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IN THE NEWS

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Legarda lauds Manila Bay rehab

SEN. Loren Legarda on Saturday lauded collaborative efforts from the government and stakeholders to rehabilitate Boracay and Manila Bay, as well as other tourist destinations in the country.

"As an archipelagic country, we depend so much for food and water from our oceans, but it is only until recently that we are ramping up efforts to rehabilitate and protect our marine life and environment. We need to sustain this level of awareness and action to ensure that we can still be able to provide for future generations," said Legarda, chairman of the Senate Committee on Climate Change.

She also supported the global call to reduce threats to marine species and urged authorities and stakeholders to help protect marine wildlife and biodiversity from pollution and impacts of climate change.

Legarda made the statement in celebration of World Wildlife Day on March 3, which carries the theme "Life Below Water: For Life and Planet."

The senator, however, noted that efforts must be aligned with the goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degree Celsius, citing the Special Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which projects lower climate risks to marine biodiversity, fisheries, and ecosystems, and their functions and services to humans at 1.5C, compared to 2C of global warming.

"As this World Wildlife Day focuses on life below water, we need to elevate the discussion and escalate our action at the local and global level to protect our marine resources in a more sustainable and meaningful fashion. In this time of climate crisis, we are compelled to do more for the sake of our future and our planet," Legarda said. **JAVIER JOE ISMAEL**



Swimming mapanganib pa rin

5-M kilong basura nalimas sa Manila Bay

NI ROMINA CABRERA

Umaabot na sa mahigit limang milyong kilong basura ang nakuha sa Manila Bay mula nang simulan ang rehabilitation program dito noong nakaraang buwan.

Ito ang isiniwalat ni Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año na nagsabi pa na, bagaman mas malinis ngayon ang Manila Bay, hindi pa rin ligtas lumangoy dito.

Sinabi pa ni Año na, sa isinagawa ngayon sa Manila Bay, tinututukan na nila ngayon ang paglilinis ng mga kanal na patungo sa look na ito.

"Ngayon tinutugunan

natin ay paglilinis ng estero. Ang Manila Bay ngayon, nakita natin, malinis na siya. Ngayon, ginagawa natin, kailangang maisara ang mga kumpanya na nagtatapon ng madumi para matigil na ang pagpasok ng dumi sa Manila Bay," sabi ng kalihim sa isang panayam.

Bukod sa paglilinis ng estero, sinabi ni Año na tinukoy nila ngayon ang mga detalye sa relokasyon ng mga informal settler families na nakakaambag sa pagdami ng mga basura sa Manila Bay.

"sa mga ISF, iyan ang isusunod natin. Merong

mga nakalaang pondo at paglilipatan. Iba-validate lang iyong nakatira rito. Kapag nawala iyan, malaking bagay ito. Diyan nanggaling ang dumi," dagdag niya.

Naunang inatasan ng DILG ang mga barangay na magsagawa ng immentaryo sa mga informal settler families na naninirahan sa mga baybayin ng Manila Bay at sa mga tributaries nito.

Tinagubilinan din ang 178 pamahalaang lokal sa paligid ng Manila Bay na magsagawa ng sari-sarili nilang lingguhang paglilinis para makaambag sa rehabilitasyon.



ENTERTAINMENT REMATE

email: pete_ampoloquio@yahoo.com

HOT SHOTS

Editor: PETE AMPOLOQUIO JR.



SIR BENNY ANTIPORDA

disposal.

"Yang paglilinis raw ng Manila Bay ay mababalewala at mawawalan ng halaga kung hindi natin sisimulan ang paglilinis sa sarili nating bakuran.

Kumbaga, big things come from small things.

Kaya nga 'yung simpleng hindi natin pagtatapon ng mga bagay-bagay like candy wrapper, among other things, ay malaki ang maitutulong para maging malinis ang ating bansa.

"Yung linisan raw natin ang ating bakuran ay malaking bagay ang maitutulong tungo sa isang bansang malinis.

Sa mga nag-aakusang balak raw niyang kumandidato kaya nagpapakitang gilás, siniguro ni Sir Benny na wala raw siyang balak na ganon.

Kapag natapos na ang kanyang termino, willing raw siyang magbalik sa pagiging ordinary citizen, unless another offer to serve the country would come his way.

"Yun lang!

AKTRES, YAMAN NG AMANG

PATAY KINAMKAM LAHAT

MAS fierce ang bakbakan nina Dimples Romana at Beauty Gonzalez sa Season Two ng Kadenang Ginto.

Ipinakita sa bagong teaser ng soap ang pamumuhay ng mga characters after Robert's (Albert Martinez) death.

Kinamkam ng switik na character ni Dimples Romana (Daniela), na maigsi na ang buhok sa ikalawang yugto ng soap opera, ang lahat ng kanyaman ng kanyang ama.

Nakulong naman si Romina, Beauty Gonzalez's character, dahil isinisi sa kanya ang kamatayan ni Robert.

Nakahahabag naman ang naging buhay ni Cassie (Francine) na ginawang alipin ni Marga (Andrea).

Later on, nakalaya si Romina at iniligtas nito ang anak sa mga kamay nina Daniela at Marga. Ang Kadenang Ginto na nag-premiere last October 8, 2018, is on its 21st week already on ABS-CBN.

And with that, ito po ang Kuya Pete ninyo na nagsasabing, Christopher, my son, I love you very, very much, my love for you goes beyond eternity.

Adios. Mabalos. I always need you, Nhong!



5 M kilos of trash removed from Manila Bay - DILG

By **ROMINA CABRERA**

At least five million kilos of trash have been removed from Manila Bay since the start of the rehabilitation program on Jan. 27, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) said yesterday.

While the bay is cleaner,

it is still not safe for swimming, DILG Secretary Eduardo Año said.

He added that they are now focusing on cleaning canals leading to the bay.

"We need to shut down the companies discharging waste" into the canals to prevent the waste from polluting the bay, Año said.

He said they are also threshing out details in the relocation of informal settler families (ISFs), whom he said are largely to blame for the garbage in Manila Bay.

"There are funds and relocation sites allocated," Año said.

The DILG earlier directed

barangays to conduct an inventory of the ISFs living along Manila Bay's shoreline and the bay's tributaries.

The 178 local government units around Manila Bay have also been directed to conduct their own weekly cleanup drives to contribute to the rehabilitation.



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E-waste facility to rise in Caloocan

By **CORY
MARTINEZ**

ELECTRICAL or electronic devices, commonly referred to as e-waste will soon be properly disposed with the establishment of an e-waste facility in Bagong Silang, Caloocan City.

Atty. Jonas Leones, Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs, Department of Environment and Natural Resources

(DENR) said the project seeks to promote the environmentally-sound management of discarded e-waste.

During Friday's event, various stakeholders, especially from e-waste collectors, dismantlers and recyclers, project collaborators gathered in Barangay 176, Bagong Silang, Caloocan City to put a signage for the planned E-Waste Category F.1 Treatment, Storage and Disposal (TSD) Facility in the pilot area.

"We are here together to mark a new chapter in

our effort to promote the environmentally-sound management of e-waste so that their hazardous components do not end up contaminating the environment, specifically our water bodies, which serve as our main source of food and other resource needs," Leones said.

The establishment of the said e-waste facility is made possible by the Safe PCB and E-Waste Management Project funded by the Global Environment Facility and implemented in the country by UNIDO through the DENR-Environmental Management Bureau.

The soon-to-be erected facility to be manned by trained personnel from the ranks of local informal recyclers will be used to store collected e-waste, particularly old and busted TVs, prior to being transferred for proper dismantling and recycling at the Laguna-based Integrated Recycling Industries (IRI), a company specializing in the reclamation and recycling of useful materials from e-waste.

Speaking on behalf of the host community of 300,000 residents, Barangay 176 Chairman Joel Bacolod said: "Barangay Bagong Silang, being the largest barangay in the country, is pleased to set an example as 'cause champion' in environmental management and advocacy, especially in the way we handle unwanted electrical and electronic goods."



E-waste facility opened in Caloocan

ELECTRICAL and electronic devices, which end up as e-waste, will soon be properly disposed of with the establishment of an e-waste facility in Bagong Silang, Caloocan City.

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Cory Martinez



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Boracay road rehab completed this month – DPWH

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) is confident of completing the first phase of the rehabilitation of the circumferential road in Boracay in time for the expected influx of tourists.

Road widening and implementation of a flood control program on the 4.1-kilometer road was initially targeted for completion last Oct. 26.

Wenceslao Leano, DPWH-Western Visayas director, said the project is expected to be finished in the next two weeks.

The DPWH extended its

deadline after heavy rains slowed down rehabilitation works.

The government appealed to telecommunications, water and electric companies on the island to facilitate the transfer of underground lines.

Leano said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources had earlier set a Feb. 15 deadline to transfer underground lines to pave the way for pipe-laying.

DPWH Secretary Mark Villar said that they have not been remiss in reminding public utility firms.

– Evelyn Macairan



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Boracay among top choices of travelers – US website

By ROBERTZON RAMIREZ

Boracay remains one of the top choices of travelers based on the recent report of a US website.

In the 2019 traveler's choice of TripAdvisor, Boracay ranked ninth among the Top 25 Beaches in Asia.

"Calm, warm waters, gently sloping sand. Very relaxing. Possibly the

most beautiful beach in Asia," TripAdvisor said.

Nacpan and Las Cabanas in El Nido, Palawan ranked 13th and 22nd respectively, while Yapak or Puka Shell beach, also in Boracay, ranked 25th.

Radhanagar Beach in India is the website's top tourists' choice for 2019.

Jojo Clemente, president of the Tourism Congress of the Philippines,

said he is not surprised by the positive response of the tourists.

"That's a testament to the reputation and beauty of Boracay despite (its closure) for six months," Clemente said.

Clemente said local government officials in Boracay are enforcing environmental laws and ordinances to preserve and promote sustainable

tourism on the island.

"I think it's back – the only thing that's different now is accessibility to the island in terms of flights because (airline companies) have cut down their flights," he added.

He said hotels and resorts in Boracay are 80 to 90 percent operational since the island was opened in October last year.



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Boracay remains one of Asia's best beaches

DESPITE the environmental woes that prompted its six-month closure, Boracay was recently listed among Asia's top 25 beaches rankings of an American travel website.

TripAdvisor ranked Boracay's White Beach 9th among 25 others for the four-kilometer main beach's "calm, warm waters, gently sloping sand, very relaxing [environment]... possibly the most beautiful beach in Asia."

Yapak Beach (Puka Shell Beach) of Boracay Island also took the 25th spot.

Two other Philippine beaches also made it to this year's elite list.

These are Nacpan Beach at 13th, and Las Cabañas Beach at 22nd, both in El Nido, Palawan.

In a recent top 50 best beaches in Asia by Flight Network, nine beaches in the country were recognized, with the Hidden Beach in El Nido, Palawan ranked as No. 1.

Boracay, however, was not in the list. In 2018, the White Beach was listed second best beach in Asia.

The Tourism Congress of the Philippines (TCP) said the ranking was a testament to Boracay's enduring reputation and beauty despite its closure last year.

"This means that Boracay was able to hit the ground running upon its reopening. That's a testament to [its] reputation and beauty, that despite everything, it was listed as one of the top destinations

► **Beaches A2**

in the region," TCP president Jose Clemente 3rd told reporters.

The TripAdvisor's list ranked Radhanagar Beach in Havelock Island, Andaman and Nicobar Islands the top beach in Asia, while Kelingking Beach in Nusa Penida, Bali, came in second. Nai Harn Beach in Thailand got the third spot and Agonda Beach in India took fourth place.

Bentota Beach in Sri Lanka was ranked 5th, PhraNang Cave Beach in Ao Nang, Thailand, placed 6th, Varca Beach of India came in 7th, Karon Beach of Thailand took the 8th spot and Ngapali Beach of Myanmar was ranked 10th.

'Strike a balance'

Clemente said now that Boracay is 90 percent operational, the government and the private sector has become strict in implementing en-

vironmental laws and ordinances.

In a recent bulletin from the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force, 320 more tourism establishments and hotels have been allowed to operate on the island, which brings a total of 11,662 rooms available for booking.

"The problem before was less of the influx of visitors in Boracay but more on inefficient enforcing of those ordinances and laws. This time, despite the influx of tourists, the element of sustainability will still be there," Clemente said.

He, however, explained that accessibility to the island remains inadequate because of limited flights.

"But now I think maybe they (airlines) have to rethink it because airfares are now high, but people are still going. So it's still a viable destination," Clemente said.

Boracay reopened on October 26 after a six-month clean-up and rehabilitation ordered by President Rodrigo Duterte.

The TripAdvisor's ranking of beaches was determined by the quality and quantity of reviews and rankings for beach destinations, restaurants, hotels, attractions on the islands and traveler booking interest.

NEIL JAYSON SERVALLOS



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A bridge too late: How to delay a gov't infra project

By **Mikkah F. Factor**
@MikkahINQ

The people of San Pedro City in Laguna were promised a wider bridge between the barangays of San Antonio and San Vicente by the end of 2016. But today, more than three years after the project contract took effect, construction is still ongoing.

Absence of proper planning by the project's implementing office, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) in Region IV-A, and lack of coordination with other agencies are the clear reasons for the long delay, according to San Pedro City Administrator Filemon Sibulo.

The 200-meter bridge, known locally as San Isidro Bridge after the river that runs below it, connects the city boundaries of Muntinlupa and San Pedro to the latter's town proper. It is part of a main route traveled daily by San Pedro residents.

The widening of the bridge from two to four lanes was planned to ease traffic. The work that began on Jan. 26, 2016, was scheduled for completion on Nov. 21 of the same year.

But on both bridge approaches stood tamarind, *kamagong* and ipil trees, among others. Clearing these required a permit from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Below the bridge was a railroad owned by the Philippine National Railways (PNR), which claimed that the DPWH and the project contractor, VR Patron Builders and Developers Corp., were operating within its right of way. Thus, construction was deferred until the DPWH got a permit to enter and work in the area.

There were also some 50 informal-settler families living under the bridge, as well as a gas pipeline owned by First Philippine Industrial Corp. and a high-tension wire of the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines.

After the fact

All these issues were addressed and the necessary permits secured only after work on the P71.7-million project began.

"Isn't it that before starting a project, all permits have to be secured first and not when the project is already in progress?" Sibulo told the Inquirer, adding that the right of way issue with the state-owned PNR should have been settled first.

But the matter was already settled given that the bridge is part of a national road, which is entitled to a 20-meter right of way, the DPWH argued.

"When the PNR saw us working, they claimed that they have right of way in the area," said project engineer Melquiades Sto. Domingo. "But we thought: Our project is a bridge and we are just working within the right of way parallel to it."

The issue was later resolved, with the PNR maintaining a 30-meter authority in the area, he said.

"From the very start, we saw there were obstructions," Sto. Domingo said. "The [delay in cutting] trees affected the informal settlers, and then there was the issue with the PNR. All were contributing factors in the project's delay."

To compound matters, DPWH resident engineer Percival Rotas said, these issues coincided with major activities, such as building the bridge's foundation.

Failed estimates

The informal settlers, some of whom make a living by selling strings of sampaguita in Quiapo, Manila, had long stayed in the area whose right of way the DPWH initially claimed.

"Our presumption was we had already acquired the area's right of way," Sto. Domingo said. "Our anticipation was that the informal settlers under the bridge would immediately leave ... But maybe our estimates failed. We did not think it would take them long to go."

While mobilization for the project started in January 2016, the operations were not "on full blast" until June because of the informal settlers, the DPWH said.

But Sibulo said the informal settlers were not the problem because they were immediately relocated to designated areas in San Pedro. "The main issue was with the PNR, which put the construction on hold," he said. "We told the DPWH: 'Why don't you work on the approaches while construction under the bridge is on hold?' But they said they couldn't do that because they didn't have a tree-cutting permit."

Early in August 2016, the DPWH started excavation work under the bridge but was stopped due to a proposed PNR project that would require an additional railway track. The DPWH secured a permit to en-



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A bridge too late: How to delay a gov't infra project

ter the PNR area, and construction resumed in the last week of September.

The DPWH sought a tree-cutting permit from the DENR in November, but it was approved only in September 2017.

"We actually focused on the bridge itself. It just so happened that we also needed to work on its approaches," Sto. Domingo said.

"We have a lot of bridge-widening projects but there are no obstructions. In the case of the San Pedro Bridge, we had informal settlers and a railway below. We know we cannot use those as excuses, but they posed a challenge to us that we had to learn from," he said.

'Total inconvenience'

Tricycle driver Fred Paragatos lamented the long delay: "It is a total inconvenience to students and those who go to work, especially when the bridge becomes one-way."

Commuter Kristia Lania said her previous five minutes of waiting to cross the bridge had become 30 minutes.

Student Farah Zavala said using alternative routes was no solution: "That causes heavier traffic. Sometimes, no one works on the bridge and the building materials are just left there."

The bridge is closed whenever the DPWH conducts major activities. But the times of these closures, and even that allotted by the city government for construction—10 p.m.-4 a.m.—are sometimes limited, Rotas said.

Sibulo said the city government had been "willing" from the very start to close the entire bridge so work on it could get done. "We're just following [the DPWH]. When they say we should close the bridge, we close it. When they say we should open it, we open it."

81.38 percent

At this writing, 81.38 percent of the project has been accomplished, the DPWH reported.

Mark Patron, authorized managing officer of VR Patron Builders and Developers Corp., said construction would be 100-percent complete within March 30-April 15—a "safe" period, per the DPWH.

But the people of San Pedro doubt it. "I'm not sure about that because they said they could finish the bridge by May 2017," Sibulo said. "We hope it would be finished this year, but if you look at the bridge, you'll see there's still a lot of work to do." INQ



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Dahil sa grassfire **Mt. Apo, napipintong ipasara sa mga trekkers**

Pinag-aaralan na ngayon ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Kidapawan City kung ipapasara muli para sa mga climbers ang Mt. Apo ngayong summer season dahil na rin sa matinding init na nararanasan sa lungsod na maaaring maging dahilan ng grassfire.

Ayon kay City Tourism officer Joey Recimilla, inantay pa ng City Tourism Council ang magiging desisyon ng Protected Areas Management Board o PAMB ng DENR kung itutuloy ba ang temporary closure.

Bagamat bukas pa ang bundok sa mga climbers sa kasalukuyan, pinag-aaralan din kung lilimitahan ang bilang ng mga aakyat sa layuning makontrol ang dami ng climbers at upang maiwasan ang posibleng sunog.

Patuloy na umiinit ang panahon at natutuyo na ang mga damo sa bundok na peligrosong magsanhi ng grass fire.

Taong 2016 nang naitala ang grassfire na sumira sa ekta-ektaryang kahuyan at damuhan sa bundok.

Samantala, sinabi ni Recimilla na normal lang ang namuong yelo o tinatawag na icicles sa ilang parte ng Mt. Apo kahapon ng umaga dahil ito sa pagtatagpo ng init sa baba at lamig naman sa taas ng bundok.
(*Rhoderick Beñez*)



246 libreng pabahay para sa landslide victims sa Naga, Cebu

MMAGTATAYO ang lokal na pamahalaan ng Naga City, Cebu at ang National Housing Authority (NHA) ng 246 na bahay para sa mga pamilyang naapektuhan ng landslide sa Barangay Tinaan sa siyudad noong Setyembre nang nakaraang taon, inihayag ni City Mayor Kristine Vanessa Chiong nitong Biyernes.

Popondohan ng pamahalaang lungsod ang 54 na housing unit sa Barangay Tinaan at ito ang mauunang itayo sa 192 pang housing unit na bubuun ng NHA sa Balili property sa coastal area ng Tinaan, lahad ni Chiong.

Aniya pa, nilagdaan na niya ang building plan na isinumite ng NHA.

Sinabi ni Chiong na ang mga bahay mula sa gobyerno at NHA ay ibibigay sa mga biktima ng landslide nang libre, at ang bawat unit ay mayroong 50-square-meter lot area at 26-square-meter floor area.

Nagsasagawa rin ang Environmental Management Bureau 7 (Central Visayas), sa pangunguna ni Engr. William Cuñado, ng geo-hazard assessment sa Tinaan "(to) "make sure it is safe" para sa bagong housing area para sa mga biktima.

Nag-donate ang lalawigan ng Cebu

ng 2.1 ektarya ng Balili property para sa NHA housing area.

May mga report naman na tinanggihan ng ilang evacuee ang alok na pabahay sa Balili property dahil sa pangambang magkaroon ng sakuna dahil malapit ito sa baybayin ng Tinaan.

"Last year, we were supposed to relocate around 444 families situated near the critical zone," sabi ni Chiong nang kapanayamin sa radyo, at binanggit din niyang pinili ng 154 na evacuee na makatanggap ng humanitarian assistance kaysa bigyan ng bagong bahay mula sa gobyerno.

Mas nais ng 154 na pamilya na maghanap ng sarili nilang lilipatan o relocation site sa mga kalapit na bayan ng Minglanilla at San Fernando.

Noong Setyembre 20, 2018, nagkaroon ng landslide sa Bgy. Tinaan, na lokasyon ng pagmimina ng isang pribadong mining firm. Pitumpu't walong katao ang namatay sa insidente, at 18 ang sugatan, habang lima naman ang idineklarang nawawala.

Bukod sa Tinaan, idineklara ring nasa ilalim ng state of calamity ang katabing mga barangay ng Naalad, Mainit, Pangdan, at Cabungahan.

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2019 Earth Hour: Protesta vs polusyon sa plastic

HANGAD ng World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines, conservation organization, na higit pang makakuha ng suporta sa publiko para sa batas hinggil sa plastic waste management, upang matugunan ang environmental degradation at biodiversity loss mula sa polusyon sa plastic.

Sa Marso 30, pangungunahan ng WWF Philippines ang pagdiriwang ng Pilipinas ng 2019 Earth Hour (EH) sa Makati City, na nakaangkla sa kampanya ng organisasyon laban sa mga single-use plastics.

"For this year, we're emphasizing what and how everybody can be part of the crusade to save the planet," pahayag ni WWF Philippines president at CEO Joel Palma, sa paglulunsad ng EH ngayong taon sa Pasig City nitong Huwebes.

Nasa ikatlong puwesto ang Pilipinas sa nangungunang plastic polluters sa karagatan at ang patuloy na pagkasira ng kalikasan dulot ng plastic ay nangangailangan ng kolektibong aksiyon para sa suliranin, aniya.

"We Filipinos must unite and create concrete steps to stop this worsening situation," ani Palma.

Aniya, mahalaga ang kalikasan sa buhay ng tao kaya ang pagpigil sa pagdami ng mga basurang plastic na maaaring magdulot ng polusyon ng kapaligiran "is a big step towards a greener, more sustainable planet."

Ang EH ay isang grassroots movement, na isinusulong ng punong organisasyon ng WWF Philippines sa buong mundo taun-taon, upang hikayatin at palakasin ang bawat indibiduwal, samahan at pamahalaan na gumawa ng konkretong aksiyon para sa mundo.

Sa pamamagitan ng pagpatay ng ilaw sa loob ng isang oras, ipinapakita ng mga kaisa sa EH ang suporta sa bid.

Ayon sa WWF Philippines, magaganap ang aktuwal na 2019 EH switch-off lights sa bansa sa Marso 30, dakong 8:30 ng gabi.

"Everyone all over the Philippines is encouraged to switch off non-essential lights from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. in solidarity with millions around the world who'll do the same," panawagan ng samahan.

Magaganap naman ang aktuwal na selebrasyon ng 2019 EH sa Makati's Globe Circuit Event Grounds simula 5 ng hapon hanggang 10 ng gabi, ayon sa WWF Philippines.

Tampok naman sa pagdiriwang ang iba't ibang booth, aktibidad at pagtatanghal na nagbibigay pugay sa Earth, gayundin ang main switch-off.

Sinabi ng WWF Philippines na sa mahigit 10 taon, nakapagbigay inspirasyon na ang EH sa mga indibiduwal, komunidad, negosyo at samahan sa mahigit 180 bansa at teritoryo upang gumawa ng aksiyon para sa kalikasan.

"More recently, EH has focused on raising awareness and inspiring conversations on why nature matters – the movement recognizes (the) role of individuals in creating solutions to the planet's most pressing environmental challenges and harnesses (the) collective power of its millions of supporters to build a sustainable future for all," dagdag pa ng WWF Philippines.

PNA



PTT PAARAL PROGRAM

PTT, DEPED TEAM UP FOR LUZON PUPILS

By **Ronnel W. Domingo**
@RonWDomingoINQ

PTT Philippines Corp. has teamed up with the Department of Education (DepEd) to support with educational materials 10,000 public school children in remote barangays, initially across Luzon.

Dubbed "PTT Paaral Program," the initiative also has the support of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine Air Force, and the local government units.

The Thai firm said the DepEd had so far identified as pilot areas schools in three provinces in the Cordilleras, Central Luzon and Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon).

The oil company, through PTT Philippines Foundation, plans to "adopt" 10,000 elementary pupils from 100 schools nationwide.

The beneficiaries—100 from each school—will receive supplies such as backpacks, notebooks, writing pads, pencils, crayons and slippers.

Also, the schools will get needed supplies such as posters, erasers, marking pens, first aid kits and pre-owned laptops, among others.

In return, the students are required to plant 10 trees each inside their school compound as part of their contribution to environmental protection and preservation.

The first batch of school-beneficiaries being considered include one at the foot of Mt. Pulag in Benguet, another at the foot of Mt. Mariveles in Bataan, and a third at the foot of Mt. Bana-haw in Quezon.

Sukanya Seriyothin, PTT Philippines president and chief executive, said priority would be given to schools in remote barangays.

"Normally, these schools are located in the far-flung areas that are about 2 to 5 kilometers away from the poblacion," Seriyothin said.

The program has a seed fund of P3 million from PTT's Restroom 20 project, which is a donation-type toilet that is being implemented in two PTT stations—the one along Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway and PTT Lucena.

At a suggested donation of P20, donors can use the toilets, which are provided with first-class amenities. The concept follows a similar project that PTT initiated in Thailand. INQ