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ILOG SA MINAHAN IRE-REHAB

MAGIGING magkatuwang ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources at ang lokal na pamahalaan ng Compostela Valley para sa isasagawang rehabilitasyon ng Naboc River sa Mt. Diwata, Compostela Valley na sinira ng pagmimina.

Nilagdaan ang Memorandum of Agreement sa pagitan nina DENR OIC Assistant Secretary for Field Operations-Eastern Mindanao Ruth Tawantawan at Compostela Valley Governor Jayvee Tyron Uy sa DENR Region 11, Davao City.

Sinabi ni DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu na huhukayin ang ilog upang matanggal ang dumi na dulot ng pagmimina upang maisasaayos ang daloy ng tubig at matatanggal ang mga dumi na sanhi ng polusyon.

Sinabi pa ni Cimatu, sa nakalipas na 25 taon, biktima ang lugar ng kasakiman at irresponsableng pagmimina at naging tagasalo ang ilog ng mga nakalalasang kemikal, lalo na ang mercury, mula sa gold mining, iba pang gawain at dumi ng mga tao at hayop sa Mt. Diwalwal.

Ang Naboc River ay nagmumula sa itaas na bahagi ng Mt. Diwata at dumadaloy sa anim na barangay na Babag, Mt. Diwata, Naboc, Tubo-Tubo, Upper Ulip at Mangyan na sakop ng mga munisipalidad ng Monkayo at Compostela. **SC/JR**



Rody can plug leaky service

**By Mario
J. Mallari**

President Rodrigo Duterte can intervene to end the sad plight of consumers with

water concessionaires Manila Water and Maynilad Water Services Inc. and the collection of fees for services they failed to provide for years now.

Sen. Richard Gordon, during the weekly online

EXCLUSIVE

forum "Straight Talk with *Daily Tribune*," said since water supply can be considered under the general welfare provision of the Constitution, the Chief Executive can really
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That falls under the general welfare clause like peace and order. That is police power, the President can really intervene

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step in to address the issue.

"That falls under the general welfare clause like peace and order. That is police power, the President can really intervene," said Gordon, who is a lawyer.

He also added local government officials, who are under the executive department, should take the lead and act against those that go against the general welfare proviso.

The Constitution states that "the maintenance of peace and order, the protection of life, liberty and property, and promotion of the general welfare are essential for the enjoyment by all the people of the blessings of democracy."

It also says that "the State shall pursue a trade policy that serves the general welfare and utilizes all forms and arrangements of exchange on the basis of equality and reciprocity."

Short delivery

In an exclusive pre-State of the Nation Address interview with the *Daily Tribune*, the President said the public can sue Manila Water and Maynilad Water Services Inc. for "plunder," since they have been collecting fees for services that they do not provide.

Mr. Duterte noted the two concessionaires' failure to put up water treatment plants despite charging millions of households for such facilities.

During a congressional hearing last February, the House of Representatives' Committee on Metro Manila Development established that Manila Water and Maynilad failed to deliver on the concession agreement with the government.

The committee particularly cited the failure of the two companies to put up wastewater treatment facilities, thus, contributing to the pollution of Manila Bay.

In the hearing, representatives of Manila Water and Maynilad

admitted that only 20 percent of their facilities have been completed as of February and it would take up to 2037 to finish the plants.

It was established that the two have been charging consumers for such service. Apart from the alleged "illegal" charging of sewerage fee, both concessionaires have been criticized for their failure to provide 24/7 water supply to their respective service zones.

Currently, Maynilad customers are experiencing more than 12 hours of supply interruption.

Brownish liquid

Worse, whenever supply returns, particularly in the Manila area, usually at the wee hours of the day, it takes five to 15 minutes before the water becomes clear — the brownish liquid goes through the meter, thus it is being charged to the customers."

In a survey conducted live over radio, all of the Maynilad customers affected by the interruption have demanded rebates or any sanction against the company.

A few months ago, Manila water coughed up about P1 billion in rebates and other sanctions following the water supply outage in the eastern part of Metro Manila.

Despite all of these, there has been no major street protest launched by so-called cause-oriented groups against the water companies.

It is widely known that both Manila Water and Maynilad are generous donors of various organizations that are usually active in protest rallies, passing themselves as environmentalists.

The *Daily Tribune* tried to interview the cause-oriented EcoWaste Coalition regarding the two concessionaires' failure to put up wastewater treatment facilities that was blamed partly for the pollution of Manila Bay, but the group declined the request.

EcoWaste claimed that the group only focuses on waste management and would not entertain an interview regarding Manila Water and Maynilad.

In its official website, EcoWaste Coalition described itself as "a public interest network of community, church, school, environmental and health groups united by the common goal to end wasting through the promotion of environmental justice and stewardship."



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The black state of the Philippine environment



LAST Thursday, I had the honor of delivering the keynote address at the forum on the State of the Philippine Environment. I am grateful to the Center for Environmental Concerns, Kalikasan People's Network, Development Studies Program, Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung, and the Ateneo Environmental Science Society for asking me to make this presentation. It gave me an opportunity to reframe Philippine and global environmental concerns and propose a new taxonomy of environmental issues that the world and the Philippines face.

“We are failing in addressing effectively the climate emergency and the biodiversity crises.”

The usual classification has been to categorize environmental issues as green (for terrestrial ecosystems), blue (for coastal, marine, and water related challenges), and brown (for pollution, waste and other industrial problems). In my presentation, I introduced a fourth class of environmental challenges - the black issues, which are the enormous and existential challenges we are facing today. These issues are climate change, extinction of species, large-scale mining and big dam projects, and destruction by China of the resources of the West Philippine Sea. These black issues are characterized by development aggression, global inequity, loss of national sovereignty, and social injustice.

I will now be using this presentation

for my environmental law classes in Ateneo Law School, Ateneo de Zamboanga, San Beda Graduate School of Law, FEU Institute of Law, and University of Makati and in many forums I expect to be invited in the months to come.

Indeed, the state of our environment is black. This in spite of generally good and competent leadership in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Secretary Roy Cimatu has taken big steps to try to fix Boracay and Manila Bay. It is too early to say whether he will succeed or not. But for sure, Boracay and Manila Bay are not the Philippines. And in the rest of the country, the efforts of the government are simply not adequate to respond to the challenges.

This is especially true of the black environmental issues.

We are failing in addressing effectively the climate emergency and the biodiversity crises, in fact making bad decisions about them in concrete cases like allowing a new coal power plant to be built in Palawan.

We are failing in mining with the DENR supporting the renewal of the Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement of Oceana Gold in the face of strong opposition by all levels of local governments and the indigenous peoples and local communities.

We are making a bad decision in pursuing big dam projects like Kaliwa River Dam that will only result in inundating flora, fauna, and people without solving the water shortage in Metro Manila and in financial terms with China that is grossly disadvantageous to the Philippines.

And, yes in the West Philippine Sea, we are giving up our sovereign rights, allowing Chinese militia fishermen to exploit our fisheries at the expense of our own food security and the livelihood of many Filipinos.

In the face of these black environmental issues, I welcome the pastoral letter on ecology issued earlier this week by the Catholic Bishop's

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Conference of the Philippines entitled “An urgent call for ecological conversion, hope in the face of climate emergency.” Signed by CBCP President Romulo Valles, Archbishop of Davao, it minces no words and speaks truth to power. Below are excerpts from the letter:

“Our remaining forests and biodiversity are continually being threatened by extractive mining operations and the building of dams. Respect for God’s creation is disregarded when irresponsible mining practices are allowed to continue. Land and life is desecrated when almost two-thirds of the ancestral domains of indigenous peoples and more than half of protected and key biodiversity areas are directly threatened by mining applications and operations. Despite evidences against 26 mining operations ordered closed or suspended last February 2017, not one mine has stopped extracting because of technical administrative loopholes. Social justice is not served when only the few mining companies, many of which are also owned by political leaders, reap the benefits from mineral extraction. The rural poor remain poor as mining only contributes less than one percent to our GDP, employs less than 0.4% of our labor force and directly threatens agriculture, forestry, watersheds and fisheries resources that are essential for the survival of the rural poor.

Another problem related with mining is the phenomenon of our country’s growing dependence on fossil fuel-based energy, such as coal. There are at least 23 existing coal-fired power plants operating across the country;



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The black state of the Philippine environment

28 more may be operational by the year 2020. To support and sustain this dependence, a huge number of coal power plants involved in extensive coal extraction has to be put in place. Thus, coal mining projects have been allowed to increase to 186, including small-scale ones. Worse is, most of these coal projects are located within the vicinity of communities of indigenous Filipinos and are supported by rich ecosystems and biodiversities.

Centuries of emissions from coal have been scientifically proven to be among the lead causes of the current climate degradation. Coal projects also further exacerbate the vulnerability of impoverished host communities in the Philippines already struggling to cope with the effects of the worsening climate. Many coastal and agriculture-reliant communities face the loss of their livelihood because of land conversion and the pollution of resources caused by coal. Health problems also plague such communities due to the toxic substances and heavy metals released into the air and water resources by the mining, transporting, and burning of coal.

The burning of coal and other fossil fuels and the destruction of nature are natural consequences of extractive mining. Needless to say, these industries are pursued primarily for profit accumulation and rarely, if at all, in response to peoples' needs. This is the root cause of the continuous escalation of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere which, in turn, is causing the climate crisis. The climate crisis has thus far claimed tens of thousands of lives, displaced millions of people, and brought about tragic devastation in many parts of the world. This climate crisis is bound to get much worse in the years ahead.

The Philippines, being an archipelago, is prone to climate-induced disasters brought about by sea level rise, storm surges, prolonged droughts, and flash floods, among others. We are known to be the second among the countries with the greatest exposure to disaster risks worldwide. We are at the doorstep of all the major threats of climate change which cause irreversible damage to agriculture, marine resources and the entire bio-networks. Moreover, extreme weather events are occurring more frequently in our country. The catastrophic super typhoons like Yolanda, Ondoy, Sendong, and Pablo, that have devastated several of our regions, attest to this level of climate vulnerability. On record, Yolanda (Haiyan) is the strongest tropical cyclone ever to make a landfall on our country. The damage from Yolanda was catastrophic, resulting to an estimated 8,000 casualties, affecting 16 million people in 10 provinces, while over 1.1 million homes were damaged, about half of them completely destroyed. The sources of livelihood of an estimated 5.6 million poor people were severely affected.

Climate-related disasters threaten us all. The reality of the climate crisis, proven by the catastrophic impact of typhoons and other human induced-disasters, has made us aware that the time to act is now, not tomorrow. We must activate climate action on behalf of the voiceless people and the planet."

In the next column, I will write about solutions to the black state of our environment, including the recommendations proposed by the CBCP.

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SOLUSYON LABAN SA PLASTIC POLLUTION SA DAGAT "BAWASAN ANG PAGGAMIT NG PLASTIC"

NANAWAGAN ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa gobyerno, business sector at iba pang stakeholders na makipagtulungan sa kanilang ahensiya upang mabigyang solusyon ang problema sa plastic pollution na nagiging dahilan ng pagkasira ng karagatan at marine biodiversity.

Ayon kay DENR Assistant Secretary at concurrent Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) Director Ricardo Calderon, sa pamamagitan ng pinalakas na public-private partnership ay mapadadali ang ugnayan ng gobyerno at business sector para mabigyan ng mabilisang solusyon ang problema sa plastic pollution.

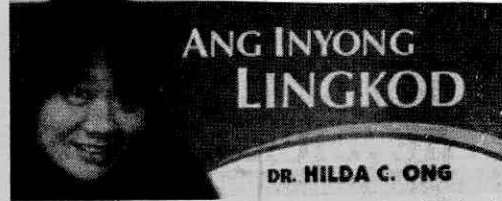
"We urge everyone to join the pledge for our environment; a pledge that will institutionalize our collective and collaborative action towards addressing the issue of marine debris," sabi pa ni Calderon sa ginanap na culminating pro-

gram ng Month of the Ocean na may temang "Free the Seas from Marine Debris" na idinaos sa The Peninsula Manila.

Ang pahayag na ito ni Calderon ay base na rin sa panawagan ni Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu sa mga Filipino na bawasan ang paggamit ng plastic na napupunta sa mga karagatan na nagiging banta sa marine life.

"The task of reversing this issue is as big and wide as the ocean, but small actions can make a huge difference," sabi pa ni Cimatu.

Base sa isinagawang pag-aaral ng Ocean Conservancy na isang US-based environment advocacy group, lumalabas na walong milyong tonelada ng plastic ang napupunta sa karagatan kada taon na dumaragdag pa sa 150 milyong tonelada na nagpa-paikot-ikot lamang sa mga baybayin at nagiging dahilan sa pagkaubos ng mga species at pagkakaroon ng kon-



ANG INYONG LINGKOD

DR. HILDA C. ONG

taminasyon ng kanilang mga kinakain.

Ayon kay Calderon, ang marine plastic pollution ay isa sa alarming issue na kinaharap ngayon ng buong mundo at ang Pilipinas ang isa sa major contributors sa problemang ito ng mundo dahil sa tinatawag na "sachet economy" kung saan ang mga kumpanya ay nagbebenta ng mga produkto na nakalagay sa single-used plastic sachet.

Bagama't madaling ipagbawal ang paggamit ng plastic sachet, sinabi ni Calderon na malaki ang magiging epekto nito sa ating ekonomiya kaya't ito ang dapat na paghandaan ng mga stakeholders partikular na ng gobyerno at ng mga negosyante.

"As one of the fastest developing countries in the world, with more than 6.6 percent in terms of world trade, one of the drivers of economic growth is basically the sachet economy, the 3-in-1 pack-

ages, including the plastic straw, which is basically part of development," pagdidiin pa nito.

Aniya, ang pagtulong sa pagbibigay ng solusyon sa problemang ito ay isang paraan upang matulungan ang mga sea animals na makaiwas na makakain ng plastic. Kamakailan ay isang rough-toothed dolphin (Steno bredanensis) ang namatay sa Palawan matapos makakain ng garbage bag.

Umaabot sa bilyong plastic sachet ang naibebenta kada taon mula sa personal care at food products tulad ng shampoo at soy sauce. Ang mga sachet na ito ay hindi nairerecycle kaya't nakapagbibigay ito ng polusyon sa dagat.

Umaasa pa si Calderon na makahanap ng paraan ang mga stakeholders na makapagbibigay ng solusyon sa problemang ito nang hindi naaapektuhan ang ating pag-unlad.

Senate bill filed banning single-use plastics

SEN. Cynthia Villar has filed Senate Bill (SB) 333 or the "Single-Use Plastic Product Regulation Act of 2019," which seeks to regulate the manufacture, importation and use of single-use plastic products.

The senator said the bill was urgent amid a study showing the Philippines as the world's third largest producer of plastic waste that ends up in the oceans.

"With our dependence on agriculture, plastic pollution also poses a grave threat to our food security," said Villar, who is expected to stay on as chairman of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources in the 18th Congress.

Disaster risks and hazards arising from plastic pollution "may put farms at risk of flooding resulting in wastage of agricultural products along with its threats to a balanced ecology," she said.

"Micro plastics leaked in our bodies of water may also put public health at risk, as it gets into our food chain," Villar said.

A 2015 report on plastic pollution conducted by the international group Ocean Conservancy and McKinsey Center for Business and Environment ranked the Philippines as the third biggest source of plastic leaking into the oceans after China and Indonesia.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization has also warned that if plastic pollution continues by 2050, there would be more plastic than fish in the ocean.

Villar said the practice of buying products in sachets had worsened the plastic waste problem.

"We must put pressure on the corporations that produce these products to come up with a program to recycle these wastes and minimize their impact on the environment," she added.

Under SB 333, the use of single-use plastics by food establishments, stores, markets and retailers will be prohibited.

Consumers will also be asked to use reusable materials, while manufacturers will be mandated to collect, recycle

and dispose of single-use plastics produced and/or in circulation in the general market. Importation of single-use plastics will no longer be allowed.

Micro, small and medium enterprises who will violate the law will be fined ranging from P10,000 to 100,000, and will face suspension or revocation of their business permit.

Value Added Tax-registered enterprises, establishments, stores and all plastic manufacturers found violating the act will be penalized from P100,000 to P1 million, with their business permit suspended or revoked.

The bill will also create a Special Fund for Single-use Plastic Regulation from collected tariffs, levies and fees.

The fund will be used for the establishment of recycling centers, as well as for the assistance and incentives for manufacturers, community-based initiatives, and nongovernment and civil society organizations advocating for the reduction of single-use plastics and proper solid waste management.

BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO



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'Single-use plastics' ipagbawal

NAIS ipagbawal ni Sen. Cynthia Villar ang single-use plastic upang mapigilan ang polusyon sa bansa.

Sa pahayag, sinabi ni Villar na layunin ng Senate Bill No. 333 o Single-Use Plastic Product Regulation Act of 2019 na i-regulate ang manufacturing, importation at paggamit ng single-use plastic products.

Sinabi ni Villar, na inaasahang chairperson ng Committee on Environment and Natural Resources sa 18th Congress, na mahalaga ang pagsasabatas ng panukalang ito dahil sa pag-aaral na sa buong mundo, ang Pilipinas ang pangatlong pinakamalaking producer ng plastic wastes na napupunta sa karagatan.

"With our dependence in agriculture, plastic pollution also poses a grave threat in our food security. Disaster risks and hazards arising from plastic pollution may put farms at risk of flooding resulting in wastage of agricultural products along with its threats to a balanced ecology. Micro plastics leaked in our bodies of water may also put public health at risk as it gets into our food chain," arti Villar.

Base sa 2015 report tungkol sa plastic pollution na isinagawa ng international group Ocean Conservancy and McKinsey Center for Business and Environment, ang Pilipinas ang pangatlo sa pinakamalaking source ng plastic kasunod ng China at Indonesia.

Nagbabala rin ang United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization na mas magiging marami ang plastik kesa sa isda sa darating na 2050 kapag magpapatuloy ang plastic pollution.

Aniya, mamamatay ang mga isda at magiging disyerto ang mga karagatan sa taong ito.

Sinabi pa ng Nacionalista Party senator na umiigting ang suliranin sa plastic waste dahil na rin sa mga produktong nasa plastic sachets.

"Hindi naman natin masisi ang mga tao kung ang kaya lang bilhin ay yung sapat para sa ilang araw lang na gamitan. But we must put pressure on the corporations that produce these products to come up with a program to recycle these wastes and minimize impact on the environment," sabi pa ni Villar.

Sa ilalim ng panukala, pagbabawalan ang food establishments, stores, markets at retailers na magbigay ng single-use plastics.

Hihikayatin din ang consumers na gumamit ng reusable materials samantalang ang manufacturers ay dapat na mangolekta, mag-recycle at itapon ang single-use plastics. Hindi na rin papayagan ang importasyon ng single-use plastics.

Papatawan ng multang P10,000 -100,000 at suspensyon o pagpapawalang-bisa sa business permit ang mga business enterprise, micro, small at medium enterprises na lalabag sa batas.

Pagmumultahin naman ng P100,000 hanggang P1M o sususpendihin o pawawalang-bisa ang business permit ng VAT-registered enterprises, establishments at tindahan at lahat ng plastic manufacturers na may paglabag.

Sa ilalim ng panukala, magtatatag din ng Special Fund for Single-Use Plastic Regulation na bubuuin ng collected tariffs, levies at fees.

ERNIE REYES



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



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SINGLE-USE PLASTICS IBABAWAL

UPANG mapigilan ang polusyon sa bansa, inihain ni Senadora Cynthia Villar ang panukalang batas na magbabawal sa single-use plastics.

Ito ang nakapaloob sa Senate Bill No. 333 o Single-Use Plastic Product Regulation Act of 2019 na i-regulate ang manufacturing, importation at paggamit ng single-use plastic products.

Ani Villar, mahalaga ang pagsasabatas ng panukalang ito dahil sa pag-aaral na sa buong mundo, ang Filipinas ang pangatlong pinakamalaking producer ng plastic wastes na napupunta sa karagatan.

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lution also poses a grave threat in our food security. Disaster risks and hazards arising from plastic pollution may put farms at risk of flooding resulting in wastage of agricultural products along with its threats to a balanced ecology. Micro plastics leaked in our bodies of water may also put public health at risk as it gets into our food chain," anang senadora.

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Sinabi pa ni Villar, tumitindi ang suliranin sa plastic waste dahil na rin sa mga produktong nasa plastic sachets.

"Hindi naman natin masisi ang mga tao kung ang kaya lang bilhin ay 'yung sapat para sa ilang araw lang na gamitan. But we must put pressure

on the corporations that produce these products to come up with a program to recycle these wastes and minimize impact on the environment," dagdag pa ng senadora.

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Pagmumultahin naman ng P100,000 hanggang P1 milyon o sususpindihin o pawawalang bisa ang business permit ng VAT-registered enterprises, establishments at tindahan at lahat ng plastic manufacturers na may paglabag.

Sa ilalim ng panukala, magtatag din ng Special Fund for Single-use Plastic Regulation na bubuuin ng collected tariffs, levies at fees.

Bukod dito, gagamitin ang pondo sa pagtatayo ng recycling centers at assistance at incentives para sa manufacturers at community-based initiatives upang mabawasan ang single-use plastics. Para rin ito sa non-government at civil society organizations na nagsusulong sa wastong solid waste management.

VICKY CERVALES



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Field of dreams Boy looks for anything valuable in a veritable land of garbage in Navotas City. ROMAN PROSPERO



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BULGAR

BOSES NG HASA, HATA NG BAYAN

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"ITINAPON mong basura, babalik din sa'yo." Ganito ang nangyari nang dumaan ang Bagyong Falcon kung saan iniluwa ng Manila Bay ang tone-toneladang iba't ibang klase ng basura tulad nito sa Baywalk. Hays!
(Jun Guillermo)



STORM-SENT

RAINS REPLENISH WATER SUPPLY OF ANGAT, IPO DAMS

By Ronnel W. Domingo
@RonWDomingoINQ

Water consumers in Metro Manila and nearby provinces enjoyed a windfall from storm-induced rains as Maynilad Water Services Inc. temporarily shortened the scheduled service interruptions across its concession area on Friday.

Maynilad said in a statement that the stock level at the Angat and Ipo dams in Bulacan rose slightly after heavy rains fell on the watersheds.

"Because Ipo Dam was filled up to its maintaining level [of 101 meters above sea level, or masl], our reservoirs were fully replenished last [Thursday] night, our customers will experience shorter service interruptions today [Friday]," the company said.

"But we will resume implementation of interruptions [as previously scheduled] if the runoffs at the watersheds have been used up and waters levels at Ipo Dam go down again,"

Maynilad said that as of 9 a.m. on Friday, water level at Angat was pegged at 160.4 masl or an increase of 1.95 meters from 158.45 masl 24 hours earlier.

Manila Water Services Inc. also reported that the water level at the La Mesa Dam rose by 0.26 meter to 73.1 masl, further above the critical level of 69 masl.

Even then, Manila Water said it continued the daily implementation of service interruptions in eastern Metro Manila and Rizal province. INQ



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Angat water level rises above critical mark

MALOLOS – The water level in Angat Dam rose above its critical mark yesterday following rains spawned by Tropical Storm Falcon and the southwest monsoon.

The Bulacan provincial disaster risk reduction and management office said the water level was at 160.62

meters as of 11 a.m. yesterday or 62 centimeters above its critical level.

The water level is still short by 19.32 meters from its minimum operating mark of 180 meters. The normal high is 212 meters.

The water level in Ipo Dam was at 100.94 meters

yesterday while Bustos Dam is at 16.06 meters. The spilling level of the two dams is 101.00 meters and 17.34 meters, respectively.

Angat Dam is the primary source of water of the two dams.

Ipo serves as the reservoir of water concessionaires in Metro Manila while Bustos

regulates irrigation supply in Bulacan and parts of Pampanga.

Josephine Salazar, National Irrigation Administration-Central Luzon director, said Bustos Dam started releasing water on Tuesday to irrigate Bulacan farms.

– Ramon Efren Lazaro



No increase in NCR water allocation

By Miguel Paolo Togonon

The water allocation for the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) and its concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water would stay at their current levels notwithstanding a slight increase in the water reserves of Angat Dam.

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said Friday the decision was based on the dam's water level being at just a meter

over its critical level of 160 meters following rains brought about by tropical storm "Falcon."

NWRB Executive Director Seville David Jr. said the allocation of 36 cubic meters per second (cms) is expected to remain for the remainder of July from the regular or normal allocation for MWSS which is 46 cms.

Angat's level still close to critical.

The reduced allocation has resulted to the rotational cutting of water supply in the concession areas of Maynilad and Manila Water. Past noon of Friday, Angat's water level was at 160.84 meters, said David.

Located in Bulacan, Angat supplies over 90 percent of the water supply in the National Capital Region. Its normal operating level is 180 meters.

A day before on Thursday, Angat's water level was at 158.27 meters, down from last Wednesday's 158.38 meters.

The partner dams of Angat, the La Mesa Dam in Quezon City and the Ipo Dam also in Bulacan also saw increases in their water supplies. La Mesa went up by 0.26 meters at 73.10 meters while Ipo rose by 0.24 meter at 100.96 meters.

Hopes of water levels in the dams increasing were buoyed by a low pressure area re-entering the Philippine Area of Responsibility, developing into tropical depression "Goring".



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Tubig sa Angat tumaas

UMANGAT ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat dam, ayon sa Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

Mula sa 158.27 metro noong Huwebes ng umaga, umakyat sa 160.16 metro ang tubig sa dam.

Ang critical level ng dam ay 160 metro.

Tumaas din ang lebel ng tubig sa La Mesa dam ng 0.36 metro o mula 72.09 metro ay naging 73.09.

Ang Angat at La Mesa dams ang pangunahing pinagkukuhanan ng suplay ng tubig sa Metro Manila.

Tumaas din ang tubig sa Ipo, Ambuklao, Binga, Pantabangan, at Magat dams. Bumaba naman ang tubig sa San Roque at Caliraya dams. —*Leifbilly Begas*

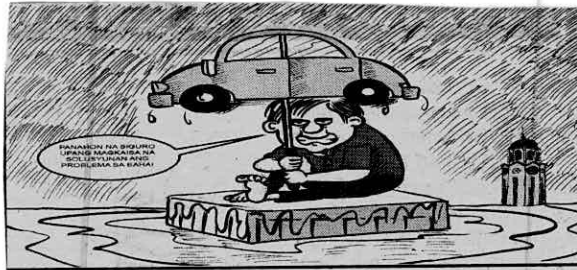


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TUMULONG LABAN SA BAHÁ

SA kahit kaunting buhos ng ulan, maraming lugar sa Metro Manila ang binabaha.

Ang masama, namamahay ang baha ng kung ilang oras at lalong masama ang kalagayan kung sinasabayan ito ng high tide, lalo na sa mga lugar na sinasabing kapantay o mas mataas lang ng mahigit isang metro sa tubig-dagat gaya ng mga lungsod ng Manila, Malabon at Navotas.

Ang malinaw, ginagawa ng pamahalaan ang tungkulin nito bagama't napakarami ang kontrobersyang bumabalot dito na nag-uugat sa korapsyon at maling gawa.

Isang halimbawa ng may kontrobersya ang P6 bilyong Caloocan-Malabon-Navotas-Valenzuela Mega Flood Control Project na sinasabing natapos noong taong 2007-2008 mula nang simulan ito noong 2003 ngunit hindi pa rin pala natatapos limang taon pagkaraan o noong 2012.

Sabihin mang natapos pa rin, nang sumalakay ang habagat noong 2012 at 2013, napatunayang punggok pala ang nasabing proyekto at binaha ang mga lugar na dati nang binabaha hanggang sa may mamatay na 136 at libo-libong pamilyang nasalanta.

Sa gitna ng mga problemang nabanggit, masasabi pa ring nagsusumikap ang gobyerno para labanan ang baha sa pinakamabisang paraan, lalo na sa mga panahong ito.

Nagsimulang magkaroon, halimbawa, ng 57 pumping station noong panahon ni dating Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos at ngayo'y nasa 36 dito ang inabutan ng katandaan at nire-rehabilitate o inaayos.

Nasimulan na rin ng administrasyon ni Pang. Rodrigo Duterte ang paglalagay ng dagdag na 20 bagong pumping station na ikakalat sa mga lungsod na kulang nito.

Kapag naitayo na lahat ang 20 istasyon, inaasahang magtatagal lang ang baha ng 40 minuto sa halip na ilang oras.

Kaya lang, dapat na sumabay ang mga mamamayan sa tamang pagtatapon ng basura.

Kapag tama ang pagtatapon ng basura, hindi basura kundi tubig-baha ang higupin ng pumping station para maligtas tayo sa salot na baha.



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WPS PROTECTION

**IBP, 7 FISHERMEN
WITHDRAW WRIT
OF KALIKASAN PLEA**

The Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) and seven fishermen on Friday filed a motion withdrawing their writ of kalikasan petition in the Supreme Court for the protection of the marine environment in the West Philippine Sea.

"With due regard to the plight and position of the fishermen-petitioners, their views and recommendations of the handling lawyers and IBP chapters involved, and the matters raised and guidance by the honorable Supreme Court, a motion has been filed for the withdrawal or discharge of the counsels of the fishermen and for the withdrawal of the petition," IBP president Domingo Egon Cayosa said in a statement.

The IBP submitted handwritten letters of six fishermen from Palawan and one from Zambales, as well as a resolution of the IBP board of governors as supporting documents.

—JEROME ANING INQ



IBP withdraws writ of *kalikasan* petition

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

With the fishermen-complainants backing out of the case, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) yesterday withdrew its petition from the Supreme Court (SC) seeking a

writ of *kalikasan* to require the Duterte administration to protect the West Philippine Sea.

Barely minutes before the SC closed office for the day, the IBP submitted a motion of manifestation to withdraw the

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IBP withdraws From Page 1

petition.

"The IBP Board of Governors adopted a resolution to request this Honorable Court to allow IBP to withdraw the instant petition and to withdraw as counsel for the petitioners who cannot be contacted," the IBP said in its motion.

The IBP asked the high court to grant the motion to withdraw the petition they filed along with other petitioners Monico Abogado, Roberto Asiado, Nonelon Balbontin, Randy Dacumos, Reny Magbanua and Wilfredo Labandelo.

The IBP lawyers also filed a motion to withdraw on behalf of their 20 other fishermen clients.

On July 12, the IBP filed a motion for extension and asked the high court to give them more time to confer with their clients.

The SC granted its request and gave them until July 19 to comply with its earlier order for both parties, the IBP and the government officials represented by the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG), to inform the SC on what would be their next move.

During the extended time given to them by the SC, the IBP coordinated with its chapters in Palawan and Zambales to meet with their clients.

The IBP Palawan chapter met with four fisherfolk petitioners who informed them that "they no longer wish to pursue the case."

While it was difficult to personally meet with six of the petitioners who were located in the remote Pagasa Island, they were able to relay their intention that they no longer wanted to pursue the case.

Six other fisherfolk petitioners were in Puerto Princesa and could not return to Pagasa Island due to bad weather.

As for the fisherfolk based in Zambales, the IBP said they had to cancel their July 13 scheduled meeting for safety reasons.

They were able to meet with one of the fishermen, Wilfredo Labandelo, who in a written statement also expressed his interest to withdraw the case.

The IBP in its motion to withdraw also asked that the SC to grant the petitioners Motion to Expunge from the Records the respondents' "Manifestation with Motion" filed last July 9 when Calida told the SC that 19 of the fishermen manifested they are withdrawing the plea.

They said the case was becoming a media spectacle instead of presenting the important issues concerning the environment in the West Philippine Sea.



IBP, fishers withdraw from kalikasan writ

THE Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) and seven fishers from Palawan and Zambales withdrew as petitioners from the writ of *kalikasan* lodged at the Supreme Court for some areas of the West Philippine (South China) Sea.

According to Supreme Court sources, the withdrawal was in compliance with the order of the high court after an alleged fraud and misrepresentation was committed by the IBP, as the fishers did not give consent to the petition.

Sen. Leila de Lima, however, said she believes the government had coerced the fishers to disassociate themselves from the petition immediately after government lawyers met with them.

A writ of *kalikasan* is a legal remedy available to any person who feels that their constitutional right to a balanced and healthful environment had been violated or could be violated by the unlawful act or omission of a public official or employee, or private individual or entity.

"Let's state the obvious, the fishermen surely did not disown on their own volition the petition for a writ of *kalikasan* filed with the Supreme Court," de Lima said in a statement.

"They were undoubtedly talked, if not coerced, out of it by the government. The affidavits crafted out of that meeting echo a rehearsed tune scripted by a spin doctor," she added.

Earlier, the IBP and human rights lawyer Jose Manuel "Chel" Diokno assisted the fishers from Palawan and Zambales in filing a petition before the Supreme Court suing concerned Cabinet officials for their neglect in enforcing Philippine laws to protect the maritime environments in West Philippine Sea territories.

But the 19 fishers later backed out from their own petition after meeting with government officials, who obtained affidavits from them manifesting their withdrawal from the case.

Diokno denounced the government's move as equally suspicious and unethical. "*Pagkatapos makausap ng abogado ng [Philippine] Navy, umatras na daw ang mga mangingisda* (After they talked with the lawyer of the Philippine Navy, the fishers reportedly backed out)."
"*Hindi raw kanila ang kaso. Hindi lang kahina-hinala na patagong nakipag-usap ang gobyerno sa mga kliyente namin, labag din sa legal ethics 'yan* (They disowned the case. The secret meeting of the government with our clients was not only highly suspicious, it also violated legal ethics)," Diokno said.

De Lima said the government used the tactic "consistent with Mr. [Rodrigo] Duterte's strategy of lies and subterfuge, likening the fate of the 19 fishermen from Palawan and Zambales to that of the 22 fishermen, whose boat was sunk by a Chinese ship in Recto (Reed) Bank."

"Nothing is a more notorious example of this than the outcome of the Cabinet officials' meeting with the [F/B] *Gem-Ver* 22 fishermen after the ramming of their fishing boat by a Chinese vessel," she said.

"Instead of support and assistance to their quest for justice as first priority, the aggrieved fishermen were 'visited by riot troops' and handed a script that they could not obviously refuse because their livelihood was on the line," de Lima added.

She noted that at the height of the issue on the ramming and sinking of a Filipino fishing vessel by a Chinese trawler in Recto Bank in the West Philippine Sea, *F/B Gem-Ver* boat captain Junel Insigne "openly narrated that he was convinced that the Chinese vessel rammed their stationary boat last June 9, but he gave a different version of the story after meeting with Duterte's emissaries."

**BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO
AND JOMAR CANLAS**



Furniture makers remain bullish on export growth

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 like to meet with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) officials so they could provide them the legal source of lumber.

"We don't want to use illegal [sources]," she said, noting furniture makers then wanted to connect with these legitimate suppliers of plantation species.

Bituin pointed out that prices of 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 in bulk raw materials otherwise, it is cheaper to import these.

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."



STUDY NOTES BALILI RIVER REMAINS HIGHLY POLLUTED DUE TO INDISCRIMINATE DISPOSAL OF WASTEWATER

BAGUIO OFFERS CONTRACT PIGGERIES TO HOG RAISERS POLLUTING RIVERS

By Vincent Cabreza
@vincentcabrezaINQ

BAGUIO CITY—Hog raisers, who have been blamed for polluting the city's rivers, have been offered contract piggery farms outside Baguio as the government prepares to shut them down.

About 260 backyard piggeries were told to stop or relocate last year by a task force that enforced a city ban on chicken and hog raising due to high concentration of fecal coliform that had been detected at the Balili and Bued rivers for years.

These rivers flow to Benguet towns, so the city's municipal

neighbors, Tuba and Sablan, have each offered 1-hectare lots for pig farms that would process hog waste using biogas digesters.

The hog raisers can make use of a P10-million fund from the Department of Agriculture, said Moises Lozano, who monitors wastewater for the environment and parks management.

Community rituals

But some backyard raisers have rejected the contract farm option, saying they raise pigs for community rituals. "We help clean the environment. We are all trash pickers and we feed kitchen waste to our pigs," said a hog raiser.

Others resented being singled out by government. "We have septic tanks and we put hog waste in sacks for our gardens," another raiser said.

River pollutants

Market waste, the local slaughterhouse and an underperforming wastewater treatment plant also contribute to river pollution, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

But the city government is making the first step to solve this problem by reducing or eliminating waste from small piggeries located in interior villages, Philip Puzon, chief of

staff of Mayor Benjamin Magalong, said.

Some piggeries put up their own septic systems, on the understanding that they would close after two years due to the city's river pollution crisis, Lozano said.

Sewage system

Baguio's bigger problem is its sewage system. DENR credits the city for installing its own sewage treatment plant, which was built through a Japanese grant in 1986.

But the plant processes daily 8,600 cubic meters of wastewater from more than 2,000 households and establishments operating in the central business district (CBD).

Before the plant was built, Baguio was sued by La Trinidad, the Benguet capital and a major vegetable producer to where the Balili River flows from the city.

La Trinidad said the American-built sewer lines of Baguio discharged water directly into the river.

Wastewater disposal

"The water quality of the Balili River, however, still remains polluted due to indiscriminate wastewater disposal from homes, commercial structures, piggeries and other sources," said a study commissioned last year by World Water Council.

The study said "private sep-

tic tanks are still predominantly used [by an estimated 67 percent of Baguio's total households], since sewer lines are only found in the CBD."

"The financing, design, construction, installation and maintenance of [septic tanks] are the owners' responsibility ... [and some of these tanks] have effluents that drain to a canal or to a water body," the study said.

During a meeting with the city council on Tuesday, Magalong said the city intended to connect households to treatment facilities by building sewer pipes in the villages or by building new treatment plants, to address a growing population. INQ



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DOTr sets Swiss Challenge bids deadline for Bulacan airport

By **EMMIE V. ABADILLA**

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) is ready to open the Swiss challenge bids for the P735 billion airport New Manila International Airport (NMIA) in Bulacan at the end of this month (July 31, 2019), Secretary Arthur Tugade announced

in yesterday's round table conference at the Manila Bulletin headquarters in Intramuros, Manila.

If no competitors show up by then, the NMIA's original proponent, San Miguel Corporation (SMC), can start the project before 2019 is over. This April, the DOTr invited interested companies and groups to submit comparative proposals

to fund, design, construct, operate and maintain the Bulacan airport project under a 50-year concession period.

Sources from the government and private sector noted that no consortium is going to put up a proposal to match that of San Miguel Corporation for the Bulacan airport.

The agency gave original proponent

status to SMC's NMIA project, which the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) approved in April, 2018.

SMC proposed to construct a world-class, major international gateway with 4-6 parallel runways, modern terminals, a sea port, an industrial zone, plus necessary infrastructure such as expressways, in Bulacan province, north of Metro Ma-

nila to decongest the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) in Pasay City and improve traffic in Metro Manila.

The airport project, also being called the Bulacan Aerotropolis, will cover about 2,500 hectares, with terminal facilities capable of accommodating 100 million passengers per year. **►B-2**

It is expected to generate about a million jobs and jump-start economic growth as well as tourism in Bulacan and neighboring provinces although militant fishermen are opposing the project which requires massive land reclamation within the 2,500-hectare fishpond area in the coastal barangay of Taliptip.

However, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has already issued an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) for the SMC project.

Earlier SMC President Ramon S. Ang said: "If all things go according to plan, SMC hopes to be operating by the end of 2024 its massive \$14-B aeropolis in Bulacan — the most ambitious infrastructure project to be started under the present administration.

"Our proposal to build a new, world-class international gateway—the New Manila International Airport—has undergone extensive review by various government agencies," noted SMC President Ramon S. Ang.

With the Swiss challenge for the proposed project to end on July 31, 2019, Ang is confident

that all requirements will be satisfied soon and they can break ground for the project by the end of 2019.

"If no other company puts forth a comparable offer to build one of the most ambitious infrastructure projects in our country's history, Filipinos could be enjoying more than just a world-class airport some five years after its groundbreaking," said Ang.

He explained that, "nothing of this magnitude has ever been completed. But we know that, to truly solve our decades-long problem of land and air congestion and to fully tap our economic potential, our country needs a future-proof solution."

The sheer scale of the development can't be downplayed. NMIA will feature four parallel runways with four times the constrained-capacity of the existing intersecting runways of NAIA.

There is ample space to construct a high-capacity runway system and airport complex that will ensure the efficient handling of 100 million to 200 million passengers per year compared to the 30 million capacity of NAIA.



Baguio open to studies on green technologies

By **ZALDY COMANDA**

BAGUIO CITY – The city government welcomed offers to conduct studies on introducing new technologies that would address solid and liquid wastes, two of the city's pressing concerns.

Mayor Benjie Magalong gave the go-signal for studies to determine the viability of two technologies: The first from Japanese company Toyo Energy Solution Co. Ltd. for a waste-to-energy system of disposing the city's daily garbage output of 400 metric tons, and the second from Cebu-based Mactan Rock Industries for processing the city's wastewater into potable produce.

In a recent meeting, Toyo executives Koichi Ishizaka, Takashi Kanazawa and Yoshimitsu Okada offered to put up a plant that will convert the city's refuse into electricity, methane gas and solid fuel without the need for segregation (except for toxic or hospital wastes) and incineration.

There would also be no gas emission or thermal combustion in the system and 20 percent of the fuel produced will be used to power the plant and the rest can be sold.

The plant will require a four-hectare lot to process the city's wastes, 40 percent of which are biodegradable.

Toyo representatives assured that they will go

through the required processes like carrying out a feasibility study and securing a Environmental Impact Assessment before the project.

The Japanese experts were accompanied by a representative of President Duterte who endorsed the technology after witnessing its operation during his visit to Japan.

Magalong also allowed members of the Zero Waste Coalition in the city to witness the presentation and scrutinize the project.

Mactan Rock Chief Executive Officer Antonio Tompar last July 8 pitched his technology that will treat the city's liquid wastes and convert it to drinking water at no cost to the city.

Tompar said the produce will be sold at a lower cost or at the level of non-potable water for household use.

Mactan Rock has put up more than 30 wastewater treatment plants all over the country that are now producing clear water.

Tompar agreed with the mayor's suggestion for a feasibility study on the expansion of the existing sewerage treatment plant at South Sanitary Camp and on the proposed construction of two new plants, one to be put up at Rock Quarry barangay and the other at the Slaughterhouse Compound on Magsaysay Ave.



DPWH prepares for 'Big One'

We need to fast track the implementation of interventions to make sure that our infrastructure cannot just withstand earthquake but also protect the people

By Raymart T. Lolo

In a bid to ensure earthquake resilience of the country's infrastructure and in anticipation to the "Big One," the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) has formed an Earthquake Resiliency Program Management Office (ER-PMO).

DPWH Secretary Mark Villar said that the earthquake resiliency office was created pursuant to Executive Order 52 Series 2018 entitled "Creating the Program Management Office for Earthquake Resiliency of the Greater Metro Manila," through Department Order 75 dated 10 July 2019.

The order stated that the ER-PMO will serve as an integrated department approach in addressing earthquake resiliency problems.

Villar stressed that the creation of the office was a pro-active measure in preparation for the "Big One."

"We need to fast track the implementation of interventions to make sure that our infrastructure cannot just withstand earthquake but also protect the people in the event of an earthquake particularly 'The Big One' that is anticipated to hit any time in mega Manila," said Villar.

The office is led by Villar with Undersecretary Emil Sadain for Technical Services as alternate and with the directors of Bureau of Maintenance and Unified Project Management Offices (UPMO) as deputy for operations and support, respectively.

As called by the department order, a technical steering committee was formed to collect and review situational reports, oversee the accomplishment of regional operations and create policy decisions while a separate support services committee was tasked to formulate long and medium-term resiliency development plans and ensure funding source for the whole program.

Villar also announced the creation of three Regional Operations Group headed by the undersecretaries for Regional Operations to conduct vulnerability and risk assessment of vital infrastructure in the provinces and collaborating with the local government units in mitigating risks.

To assist DPWH ER-PMO, several agencies were identified to serve as support agencies, namely, National Economic and Development Authority; Department of Finance; Department of Budget and Management; Department of Interior and Local Government; Department of Social Welfare and Development; National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council; Department of Science and Technology - Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology; and Department of Environment and Natural Resources - Mines and Geosciences Bureau.



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COLLECTIVE EFFORT - Students of Bulata National High School while making the biodegradable cups and bowls for their Wala-Usik canteen.

High school canteen in Negros Occidental practices zero-waste

By **NIKKY NECESSARIO**

Ever heard of the term 'Wala-Usik'? Wala-Usik in Hiligaynon means zero-waste or nothing is wasted. The Bulata National High School (BNHS) in Cauayan, Negros Occidental started practicing it to minimize the plastic wastes that pollute the ocean.

After attending an Adult Summer Camp on Danjugan Island, Bulata, Negros Occidental, BNHS principal, Eigg Duller Yap, brainstormed with his faculty members to think of a movement that would minimize plastic consumption in their school. Yap saw from the presentation of the Philippine Reef Rainforest Conservation Foundation Incorporated (PRRCFI) how polluted the seas are and how pollution destroys the marine life, and it turned out that plastics are the main culprit for such problem.

Several planning sessions and conference were organized school-wide to look into the environmental problems that can be addressed, especially plastic consumption. The meeting led to implementing a ban on plastics and to use instead biodegradable utensils that are made from bamboo, coconut, and banana leaves. Since agriculture is the backbone of Negros Occidental, said materials can be sourced locally. Barangay Bulata in Cauayan, Negros Occidental has good soil fertility where they could grow abundantly.



LOCALLY-SOURCED - Aside from the bowls and cups made of coconut shells, banana leaves are also used as wrappers for healthy kakanins sold at BNHS' Wala-Usik canteen

In a memorandum of agreement (MOA) signed between BNHS and the farmer-owners, all the materials for the school's wala-usik movement are provided free.

Moreover, BNHS faculty and staff established a cooperative to help fund the small canteen to support the zero-waste program. Yap mentioned that they also get fund assistance from Department of Education-Division of Negros Occidental.

Through the Wala-Usik canteen, the students feel happy because it enables them to help save Mother Earth. The teachers likewise feel satisfied knowing that the values they've been teaching in classrooms, such as taking care of the planet, are being practiced by their students. The parents, however, were also invited to make the utensils themselves, which could give them an alternative source of income.

"This advocacy is the start of taking the challenge of preparing them (the students) for a better future," said Yap. As the school's principal, he hopes that this experience in BNHS would eventually become a habit for the students. He looks forward to the moment when the youth would share and practice a zero-waste lifestyle, and that would make them realize that the world is a bountiful place, not only for humans, but for marine life as well.

BNHS has also signed MOAs with their municipal mayor John Rey D. Tabujara, the Barangay Council, PPRCFI, and Brgy. Bulata Cooperative Association. The project is also supported by the Association of Negros Artists, the Teachers' League Association, and DepEd-Negros Occidental Division. The wala-usik project inspired the Brgy. Council to initiate a plastic clean-up drive held last month.

Building climate- and disaster-resilient communities

First of two parts

DAVAO City, Philippines: I had the opportunity to attend the last of the three pre-State of the Nation Address organized by the Office of the Cabinet Secretary and the President Communication Operations Office held in SMX Convention Center, Davao City with the theme *"Tatak ng Pagbabago 2019: Patuloy na Katatagan."*

"The administration is steadfast in its resolve to maintain peace and order and to strengthen resilience of communities, thereby, enabling the Filipino people to live in a secure and peaceful nation," according to the PCOO's briefer released.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, also the chairman of the Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation, and Disaster Risk Reduction (CCAM-DRR) Cluster, presented its accomplishments and future directions in preserving and maintaining the country's ecological integrity.

The CCAM-DRR was created pursuant to Executive Order 24 issued on May 16, 2017. It focuses on the conservation and protection of the environment and natural resources, and serves as a venue for discussing inter-related concerns on climate change and disaster risk management. It also takes the lead in the effective integration of policies and programs on climate risk management, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development. The cluster shall pursue the following objectives:



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**LUDWIG O.
FEDERIGAN**

- Increase climate change resiliency of rural communities through increased agricultural productivity, water sufficiency, food security and climate and disaster risk-resilient development;

- Intensify sustainable management of natural resources through the adaptation of ridge-to-reef approach and sustainable integrated area development;

- Manage natural resources through strict enforcement of, and compliance with environmental standards and safeguards to achieve sustainable and resilient ecosystems;

- Ensure inclusive, people-centered, and sector-wide disaster mitigation, preparedness and quick emergency response, recovery and rehabilitation from natural and/or human-induced emergencies; and

- Promote and protect the Philippine national interest in adhering to international environment commitments.

The cluster is co-chaired by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana. Twenty-one national government agencies are part of the cluster. The cluster secretariat is handled by the Climate Change Commission.

The CCAM-DRR Cluster's Roadmap 2020-2022

In 2018, the cluster adopted a roadmap for 2020-2022 with an overall goal of achieving "Climate- and Disaster-Resilient Communities Supporting Equitable and Sustainable Development." The roadmap focused on four desired outcomes: 1) increased adaptive capacities of vulnerable communities; 2) ensured adequate supply of clean air, water, and nature resources; 3) increased resilience of critical infrastructure; and 4) enhanced knowledge, access to information and institutional capacities.

The focus areas of the roadmap are 17 vulnerable provinces, 822 coastal municipalities, and four major urban centers — Metro Manila, Metro Cebu, Metro Iloilo and Metro Davao. The 17 vulnerable provinces include Sorsogon, Masbate, Western Samar, Negros Oriental, Dinagat, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Sarangani, Eastern Samar, Southern Leyte, Zamboange del Norte, Lanao del Norte, Bukidnon, Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Sulu.



The Philippines with the most displacement associated with disasters

From July 2018 to June 2019, nine tropical cyclones — Karding, Rosita, Amang, Luis, Samuel, Chedeng, Henry, Inday and Josie — delivered P7.38 billion worth of damage to agriculture and infrastructure, affected 1.06 million families, damaged 28,548 houses, and left 38 dead, three injured, and four missing. This is on top of the damage brought by Ompong — the strongest typhoon of the year. It delivered P33.9 billion worth of damage to agriculture and infrastructure, affected 793,144 families, damaged 218,503 houses, and left 94 dead, 138 injured and two missing.

In the *2019 Global Report on Internal Displacement*, the Philippines topped the list with most new internal displacement associated with disasters. "The Philippines is always in the line of fire of climate change," said Climate Change Commission Secretary Emmanuel de Guzman. With weather-related hazards more pronounced these days, storms, particularly tropical cyclones account for new displacements, the importance of reducing risks associated with vulnerability and exposure to climate change is paramount.

As a response, aside from intensifying search, rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts, the government released P102.7 billion worth of insurance cover provided to 2.8 million farmers covering 2.1 million hectares of farmland; P2.0 billion of loan assistance to 54,379 affected small farmers and fisherfolk in 71 provinces; agricultural extension support, farm input support and farm machinery equipment to 1,471 agrarian reform beneficiaries organizations; P5.26 billion of housing assistance to 14,288 beneficiaries; P31.83 million of home materials assistance to 6,102 beneficiaries; and P672 million for assistance to communities affected by calamities natural disasters nationwide.

And to strengthen our monitoring and early warning system, the government installed 53 automatic weather stations, 28 lightning detection system, eight high-frequency Doppler radars, three Doppler weather radars and six stationary x-band radars nationwide. Also, one local sea-level monitoring station was established in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental for tsunami monitoring and warning and the first borehole type seismic monitoring station was commissioned in Tanauan City, Batangas to improve quality of seismic information.

Twenty-four and two hundred two local government units were assessed for availability of ground-water resources and aquifers, and for their risks and vulnerabilities, respectively.

Over 8,000 individuals were capacitated on disaster risk reduction management and resiliency, rapid earthquake damage assessment system and climate-smart farm business.

The author is the executive director of the Young Environmental Forum. He completed his climate change and development course at the University of East Anglia (United Kingdom) and executive program on sustainability leadership at Yale University (United States). He may be emailed at ludwig.federigan@gmail.com.

TPB brings biodiversity education to Surigao del Sur

THE Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) recently brought environmental education to the students of Quezon Integrated School (QIS) through Haribon's Biodiversity on Wheels or BOW, a multimedia library van that teaches Philippine biodiversity and conservation.

Senior high school students learned about Philippine wildlife and simple ways to protect the environment. Talks, games and workshops were facilitated by vol-

unteers from the TPB and Surigao del Sur State University-Tagbina (SDSSU-Tagbina).

Scientific studies identified the Caraga Region of Northeast Mindanao, where the BOW session took place, as a top biodiversity hotspot for amphibians and reptiles in the Philippines. This means that the region boasts more species for an area of its size than any other area in the country.

For this reason, the national govern-

ment, in collaboration with civil society groups, academic institutions and local communities, has set up various community-based conservation projects, livelihood programs and information campaigns that aim to promote and protect environmental sustainability in the area.

From learners to educators

Earlier this year, Haribon Foundation partnered with major educational institutions in the Surigao del Sur, including the Department of Education and Surigao del Sur State University, for a three-day seminar that prepared volunteers for upcoming BOW sessions.

During the activity, the participants developed localized BOW modules and learning materials intended to be used for spreading biodiversity and conservation knowledge in their respective regions.

The activity sought to educate young minds on their significant role in conserving the environment, while

also having fun through various games. BOW sessions highlighted discussions on basic ecology, the status of the Philippine biodiversity and different conservation tips.

The sessions were also designed in a way that provided students the opportunity to partake in the learning process as they actively engaged in the tasks they were given and accepted the challenge of helping protect the environment.

SDSSU-Tagbina and QIS educators Charmaine Jhane Ubay, Melanie Orap-Orap, Douglas Doloriel and Bebita Ubay served as facilitators in the BOW session.

Haribon training specialists Kathleen Zambas and Christel Yparraguirre supervised the event along with QIS school head Ma. Liza Bandola.

The activity ended on a successful note, seeing high hopes that the biodiversity champions, both students and volunteer educators, will take part in the growing support for environmental conservation in their own localities.

CHARMAINE JHANE T. UBAY



Haribon's Biodiversity on Wheels or BOW was recently brought to students of Quezon Integrated School (QIS) with the cooperation of the Tourism Promotions Board. HARIBON PHOTO



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NEWS

Man's ruin pushes 7,000 species to the brink

PARIS—Mankind's destruction of nature is driving species to the brink of extinction at an "unprecedented" rate, the leading wildlife conservation body warned on Thursday as it added more than 7,000 animals, fish and plants to its endangered "Red List."

From the canopies of tropical forests to the ocean floor, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said iconic species of primates, rays, fish and trees were now classified as critically endangered.

The group has now assessed more than 105,000 species worldwide, around 28,000 of which risk extinction.

While each group of organisms face specific threats, human behavior, including overfishing and deforestation, was the biggest driver of plummeting populations.

"Nature is declining at rates unprecedented in human history," said IUCN acting director general, Grethel Aguilar.

"We must wake up to the fact that conserving nature's diversity is in our interest."

In May, the United Nations released its generational assessment of the state of the environment. It made for grim reading.

The report warned that as many as 1 million species were now at risk of extinction, many within decades, as human consumption of freshwater, fossil fuels and other natural resources skyrockets.

It found that more than 90 percent of marine fish stocks are now either overfished or fished to the limit of sustainability.

The IUCN singled out a number of sea and freshwater fish that now occupy its highest threat category of "critically endangered"—the next step on the Red List is extinction.

Wedgefishes and giant guitarfishes, known collectively as Rhino Rays due to their elongated snouts, are now the most imperiled marine families on Earth.

The False Shark Ray is on the brink of extinction after overfishing in the waters off of Mauritania saw its population collapse 80 percent in the last 45 years.

Seven species of primate are closer to extinction on the new list, including the Roloway Monkey of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, with fewer than 2,000 individuals left in the wild.

'Severe habitat loss'

Prime culprits are humans hunting the animals for bushmeat and "severe habitat loss" as forest is converted to land to grow food.

Forty percent of all primates in West and Central Africa are now threatened with extinction, according to the IUCN.

"Species targeted by humans for food tend to become endangered much more quickly," Craig Hilton-Taylor, head of the IUCN Red List Unit, told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

"Species in environments with lots of deforestation for agriculture end up being im-

pacted."

The updated list shows that over half of Japan's freshwater fish and more than a third of Mexico's are threatened with extinction due to the loss of free-flowing rivers and increasing pollution.

More than 500 deep-sea bony fish and molluscs have been added to the list for the first time posing something of a conservation conundrum as the space they inhabit—1,000 meters (3,280 feet) beneath the surface—is often beyond national boundaries.

"The alarm bell has been sounding again and again concerning the unraveling crisis in freshwater and marine wildlife," said Andrew Terry, director of conservation and policy at the Zoological Society of London.

"Many of these ancient marine species have been around since the age of the dinosaurs and losing just one of these species would represent a loss of millions of years of evolutionary history." —AFP

USAid sounds alarm over pangolin decline in PH

THE Protect Wildlife Project of the United States Agency for International Development (USAid) is working closely with the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development and Katala Foundation to assess pangolin numbers in mainland Palawan and to protect the threatened species.

Members of the Philippine Marines stationed in the forests of Palawan have also vowed to do their part in helping save the pangolin, claiming they are harder to find than rebels.

The USAid effort is funding a dozen ground surveys, each covering 200 hectares in Palawan. Thirty-five camera traps to catalogue wildlife have also been deployed in the coverage area.

So far, the ground survey team has found only two pangolins for 2019 — attesting to their rarity and secretive nature. Pangolins spend most days quietly hiding in earthen burrows, rotting stumps or high in trees, emerging only at night to feed.

"It's easier to find rebels in these mountains than pangolins," said Marine Sgt. Darwin Balutan.

Battle-hardened Marines from the 3rd Brigade have joined researchers to find pangolins in the dense, rattan-tangled jungles of southern Palawan last month.

Caught for traditional Chinese medicine and dubbed as most illegally trafficked mammals on Earth, they've become global icons

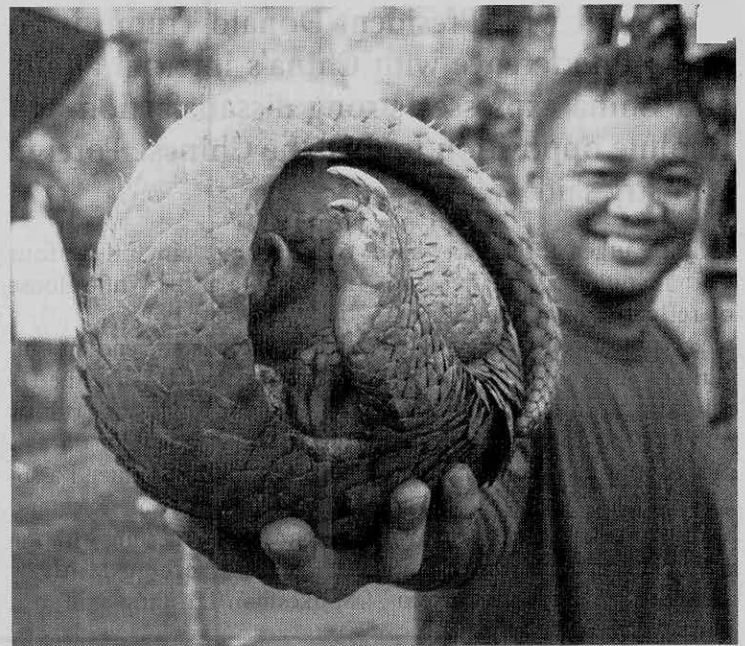
of how animals face extinction via the illegal wildlife trade.

The nongovernment organization Traffic estimates that around a million pangolins have been traded through 67 countries in the past decade, prompting a global ban often skirted by smuggling rings.

The belief that pangolin scales — in reality made of keratin (the same material as hair and nails) — has mystical powers, dating back centuries. "No one pays for powdered fingernails, but traditional Chinese medicine believers spend a fortune for powdered pangolin scales, which are no different," Sabine Schoppe, an expert on the Philippine pangolin, said.

Due largely to poaching, the population of the Philippine pangolin (*Manis culionensis*) has plummeted as much as 95 percent since the 1980s, locally making it critically endangered — one step above extinction.

"The illegal wildlife trade is run by organized syndicates with their own systems for capturing and smuggling pangolins, so we must tighten security," lawyer Edward Lorenzo, USAid's Protect Wildlife



■ Marine Sgt. Darwin Balutan holds a pangolin from the forests of Palawan. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

crime prevention advisor, said.

Traffic recorded 667 Philippine pangolins apprehended by authorities from 2001 to 2017, with 10 live animals recovered at a checkpoint in Tagaytay City just last month.

Some of the recovered animals came from other countries. In April 2013, a Chinese poaching vessel rammed into the Philippines' famed Tubbataha Reefs. Found aboard were 2,870 dead pangolins.

"DNA tests conducted on the pangolins confiscated off Tubbataha in 2013 revealed they came not just from Palawan, but Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and

Vietnam. This proves that illegal traders source their contraband from all over Southeast Asia," Mundita Lim, executive director of the Asean Center for Biodiversity, said.

Environmentalist Gregg Yan from Best Alternatives joined the expedition to interview the troops who were part of the effort to Palawan's pangolins. "We're often in the jungle, but it's our first time to notice how much wildlife there is in the Philippines," Marine Sgt. Norman Pintor said.

"The conservation community can count on us. We're proud to serve our country whatever way possible," he added. **THE TIMES**