang mga basura sa Manila Bay. Ayos 'yan, meyor!
(Jun Guillermo)



Mayor Isko bubuhayin ang Kadiwa at Metroaide

Bukod sa mga paglilinis sa mga obstruction na vendors sa iba't ibang lugar sa Maynila ay plano rin ni Mayor Isko Moreno na ibalik ang Kadiwa at Metroaide na inumpisahan noon ni dating Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos. Anya, malaki ang maitutulong ng Kadiwa sa kanyang layunin na mabawasan ang basura sa lungsod at sa kanyang programa ay ihihiwalay ng mga residente ang plastic, karton at bote sa mga nabubulok na basura na bibilhin ng gobyerno.

Sa pamamagitan ng Kadiwa ay papalitan ng kupon na may katumbas na point na may katumbas namang pagkain tulad ng bigas, asukal at kape.

Sa ganung paraan ay tiyak nang may kakainin sa araw-araw ang bawat Manilenyo bukod pa sa nababawasan ang mga hahakuting basura. *-Doris Franche-Borja-*



U.S. GOVERNMENT AWARDS GRANTS TO REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION IN PHILIPPINE OCEANS

ANG pamahalaan ng Amerika ay nagkaloob ng dalawang grants na nagkakahalaga ng Php20 milyon sa mga lokal na organisasyon para may magamit sa kanilang proyektong bawasan ang polusyon sa plastik na nasa karagatan ng Pilipinas. Ang pagbibigay ng grants ay naganap noong ika-11 ng Hulyo, sa Bulwagang Ninoy Aquino ng DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau sa Quezon City.

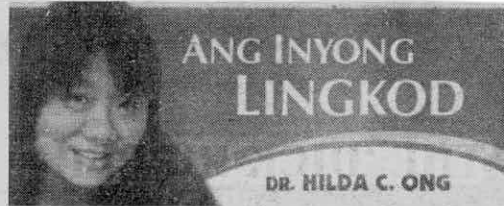
Ang mga gawad ay magtataguyod at magpapalawak ng mga programa sa pag-recycle batay sa komunidad, mapabuti ang pamamahala ng solidong basura, at pagsuporta sa pananaliksik sa plastic waste sa paligid ng Manila

Bay.

Ang Deputy Chief of Mission ng US Embassy sa Pilipinas na si John Law at Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary Benny Antiporda kasama rin si DENR Undersecretary Miguel Cuna ang nanguna sa pagbibigay ng mga gawad.

"These partnerships are critical to protecting urban coastal areas that rely on tourism and fisheries sectors," sabi ni Law. "We are proud to work together with the Philippines in finding innovative solutions to keeping plastic waste out of our oceans."

Ang Ecological Waste Coalition of the Philippines at



ANG INYONG LINGKOD

DR. HILDA C. ONG

Mother Earth Foundation, mga lokal na organisasyon na nakatanggap ng grant ang magpapatupad sa mga proyekto. Ang parehong proyekto ay sumusuporta sa rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay.

Ang mga grant 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.

(Left Photo): Iniinspek ni Deputy Chief of Mission ng US Embassy na si John Law

ang mga recyclable item na ginawa ng Mother Earth Foundation, isang katuwang sa adhikain, sa ilalim ng USID's Municipal Waste Recycling Program.

(Right Photo): Deputy Chief of Mission Law, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Undersecretary Benny Antiporda at USAID Mission Director Lawrence Hardy, kasama ang mga kinatawan ng EcoWaste Coalition at Mother Earth Foundation, na nakatanggap ng mga pondo sa ilalim ng Municipal Waste Recycling Program ng USAID.



Cordillera forests now commercial veggie farms

BUGIAS, Benguet: Residents of villages bordering Benguet, Ifugao and Mountain Province have raised concern over allegedly rampant conversion of forests into commercial vegetable farms that could cause massive deforestation unless addressed by the Department of Environment and Environment Natural Resources (DENR) and law enforcement agencies.

Sources from the villages in Buguias, Benguet; Bauko, Mountain Province; and Tinoc, Ifugao, who requested anonymity for security reasons, said those involved in the conversion had employed heavy equipment to fell trees and level the area where they plant vegetables.

The sources added that the forest destruction had been going on for years, but that the DENR and the police had not looked into the issue.

"We are wondering why the Environment department is concentrating its efforts to protect the environment of Baguio City (Mountain Province) when it is also equally important for it to preserve and protect watersheds in our communities that serve as headwaters of four major river systems, providing abundant water to our brothers and sisters in the lowland communities," they said.

According to the sources, the thousands of trees that were already sacrificed for the commercial gardens were far more than the trees that were cut in Baguio.

They said the destruction of the watersheds was closing in on virgin forests in the three provinces. **DEXTER A. SEE**



Public warned vs eating fish caught in

Pasig River

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

✉ @jonlmayuga

OFFICIALS are advising against eating fish caught in Pasig River—which continues to show signs of life—or its tributaries.

This as the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) announced its so-called River Warriors were able to catch a 3-kilogram tilapia along Estero de San Miguel, a tributary of the Pasig River on July 11.

Estero de San Miguel is a 2.3-kilometer tributary of the Pasig River located in Manila by P. Casal Bridge.

With a length of 20.5 inches,

the fish is one of the biggest tilapia ever to be caught in the river, once touted as biologically dead because of pollution.

The PRRC has brought the tilapia to the Environmental Management Division of the PRRC for laboratory testing, to determine whether the fish is loaded or tainted with toxic heavy metals or safe to eat based on accepted health standards.

“We are not advising the public to eat the fish caught in the river or any of its tributaries just yet as the rehabilitation will take many years,” PRRC Executive Director Jose Antonio E. Goitia said. “But the fact that fish are beginning to

thrive in the river is a good sign.”

However, Goitia said the PRRC cannot stop the public from eating fish caught in the Pasig River, noting that many of those living along the river have been doing it for years already.

He added that fish thriving in the river means the PRRC’s strategic rehabilitation of the waterways is working.

“If we continue to work together in cleaning our waterways and surroundings, more aquatic resources will thrive in these bodies of water, and we could eventually have a free source of food,” Goitia said.

The PRRC advised the public to

be careful as the fish might still contain traces of toxic chemicals harmful to their health.

“Expect more good news about our esteros in Manila because [local officials are] helping us get rid of the sources of pollution in his locality,” Goitia said adding the PRRC has “no more problem with the vendors.”

The successful rehabilitation of the Pasig River gained international recognition in 2018.

The International River Foundation also awarded PRRC the inaugural Asia River Prize Award, which Goitia received during the 21st International River symposium held in Australia.



Tilapia sa estero

KAILAN lang ay kumalat ang balita sa social at mainstream media tungkol sa pagkakahuli sa isang tilapia sa Estero De San Miguel sa lunsod ng Maynila.

Hindi pangkaraniwan ang laki ng tilapia. Ito ay sumusukat ng 20 pulgadang haba! Higit na malaki sa tinatawag na isang uri ng tilapia na "plapla." Giant tilapia daw ito.

Nahuli ito ng mga kasapi ng Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC).

Mabilis na ipinagmalaki ng mga nakakita sa tilapia na palatandaan daw'yon ng kalinisan ng estero. Ngunit ang pagkakahuli ng nag-iisang higanteng tilapia ay ay hindi palatandaan ng kalinisan ng estero, ayon sa Greenpeace (GP) Southeast Asia.

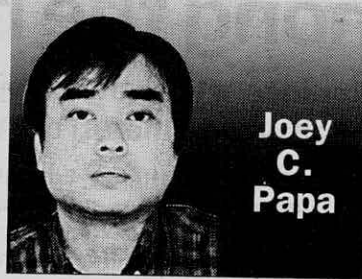
Ayon sa isang kasapi ng GP, kailangang malinaw na malinaw ang tubig sa estero at walang basura upang masabing ang estero ay maayos na.

Para sa akin, kahit na malinaw ang tubig sa anumang estero, kailangang dumaan ang tubig sa masusing pagsusuri sa isang laboratoryo upang malaman kung ligtas kainin ang anumang isda na mahuhuli rito.

May ilan pa rin namang nahuhuling isda sa maduming dagat ng Manila bay lalo na sa laot nito ngunit kung ligtas kainin ito ay tanging laboratoryo lamang ang makapagsasabi nito.

Sinabi pa ng GP na maaaring nakawala lang sa isang fish pen ang

BANGON KALIKASAN



Joey
C.
Papa

higanteng tilapia. Kaya naligaw ang tilapia sa tubig ng estero?

Parang sa tuwing may malakas na bagyo, nakawawala ang mga isda sa Laguna Lake fishe pens at napupunta sa Ilog Pasig. Marami ang naghuhuli dito at ibinibenta. Kung ligtas kainin, 'Di ko alam.

Para sa akin muli, ang tunay na sukatan ng isang malinis na katubigan ay ang masayang kislutan ng maraming-maraming isda at napakalinaw, hindi mabaho ang amoy ng tubig-sapa, ilog, o dagat. At walang nakikitang mga tambak na basura!

Marami na akong karanasan sa isang malinis na mga ilog tulad nang sa Laiban, Tanay Rizal. Maraming nahuhuling pagkaing ilog dito. May palos, talangaka, hito at iba pa.

Malinis pa ang tubig na nagmula sa bundok ng Sierra Madre na isang warershed o lunduyan ng tubig

mula sa ulan.

Karanasan ko rin noon sa Paradise 3 ng San Jose Del Monte Bulacan ang pagkakaroon ng mga isdang ilog. Ito ay noong malinis pa ang ilog. Ngunit nang nagkaroon na ng tambakan ng basura sa itaas na bahagi nito ay dumumi at bumaho na ang ilog. Nawala rin ang mga isdang ilog.

Ganoon din naman ang karanasan ng mga mangingisda sa dagat malapit lamang sa Manila Baywalk. Wala na silang nahuhuling isda dahil sa dami ng basura at dumi ng tubig-dagat.

Maganda pa rin ang ginagawang pagsisikap ng PRRC na malinis ang mga estero sa Kamaynilaan. Ngunit habang hindi natututo ang mga tao sa mga komunidad kung paano magbukod-bukod, magkompost ng mga nabubulok na tira-tirang bagay mula sa mga kusina, palengke at maging sa kabukiran, hindi matitigil ang pagiging marumi ng mga estero natin na dati'y napakasarap lumanghap ng sariwang hangin sa harapan nito.

Hanggang may mga batas pangkalikasan na binabale-wala, hindi titino ang ating kapaligiran. Mahalaga ang pamumuno sa aspetong ito. Hindi magtatagumpay ang sinumang alkalde kung walang edukasyon ang mamamayan sa mga komunidad kung paano dapat mahalín, pangalagaan at ipagtanggol ang Inang Kalikasan.

(bangonkalikasan@yahoo.com)



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COOLING OFF. A farmer gives a refreshing bath to his favored farm animal along a tributary of Lamut River, voted as the cleanest in Northern Luzon by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. **Dave Leprozo**



ENDANGERED FELINES

RARE VISAYAN WILDCATS FIND NEW HOME IN ILOILO PARK

By Hazel P. Villa
@inquirervisayas

ILOILO CITY—In March last year, poultry workers in Pontevedra town, Capiz province, saw two kittens roaming in the fields near the chicken farm.

But they noticed that the kittens, who seemed lost, had unusual features, prompting them to bring the cats to the poultry owners in Iloilo province.

“From the moment the kittens were brought to me from the farm, I researched about local wildcats on the web and saw the photo of the Visayan wildcat. That’s when I knew I had to take extra care of them until I can find a conservation

park so I can endorse them,” said Dr. Marigold Gonzalez, whose family owned the property where the kittens were found.

Indeed, the felines were unique. They are Visayan leopard cats (*Prionailurus bengalensis rabori*), a species of small wildcats endemic to the Negros-Panay region.

‘Vulnerable’

While the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists the Visayan leopard cat as “vulnerable” as of June 30, 2008, Dr. Victor Gonzales, director of the Mariit Wildlife and Conservation Park in Lambunao, Iloilo, said the native wildcat was now considered

an endangered species, with a very high risk of extinction in the wild.

The IUCN described the population trend as “decreasing.”

Gonzalez, a cosmetic surgeon and daughter of the late former Iloilo City Rep. Raul Gonzalez, fed and took care of the felines when she received them when these were three months old.

When they reached a year and three months on June 28 this year, she had them transferred to the Mariit Wildlife and Conservation Park at the West Visayas State University’s Lambunao campus in Barangay Jayubo.

The male cub, Ponte, and his sister, Vedra, were named after Pontevedra, the town where

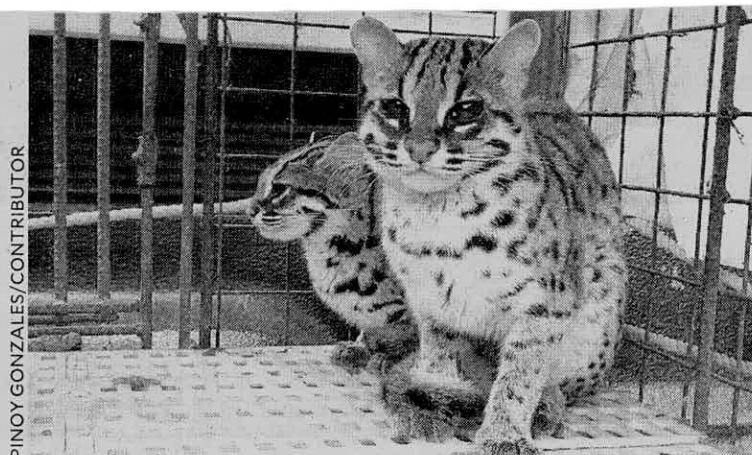
they were found.

They joined three other Visayan leopard cats (locally called “madal” or “maral”) that were surrendered to the park early this year by Lambunao hunters who found them in the town’s mountains.

Surprise

“The Visayan leopard cats are normally found in the mountains of Janiuay, Lambunao and Calinog towns in Iloilo and Tapaz town in Capiz. We were surprised they found them in Pontevedra,” said photojournalist and wildlife enthusiast Pinoy Gonzales, who suggested to Gonzalez that she send Ponte and Vedra to the conservation park.

Gonzales believed that the



PINOY GONZALES/CONTRIBUTOR

HELLO KITTY These Visayan leopard cats, seen roaming near a poultry farm in Capiz province last year, are named Ponte and Vedra after the town where they were rescued. The rare native wildcats have been turned over to a wildlife park in Iloilo province last month.

maral were living near the waterfalls within the property of the Gonzalez family in Pontevedra.

“There are still huge trees

and the environment is something kind of wild over there. But the neighboring farms are already tilled and developed,” said Gonzales. **INQ**



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Juvenile PHL eagle captured in E. Samar

By ELMER RECUERDO
Correspondent

TACLOBAN CITY—A fledgling Philippine eagle was captured in the upstream town of Maslog in Eastern Samar by a son of a farmer who set a trap for chicken.

According to a report of the Conservation and Development Division of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the estimated three-year old Philippine eagle was caught in a trap within the forest of Carayacay

village, which is within the 333300-hectare Samar Island Natural Park (SINP).

The report said the young man brought the eagle to Maslog Vice Mayor Septemio Santiago on June 17 after it unintentionally entered the set trap. Santiago then reported the incident to the Community Environment and Natural Resources office in Dolores town (CENRO-Dolores), which has the jurisdiction over the area.

The DENR regional office and Biodiversity Management Bureau then immediately sent a team of veterinarians and technical staff from

Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) to conduct an assessment on the condition of the eagle now officially named "Maslog ES."

Although the team considered the eagle in good condition, Maslog ES was turned over to the PEF center on June 26 for further examination and rehabilitation. When the foundation already sees it fit, Maslog ES will be released back to its natural habitat in Maslog forest.

"Sightings of the Philippine eagle is extremely rare and protecting them is a challenge," said Crizaldy Barcelo, DENR regional executive director. He said the rescue of Maslog ES once again confirms the presence of this critically endangered species in Eastern Samar.

SINP is the country's largest terrestrial protected area, which, including its buffer, totals 458,700 hectares, or a third of the entire Samar Island.

Up until highways were built that criss-crossed the mountains, SINP is known as a nesting site of the Philippine eagle, with the first sighting recorded by British explorer John Whitehead in June 15, 1856.

Following the rescue of Maslog ES, DENR is stepping up its campaign for the protection of this critically endangered bird and its habitat.

"Its presence in our region is a testament that we still have healthy forests, which we need to sustainably manage and protect," Barcelo said.

Last year, the three provincial governments that comprise the Samar island—Northern, Western and Eastern Samar—started a campaign to declare SINP as a Unesco World Heritage Site due to its rich biodiversity.

Hunting of the Philippine eagle is strictly prohibited under the Philippine Wildlife Conservation Act with penalties of up to 12 years imprisonment and a fine of up to P1 million.

A Philippine eagle was last seen in the forests of Calbiga, Samar and Taft, Eastern Samar, in September 2014. In 2013, a Philippine eagle was spotted near the boundaries of Baybay City, Burauen and Albuera in Leyte province and Silago, Southern Leyte, months

before Super typhoon Yolanda struck. Reports of observed nesting site were also recorded in Eastern Samar in the same year.

The Philippine eagle was officially declared the country's national bird in 1995 by then-President Fidel V. Ramos. It is endemic to the Philippines and can be found in the islands of Eastern Luzon, Samar, Leyte and Mindanao.

Barcelo said the Philippine eagle is one of the DENR's priority threatened species for conservation and is listed as "critically endangered" per DENR Administrative Order 2004-15 on the list of terrestrial threatened species and their categories and under the International Union for Conservation (IUCN).



This is On Me

Floro Mercene

A pair of Philippine eagles fly to Singapore

LAST June 4, a pair of Philippine Eagles was delivered to Singapore as part of the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) captive breeding program. The Department of Environ-

ment and Natural Resources (DENR) signed a Wildlife Loan Agreement with the Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS). According to Dr. Jayson Ibañez, PEF's Director for Research and

Conservation, this will be a safety net for the eagles since they are threatened by climate change and the bird flu. A male eagle, Geothermica (15 years old), and a female, Sambisig (17 years old), were being paired at the PEF Philippine Eagle Center in Davao. They will be under the care of the Jurong Bird Park for the next 10 years. These keepers have already been trained in the care of the eagles at the center. Any offspring from the pair in Singapore will be returned to the Philippines for release back

to the wild.

According to The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN Red List), there are only 250-750 eagles left. The decline in their population is primarily caused by deforestation due to the timber industry and shifting cultivation. Poaching and hunting are also a threat. These eagles are vital for controlling the population of other animals such as snakes, monitor lizards, birds and bats. It is also declared as the Philip-

pine national bird because of its notable strength, and uniqueness. The Philippine Eagle Foundation monitors and protects wild populations of the eagles. They also conduct captive breeding programs that produces offspring for releasing back into the wild or for more breeding pairs for the program. The Philippine Eagle is protected in wildlife protected areas in the Mt. Kitanglad and Mt. Apo National Parks of Mindanao and the Sierra Madre National Park in Northern Luzon.



INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

A serious threat to ecosystems, biodiversity

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)

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FROM afar, the sight of the green, leafy, free-floating aquatic plants over vast water bodies add aesthetic value to nature's serenity. However, at a closer look, the fear of the unknown suddenly kicks in. And it is not for a good reason.



MEMBERS of Task Force Water Hyacinth and DENR personnel remove water hyacinth from the Pasig River near Aroceros Park in Manila early this month. PPRC



What appears to be naturally occurring, the water hyacinth, which is native to tropical and subtropical South America, has broad, thick, glossy, ovate leaves. This pervasive plant can rise above the surface by as much as a meter in height.

Unlike *kangkong*, or water spinach, a nutritious vegetable Filipinos eat, water hyacinth is not edible and causes adverse impact on people and the environment.

Just last month, the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) revived the Task Force Hyacinth and started removing hundreds to thousands of sacks of water hyacinth.

According to PRRC, said 4,120 sacks of water hyacinth were removed on June 10, and there is no letup in the harvesting of this invasive alien species.

Besides causing flooding, water hyacinth affects the mobility of people traveling via boats, including fishers whose livelihoods are severely affected by its adverse environmental impact.

Executive Director Jose Antonio E. Goitia said: "Rain or shine, PRRC's clearing operations will continue not just across the Pasig River, but also in the esteros and creeks to prevent flooding."

Invasive alien species

THE Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) describes invasive alien species as "plants, animals, pathogens and other organisms that are nonnative to an ecosystem, and which may cause economic or environmental harm or adversely affect human health. In particular, they impact adversely upon biodiversity, including decline or elimination of native species—through competition, predation, or transmission of pathogens—and the disruption of local ecosystems and ecosystem functions."

In the Philippines, invasive alien species like the water hyacinth are slowly creeping, menacing one ecosystem at a time, including otherwise healthy water bodies like Pasig River and Laguna de Bay and Agusan marsh, undermining their productivity.

Worse, invasive alien species are considered a major driver of biodiversity loss, as they tend to compete and displace native species and cause ecological imbalance.

Invasive alien species are hard to eliminate, control or manage,

like a pest that requires a science-based solution.

IAS Congress 2019

TIMELY enough, the Philippines hosted the Invasive Alien Species Conference 2019.

Held from July 8 to 12 at the Diamond Hotel in Pasay City, the conference, titled "Research and Development Congress on Invasive Alien Species in the Asia Pacific," gathered 200 local and foreign researchers, scientists, academics, policy-makers, and guests to discuss recent status, control and management in the region.

Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB), the research and development (R&D) arm of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), took the lead to raise the IAS biosecurity approach within the entire stretch of the Pacific.

The conference aimed to contribute to the Aichi Biodiversity Target 9 in reducing the direct pressures of IAS on environmental sustainability. Its objective is to help ensure that by 2020, "invasive alien species and pathways are identified and prioritized, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and measures are in place to manage pathways to prevent their introduction and establishments."

Aichi Biodiversity Target 9 is part of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, 20 in all, that were agreed upon by governments in October 2010, at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture in Japan.

A threat to ecosystems, biodiversity

ACCORDING to experts, invasive alien species raise countless threats to biodiversity.

The DENR's ERDB said their proliferation could consequently wipeout endemic and native species of a country.

"With the introduction of alien species to a new environment, the indigenous flora and fauna become vulnerable to risks," Dr. Carmelita I. Villamor, overall coordinator and chief of ERDB's Coastal Zone and Freshwater Ecosystems Research Division (CZFERD), said.

"Invasive alien species can occur in different taxonomic groups and may pose great threats across all ecosystems. They could also spread in ways destructive to human and the society at large," she said.

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Causing massive extinction

QUOTING a CBD report, the ERDB said since the 17th century, IAS has been contributing to massive extinction on the world's fauna at about 40 percent.

These species continue to trigger competition, predation and massive transmission of pathogens, which then increase the stakes for survival among native species like the water hyacinth.

Due to its rapid spread, water hyacinth has aggressively invaded tropical regions. Its thick cover on waterways can cause blockage, oxygen depletion and fish kills, such as what recently happened in Laguna de Bay.

Another priority species is the African tulip tree growing in the tropical forests of the South Pacific.

The African tulip tree crowds out native species and is extremely difficult to remove as it can easily regrow from its root fragments and wind-dispersed seeds.

ERDB Director Dr. Sofio B. Quintana acknowledged IAS threats as a top concern for the bureau.

"We are always keeping a close eye on invasive alien species to secure and sustain our ecosystems. Our time is changing and we don't want to compromise the survival of our native species any further due to invasive threats," Quintana said.

Massive infestation

ACCORDING to Asean Centre for Biodiversity Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim, more than 200 nonnative species have already been recorded to have been introduced in the Southeast Asian region alone.

"More than 40 of these [nonnative species] are listed in the IUCN [International Union for Conservation of Nature] as the world's worst invasive alien species," Lim, a former director of the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), said.

The Asean has one of the highest proportions in endemic species on a per-country basis compared to most tropical regions, Lim said.



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Vulnerable island biodiversity

CHAMPIONING the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and protection in the Asean, Lim said some countries in Southeast Asia are with islands that are home to unique species that are found nowhere else in the world.

"The Asean also hosts a variety of forest ecosystem types, with each type having its own unique combination of species. The Philippines alone has 12 types of forest ecosystems, which include not just a forest of tall dipterocarps, but also, pygmy forests that are found on islands like Dinagat, and in mountain protected areas like Mount Hamiguitan and Mount Apo. From land to water, the region is blessed with lakes and river ecosystems that support a variety of freshwater fisheries that thrive nowhere else naturally, but in these bodies of water," she said.

Such a situation makes the region, and island countries within the region, like the Philippines, very vulnerable to the impacts of IAS, she said.

"Introduction of exotic [nonnative] species, whether intentionally or not, has already resulted in observed depletion of our native species. Invasive alien species threaten native species by feeding on them, by competing with them for food and space or introducing pests and diseases," she explained.

Economic, cultural impact

ACCORDING to Lim, IAS not only affect the environment, but also agriculture and health, and result in significant economic losses.

"The problem is, we only start paying attention to them when their effect can be felt, which is usually already a bit late. So we need to focus as well on prevention and early detection," she said.

The loss of the variety of food and nutritional choices on the table would be the most obvious impact of some of the most problematic IAS we have in the Philippines, she said.

According to Lim, most of the freshwater fish now commonly served for food are introduced into our water systems, like tilapia and cream dory.

"We, of course, have heard so much about increasing catch of knife fish and janitor fish in Laguna de Bay and Marikina River, where *ayungin* and *kanduli* used to thrive in abundance. We have also seen how the Brazilian mahogany, with its 'propeller-like' seeds and the 'Piper aduncum' weed can affect the regrowth and regeneration of natural vegetation for watershed areas, and for the restoration of vital ecosystems and ecosystem functions. Then, we also have the golden apple snails, the European squirrels, the cane toad, and other known 'invasives,' all of which are impacting our biodiversity, and in some areas, our culture and our way of life," she said.

A cause for alarm

ASSISTANT Secretary for Staff Bureaus Ricardo L. Calderon, the concurrent director of the DENR-BMB, said the massive infestation of ecosystems, especially in Philippine forests is a cause for alarm.

Calderon, a forestry expert, said invasive alien species have been unintentionally introduced into the wild not knowing their adverse environmental impact.

He agreed that IAS "seriously threaten our ecosystems, especially in flora. We are losing our native species because of them."

Unintended release, unintentional effect

HE said while some of IAS were introduced "in good faith" or "with good intentions" their spread, as a result of the unintended release into the wild, do more harm than good to new environments.

Calderon cited the case of the *gmelina*, a fast-growing tree that tends to grow from 3 meters to 30 meters tall or even higher, which have been proliferating in protection forests.

Good for production forest, *gmelina* tends to compete with native trees, which it outgrows and eventually kills in protection forests.

"These invasive species that were introduced in the past eliminate native species or prevent their growth. For example, *gmelina* is supposed to be for production forests, but not for protected areas. They have been planted in protection forests, unintentionally," he explained.

Prevention better than cure

ACCORDING to Calderon, while the problem brought by invasive alien species is not as extensive as they have been reported or believed to be, the DENR is not taking the challenge posed by their proliferation sitting down.

"We have a number of interventions and with this [18th] Congress, we hope to come up with an action plan to prevent their proliferation," he said.

"Remember, prevention is better than cure. But since some of these invasive alien species have been introduced—and they are here now and part of the food chain—we must find a way to control it, manage it and make the most out of it," Calderon said.

He cited, for instance, the unintentional release of pets, citing the case of the Chinese softshell turtle, which is considered a menace to fishpond owners in Central Luzon. The Chinese softshell turtle has also been spotted in Laguna de Bay and other water bodies.

The aggressive turtles grow fast and have a big appetite for fish and other aquatic life—feeding on tilapia, also an invasive alien species, and prawn being cultured by fishpond operators.

Calderon said the gathering of expert hosted by the DENR-ERDB aims to tackle invasive alien species and find ways to control and manage them, if not prevent their proliferation, hence, it is important to define, so as to identify, what is invasive alien species.

"One species may be invasive in the Philippines but not in another or other countries where they occur naturally," he said in a mix of Filipino and English.

Maximizing economic potentials

HE said identifying the various threats of invasive alien species, and how to maximize their economic benefits, would also be a bonus output of the international conference.

For the Philippines, learning how to treat IAS at the national level is a must.

But he said the Philippines is also looking forward to forging ties with its neighbors in the Asia Pacific to address the threats while exploring their potential economic benefits.

"Hopefully, the direction is to come up with a regional action plan. But first and foremost, we must have a national action plan. This is being worked out by the DENR's various bureaus. How do we control it, and how do we prevent its entry," Calderon said.

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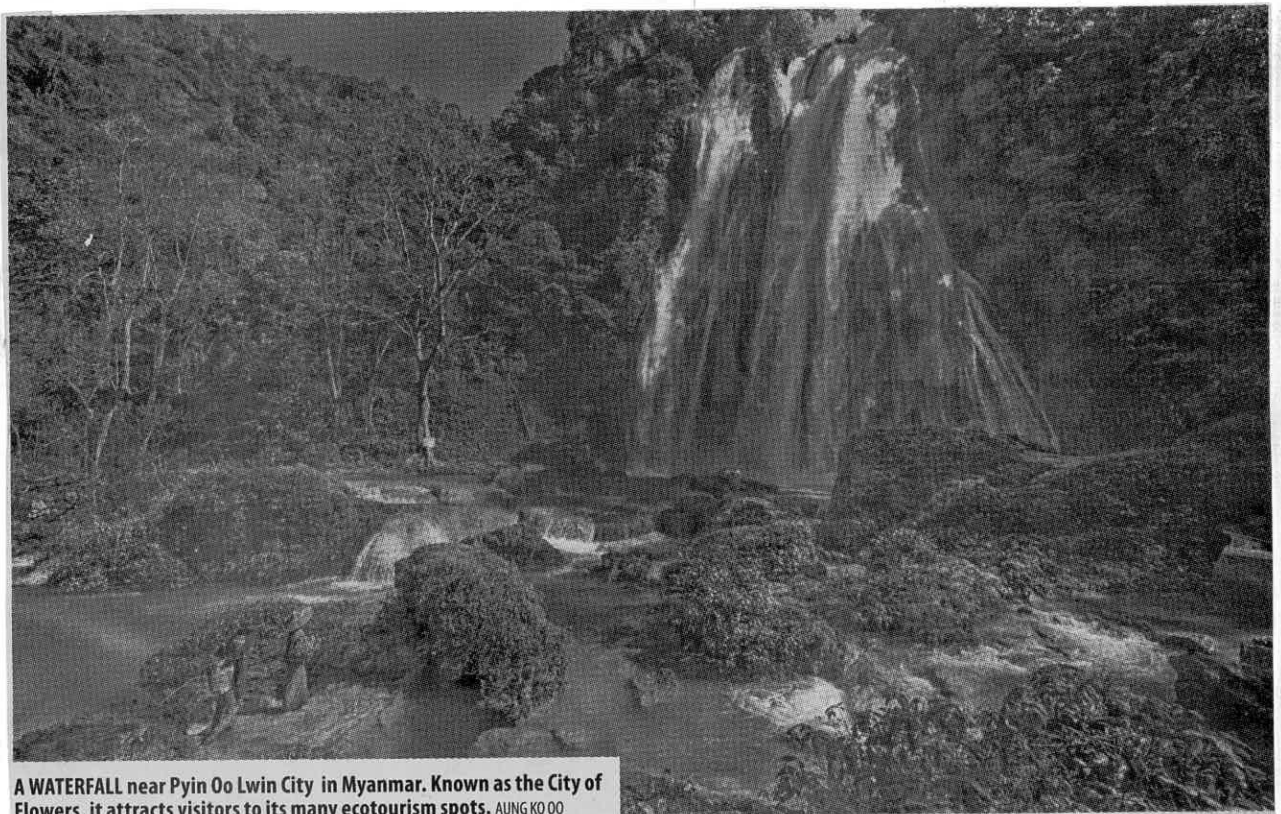
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A message of hope for Asea's threatened biodiversity

By DR. THERESA MUNDITA S. LIM

THE Asean region's relentless campaign to conserve and protect its rich but highly threatened biodiversity and ecosystems took center stage with the recent International Conference on Biodiversity hosted by Thailand.

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A WATERFALL near Pyin Oo Lwin City in Myanmar. Known as the City of Flowers, it attracts visitors to its many ecotourism spots. AUNG KO O



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With no less than the Princess of the Kingdom of Thailand, Her Royal Highness Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, gracing the opening ceremonies, the event highlighted the conservation collaboration among the 10 Asean member-states—Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The Asean region occupies only 3 percent of the world's total area, yet its mountains, forests, rivers, lakes and seas are home to almost 20 percent of the world's known plant and animal species as assessed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

The region is endowed with a diversity of forests, marine areas, oceans and wetlands. Many Asean member-states share common biodiversity-rich boundaries, possessing rich natural and cultural resources that provide a variety of ecosystem services, such as provision of food, clean air and potable water; regulation of natural processes like decomposition of wastes, nutrient cycling, and pollination of crops and other plants; as well as providing spiritual and cultural significance.

All these biodiversity and ecosystem services are key to the survival, development, well-being and prosperity of some 650 million Asean citizens.

Development taking toll on the environment

THE Asean region has been experiencing rapid economic growth and modernization. It is known to be the world's fifth largest, and Asia's third-largest economy with a gross domestic product (GDP) valued at approximately \$2.8 trillion in 2017. This is almost four and a half times the GDP value in 2000, which is valued at \$615 billion.

Moreover, the region's economic development is highlighted by the ever-increasing tourist arrivals, from 42 million in 2001 to 115 million in 2016, and is expected to expand by an average of 6.4 percent per annum until 2026.

In addition, Southeast Asia boasts of thriving manufacturing and export industries, with exports increasing from \$1.9 trillion in 2008 to \$2.5 trillion in 2017.

However, along with this economic advancement comes escalating consumption and ever-increasing threats to biodiversity, such as pollution, terrestrial and marine debris, land conversion, irresponsible mining, illegal wildlife trade, and the introduction and proliferation of invasive alien species.

Inevitably, development sectors, including infrastructure, agriculture and fisheries, mining, energy and tourism have direct and indirect impacts on biodiversity and our precious ecosystem services.

Not a message of doom, but hope for Asean's biodiversity

HOWEVER, this scenario is not a message of doom and despair, but of encouragement and hope.

Southeast Asia has an advantage over other regions. While human and economic development in other parts of the world have often come at the expense of biodiversity, Asean's rich biodiversity and ecosystems remain viable and receptive to protection and conservation measures.

The theme for the International Conference on Biodiversity—Biodiversity for Sustainable Bioeconomy—was both timely and necessary.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization defines bioeconomy as the knowledge-based production and utilization of biological resources, biological processes and principles to sustainably provide goods and services across all economic sectors.

A rich biodiversity and healthy ecosystems mean cleaner air, greater food security, decreased disaster risk and greater human health outcomes.

Clearly, biodiversity—the very foundation of life and livelihoods—supports sustained growth and development for the present and future generations, as long as we recognize our responsibility, not only to care for it, but to utilize it with care.

Economic advancement spearheaded by development sectors—such as infrastructure, agriculture and fisheries, mining, energy and tourism—may have negative impacts on biodiversity and our precious ecosystem services, but they are the very same sectors that can significantly contribute to halting, or reversing biodiversity loss.

Apart from possessing the human, financial and technological resources to ensure that their operations do not have negative impacts on ecosystem services, these sectors also have the capacity to augment government efforts in arresting biodiversity loss.

This is the reason it is crucial to mainstream and embed biodiversity conservation into development plans, as well as in the business processes of the private sector, to guarantee that biodiversity is protected and conserved in an ever-growing region such as the Asean.

Asean at the forefront of conservation

RECOGNIZING the invaluable contribution of biodiversity to peoples, the Asean and its member-states have been taking substantial and concerted action at the national, regional and international levels toward conservation and sustainable use of our biological resources and natural heritage to drive inclusive sustainable development, where no one is left behind.



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The fact that all Asean member-states are parties to various multilateral environmental agreements demonstrates not only their appreciation of the importance of biodiversity conservation, but also their willingness to be legally bound by their commitments under these agreements.

These include the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, to name a few.

ACB as precursor of regional cooperation

AT the regional level, the Asean member-states established the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) in 2005 as its response to the challenge of biodiversity loss.

Since its establishment, ACB has been assisting the Asean member-states in promoting regional collaboration in biodiversity conservation, in particular, by supporting concerted efforts to achieve the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and ensuring that biodiversity continues to thrive in the region.

All Asean member-states have their respective national biodiversity conservation programs. But conservation is a shared responsibility considering that biodiversity loss is an environmental problem that knows no boundaries.

To promote cooperation within the Asean region, the ACB coordinates the protection and conservation efforts of the Asean member-states into one common front.

Conserving Asean's best nature parks

ONE of the region's banner initiatives is the Asean Heritage Parks Program, which encourages Asean member-states to set aside and protect areas that are of high conservation importance. The protection accorded to these nature parks redounds to the valuable ecosystem services they provide.

For example, Khao Yai National Park in Thailand is the source of potable water and irrigation in the surrounding areas of the park. The abundance of forest and other biological products in Hoang Lien National Park in Northern Vietnam gives sustenance and livelihood opportunities to several indigenous communities.

The Mount Apo Natural Park in the Philippines provides natural irrigation for food production in surrounding provinces, as well as geothermal energy and hydropower.

Moreover, Mount Kinabalu National Park in Sabah, Malaysia, is a prime destination for ecotourism enthusiasts; and the Kepulauan Seribu National Park, a marine Asean Heritage Park in Indonesia, provides nutrients to the Java Sea and to the Indian Ocean where the fisheries industry is thriving.

The Asean Heritage Parks Program also offers opportunities to strengthen regional connectivity and cooperation, as ecosystems and their services transcend national borders. Such regional cooperation can be manifested in the collaborative management of adjacent and interconnected protected areas.

For instance, a number of countries work together to protect and conserve the biological, ecological and cultural treasures in environments, such as the forests of Borneo, the river systems of the Mekong and the ocean around the Turtle Islands in the Philippines.

In addition, many Asean Heritage Parks serve as sources of livelihoods to the communities living within and around these areas. As such, the ACB is spearheading the incorporation of biodiversity into the value chain, and ascribing more premium to livelihoods that provide communities with eco-friendly alternatives to unsustainable extraction activities in protected areas.

The benefits of these livelihood opportunities are being realized in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam through an ACB project, titled "Biodiversity-based Products as an Economic Source for the Improvement of Livelihoods and Biodiversity Protection," supported by the government of Germany.

Bountiful diversity of species and ecosystems

THE Asean appreciates its bountiful diversity of species, some of which are migratory, which move across national borders within the region.

Asean member-states exert collective efforts to protect these species—such as elephants, tigers, hornbills and marine turtles—most of which have culturally significant value, sources of pride and inspiration for the peoples of Asean, and subjects of tourism and recreational activities.

Around 50 million waterbirds journey to Southeast Asia to keep

themselves warm during the cold winter months in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. Hence, the Asean Flyway Network supports the monitoring and protection of these migratory birds.

The continued presence of these birds is a good indicator of a healthy network of wetlands in the region. The protection of Asean's wetlands—which serve as watering grounds of these migratory birds—provides valuable provisioning and ecosystem services that are important, not only to local livelihoods, but also to the food security and ecological integrity of the region.

A healthy network of wetlands recharges groundwater for sustained water supply, absorbs flooding and sea level rise, supports fisheries and keeps bird-borne and water-borne diseases in check.

Clearly, conserving this important ecosystem secures sustained benefits for the people, communities and industries that depend on these migratory birds and wetlands.

Similarly, healthy ecosystems mean reliable irrigation and water supply for one of the most vital industries in the region: agriculture.

As such, the ACB, together with the Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, has catalyzed greater cross-sectoral collaboration to promote agrobiodiversity and biodiversity mainstreaming in the agriculture sector.

The importance of cross-sector cooperation, particularly in agriculture, cannot be overemphasized, in light of the increasing need for food security in order to respond to the region's growing population.

Urban areas have biodiversity, too

CONSEQUENT to human development in the Asean is the rising demand for housing and shelter, which brings with it the creation of more urban spaces.

Seeing this as both a challenge and an opportunity, Asean member-states and the ACB are promoting urban nature and green infrastructure to ensure that the establishment of urban spaces are cognizant of biodiversity considerations, and that inhabitants of these spaces have access to nature and its associated benefits.

Singapore has formulated the Singapore Index on Cities' Biodiversity, a



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self-assessment tool for measuring a city's biodiversity efforts.

Through the index, cities are guided to incorporate biodiversity in urban planning to allow its inhabitants to benefit from nature-based solutions to environmental concerns common in these areas, such as the provision of clean air, the reduction of urban heat and the prevention of floodwater retention, all of which contribute to health and well-being.

The Singapore Index is already being utilized, not only in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, but also in countries beyond Southeast Asia.

Science and policy interface

ANOTHER important area of cooperation is the promotion of the interface between science and policy. The ACB is working with the Asean member-states to advance knowledge-sharing, capacity building and technology transfer within the region.

Needless to say, science-based and informed decision-making is one of the foundations of crafting sound and sustainable policies for development planning and implementation.

Ensuring healthy biodiversity for the next generation

THE ACB is fostering the engagement and leadership of the next generation. Our youth, who represents over 33 percent of the population, and is a key stakeholder in contributing to a sustainable, healthy and resilient future.

To ensure that our future generation is empowered to inherit and steward our region's rich biodiversity and ecosystems, the ACB is spearheading the Asean Youth Program in collaboration with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, the official youth constituency to the CBD. It is supported by the European Union, through the "Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in the Asean Project."

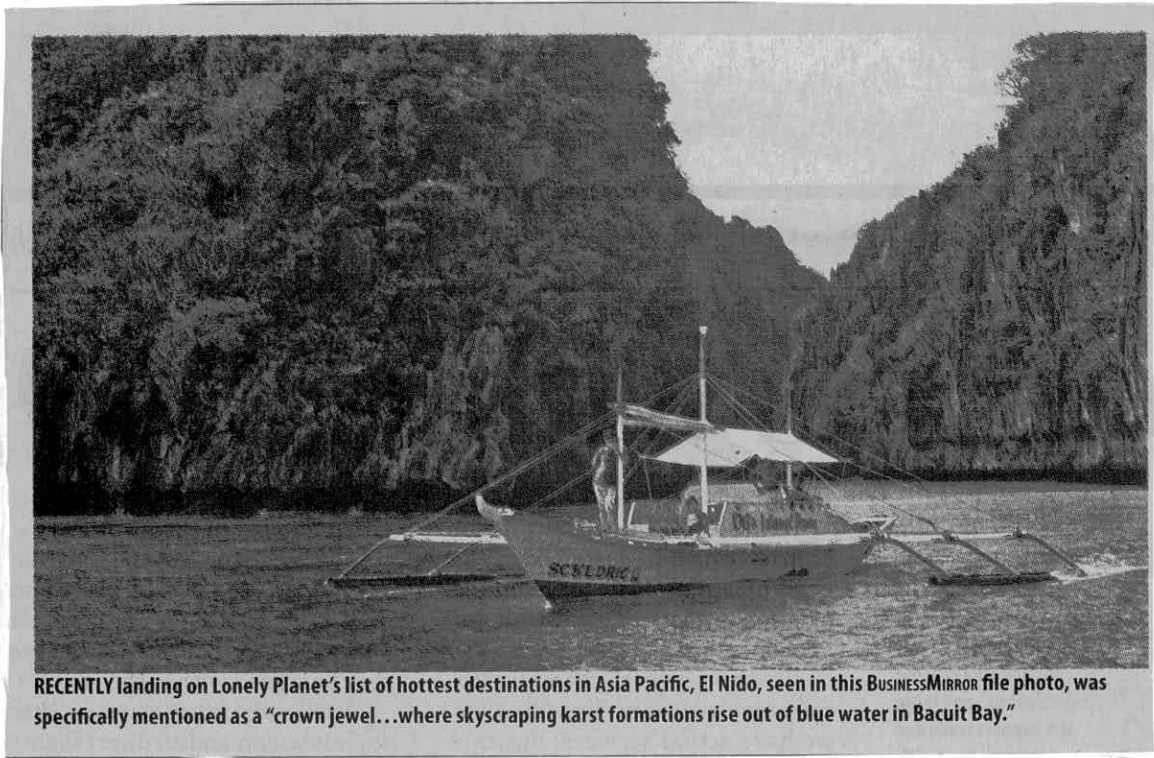
Under this program, the Asean Youth Biodiversity Leaders select 20 inspiring youth leaders from all across the region for a yearlong fellowship that provides them with in-depth training and mentorship to strengthen youth-led conservation in the region.

They also get the opportunity to conduct youth consultations on biodiversity issues, and exchange best practices on enhancing several youth-led activities in the region.

All these efforts are made possible through the strong collaboration and cooperation of the Asean member-states, supported by the ACB and its international and regional partners.

The Asean region is the repository of rich biodiversity and ecosystem services, the site of exemplary natural wonders, and home to the Asean community. Let us continue working together as one community to conserve and sustainably use our biological diversity; because biodiversity is for people and for progress.

Dr. Lim, the executive director of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity, was the keynote speaker at the opening of the International Conference on Biodiversity held at the Centara Grand, Central World in Bangkok, Thailand, organized by the Biodiversity-Based Economy Development Office under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation; the National Science Museum; and the National Science and Technology Development Agency.



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RECENTLY landing on Lonely Planet's list of hottest destinations in Asia Pacific, El Nido, seen in this BUSINESSMIRROR file photo, was specifically mentioned as a "crown jewel...where skyscraping karst formations rise out of blue water in Bacuit Bay."

'DILG TO RECOMMEND EL NIDO CLOSURE'

By MA. STELLA F. ARNALDO

[@akosistellaBM](#)

Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR

DON'T look now, travel junkies, but El Nido in Palawan could be the next hot tourism destination to be closed.

A government source told the BUSINESSMIRROR the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) will be recommending to "close Bacuit Bay and the Corong Corong outfall, with no water activities for three months." The source requested anonymity as he was not authorized to speak on the matter.

Bacuit Bay is a haven for many scuba divers because of its rich marine resources. It hosts exotic wildlife like dugong (seacows),

sea turtles, manta rays, whale sharks and various species of tropical fish and extensive coral reefs.

— The recommendation was made after the DILG sent an inspection team to El Nido earlier this month. The DILG will also recommend the formation of a specific task force, composed of representatives of the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources, Tourism and the DILG to enforce the closure.

According to the source, the closure of El Nido, dubbed by international media and travel publications as "one of the best island beaches in the world," would enable the task force, to rehabilitate and cleanup these areas. "The fecal coliform level in these areas is very high and waters are quite dirty," the source

said in Filipino.

The timing of the area's closure is just right, added the source, as the low season for tourists is usually from July to October, with the arrival of the monsoon rains and typhoons. According to the Department of Tourism (DOT) web site, as of March 2018, there were 26 accredited accommodation establishments in El Nido.

While the government source said the properties of the Ayala Hotels and Resorts Corp. will not be impacted directly by the closure, many of these are actually located within Bacuit Bay and frequently hold watersports activities there. These resorts are on Miniloc, Pangalusian and Lagen Islands, as well as its newly opened Lio Tourism Estate.

SEE "EL NIDO," A12



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EL Nido...

CONTINUED FROM A1

Interior Secretary Eduardo M. Año is expected to present his agency's recommendation in the next meeting of the task force, which has been monitoring several island destinations for possible violations in environmental, easement, local government and tourism regulations. These include El Nido,

Coron, Panglao and Siargao. This the same task force, chaired by Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu, which closed Boracay Island for six months in 2018, on pollution and overtourism concerns.

In an interview with CNN Philippines over the weekend, Cimatu did not shut the door to possible closures of these destinations, especially those which failed to follow the prescriptions of the task force. The LGUs and several establishments on Panglao and El Nido

were given six months from November 2018 to implement measures to correct violations on pollution and easement issues.

"We are going to discuss this [possible closure] when we go there," said Cimatu, and, publicly addressing violators, said, "we gave you six months, you didn't comply," and hence "we might be ordering drastic actions." The task force members, including Año and Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat, will be heading out to El Nido and Coron to

check on the compliance with their directives, after having revisited Panglao last March. "We will also go to Siargao," he said, adding that all four islands are "all violators of our environmental laws."

Task force representatives on the regional level also recently completed their inspection of Panglao. The six-month deadline for these destinations to address their violations was on May 31, 2019.

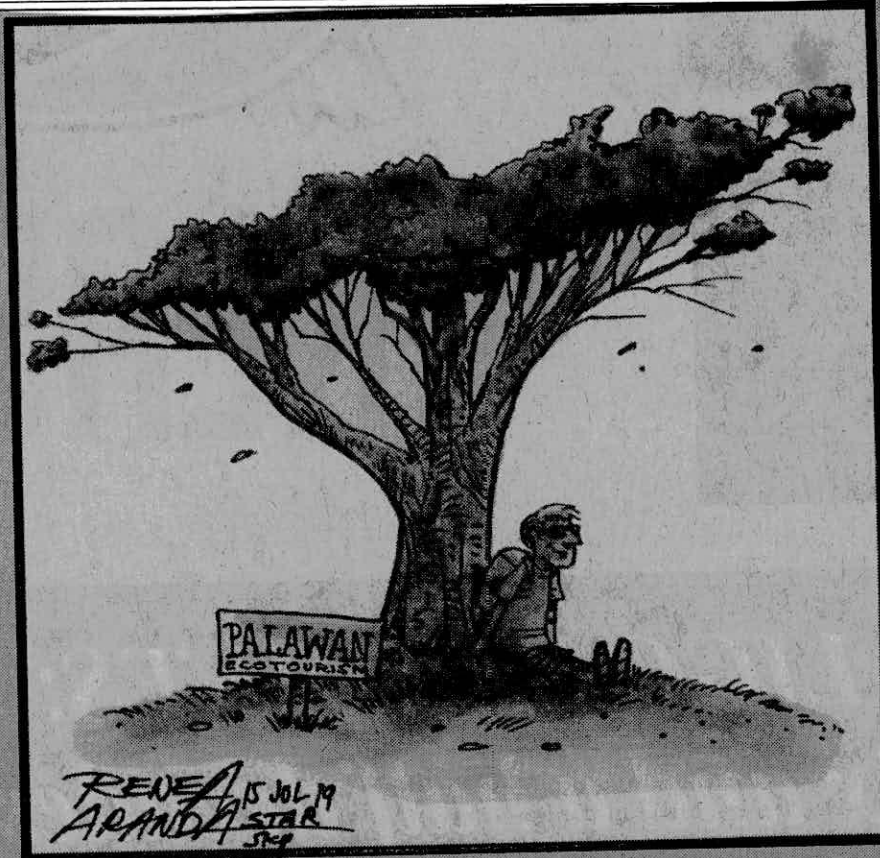
Only recently, Palawan made it to the Lonely

Planet's list of hottest destinations in Asia Pacific, where El Nido was specifically mentioned as a "crown jewel...where skyscraping karst formations rise out of blue water in Bacuit Bay."

The popular travel guide added, "New rules restrict visitor numbers at signature sights like Big Lagoon on Miniloc Island, while a ban on single-use plastic bottles on tour boats is helping to tackle marine pollution."

The DENR earlier issued cease-and-desist orders on 10 hotels in El Nido for violations of the

Clean Water Act: El Nido Sea Shell Resorts and Hotel in Brgy. Buena Suerte; Doublegem Beach Resort and Hotel, Buko Beach Resort, Panorama Resort (Mangonana Inc.), Four Seasons Seaview Hotel and Stunning Republic Beach Resort in Brgy. Corong-Corong; and Sava Beach Bar/Sava Nest Egg Inc., El Nido Beach Hotel and The Nest El Nido Resorts and Spa Inc. in Brgy. Masagana. **(See, "DENR gives El Nido, LGUs 1 week to act on environmental law violations," in the BUSINESSMIRROR, on May 21, 2019).**



The benefits of ecotourism

Once again, Palawan has earned recognition from travelers.

Readers of *Travel+Leisure* magazine ranked Palawan second among the world's best 15 island destinations – an improvement from last year's sixth place.

Earlier this year, Palawan's El Nido together with Boracay were also named among the best beaches in Asia by TripAdvisor's 2019 Traveler's Choice Awards.

The accolades are well deserved. Palawan is home to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Subterranean River National Park in Puerto Princesa and Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park in Sulu Sea. El Nido and Coron have world-class snorkeling and diving sites. Limestone formations that dot Palawan waters provide spectacular sceneries.

The challenge is to prevent the province from becoming a victim of its own success. Following the rehabilitation of Boracay Island, a similar effort is underway notably in El Nido, to clean up the beach, modernize the sewerage system and enforce coastal easement rules. Access to the top destinations in the province is being regulated, but there are lesser known destinations that also need to be protected from overdevelopment. Uncooperative

EDITORIAL

local government officials must face sanctions.

Sustainability is always a challenge. This year's second place ranking is down from Palawan's top spot in the same magazine in 2013 and 2017. The slide may be due to the emergence of other attractive destinations, but the goal must always be to hold on to the top spot.

Apart from protecting the environment, ecotourism should include promoting the welfare of indigenous communities. They should be given opportunities to participate in tourism programs and to reap the benefits of a highly profitable industry. Preserving their culture should be part of any tourism development program in the province.

Palawan residents are also custodians of rich biodiversity. With ecotourism as the lifeblood of the province, residents can understand that their livelihoods depend on protecting their natural blessings, from the extensive coral networks to the lush forests and mangrove areas. There are threatened wildlife that need nurturing, such as pangolins, the bear cat and hornbill. Those who are tempted to maximize commercial profits should realize that the long-term viability of their business depends on the health of the environment.



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TOURIST SPOTS SA BANSA, PINALALAGYAN NG 'CARRYING CAPACITY'

HINIMOK ng isang kongresista mula sa lalawigan ng Bohol ang iba't ibang ahensiya ng pamahalaan, partikular ang Department of Tourism (DoT), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) at Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), na bumuo ng pamantayan na magtatakda ng 'carrying capacity' ng bawat 'tourist spot' sa bansa.

Ayon kay neophyte 3rd Dist. Bohol Rep. Alexie Besas Tutor, sa ipinatupad na malawakang rehabilitasyon sa pamosong Boracay Island, napatunayan ang pangangailangan na paglilimita sa bilang ng mga turistang bibisita at maging sa nakatayong mga establisimiyento roon bilang bahagi ng pangangalaga rito.

Giit ng Bohol lady solon, mainam na kontrolin ang mga aktibidad sa isang tourist destination nang sa gayon ay maiwasan na maabuso ang likas na yaman nito at mapananatili ang kagandan at kaayusan sa mas mahabang panahon.

Naniniwala si Tutor na mayroong kanya-kanyang katangian ang bawat dinarayong tourist spots ng Filipinas kung kaya dapat magkaroon ng sapat na pag-aaral para tukuyin kung ano ang indibid-

wal na 'carrying capacity' na akma sa mga ito.

"It is about time that the carrying capacity approach applied most recently to Boracay must be adapted to other popular tourist getaways.

We cannot have a 'one-size fits all' standard because the Philippines has a variety of tourist destination types, so the variables and weights are different across the typology," sabi pa niya

Idinagdag din niya na bilang isa sa nagbibigay ng kontribusyon sa pagpapalago ng ekonomiya ng bansa at pagpapalakas sa hanapbuhay ng mga lokal na residente, dapat lamang na mapangalagaan ang iba't ibang tourist spots upang tumagal ang kapakinabangan at tamin maging ng mga susunod pang henerasyon.

Kaya naman tinukoy ng kongresista ang mga nabanggit na ahensiya na silang magtutulongan at tututok sa pagbuo ng regulasyon hinggil sa susundang 'carrying capacity' ng bawat lugar-pasyalan kapwa ng mga lokal at dayuhang turista.

Naniniwala si Tutor na upang mapabilis ang implementasyon ng 'carrying capacity standard' na ito, pupuwede itong mabuo sa pamamagitan ng isang executive order, subalit sa kalaunan ay ininumungkahi niyang magkaroon ito ng kaukulang batas.

ROMER R. BUTUYAN



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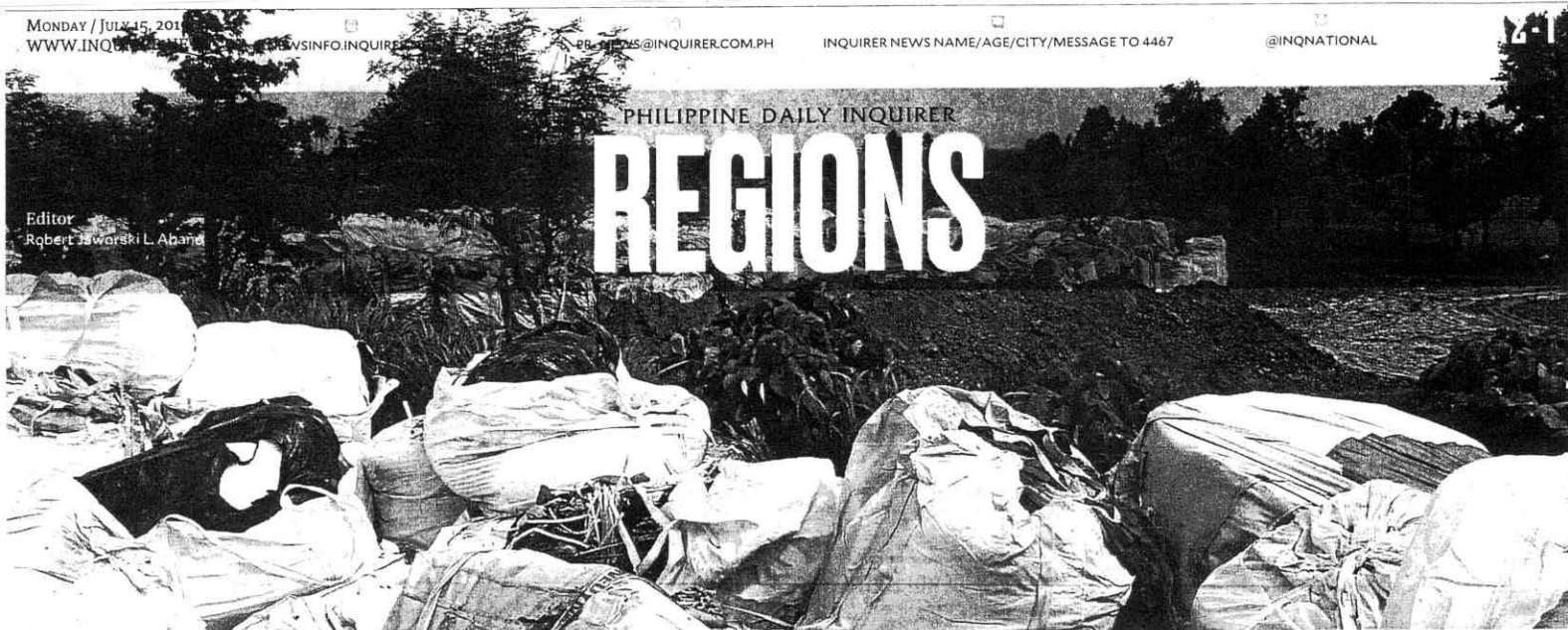
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REGIONS

Editor
Robert Jaworski L. Abang

FIELD OF TRASH Sacks containing shredded plastic waste from South Korea are stored at an industrial estate in Tagoloan town, Misamis Oriental province, awaiting recycling. —CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

BOC team vs foreign trash backed

EcoWaste Coalition says PH ports must have dedicated groups to stop entry of imported garbage

By Jigger J. Jerusalem
@inqmindanao

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY— The plan of the Department of Finance (DOF) to organize a special strike team within the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to prevent

foreign garbage from being dumped in the Philippines has the support of environmental group EcoWaste Coalition.

EcoWaste Coalition national coordinator Aileen Lucero said Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III's order to the

BOC to create such a team would be useful in averting the entry of waste shipments into the country's ports.

"All BOC ports nationwide should have a dedicated group comprised of honest and principled women and men who will proactively act to frustrate the unloading and dumping of waste from overseas into our shores," Lucero said in a statement last week.

She said the efforts of John Simon, the Mindanao Container Terminal (MCT) Customs sub-

port collector, in seizing misdeclared waste shipments from Hong Kong, South Korea and Australia should "inspire other ports to be more vigilant against such imports."

The 6,500 metric tons of mostly plastic waste from South Korea arrived at MCT in two shipments in July and on Oct. 20 last year. Simon facilitated the reshipment of 1,599 MT of the garbage back to South Korea in January this year.

Simon, who assumed his post in October last

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year, was also responsible for sending back 2,651 tons of electronic waste to China's special administrative region of Hong Kong on June 3, four months after the shipment arrived at MCT.

The BOC still has to act on the Australian waste discovered at the port and seized by Simon's team in May.

Dominguez had directed Customs Commissioner Rey Leonardo Guerrero to look into the creation of a special strike team during a recent DOF executive committee meeting.

"It's time we put up something like an environmental unit in the Customs to really act on this garbage issue," Dominguez said in a July 11 article posted on the DOF website.

Nationwide monitoring

Simon, in a text message on Sunday, said: "That's good. We shall now have a nationwide awareness and monitoring of waste smuggling in the Philippines."

Lucero said the creation of the special team must be done soon due to the continuing threat of illegal trafficking of waste.

"As time is of the essence, we hope the BOC strike team versus foreign waste imports will be set up soon. Its information will be in sync with the presidential order banning waste imports," she said.

President Duterte, in May, declared that the Philippines would no longer accept any waste shipment from any country.

To further shield the country from adverse impact of the global waste trade, EcoWaste Coalition has called on the government to hasten the ratification of the Basel Ban Amendment.

The Basel Ban Amendment, which only needs ratification from two more eligible countries such as the Philippines, seeks to prohibit the export of hazardous and other waste from developed to developing countries for any reason, including recycling.

"We expect the DOF and the BOC to strongly support the [Department of Environment and Natural Resources] in seeking President Duterte's ratification of the Basel Ban Amendment," Lucero said. INQ



JIGGER JERUSALEM

INSPECTION A Customs official in Misamis Oriental checks a container of trash in this photo taken in January.



PRRD, sobra ang galit sa mga tiwaling kawani ng BoC

TINGNAN NATIN



By VIC REYES

PABOR pala ang mga miyembro ng Association of Southeast Asian Nations o ASEAN sa ginagawa ng Pilipinas ukol sa isyu ng mga imported garbage.

Matatandaan na kamakailan ay pinilit ni Pangulong Rody Duterte ang Canada na kunin ang mga basura nitong dumating sa ating bansa anim na taon na ang nakararaan.

Para mapilitan ang Canada na kunin ang mga basura ay pinabalik pa ni Duterte sa Manila ang ating ambassador at consuls sa nasabing bansa.

Nagbabala pa si Pangulong Duterte na itatambak niya sa teritoryo ng Canada ang mga nabubulok nitong basura sa Pilipinas.

Sinabi naman ni BoC Chief Rey Leonardo Guerrero na nagkaka-isa ang mga miyembro ng ASEAN na palakasin

ang kani-kanilang law enforcement capability para huwag maging tapunan ng basura ang rehiyon.

Kamakailan lamang ay dumalo si Commissioner Guerrero sa 28th meeting ng ASEAN Directors-General of Customs.

Ayon pa kay Guerrero, nagpasalamat sa Pilipinas ang kanyang mga counterpart "for setting the example."

Aminado ang Malaysia na ang problema "has come to the consciousness of the international community dahil sa aksyon ng Pilipinas.

Dahil sa ginawa ni Duterte, hindi na raw itinuloy ang mga planong pag-export pa sana ng mga basura sa Pilipinas.

Sa kaugnay na balita naman, inatasan ni Finance Sec. Carlos Dominguez III si Guerrero na bumuo ng isang strike team para pigilan ang pagpasok sa bansa ng garbage imports

"It's time we put up something like an environmental unit in the customs (bureau) to really act on this garbage issue."

Sinabi naman ni Assistant Commissioner Vincent Philip Maronilla na ang BoC Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) ay makikipag-coordinate sa kanilang mga counterpart sa ASEAN.

Ang EPU ay nasa ila-

lim ng Enforcement Group (EG).

Sinabi pa ni Maronilla na ang mga tauhan ng BoC-EPU ay sasanayin sa shipment profiling.

Kailangang alam nila ang "common schemes" ng mga kompanyang nasa likod ng pagluluwas ng mga garbage export.

Sana nga matigil na ang pagtatapon ng basura sa atin ng ibang bansa.

Hindi na pala biro ang dami ng mga Pilipino.

Umaabot na pala ng 108.1 milyon ang populasyon ng bansa.

At ang Pilipinas na ang 13th most populous na bansa sa buong mundo.

Sa tingin ng iba ay hindi kaaya-aya ito dahil isa pa rin tayong mahirap na bansa.

Hindi lang 'yan. Pagdating pala ng 2058 ay aabot na ng 216 milyon ang populasyon ng bansa.

Baka pagdating nang nasabing panahon, aasa na lang tayo sa importasyon para may kainin.

Palit na kasi nang paliit ang lupang tinatamnan ng mga magsasaka.

Parang nagsulputang kabute ang mga subdivision, golf course, shopping mall, pabrika at iba pang naglalakihang gusali.

Isa pang masakit na katotohanan, ipinagbibili na ng mga magsasaka ang kanilang mga lupain.

Hindi na daw sila kumikita sa pagsasaka dahil napakamahal ng production cost pero pababa naman nang pababa ang presyo ng kanilang mga produkto. Tsk tsk tsk.

Sa tingin natin, dahil sa matinding galit ni Pangulong Duterte gusto nitong hiyain ang mga pinaghihinalaang tiwaling kawani ng Bureau of Customs.

✓ Ayon sa Pangulo, uutusan niyang maglinis sa Pasig River ang mga ito.

Sinabi pa ni PRRD na ipapatanggal niya sa mga "lingkod-bayan" na ito ang waterlilies sa dinaraan ng barge niyang sinasakyan mula Bahay ng Pagbabago papuntang Malakan- yang.

Masakit na parusa ito sa isang empleyado ng gobyerno.

Pero dito mo makikita na sobra na ang galit ni Pangulong Rody sa mga kawani ng BoC na ayaw tumigil sa kanilang mga tiwaling gawain.

Siguradong aabangan ito ng taumbayan, para makita kung sinu-sino ang mga dorobong opisyal at empleyado ng BoC.

Abangan!

(Para sa inyong komento at suhestiyon, tumawag o mag-text sa # 0921-4765430 / emailvicreyesj08@yahoo.com. Ilagay lang ang buong pangalan at tirahan.)



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Locsin questions list of ocean-polluting countries

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. has called the inclusion of the Philippines in the list of eight countries responsible for 63.6 percent of ocean trash as "shameful" but questioned whether there are nations not included because they exported their garbage.

A *Bloomberg* article reported that China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Egypt and Malaysia dispose of a high amount of plastic waste to oceans in comparison with other countries.

"That we're on this list is truly something to be ashamed about. But, are other countries not on the list because they export their garbage to these countries? Well, we returned

some of those back to sender," Locsin tweeted on Saturday.

The article claimed that the amount of disposal has increased over the past years with the increase in development mainly in Asian countries and the lack of adequate garbage disposal methods to meet the requirements in line with fast-paced development.

Locsin said garbage from Australia illegally dumped in the Philippines were going back to its country of origin.

Malacañang said the government was "offended" by the reported dumping of garbage from Australia.

Holcim Philippines, the consignee of the shipment, reportedly said the container vans had trash declared as processed engineered fuel.



QC Mayor: City treasurer's office to collect plastic recovery system fee

MAYOR Joy Belmonte immediately urged the Quezon City Council to amend SP 2350 or the Environment Protection and Waste Management Code of QC following a Commission on Audit recommendation that the so-called Green Fund, now amounting to P316 M is a public fund that must be subjected to audit by the agency.

In the Ordinance passed in 2014, the QC Council envisioned the Green Fund as a mechanism through which retailers could generate means to carry out environmen-

tal projects by charging two pesos from consumers for every plastic bag used. By charging for plastic bags, the QC Council hoped to encourage consumers to give up using plastic in favor of eco-bags instead.

COA however, maintains that the Green Fund must be turned over to the City Treasurer's Office and be subject to audit. Mayor Joy Belmonte certified the amendment to the Ordinance as urgent and instructed Vice Mayor Gian Sotto to ensure that it incorporates all COA's recommendations.

PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT IN MOUNTAIN REGION

EXECS' PLEA: EXEMPT CORDILLERA FROM BUILDING BAN ON SLOPES

BAGUIO CITY—To improve investments and grant land titles to indigenous communities, Cordillera provinces must be exempt from the ban on owning and developing property along mountains and hillsides with 18 percent slopes, according to the region's top technocrats.

Only Benguet—which includes Baguio—and Cebu are exempted from the coverage of Presidential Decree No. 705 (the Forestry Code), which states that “no land of the public domain 18 percent in slope (or about 10.2 degrees) shall be classified as alienable and disposable, Mila Rimando, Cordillera director of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), told a recent meeting of the Regional Development Council (RDC).

The RDC approved the Cordillera spatial development framework covering 2019-2049, which sets as one of its policies the task of securing an exemption of the region's provinces from PD 705.

“Potential irrigable areas in the region include agricultural-

ly developed lots on 18 percent slopes but these are not in areas classified as hazardous or environmentally critical,” Rimando said.

Benguet was exempted from the prohibition because it has developed areas “planted to agricultural crops using effective erosion control practices or measures like terracing.”

Baguio has an “established and developed townsite” com-

plete with roads, schools and churches that are not covered by the forestry code.

Untitled properties

Many towns in Cordillera have untitled properties although 94 percent of the region is covered by ancestral domain or ancestral lands. Only 15 percent (275,769 hectares) of Cordillera land area of 1,829,368 ha is alienable and disposable, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority website.

Forest dwellers have been tolerated by the government due to Section 53 of PD 705 which says the state will not prosecute “kaingineros,’ squatters, cultural minorities and other occupants who entered into forest lands before the [law’s] effectivity [in 1975].”

The Cordillera development framework puts together up-

dated maps showing population density, forest cover, growth rate of settlements, existing roads and geological vulnerabilities to “serve as a development planning guide” for local governments, Rimando said.

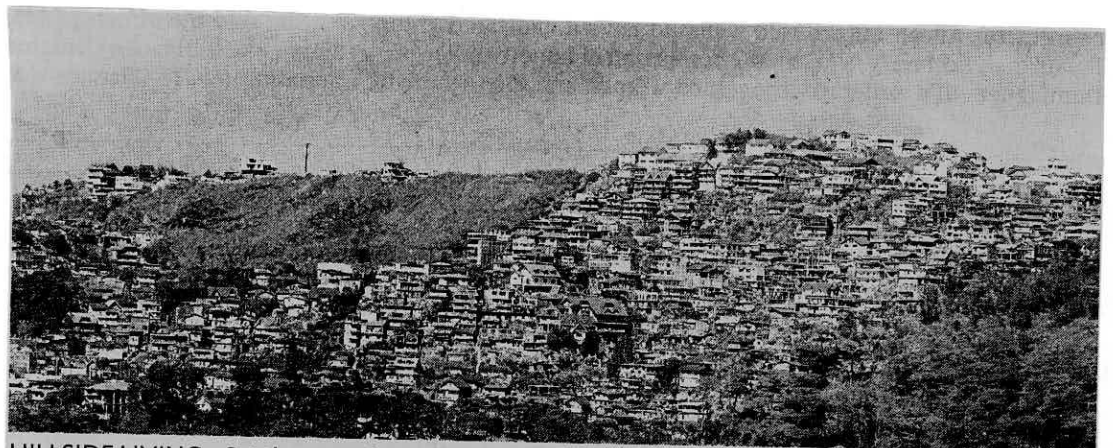
Growth centers

Neda has been developing two growth centers in Cordillera—the economic cooperation of Baguio and the Benguet towns of La Trinidad, Itogon, Sablan, Tuba and Tublay (BLISTT), and an eastern growth corridor in Kalinga province comprised of Tabuk City and Rizal, Pinukpuk and Tanudan towns.

It also mapped out priority investment areas for coffee development, water, farm tourism and the region's creative arts, which was inspired by Baguio's selection as one of the world creative cities by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The region's gross regional domestic product in 2018 was 7.3 percent, down from the 12.2 percent growth posted in 2017.

—VINCENT CABREZA INQ



HILLSIDE LIVING Settlements have been sprouting on Baguio City's mountainsides since the 1970s, after a proclamation exempted the summer capital from the ban on ownership and development of lots on slopes. —EV ESPIRITU



12,000 sign petition to stop Kaliwa Dam

By **Mariejo S. Ramos**
@MariejoRamosINQ

Around 12,000 people have signed a petition urging the Duterte administration to stop the P10.37-billion China-funded Kaliwa Dam project in Quezon province.

Located at Gen. Nakar and Infanta towns, the project poses a serious threat to people and the environment, according to priest Pete Montallana, head of environmentalist groups Save Sierra Madre Alliance and Stop Kaliwa Dam network.

Resident opposition

Montallana said hundreds of Infanta residents, including Mayor Filipina Grace America, launched the petition after a Mass at the Infanta Cathedral.

The petition, which was made available in print and online through Change.org, urges the Duterte administration to

stop the project that also supposedly violated legal processes.

Around 3,000 people have signed the petition during the launch on July 7, while the online petition had more than 9,000 signatures as of Sunday.

10 million target

Montallana said they are aiming to get 10 million signatures, similar to the 10 million signature campaign against mining in Palawan in 2011.

"If we have 10 million signatures of people who oppose the dam, any political personality would think twice about supporting the project," he said.

Montallana said the dam was approved without consulting Remontado Dumagats who claim the area as their ancestral domain and would destroy 300 hectares of forest, which is the habitat of 126 species.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has also opposed the dam, which

will be constructed over the Infanta Fault and endanger 100,000 people living downstream the Kaliwa River.

Deadly floods recalled

Local residents still fear a recurrence of the deadly 2004 flash floods and mud slides caused by four successive cyclones that killed 1,000 people.

The Kaliwa Dam is part of the government's New Centennial Water Source Project, which aims to provide a new water supply to Metro Manila and its environs.

The project will involve the construction of Laiban Dam at the Kaliwa River and the smaller Kaliwa Dam, but the government decided to proceed in stages, so only Kaliwa Dam has been approved.

The dam is envisioned to collect 600 million-liters-a-day (MLD) capacity with a supply tunnel that can deliver 2,400-MLD capacity. INQ



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Re-enhanced 'habagat' may bring rains to Angat Dam – PAGASA

By **ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ**

A re-enhanced southwest monsoon or "habagat" could finally bring rains to Angat Dam this week and help the water reservoir in its gradual recovery.

According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), the habagat could strengthen as the low pressure area (LPA) east of Visayas moves closer to the country this week.

As of Sunday morning, the LPA remains outside the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR) or 1,345 kilometers east of Visayas.

PAGASA weather specialist Gener Quitlong said the LPA will likely be inside the PAR by Sunday evening or Monday morning.

It is still seen to intensify into a tropical depression on Tuesday, and will be given the local name "Falcon," Quitlong said.

The brewing cyclone is less likely to make landfall over any part of the Philippines, but PAGASA continues to monitor developments as

regards this weather disturbance, he added.

The LPA is still far from the country but its trough or extension may bring cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms over Metro Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon, Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Masbate, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan, Visayas, and Mindanao this Monday.

Meanwhile, the rest of Luzon will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers due to localized thunderstorms.

Quitlong said Metro Manila will be affected by the trough of the LPA and habagat, which means the metropolis will experience scattered rains and thunderstorms in the next three days.

PAGASA earlier said that the weather disturbance, which is more likely to become tropical depression Falcon by Tuesday, will further enhance the habagat, which will bring rains over Aurora, Bataan,

Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, Zambales, Metro Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan, Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Masbate, and Visayas.

The habagat rains could help in the recovery of the dwindling water level at Angat Dam, which is situated in Bulacan.

As of Sunday morning, Angat Dam's water level was 159.15 meters, further down from 159.45 meters last Saturday.

The low-level outlet of Angat Dam is being utilized since the water reservoir reached its 160-meter critical level last July 11.

Meanwhile, the water level at La Mesa Dam in Quezon City continues to increase at 72.26 meters on Sunday, up from 72.16 meters last Saturday.

However, both the major water sources of Metro Manila remain below their normal level at 180 meters for Angat Dam, and 80.15 meters for La Mesa Dam.



Angat Dam dips further

By **Rochelle Acse**
and **Gladys Mae Bagting**

Water level at Angat Dam continued to drop despite recent rains, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration reported yesterday.

As of Sunday morning, the dam's water level was at 159.15 meters or 0.3 meters lower than its 159.45 level recorded on Saturday.

The level was still short of the 160 meters for Angat Dam to maintain normal supply to households and businesses in Metro Manila and adjacent provinces.

So far, water service interruptions have been implemented by both Manila Water and Maynilad in their respective service zones.

On the other hand, the dam needs 180-meter level to supply water for irrigation and power generation. The reservoir's normal high-water level is 210 meters.

In Manila, areas being served by Maynilad, previously unaffected by supply interruptions, have been experiencing up to 12 hours of no water.

Owners of water refilling stations have already been affected by the lack of supply.

Meanwhile, Pagasa said that a low pressure area (LPA) is expected to bring rains in Metro Manila, Bicol, Calabarzon, Bicol and some parts of Visayas and northern Mindanao.

As of 3 a.m. Sunday, the LPA was spotted at 1,345 kilometers east of Visayas.

The state weather bureau said that the LPA is expected to bring scattered thunder and lightning across the country that may spark light and rainy weather.



LPA may turn into tropical depression

THE low pressure area (LPA) that entered the Philippine area of responsibility on Sunday afternoon is expected to develop into a tropical depression within 48 hours and will be named "Falcon," according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services

Administration (Pagasa).

Pagasa is monitoring the LPA that was last spotted 980 kilometers east of Guiuan, Eastern Samar.

Cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms are expected over Bicol Region, Mimaropa (Mindoro,

Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan), the Visayas and Mindanao.

Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers due to localized thunderstorms.

Pagasa weather specialist Ray-

mond Ordinario said the brewing tropical depression was unlikely to make landfall. However, it could enhance the southwest monsoon and bring moderate to heavy rains in the next few days.

However, there is no assurance that

rain will fall over the Angat watershed, the primary source of water for Metro Manila. Angat Dam's water level continued to drop, registering 159.15 meters on Sunday, which is below the critical level of 160 meters.

DIVINA NOVA JOY DELA CRUZ



Paghandaan ang tag-ulan

Dear Abante Tonite,

Kailangang maging handa na tayo sa panahon ng tag-ulan lalo ngayong madalas nang umulan sa hapon at gabi.

Panawagan ko po sa mga pamahalaang lokal na ngayon pa lang ay linisin na nila ang mga imburnal at iba pang daluyan ng tubig para maibsan ang perwisyong dulot ng mga pagbaha.

Sana tumulong na rin ang mamamayan doon sa mga lugar na palagiang binabaha. Hindi makakayanan ng pamahalaang lokal kung sa kanila lang ipapaubaya lahat ang paglilinis. Kailangan ang kooperasyon ng lahat dahil lahat naman tayo apektado kapag nagkakaroon ng mga pagbaha.

Alam din natin na kapag tag-ulan may hatid din itong iba't ibang sakit katulad ng ubo, sipon, lagnat. Ang pinakamabigat ay dengue at ang leptospirosis na dulot ng bakteryang galing sa hayop, pangunahin na ang daga.

Dapat alerto at maging maingat tayo para na rin sa kaligtasan nating lahat. Hindi naman nagkukulang ang pamahalaan sa pagpapaalala sa atin. Ang kailangan natin ay sumunod sa mga abiso o paalala at huwag nang matigas ang ulo.

Huwag ipagwalang-bahala ang mga babala. Huwag rin ipaubaya na lamang sa mga awtoridad ang pangangalaga sa inyong kaligtasan.

Emil ng Pasig City



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Water crisis ushers historical year for concessionaire

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLORE**

As two dams simultaneously run out of water and the government starting to impose financial penalties on utilities, this year is certainly looking to be a historical year for both concessionaires and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

"It's really a new era," said Ferdinand Dela Cruz, the president and chief executive officer of Manila Water Company, Inc., which caught itself in two water supply messes so far this year — the first one costing it around ₱1.5 billion in fines and self-imposed penalty.

Metro Manila — home to more than 12 million people — gets its water supply from the Angat-Ipo-La Mesa water system.

Angat Dam currently supplies 97 percent of Metro Manila's water needs, releasing about 4 million liters of water per day (mld), while La Mesa Dam is supposed to serve as a reserve for Manila Water.

Of the Angat Dam allocation, Manila Water gets an allocation of 1,600 mld, while Maynilad Water Services, Inc. is allowed to get the rest or about 2,400 mld.

Speaking to Manila Bulletin, Dela Cruz said it's the first time that both Angat Dam and La Mesa Dam reached their critical water level at the same time and that both concessionaires have to simultaneously implement rotational water interruption.

Dela Cruz is blaming this to climate change, rising demand, and the delay of new water sources.

"You can't fight nature but you can build new water resources," he said.

To recall, Angat Dam also had its low-

est water level in 2010, but Manila Water didn't have to implement water supply interruption since there was enough water from La Mesa Dam at that time.

As for the financial penalties, MWSS-Regulatory Office (MWSS-RO) also stepped into an unfamiliar territory this year when Metro Manila's water crisis started.

Manila Water faced a shortage in its water supply last March when La Mesa Dam reached its critical level, forcing the Ayala-led company to implement days of low to no water supply interruption among its 1.2 million customers.

For a few days, MWSS-RO was in a limbo and MWSS Chief Regulator Patrick Ty was uncertain as to how the government will make Manila Water accountable for this.

Ty first admitted that MWSS could not impose administrative penalties to the company, saying he would instead ask the water utility to "do the right thing" and either implement a rebate or won't charge its customers on days when they had no water.

"[To order Manila Water not to collect payments] is beyond MWSS-RO [MWSS-Regulatory Office]. But we would give them the moral pressure," he said.

But as pressure mounted coming from the public and the government, MWSS-RO was still forced to recommend a penalty on Manila Water, which amounted to ₱534 million in fines and a financial commitment of ₱600 million to develop a new water source. This was later on approved by the MWSS Board of Trustees.

"It's the first time [in the history of the concession]," Dela Cruz said. "We are not the root cause [of the water crisis] but we

said we will just abide by the penalty."

It was in 1997 when Manila Water entered into a concession agreement with MWSS to be the exclusive provider of water and used water services to the East Zone of Metro Manila and Rizal Province, consisting of 23 cities and municipalities.

Dela Cruz pointed out that when the deal was signed, the government promised that there will be a new major water source over the next 10 years, something that didn't happen even 22 years later.

"Another new thing is what MWSS-RO did to Maynilad. It's the first time that they penalized a concessionaire even if the interruption isn't concession-wide," Dela Cruz said.

He was referring to the recent decision of MWSS-RO to order Maynilad to implement a rebate to some of its customers in Barangay Captain Albert Aguilar (CAA) in Las Piñas City who experienced days of water interruption in May.

"It's too localized," Dela Cruz said.

Moving forward, Dela Cruz hopes that the government will finally come up with ways to address the water shortage by fast-tracking the approval of water projects and have them implemented.

He also wants National Water Resources Board (NWRB) to release a year-end projection for the water level of Angat.

"For the balance of the year, what we will have to deal with is rotational interruption. What we really have to plan is the next summer, 2020, which is dependent on the year-end level of Angat Dam," Dela Cruz said.



20% work to show for sewage system

EXCLUSIVE

By Hananeel Bordey

It has been 21 years since the two private water concessionaires, Maynilad and Manila Water, have been collecting a 20 percent environmental fee that should have been allotted for the maintenance and improvement of the sewerage system in areas covered by the two concessionaires but delivered only 20 percent of what they committed to implement, a transcript of a House of Representatives hearing obtained by the *Daily Tribune* showed.

For businesses, an additional 30 percent sewerage fee is tagged on monthly bills.

No less than President Rodrigo Duterte threatened corruption charges on the companies' negligence. In the exclusive pre-State of the Nation Address interview, Mr. Duterte warned that the public can sue both private water firms and conniving public officials for "duping" consumers for a long time since both do not have water treatment facilities but collect fees for these in monthly billings.

These facts were brought up as early as February during the

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House's Metro Manila Development (MMD) committee which looked into the recurring water crisis in Metro Manila.

In an inquiry on the status of Manila Bay Rehabilitation last 4 February, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System's (MWSS) Wastewater Management head Antonio Garcia and Manila Water's Wastewater Operations division head Arnold Mortera stated on record that only 20 percent of the sewerage system were accomplished.

This was despite both concessionaires' collection of a 20 percent environmental fee from all water users since 1997.

18 years needed to finish

Garcia and Mortera told the panel that the construction of sewerage systems was expected to be completed by 2037 or 18 years from now. But House members said if the water firms will continue with the slow progress in the construction of the project, it might take about 80 years to complete.

This is extremely slow compared to the President's ideal timeline of 10 years which was based on Singapore's rehabilitation of its waterways.

"Actually when Singapore was rehabilitating its water ways, it took them about 10 years..." he said.

The Chief Executive lamented that it can't be done in his term as he explained that "you have to give a President something like 10 years to do this. All the improvements that can (be done)."

The construction of sewerage systems was expected to be completed by 2037 or 18 years from now.

But he supported efforts from Congress and local government units which commenced the cleaning of the waterways.

Until today, Maynilad and Manila Water have been issuing water interruption advisories as the level of Angat Dam, the major basin that supplies the water in the Metro, had reached its critical level.

Despite the rainy season, there is still a need for more innovative ways to assure water supply such as salination and reuse of water.

The idea is not a new one to

1/2



2/2

Only 20 percent of the sewerage system were accomplished despite both concessionaires' collection of a 20 percent environmental fee from all water users since 1997

the President. Mr. Duterte cited as example, the water treatment scheme in advanced countries like Canada where toilet water are recycled to something which can be safe to drink.

Recycling holds promise

"I went there and they asked me to drink but I refused. All of these water that we collect from the bathrooms and everything goes to one big lake and you can just scoop water there and drink," he said.

Such a facility, however, is impossible as long as there is no proper water sewerage system.

Just like what happened in Manila Bay, which could have been a source of potable water, both concessionaires' negligence in their obligation to provide a proper wastewater-treatment facilities contributed to the water crisis.

"There are several buildings along Pasig River, fronting it and back, we have to ask everybody to provide a new system of sewerage so that they can collect the water and go to big pipes that would run to the water treatment facilities," he said.

"We have been saying since day one that the continued degradation of Manila Bay is due to the

non-delivery of the two water concessionaires, Manila Water and Maynilad Water Services Inc., of their contractual obligation to provide waste-water treatment facilities," Buhay Rep. Lito Atienza said during the oversight committee hearing.

He explained that the waste-water treatment facilities was part of the concessionaires' contract with the government aside from providing potable water.

"They have failed to do this... What is worse is they have been charging consumers for this non-existent service for the past 21 years!" he stressed.

We have been saying since day one that the continued degradation of Manila Bay is due to the non-delivery of the two water concessionaires.

Atienza's position was supported by MMD Chairman former Quezon City Rep. Winston Castelo and three other congressmen during the hearing.

Former Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chairman and Marikina Rep. Bayani Fernando also suggested to hold the applications of the concessionaires to expand their services to areas outside Metro Manila until they fulfill their obligations. A thorough review of the concession agreement was also recommended by Atienza.



BULABUGIN ni Jerry Yap

Para sa mga reaksiyon, suhestiyon, reklamo at sumbong, magtext sa 0977.705.22.31 o mag-email sa JERRYAP888@YAHOO.COM. Para sa mga nakaraang isyu ng BULABUGIN please visit <http://www.hatawtabloid.com>

'Crime' 'este Primewater 'lason' 'daw' ang isinusuplay sa tubig sa Guagua, Pampanga

KAWAWA naman ang mga tao sa Guagua, Pampanga.

Hindi pa man lubusang nakababangon sa 'delubyo' ng lindol, lahar at baha noong 1990 at 1991, heto't parang 'tubig' na naman ang magiging sanhi ng 'pagkaputi' ng buhay ng mga tao roon.

Bakit 'kan'yo?

Aba, mismong ang Commission On Audit (COA) ang nagsabing, ang isinusuplay na tubig ng 'crime' 'este Primewater Infrastructure Corp.

(Primewater) na sinasabing pag-aari ni dating Senate President Manny Villar ay labis sa Arsenic.

Batay umano sa 2018 annual audit report, isinailalim ng COA sa physical at chemical analysis ang walo sa 13 pumping stations ng Guagua Water District (GWD) at lumabas na ang kalidad ng tubig ay lagpas sa "maximum allowable limit for Arsenic content batay sa inihihimatong ng Philippine National Standard for Drinking Water."

Ang Arsenic ay nakasasama sa katawan ng tao lalo na kung mataas dahil makapagdudulot ito ng iba't ibang sakit at maaring ikalason ng mga batayang organo sa loob ng katawan ng tao.

Ang maximum allowable level para sa drinking water ay 0.01 mg/L. Pero ang mga nabanggit na pumping station sa Guagua ay nakapagtala ng hanggang 0.023 mg/L - halos doble sa pinayapagan ng gobyerno.

Inalerto umano ng COA si GWD General Manager Eduardo Rodriguez na agarang solusyonan ang problema sa mga kontaminadong tubig.

Kumilos naman daw ang Primewater at nagsagawa ng pilot testing upang maayos ang sobrang arsenic sa mga pumping station.

Bukod sa Arsenic content, sinita ng COA ang Joint Venture Agreement ng GWD at Primewater sa 32.26% na Non-Revenue Water, lagpas sa pinapayagan na 30%. Sa umiiral na rate na P135 per 10 cubic meters, ang district ay nalugi umano ng P2.041 milyon sa taong 2018.

Noong 3 Nobyembre 2017 pumasok sa JV Agreement ang Primewater para sa development ng local water supply system ng Guagua.

Malapit nang mag-dalawang taon pero ngayon lang nabatid ng publiko na mayroong problema sa supply ng tubig ng Primewater sa Guagua.

Nakatatakot isipin na marami na ang nagkaskakit dahil sa 'tubig na may lason' ng Primewater.

Sana naman ay maagapan ito at kung walang solusyon ang Primewater, sana'y ibalik na lang sa dati kung saan kumukuha ng supply ng tubig ang mga taga-Guagua.



WRIT OF KALIKASAN CASE

Penalize IBP lawyers, high court urged

THE Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) has asked the Supreme Court to penalize the lawyers behind the "fraudulent" filing of a writ of *kalikasan* suit by some fishers.

The OSG also asked the court to dismiss the motion of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) to be given more time to confer with their clients, who sought an environment protection order for some areas in the West Philippine (South China) Sea.

The OSG stressed that fraud was clearly committed by the IBP lawyers. It said these lawyers — Jose Manuel "Chel" Diokno, Gil Aquino and Andrei Palacios — should be penalized.

"To stress, said fisherfolk-petitioners disavowed their signatures, participation in the case and ultimately, their being represented by counsel as they deny being part of the case at all.

Significantly, out of 37 fisherfolk-petitioners from Palawan, only 24 signed the verification and certification non-forum shopping and 13 did not," it said.

"Of the 24, there were 4 who executed handwritten statements, while 14 executed affidavits, two of whom are the president and vice president, who represented the entire association. Also for the three fisherfolk-petitioners from Zambales, two executed affidavits attesting that they (Wilfredo Labandelo, Nilo Labrador and Rolando Labandelo) were only made to affix their signatures on a document, which only contains their names," the OSG said,

During the oral arguments last week, it was learned that the signatures of some of the fishers were not authentic.

Solicitor General Jose Calida said some of the fishermen signed

without their identification cards, some disowned the signatures, while others were still subject for verification and 19 of them withdrew from the case.

Calida added that the petitioners should be held liable for misleading the court and for misrepresentation.

In light of Calida's allegations, the IBP asked the high court to be given more time to consult with the fishers.

IBP president Domingo Cayosa said "the IBP firmly stands with the fishermen, IBP chapters and the lawyers involved in the petition for a Writ of *kalikasan* filed before the Supreme Court."

Calida argued that the petition was politically motivated and "used it as a battering ram to take down the Duterte administration.

"For these defects, the petition must be dismissed," he said.

JOMAR CANLAS

Editorial

Tell the nation the facts about the West Philippine Sea

It will help public comprehension of the issues and stakes in our maritime dispute with China if the government and its critics both disclose the facts of the dispute, and desist from muddling the argument with deceptive claims.

The government's critics contend that the country won sovereignty over the West Philippine Sea after its legal victory at the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague in July 2016.

They say that the Duterte administration must do better in protecting its sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea.

President Duterte and his administration on the other hand contend that while the arbitral ruling was important, the Philippines did not win and does not have sovereignty over the waters. All it has are sovereign rights over its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in a portion of the South China Sea.

The opposition stresses West Philippine Sea. The administration mentions only the exclusive economic zone.

President Duterte says that pressing too insistently on the arbitral ruling could lead to conflict with China, a war which the country can hardly fight at this point.

The critics say that Duterte is using the war scare to intimidate the people into accepting his appeasement of China.

There will be clarity and understanding of the argument if the truth about the West Philippine Sea is fully brought out in the open.

At the third anniversary of the ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration on July 12, Senior Justice Antonio Carpio, former foreign affairs secretary Albert del Rosario, and former ombudsman and justice Conchita Carpio-Morales joined together in telling a forum at the University of the Philippines that our country is waiving or throwing away everything it won in the historic arbitral ruling.

They contended that three years after winning against China at the PCA, the Philippines is achieving the exact opposite of its legal victory in the dispute.

Mrs. Morales declared that Filipinos own the West Philippine Sea.

Until this controversy, most Filipinos did not know about the WPS. It did not appear in the books and maps we studied and used.

In fact, the West Philippine Sea only started to exist during the administration of President Benigno Aquino 3rd.

In September 2012, the Aquino government by administrative order announced that it would start using the name to refer to waters west of the Philippines as the "West Philippine Sea" in government maps, other forms of communication and documents.

Administrative Order No. 29 says: "The maritime areas on the western side of the Philippine archipelago are hereby named as the West Philippine Sea. These areas include the Luzon Sea as well as the waters around, within, adjacent to the Kalayaan Island Group and Bajo de Masinloc, also known as Scarborough Shoal.

The administrative order asserts the Philippine claim over its EEZ in the South China Sea which conveys the Philippine government's position that it has sovereign rights under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) over the West Philippine Sea area and "inherent power and right to designate its maritime areas with appropriate nomenclature for purposes of the national mapping system."

The arbitral ruling on the sea dispute nowhere mentions the West Philippine Sea, so it is a delusion to say that we won sovereignty over the waters through the ruling.

It is also fact that UNCLOS does not confer on coastal states sovereignty over their exclusive economic zones. It recognizes only sovereign rights to exploit and use resources in the EEZ.

President Duterte and his dedicated critics will be more enlightening and enlightened if they can agree on terminology.

It would be a horrible disaster if we go to war over a misplaced name.



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PROBINSIYA

Illegal logger, tigok sa shootout

TACLOBAN City - Patay ang isang hinihinalang illegal logger sa loob ng compound ng Leyte Regional Prison (LRP) sa Abuyog, Leyte kamakailan.

Kinilala ni Capt. Ronald Espina, Abuyog Police ang suspek na si Roberto Arcon, 53, magsasaka at residente ng Bgy. Tuy-a ng bayang ito.

Sa inisyal na imbestigasyon, nakarinig umano ang isang personnel ng LRP ingay ng chainsaw kaya't nagdesisyon ang grupo na magsagawa ng anti-illegal logging operation.

Naaktuhan ng grupo ang ilang kalalakihan habang pinuputol ang mga puno ng "Lanete" sa Bgy. Mahagna. Nang magpakilala ang grupo na taga-Bureau of Corrections, agad umanong napaputok ang isa sa mga ito, dahilan upang gumanti ang grupo.

Tumakas ang mga suspek sa magkakahiwalay na direksyon, at naiwan ang nasawing kasamahan.

Marie Tonette Marticio



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Blast kills fisher

PATNANUNGAN, Quezon — A fisherman died when a home-made dynamite he was using suddenly exploded along the seawaters of this island town.

Mareno Dellosa, 53, of Purok 4, Bgy. Poblacion, here suffered severe wounds and died on the spot, said Quezon police director, Col. Ramil Montilla.

Montilla said the incident happened at 10 a.m. while the victim was fishing using bigas-bigas.

He said the victim was about to throw the explosive to the water when it exploded, hitting him in the head and body.

Gemi Formaran



Furniture makers seek cheap raw material sources

LOCAL furniture manufacturers are working to bring down the rising costs of major raw materials and components as they aim to boost exports growth even amid strong domestic market.

Myrna Bituin, Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. (Philexport) trustee for the furniture sector, said they would seek a dialogue with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) officials on how the

agency could help provide them the legal source of lumber.

"We don't want to use illegal (sources)," she said, noting furniture makers want to connect with legitimate suppliers of plantation species.

Bituin said raw materials now comprise a huge portion of their production costs.

She noted it is "not easy" to increase prices thus, exporters have to absorb rising costs to

protect customers from those adjustments.

She added the group also intends to buy raw materials in bulk.

Bituin remains hopeful of achieving exports growth in 2019 after posting flat growth in the first half of the year.

"On the high-end market, we are still okay," she added. "But the local market is good. It is the local market that is really earning." - *Philexport News & Features*



World-class. Philippine furniture are sought-after in the global market with their unique design and indigenous materials.



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Heavy load A back hoe operators clears out water hyacinth that practically covered a river in Taguig City.
AL PADILLA



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A LAS PIÑAS policeman helps in cleaning up a creek as part of their unit's clean-up drive and anti-illegal drugs lecture at Talon Dos.
ALFONSO PADILLA



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

PINATIKIM ang Pinas ng mahina pero deadly na lindol sa Surigao del Sur. Magnitude 5.5 lamang ang sumalakay sa nasabing lalawigan pero kinatakutan ito dahil mahigit 50 ang nasugatan. Nasugatan ang mga mamamayan nang bumagsak ang kisame ng simbahang St. Vincent sa bayan ng Carmen at nasira rin ang eskwela nito.

Sa bayan ng Madrid, nasira ang ospital at sa labas na lang isinagawa ang pangagamot sa mga maysakit.

Marami sa bayang ito at sa Carmen ang nagibaan o nasiraan ng bahay, palengke at iba pang gusali.

Nagkabitak-bitak din ang mga kalsada at nawalan ng kuryente.

Inabot ng lindol ang mga lugar na Carrascal, Butuan City; ilang bahagi ng Surigao del Norte; Surigao del Sur; Agusan del Sur; Misamis Oriental; at maging ang Cagayan de Oro City.

BOHOL QUAKE

Kung naging mapaminsala ang mahinang lindol sa Surigao del Sur, paano naman ang magnitude 7.2 na The Big One na inaasahang maganap sa Bulacan, Metro Manila, Laguna at Cavite anomang oras o araw mula ngayon?

Para maimadyin natin, mga Bro, ang magnitude 7.2, ito ang lakas ng lindol na sumira sa lalawigan ng Bohol ilang taon lamang ang nakalilipas.

Pinaguho ng magnitude 7.2 ang halos lahat ng simbahan doon, maraming gusali ng gobyerno mula city hall at municipal hall hanggang sa barangay hall.

Marami ring tahanan at gusaling pangnegosyo ang nawasak.

Sa kabuuan, 73,000 gusali ang nasira at 14,500 ang nawasak.

Ang bilang ng patay at sugatan?

Nasa 222 ang patay, 8 ang missing, at 976 ang nasugatan.

THE BIG ONE

Paano naman kaya kung tatama ang The Big One sa Megá Manila, mga Bro?

Tantiya ng mga awtoridad, aabot sa 30,000-50,000 agad ang posibleng mamatay.

Pero sa Metro Manila lang 'yan.

Kung guguhon ang Angat Dam, mayroong



MAHINA PERO DEADLY SA MINDA; THE BIG ONE PAANO?

100,000 ang mamamatay sa lunod mula sa 30 metrong taas ng tubig na daluhong sa mga taga-Bulacan.

Ang 30 metrong taas ng tubig, mga Bro, ay ang taas ng tsunami na lumusob sa Indian Ocean at South China Sea na ikinatatay ng nasa 200,000 tao sa Indonesia at nasa 50,000 naman sa mga bansang Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar at iba pa.

Nilikha ang tsunami ng malakas na lindol sa Sumatra, Indonesia.

NAKATATAKOT

Nakatatakot talaga ang 7.2.

Kung sa akala natin, mga Bro, eh, Norzagaray, Bulacan, Quezon City, Marikina City, Pasig City, Pateros, Taguig City, Makati City, Muntinlupa City, San Pedro City, Laguna at Tagaytay City ang matatamaan ng The Big One, nagkakamali tayo.

Nakita naman ninyo ang lawak ng lugar na tinamaan ng lindol sa Surigao del Sur.

Anim na lalawigan ang tinamaan.

Sa The Big One, para sa atin, lahat ng mga lungsod at bayan ay tiyak na matatamaan.

MANILA 'DI HANDA

Ang maganda, si Manila Mayor Isko Moreno ang pumiyok na hindi handa ang kanyang pamahalaan na humarap sa malakas na lindol.

Nalaman nito sa mga unang araw ng kanyang panunungkulan nang pagtatanungin nito ang mga opisyal at empleyado ng kanyang lungsod.

Hindi handa ang mga ospital, ang mga makinarya gaya ng mga sasakyang ambulansya, bumbero, police patrol at heavy equipment at ang mga pwersang tao ng pamahalaan.

Paano pa ang mga gusali na dinaan sa korapsyon sa pagtatayo kaya kwestiyunable ang tibay ng mga ito?

Paano naman kaya ang mga lungsod ng Valenzuela, Caloocan, Malabon, Pasay at iba pa?

Isa pa na hindi kinokonsidera ang posibleng paggalaw ng tubig-Manila Bay at ang 90,000 ektaryang Laguna de Bay.

Hindi kaya magkaroon ng tsunami mula sa mga ito?

MAGPRAKTIS

Maganda ang ilulunsad ng Metro Manila na praktis laban sa lindol na The Big One.

Gaganapin ito sa mading araw sa darating na Hulyo 27.

Kasarapan ng tulog ito kung tutuusin at kaiba sa mga praktis sa nakaraang mga taon.

Dati-rati, may praktis sa araw at kahit sa kagsagsagan ng trapik.

Ngayon naman, mading araw o kung tutuusin ay madilim.

Paano nga kung maganap ang lindol sa gabi?

Mawalan ng kuryente, magkaroon ng mga sunog, magigiba ang maraming gusali, bibitak ang mga kalsada, masisira ang mga ospital, mapaparalisa ang mga ambulansya, bumbero, pulis at maraming ahensya at tauhan ng pamahalaang lokal at nasyonal.

Ito'y sa gitna ng mga maraming patay at sugatan.

Bata, matanda, buntis, lalaki, babae.

'DI PWEDE ANG DASAL LANG

Ano-ano nga ba ang ating mga gagawin?

Hindi pwede ang magdasal lang.

Dapat iwanan ng mga pari at madre ang kanilang mga rosario at sasali sa mga search and rescue.

Lahat ng pamahalaang lokal at pambansa at mamamayan ay dapat na kumilos.

Sana ang diwa ng mahigpit na pagkakaisa at pagtutulungan ang pairalin ng lahat.

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



MR. TRABAHO



Joel Villanueva

TWITTER: @senatorjoelv

Pagkilala at pagpupugay po sa mga kababayan nating person with disability (PWD) sa pagdiriwang ng 41st National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Week na ating gugunitain sa buong linggo ng Hulyo 17-23, 2019.

Tulad po ng karamihan sa atin, ang mga PWD ay patuloy na nakikibaka sa

Oportunidad at trabaho para sa mga PWD

buhay upang maitaguyod ang sarili at pamilya sa kabila ng mga balakid sa buhay na hinaharap sa araw-araw.

Tayo po ay nagsumikap at tumulong upang maisabatas ang RA 11106 o ang 'Filipino Sign Language (FSL) Act' na nilagdaan po ng ating pangulo noong Oktubre 30, 2018.

Isinasaad po ng naturang batas ang FSL bilang pambansang sign language ng Filipino deaf at opisyal na sign language sa lahat ng transaksyon ng gobyernong may kinalaman sa mga deaf-mute at ang paggamit nito sa mga paaralan, broadcast media, at workplaces.

Sa pagbubukas po ng 18th Congress, isusulong naman po natin

ang 'Inclusive Education for Children and Youth with Special Needs Act (IDEA)'. Layunin po ng panukalang batas na ito ang mabigyan ng patas na turing at pagkakataon sa edukasyon at sa buhay ang mga children and youth with special needs.

Bahagi po ng patas na turing at pagkakataon sa buhay ang patas na pagkakataon sa trabaho. Daan patungo rito ang patas na edukasyon at ang pagwawaksi sa lahat ng uri ng diskriminasyon sa trabaho.

Pinag-aaralan din po natin kung paano palalakasin at pagtitibayin ang RA 7277 o 'Magna Carta for Disabled Persons' na naisabatas noon pang Marso 24, 1992. Nais po nating pagtuunan

ng pansin ang nakasaad sa Section 5 na dapat 5% ng lahat ng mga manggagawa sa piling mga ahensya ay dapat ilaan sa mga PWD. Hindi naman po mahirap mapansing hindi pa lubos na naisasakatuparan ang mga probisyong ito ng batas.

Nasabi nga po noon ng dating Pangulong Ramon Magsaysay na, "Those who have less in life should have more in law." Hindi po sinasabing 'less in life' ang pagiging differently able o PWD. Ang nais ko pong tumukin ay huwag naman po sanang sa halip na mabigyan ng patas na turing at pagkakataon sa edukasyon, trabaho, at buhay, ay madalas silang nagiging biktima pa ng pang-aabuso at diskrimi-

nasyon.

Kaya nananawagan po tayo sa ating mga business establishment na igalang ang mga diskuwento para sa mga kababayan nating PWD ayon sa tinatadhana ng ating mga batas.

Muli po, pagkilala at pagpupugay sa mga kababayan nating person with disability.

Job Fair Schedule :
PWD Local Job Fair—
SM City Activity Center
Naga City, Camarines
Sur—Hulyo 15

T'nalak Job Fair KCC—
Mall of Marbel, Gensan
Drive Koronadal City—
Hulyo 17

Banak Festival Job
Fair—Brgy. Sta. Ana,
Taytay, Rizal—Hulyo 19
(joelvillanueva@yahoo.com)



EDITORIAL

Cancel CARP debts!

FORGIVENESS, like charity, begins at home.

And while we are at it, why not start charitable forgiveness with those who absolutely have nothing or were reduced to penury by tilling the land to grow food for others to feast on?

Is there a greater, more outrageous irony than this? Poor, hungry, starving, and, worse, debt-strapped farmers.

Yes, the very same people who feed the rest of us are deprived of the means to keep themselves and their families nominally nourished and while mightily trying to shake off the chains that bind them to debt masters.

Quite thankfully, a bill condoning all the debts farmers incurred in owning lands under the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program has been filed in the Senate.

Filed by Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto, the measure seeks the write-off of all unpaid amortizations, interests, penalties, surcharges on loans secured under CARP.

Once this mass amnesty of farmer's obligations is approved by law, "the agrarian reform beneficiaries shall be deemed rightful owners of the lands awarded to them".

Landowners whose properties were subjected to land distribution would still be paid, Recto explained. "Their right to be paid on time and based on the legal contracts will be honored and will not be impaired."

In one official report, only P2.5 billion of the P14.3 billion in amortization for loans granted to awardees of CARP from 1987 to 2004 was paid.

Collection performance by the Land Bank of the Philippines on CARP loans, on the other hand, was about 51 percent as of March 2015.

The veteran lawmaker said the total amount of land reform loans for forgiveness is small compared to the hundreds of billions in private sector loans it had written off over the past 40 years.

"We have bailed out banks, paid for white elephant projects, amortized foreign loans of dubious benefits, lost money in bankrupt firms, entered into joint ventures which left us holding the bag," Recto said.

"Government has a history of being generous to corporate deadbeats whose loans we guaranteed and eventually assumed. But we have not extended the same consideration to the farming poor," he lamented.

"When can government be a white knight to indebted farmers who are being squeezed between rising production costs and falling crop prices?" Recto said.

The former Socio-economic planning chief said condoning the loans would be taking a big load off farmer's backs and also from offices that manage these receivables.

"There is a huge administrative cost in managing this important aspect of the agrarian reform program. In fact, in one study, the system to collect loan payments from CARP beneficiaries was not fully put in place due to the high costs required," he explained.



BEAUTY'S CAUSE

MS EARTH BET URGES ACTION ON PARIS PACT

The Philippines should continue to honor its commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change, a pact to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and keep the rising global temperature to below two degrees.

Newly crowned Miss Philippines Earth Janelle Tee, 28, made this statement as she talked about the pageant's responsibility of helping spread awareness about the environment.

"Of course, we have to respect it, but I'm more concerned about how we act upon it than just signing the agreement," Tee told the Inquirer after the coronation ceremonies at the Cove Manila in Okada Manila, Parañaque City, on Wednesday afternoon.

Two years ago, in spite of misgivings, President Duterte signed the agreement. However, in May last year, he called the agreement a "farce."

Last May, he played down the United Nations climate conferences.

But for Tee, it is important "to exchange ideas and opinions from other countries."

"We should open our eyes, open our minds to other countries as well, and learn from them," she said.

Tee was born and raised in Davao City, where the President and his family have been ruling for decades now.

She represented the President's home city on her first attempt at the crown in 2014, and eventually the second Miss Earth victory for the Philippines.

Tee also carried Davao City when she joined the 2015 Miss World Philippines pageant.

Not only a pageant veteran, the beauty queen was also a TV host, with a two-year stint on the wildly popular GMA afternoon game show "Wowowin" top-billed by Willie Revillame.

She also hosted "Chinoy" on ABS-CBN News Channel, and is a professional corporate events host as well.

"For me, the biggest environmental problem that we have is complacency. Everything is so easy. We need to shift that complacency to sensitivity for the environment, and the urgency that we have to act now. Not tomorrow, not in the future, but today," she told the Inquirer.

Tee bested 39 other aspirants from around the country and overseas Filipinos.

Joining her in the winners' circle are Miss Philippines Air Ana Monica Tan of Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental; Miss Philippines Water Chelsea Fernandez of Tacloban City; Miss Philippines Fire Alexandra Dayrit of Marikina City; and Miss Philippines Ecotourism Karen Nicole Piccio of Maasin, Iloilo. —**ARMIN P. ADINA** INQ



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KPMG Perspectives

Facing climate change: Are countries ready?

CLIMATE change presents twin challenges for countries worldwide: the transformation to a low-carbon economy and adjusting to climate risks. These are large-scale challenges.

Decarbonization requires significant investments, as well as the development and widespread adoption of new and existing technologies and processes. Climate risks from hurricanes, typhoons, flooding, heat waves, drought and sea-level rise are increasing and global in nature.

To meet these challenges, governments, the private sector and civil society are adopting climate-ready policies and institutions. The 2019 Change Readiness Index (CRI) offers insights on the country-level capabilities for each of these sectors, analyzes factors that enable countries to adopt climate-ready approaches, and offers a perspective on how prepared they are to respond to climate change.

Adopting climate-ready policies and institutions

THE CRI captures a broad set of the variables that measure a country's capacity to adopt climate-ready policies and institutions, and can be used to benchmark climate readiness.

Among these data are: medical and health service coverage, presence of safety nets, infrastructure coverage and quality, environmental and climate policies, food security and the depth of financial markets. Taken together these data highlight the policies, institutions and technological innovations needed to move towards a low-carbon economy and reduce the costs of climate risk.

Each sector has a role to play.

■ **Enterprise:** Climate change is impacting business models across sectors and industries. In insurance and banking, the long-term costs from increased claims from natural disasters and the potential losses from sunk assets in certain industries are leading to new transparency on climate risk exposure and new risk-pricing models.

New products, such as parametric risk insurance, are being used to transfer climate risks from the agricultural sector and other affected parties. Producers are adopting processes that use less water and conserve en-

ergy, while farmers are adapting to new weather patterns and planting cycles. Many larger firms are adopting carbon pricing in their business models to account for both environmental and financial impact. Small businesses—many lacking insurance against flooding and other events—are developing contingency plans for their staff, supply chains, inventories and physical plants.

Investors are also factoring climate into their portfolio choices, discounting its impact on businesses and proactively investing in green bonds and other financial instruments.

■ **Government:** The public sector is adopting approaches to reduce carbon emissions as part of its commitment under the Paris Agreement, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to prevent an unbridled rise in global temperatures.

These policies include taxes on carbon, cap-and-trade mechanisms for carbon credits, reductions in fossil fuel subsidies, targets for the use of renewable energy sources, more energy-efficient building codes, along with investments in new technologies and public transport.

Municipal and national governments must also have infrastructure investments and urban plans with adaptation built-in as part of their design to ensure these assets withstand projected extreme weather events and structural changes, like rising sea levels.

■ **People and civil society:** NGOs and community organizations are actively working to ensure the inclusion of impacted groups, provide policy advice

The excerpt was taken from the KPMG article series titled "2019 Change Readiness Index: Assessing countries' ability to manage change and build a climate-ready future."

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