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IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service

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23 MARCH 2019 DATE

Duterte admin showcases political will anew in Diwalwal massive cleanup drive

MERCURY STOPS RISING IN DIWALWAL



THE relocation area in Sitio Mabatas, Barangay Upper Ulip, Monkayo. MANUEL CAYON

BY MANUEL T. CAYON

DIWALWAL, MONKAYO, Compostela Valley—The Duterte administration's clean-up drive covering massive areas—with Boracay and Manila Bay as the prime examples—has reached Mindanao, after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) served the final cease-and-desist order (CDO) to small miners in the Diwalwal gold rush site.



SOLDIERS were tapped to secure the residential and mining site and to provide security to the enforcement teams headed by environment and natural resources officers. MANUEL CAYON

This is another testament to the government's political will, as like in the other ambitious clean-ups, to be affected are thousands of miners and their families, plus their "influential" backers.

The DENR and its concerned units are saving the waterways around the area from further mercury contamination due to the decades of small-scale mining in Diwalwal that was often marred with violence. This, to date, is the biggest clean-up drive in Mindanao by Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, DENR Assistant Secretary Ruth M. Tawantawan said.

The move has been set in motion last week after both DENR field officers and local government officials served with finality the CDO that bans any further processing of gold ores near canals and rivers, and inside residential areas in Diwalwal.

Going, going, gone

AS soon as the last of the 1,797 ball mills, which are used to crush rocks and stones, and the 31 carbon in-pulp (CIP) machines, used to separate the gold from the ore dusts by applying cyanide, has

been removed from the active mining and residential areas of Diwalwal, the dredging of the Naboc River would begin, Tawantawan said.

The river is the main dumping waterway of these processing plants, which throw the mercury- and cyanide-laden water through the several tributary streams at the western slope of Mount Diwata



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mountain range, which straddles the provinces of Compostela Valley and Surigao del Sur.

"The dredging would start immediately, but it would be contracted by private groups via bidding," she said.

"That's the initial discussion, so that it would be fair. Whoever wants to dredge Naboc, anyone who can separate and handle well the mercury, as well as the other minerals, is welcome to bid, Tawantawan added."

It would be conducted "definitely this year," she added.

"Our patience ended [on March 14] and we would be filing charges against those who still resist, because it has been a long time already," she said. The last grace period was given between October last year and March this year.

Every day of violation of the CDO would merit a fine of P200,000.

So far, there were no violent opposition to the teams of provincial and community environment and natural resources officers who served the order between March 15 and March 17 to the 316 owners of the ball mills and CIPs scattered in the various residential areas of Barangay Diwalwal.

The DENR said the dredging and clean-up of the Naboc River is crucial because it goes straight to the Agusan River, the country's third-largest river basin, which drains into an estimated 12,000-square-kilometer area, including the Agusan Marsh, a wild-life sanctuary.

Fewer grumbles

EDGARDO BAYAWA, one of those served with the CDO, pleaded with serving officers from the local Mines and Geosciences Bureau and the Environmental Management Bureau, to allow him 10 more days at most to haul the unprocessed gold lying idle at a small tailings

pond, and to process the rocks that must be crushed and refined at the ball mills.

"It would take one day to crush and pulverize one sack of these rocks," he said.

The serving officers were divided, though, with one assuring him that he could negotiate it with the higher officials.

Another small processor would rather stop his processing activities. "It is difficult to get gold from the ores. These few years, a gram of gold could be extracted from three to four sacks of rock ores. That's how it is getting to be scarce."

A company-sized unit of Army soldiers was tapped to secure the residential and mining site and to provide security to the enforcement teams headed by 11 community environment and natural resources officers (Cenros) and five provincial environment and natural resources officers (Penros).

They would serve the order to the more than 300 operators of 1,797 ball mills and 31 CIPs.

Still unused

THE relocation area has been prepared already in Sitio Mabatas, where a tailings dam was also carved out from within the 60-hectare area, a part of it hedged in by a cemented wall to contain the mines tailings. Additional wall would be constructed atop the existing wall, as the tailings would continue to build up through the years, Tawantawan said.

The Mabatas area is 5 kilometers to the west and down the slope of Barangay Diwalwal.

"The area has been there, ready, but it has not been used," she said.

Last year, lawyer Alberto Sipaco, former regional director of the Commission on Human Rights and currently designated president of the Philippine Mining Development Corp., announced that the civilian infrastructure needed to transfer the processing equipment

and the facilities needed for residential occupancy were already installed.

The relocation in Mabatas is intended to remove the families from shanties perched atop the slopes with tension cracks developing underneath, although the main goal is to bring the processing mills away from the rivulets and streams that feed into the Naboc River, a tributary of the Agusan River.

The heavy contamination by mercury of the Naboc River eventually found significant traces into the Davao Gulf in the 1990s, and forced the government to clamp down on the wanton use of mercury and cyanide.

Toward the end of the 1990s and way into the decade of the 2000s, the Mabatas site was ignored, as miners and barangay officials argued that government has not constructed the necessary structures, like a tailings dam, and basic infrastructure for civilian occupancy.

The order to relocate the residents and the processing machines to Mabatas began a few years immediately after the government took over the small-scale mining operation in the 729-hectare Diwalwal mines in 2002. The National Task Force Diwalwal soon subdivided the scattered and violence-wracked control of the tunnels into cooperatives.

Malacañang also established here the offices of its corporate arm on mining, the Philippine Mining Development Corp., and the DENR's corporate arm, the Natural Resources Development Corp.

Compliance

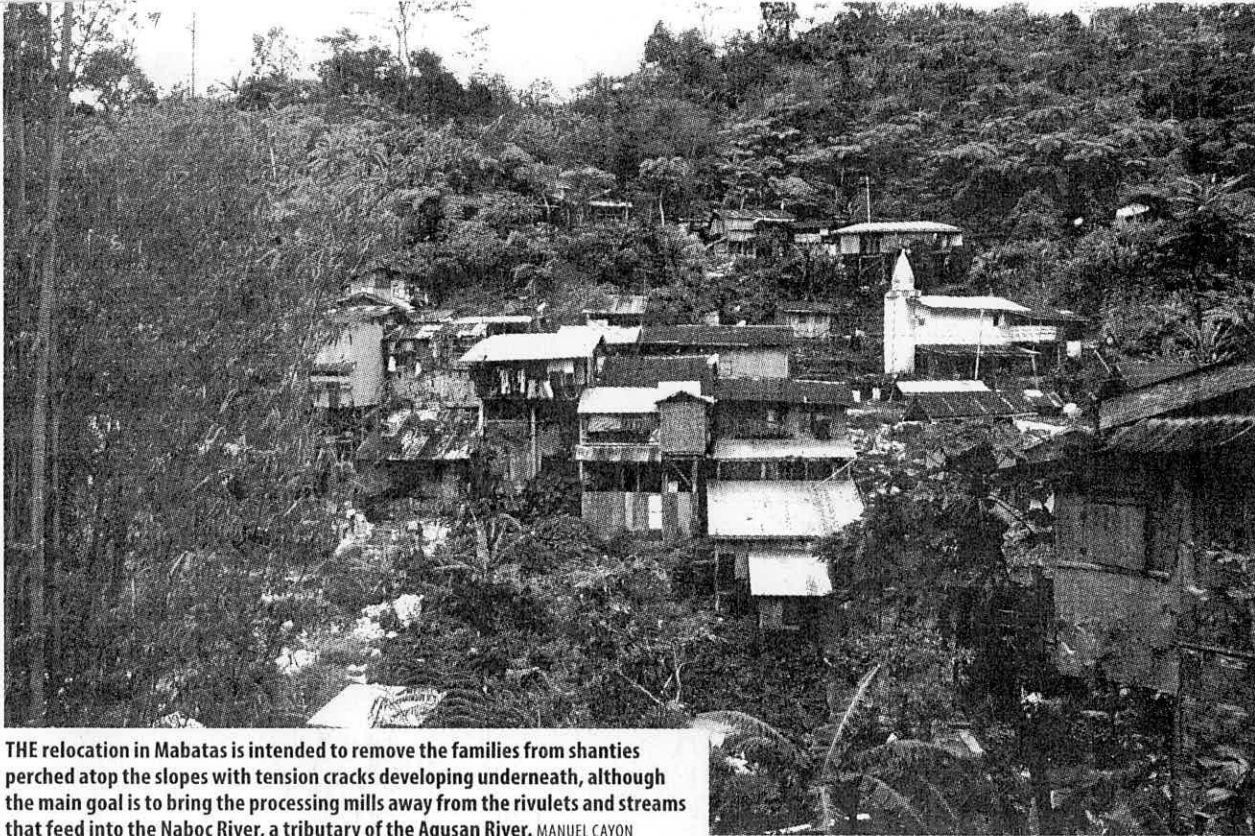
"THE mining operators have no other recourse but to comply," Barangay Captain Pedro Samillano said.

The miners, he added, apparently held on to last-minute hope, as in the previous attempts, that the order would not be served. "They called me up or sent text messages telling me that the DENR

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has arrived in the area. They asked me what to do”.

“Of course, I told them to comply,” he said.

Tawantawan said it was different now. “It is the political will of the President that spelled the difference. It must be implemented and we made it clear that we now have to enforce it”.

Mining officials also said in their speeches shortly before going up to Mount Diwalwal that they would not like to wait for the third State of the Nation Address of President Duterte to call their attention to the mercury contamination in the area.

The DENR said in its briefer that the rehabilitation of the Naboc River “is one of the priorities of DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu.”

Cimatu and Gov. Jayvee Tyron

Uy did not attend the send-off program down in Monkayo poblacion. The Uys own then one of the five major tunnel portals in Diwalwal.

The DENR said, however, that the Uys and owners of the other portals have yielded to the government’s relocation program and cleanup of the Naboc River.

Samillano said the national government must also do its share to help these people who would be displaced.

“About 70 percent of the Diwalwal residents and miners would be definitely affected with the sudden shutdown of the 1,797 ball mills and CIPs,” he said.

Diwalwal has a population of 10,400 and the barangay government still depends largely on internal revenue allotment, which reached P10 million last year. It earns about

P1 million a year, “but not on the share of these gold extracted from the mines, but from building permits and business taxes.”

He said the displacement’s effect would be hardest in the next three months. “With nothing to find work, or any source of income, these people would starve,” Samillano warned.

“Diwalwal would comply with this enforcement, but the government should also help because the people going hungry would be forced to take action.”

Monkayo Mayor Ramil Gentugaya also aired the same warning. He said the local municipal government would help the DENR and the national government enforce the regulations, “but we also appeal to the DENR: Please, no to large-scale mining.”



DENR to villagers: Avoid forest fire triggers

By **MIKE U. CRISMUNDO**

BUTUAN CITY – The regional office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Thursday called on the public to avoid anything that could start fire in the different mountain slopes in the five provinces in Northeastern Mindanao or Caraga region.

The DENR Caraga Region 13 also asked local officials to help especially now that thousands of hectares of tree plantation areas are sprouting in the different areas in the region.

“Please help us and let us not start any fire in the mountains because it is indeed difficult to contain fire in this kind of El Niño weather disturbance,” said DENR 13 Regional Executive Director (RED) Atty. Felix S. Alicer.

“We have been able to gradually bring back the good condition of our mountains through our massive and continuing tree-planting and protection program. Thus, let us protect it,” he said.

Triggers of forest fires could include indiscriminate throwing of cigarette

butts, burning of trash, and “kaingin” or slash and burn farming. “These must be avoided,” stressed Alicer.

The DENR Caraga Region 13 is raising awareness on forest protection to also stop timber poaching.

Alicer said the agency stepped up forest protection efforts in time for the global celebration of International Day of the Forests (IDF) last March 21.

The DENR’s forest protection activities all relate to the objectives of the celebration of IDF, which is to raise awareness on how sustainably managed forests contribute to a healthy environment.

Forests secure the soil and water resources, mitigate climate change, provide habitat for animals, and livelihood for human.

Alicer ordered all PENROs and CENROs spread in the different areas in the region to step up massive information, education and communication drives, strictly monitor timber poaching activities in their assigned areas, and closely coordinate with apprehending authorities for the conduct of anti-timber poaching operations.



Align mining rules to boost economy, think tank urges

The Philippines is losing billions of dollars in potential mining investments because of the policy stalemate plaguing the industry, according to an independent think tank.

Dindo Manhit, president of Stratbase ADR Institute, said while countries such as Australia and Indonesia managed to develop their mineral endowments as a strategic pillar of their economies, the Philippine mining industry has become stagnant, following the issuance of Executive Order 79 and DENR Administrative Order (DAO) 2017-10 on April 27, 2017 which effectively banned open pit mining.

"Our ability to efficiently and sustainably harvest the country's mineral wealth potential, estimated to be worth more than a trillion dollars, just sitting underground and basically untapped, has been mired in prolonged legal and regulatory challenges," Manhit said during the Stratbase ADR Institute's "Roundtable Discussion on the Open Pit Mining Ban" organized in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Philippine Business for Environmental Steward-

ship (PBEST).

"To put in perspective just how much opportunity we are losing, a 2016 list of just 11 pending projects was estimated to total over \$23 billion in capital investments. Compare this to the official figures of the BSP on our total foreign direct investment from January to November last year which totaled only \$9.06 billion," Manhit said.

"Passing a new mining revenue law now pending in the Senate will resolve the impasse caused by EO 79 and will result in substantial revenue gains needed for President Duterte's vision for economic and infrastructure development," Manhit said.

Chamber of Mines of the Philippines chairman Gerard Brimo said EO 79 which imposed a ban on new mining applications and DAO 2017-10 made mining in the Philippines unattractive to investors.

Brimo identified three open pit projects that are now on hold due to the ban. These include the Tampakan Copper Project, King-king Copper Gold Project, and Silangan Copper and Gold Project which are all located in Mindanao.



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EDITORIAL

Responsible mining

MINING industry leaders would do well to help the government in achieving its economic and environmental agenda as President Duterte fulfills his 2016 poll campaign promises.

This they will do by working closely with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to make sure that laws on sustainable and responsible mining are carried out.

House Speaker Gloria M. Macapagal-Arroyo, a close ally of Malacanang, said the mining sector "can contribute greatly to government revenues, exports, economic growth and job creation."

A former Chief Executive, Speaker Arroyo made the statement during the Philippine Nickel Initiatives Forum held last Tuesday at the Shangrila Towers in Bonifacio Global Center.

She said the industry ought to work closely with the DENR for it to grow even with the strict stance of President Duterte on mining.

Likewise, it is important that the DENR should view itself not just as a regulator but also as a promoter of responsible, world-class, efficient and mining businesses, according to the lady lawmaker.

During the administration of President Duterte, who is very strict about mining, Arroyo said the sector even grew compared to her time.

Speaker Arroyo specifically cited the nickel mining industry which, she said, is very important to the Philippines because the country is the world's second largest supplier of nickel.

As a well-meaning Filipino, we cannot overemphasize the importance of promoting responsible mining if we are to succeed in transforming sleepy mining villages into flourishing communities.

Admittedly, mining has always been a major sector of the still struggling Philippine economy.

What is important is for the country's industry leaders to protect the environment through responsible mining.



Philex starts digging Surigao site

The company said that the impact of typhoons causing power disruptions, paired with lesser operating days due to human resources safety concerns, also resulted in smaller mining operations

By AJ Bajo

Listed firm Philex Mining Corp. is commencing mining operations for Boyongan in 2022, the first

phase of the Silangan mine in Surigao del Norte, in line with an industry effort to make the country a significant copper producer.

Philex said the site indicated

higher mineral resource estimates, including high-grade gold and copper deposits, compared to previously declared levels.

The company will be employing underground sub-level cave mining for ore extraction. Silangan has three deposit areas – Boyongan, Bayugo and Kalayaan, with the latter being a joint venture with Manila Mining Corporation.

Philex will be launching Silangan in four phases, while feasibility studies are expected to be completed in May this year, it said in a filing to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

"We are currently working on securing all requisite permits and approvals to operate Silangan," Philex president and chief executive officer Eulalio Austin Jr. said.

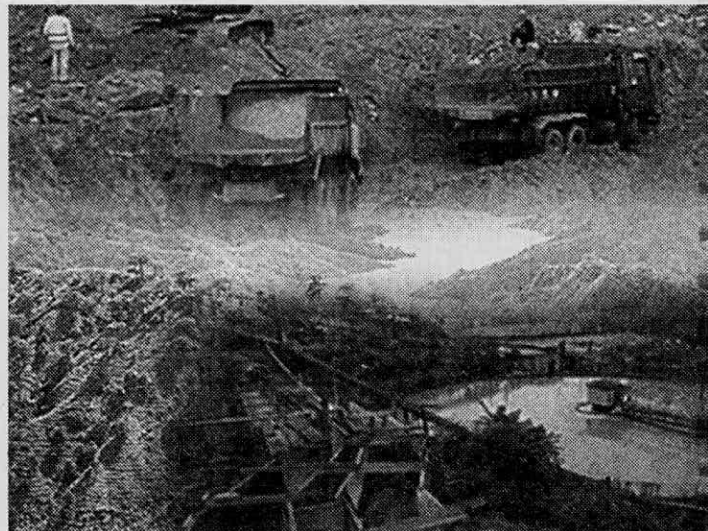
"We look forward to realizing the massive potential of a project of this magnitude."

Seen as one of the three "bigticket" projects that will solidify the country's stand as a major copper producer, Philex is also banking on the site's success to boost its own operations.

Philex's net income dipped to P608 million from P1.66 billion in 2017, owing to the "rising inflation, regulatory hurdles and depleting ore grades."

The company said that it would maximize the cash generation capabilities of its Padcal mine as it moves towards the end of its mine life.

"We are aggressively working on key project requirements in preparation for the eventual transition to Silangan. At the same time, while interim projects remain subdued, we are determined to maximize the remaining mine life of Padcal," Austin said.



MINING is a major contributor to the country's GDP, with minerals and product exports totaling 4 percent of total output.

Total tons milled stood at 8.517 million from 8.673 in 2017. Marginal ore grades contributed to weaker metal output, Philex added.

The company said that the impact of typhoons causing power disruptions, paired with lesser operating days due to human resources safety concerns, also resulted in smaller mining operations.

This led to gold and copper production declining to 61,977 ounces and 26.575 million pounds, compared to 2017's 84,638 ounces

30.118 million pounds, respectively.

Consolidated revenues in 2018 dropped by 16 percent to P7.640 billion from P9.142 billion the prior year owing to lower tonnage across all products.

Philex said that this was partly cushioned by the impact of stable metal prices and favorable exchange rates.

Average realized prices for gold and copper were \$1,294 per ounce and \$2.92 per pound, higher against 2017's \$1,273 per ounce and \$2.96, respectively.



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Heat is on, it's dr

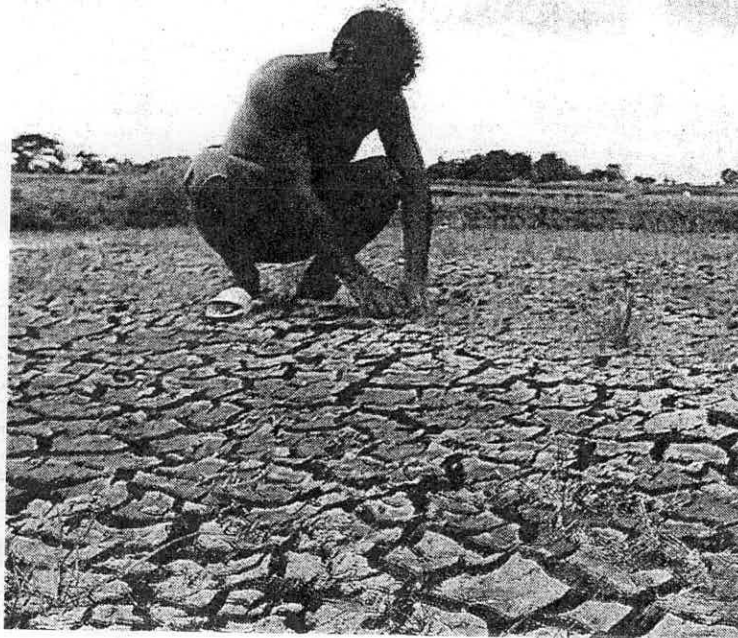
By Rio N. Araja

THE heat is on, officially.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration on Friday declared the termination of the northeast monsoon season or "amihan" and warned that a weak but prolonged El Niño warm weather system will stay until at least August or as long as the first quarter of 2020.

The phenomenon is already proving disastrous to the country, as the Department of Agriculture said earlier in the week that damage to crops had grown from P464.27 million on March 11 to P1.33 billion as of Tuesday, March 19. *Next page*

WEARISOME WEATHER. Looks like a full-fledged El Niño has begun and may last, according to weather forecasters, until August 2020.





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Heat...

From A1

Analiza Solis, the state weather bureau's Climate Information Monitoring and Prediction chief, said the El Niño will continue to be felt in the Philippines past August—not up to June as they earlier reported.

At a news conference at the Science Garden in Quezon City, Solis said the phenomenon will bring about "severe meteorological impact" up to the end of April in many parts of the country.

At least 61 percent of the country, including Metro Manila, is expected to experience drought, while 39 percent of the country is forecast to feel the long dry spell, she added.

In a Facebook post, the Agriculture department's DRRM Operations Center said drought had claimed 78,348 metric tons of rice and corn, over triple the 22,918 MT of rice and corn posted in the previous week.

Rice took the biggest hit with production losses of P814.4 million or 41,003 MT, while corn suffered P512.3 million in losses or 37,344 MT.

Drought-ridden agricultural lands also grew from 13,679 hectares to 70,353 ha, affecting 84,932 farmers and fisherfolk—or five times as many workers hit in the previous week.

Northern Mindanao has been bearing

the brunt of El Niño, according to the DA report.

This was after PAGASA Administrator Vicente Malano declared the start of the dry season with the termination of the "amihan" monsoon.

"With this development, the day-to-day weather across the country will gradually become warmer, though isolated thunderstorms are also likely to occur," he said.

Dr. Flaviana Hilario, the weather bureau's acting deputy administrator for research and development, said the dry season will be longer due to El Niño, therefore Filipinos should "expect a delay in the onset of the rainy season."

According to Solis, apart from Metro Manila, areas to experience drought by the end of April are Pangasinan, Bataan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Zambales, Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Quezon, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Romblon, Albay, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate and Sorsogon in Luzon.

PAGASA said these areas must brace for drought until the end of May.

In the Visayas, Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Siquijor, Biliran, Eastern Samar, Leyte, Northern Samar and Samar (Western Samar) will also experience drought as well as Mindanao's Misamis Occidental and Dinagat Islands, Solis said.

She added 37 percent of the country

will likely experience drought and 4 percent a dry spell by end of May.

Drought will affect only 19 percent of the country—Metro Manila, Pangasinan, Bataan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Zambales, Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro and Masbate—in June, she cited.

Drought will also distress Antique, Biliran, Northern Samar and Samar (Western Samar) in June, but will spare Mindanao, the weather bureau added.

Most dams and lakes in April "will possibly experience way below to below normal" rainfall conditions, while generally below to near normal rainfall conditions is likely during the rest of the forecast period, Malano said.

Despite the presence of El Niño, a low pressure area outside the Philippine Area of Responsibility could enter the country and develop into a powerful typhoon with reduced amount of rainfall.

El Niño, the weather bureau said, started to develop during the last quarter of 2018 and is still present in the tropical Pacific Ocean.

"Both oceanic and atmospheric indicators have reached El Niño threshold levels in February. Recent conditions suggest that this phenomenon will likely continue until the April-May-June 2019 season and that varying impacts are now occurring in most areas of the country," the PAGASA El Niño advisory No. 2 stated.



Trusted Since 1898

The Manila Times

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STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

23 MAR 2019

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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

YESTERDAY, March 22, amid the ongoing "artificial water crisis" that affected around 1.2 million residents of Metro Manila, we celebrated World Water Day. This year's theme is "Leaving No One Behind," an adaptation of the central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — as sustainable development progresses, everyone must benefit.

According to United Nations (UN) Water, we must focus our efforts towards including people who have been marginalized or ignored. Water services must meet the needs of marginalized groups — women, children, refugees, indigenous peoples, disabled people and many others — and their voices must be heard in decision-making processes. Regulatory and legal frameworks must recognize the right to water for all people, and sufficient funding must be fairly and effectively targeted at those who need it most.

Since the start of the year, I have been involved in four local and international conferences: Efficient 2019 10th International Water Association (IWA) Conference on Effective Urban Water Management with the theme "Water Efficiency — Driving Sustainable Development" and the International Workshop for Sanitation Value Chain with the theme "Social Acceptance of New Technology," both held in January; and the Philippine Association of Water Districts (PAWD) 40th National Convention with the theme "Water Districts: Addressing Challenges Through Innovations," and the 2019 Student Leadership Conference on Development at the United



ALL ABOUT CHOICES

LUDWIG O. FEDERIGAN

Nations with the theme "Ensuring Safe, Sufficient, and Accessible Water and Sanitation for All," both held last month. All focused on water-related issues where I had the opportunity to deliver presentations in three of these events.

In these events, I was deeply involved with the 2019 Student Leadership Conference on Development at the UN where our organization, the Young Environmental Forum, had the privilege of sending 43 young leaders as delegates representing the 23 educational institutions namely: Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology, Bicol University-Tabaco Campus, Bulacan State University, Cavite State University, College of the Immaculate Conception, Dr. Jose P. Rizal Senior High School, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Philippine Normal University-Manila, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, National University-Nazareth School, Talugug National High School Annex-Saverona, University of Caloocan City, University of Makati, University of the Philippines-Baguio, University of the Philippines-Los Baños, University of Santo Tomas, ACLC of Tacloban City, Eastern Visayas State University, Visayas State University, West Visayas State University, Sultan Kudarat State University, University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines, and University of Southern Mindanao.

Three weeks prior to the event

after all the delegates were selected, we held virtual meetings that lasted until midnight where the delegates discussed and drafted their well-thought resolutions. I find this an opportune time to share with you seven resolutions finalized by our 43 young leaders on three subthemes, namely:

On Water and Sanitation Resource Management and Innovation

Under the subtheme "Water and sanitation resource management and innovation" led by Anne Louise Toleza (Bulacan State University) and Jefferson Estela (Polytechnic University of the Philippines), three resolutions were prepared and presented:

Urging the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to mainstream the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) and Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM) in the formulation of the Integrated Water Quality Management Framework and Water Quality Management Area Plan.

Encouraging the DENR and NWRB in partnership with the local government units (LGUs) and other concerned agencies and stakeholders to strengthen the policies and intensify actions addressing water issues, and the right to water, its sufficiency, safety, accessibility and affordability as recognized by the UN.

Urging NWRB to nationally device the Integrated 3D Geographic Information Systems (GIS)-based Water Resources Management Information System to be piloted by the Korea International Cooperation Agency in the provinces of

Bulacan and Pampanga.

On water sanitation and infrastructure

Under the subtheme "Water sanitation and infrastructure" led by Mary Grace Garingo (Sultan Kudarat State University) and Jay-Ar Catabona (Talugug National High School Annex-Saverona), a resolution was prepared and presented:

Urging all national government agencies whose main responsibility are in water to provide the public a current situationer and the challenges of our water sanitation and infrastructure that will eventually pose a problem to the entire society.

On water pollution

Under the subtheme "Water pollution," led by Aldwin Silfavan (West Visayas State University) and Raymark Paul Rigor (University of the Philippines-Baguio), three resolutions were prepared and presented:

Urging the government to strengthen environmental compliance under Presidential Declaration 1586, where every project have to comply with the Philippine Environmental Impact Statement System and secure the corresponding Environmental Compliance Certificate or Certificate of Non-Coverage in order to mitigate the negative effects of contamination; the DENR, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Department of Education (DepEd), in partnership with nongovernment organizations (NGOs) to conduct environmental awareness campaign and forums in order to inculcate consciousness to the Filipinos such as the youth sector and business establishments; and

all LGUs to implement proper urban and land use planning and to educate and enlighten our people in rural and urban areas on the negative impacts of groundwater contamination to health.

Urging government agencies such as the DENR and DepEd to conduct seminar-workshops and intensive awareness campaigns on solid waste management and by incorporating these topics in the Youth Development Sessions and Family Development Sessions of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) under the Department of Social Welfare and Development; the LGUs to participate in symposiums in the local, regional, and national levels to gain organizational capacities and professional knowledge on solid waste management and to adhere to the 10-year Solid Waste Management Plan as stipulated under Republic Act 9003 and to immediately implement an action plan that will monitor proper collection and disposal of solid waste, and partner with the student body organizations in both in public and private schools so as with the private sector in order to raise the awareness on solid waste management; politicians in all levels of government to pay attention and give high priority to solid waste management by creating technical working groups that will monitor and implement local activities in mitigating solid waste that results into lesser water pollution; and entertainment and social media networks to publicize ads, campaigns, commercials, and other means of education and information dissemination to ensure effective awareness.

Urging government bodies such as the DENR-Environmental Management Bureau and Fertil-

izer and Pesticide Authority to provide countermeasures and mitigate the proliferation and effects of agrochemicals to the bodies of water; encouraging government bodies such as the DENR, DepEd and Department of Agriculture to conduct seminar-workshops and intensive environmental awareness campaigns and fora to instill mindfulness to the Filipino people especially to those people in the farming industry and agricultural community; and the LGUs to immediately implement an action plan that will monitor the contribution of agrochemical wastes to water pollution and educate our people on its hazards.

In his inspirational message, Climate Change Commission Emmanuel de Guzman, said: "With the synergies that we are continuing to build, I am confident that we can collectively step up our game. We can collectively find newer, more efficient, more creative, more united pathways for climate action. And with a single resounding voice, we will continue to champion our cause within government and beyond."

We ended the conference with a greeting "Tashi Deley." It is a Tibetan greeting that means: "I honor the greatness in you! I honor the place in your heart where lives your courage, honor, love, hope and dreams."

I will deliver a presentation on "Diminish Plastic" on March 27 during the launch of the Hotel and Restaurant Management Society Movement for Environmental Sustainability at the University of Santo Tomas.



Regulatory body for water pushed

Gov't agencies cite need for single point of accountability

By Ronnel W. Domingo
@RonWDomingoINQ

Officials of the National Economic and Development Authority and the National Water Resources Board along with private-sector consultants called on Congress to create an administrative and a regulatory body responsible for nationwide water concerns.

Neda Assistant Secretary Roderick Planta said the push for the creation of a Department of Water as well as a Water Regulatory Commission was a product of consensus among various national agencies.

"We've been advocating for this for the longest time," Planta said in a press briefing. "We have presented this to so many fora and we have recommended this to the Office of the President for endorsement as a priority legislative measure."

He said having these two bodies was critical to our use and management of our water resources and was as necessary as having a Department of Energy and an Energy Regulatory Commission when it came to electricity.

"There are so many agencies—32 in all—involved in water and there is no single point of accountability," Planta said. "There are overlapping mandates, which will just lead to inefficient use of water resources."

He said that on the regulation of water services, there were also many entities involved such as the NWRB itself as well as the Local Water Utilities Administration, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System-Regulatory Office, the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority and the Bases Conversion and Development Authority.

NWRB executive director Sevillo David said the need for such agencies was made more urgent by the fact that the Philippines has been experiencing water stress for the past several years.

"The international benchmark is that a country should have water supply of at least 1,700 cubic meters per person per year," David said. "Our per capita supply is below that at 1,446 cubic meters per year."

David said the National

Capital Region and Calabarzon region—which includes Rizal and Cavite, both parts of the MWSS east zone concession—were the most water-stressed areas with water availability of no more than 500 cubic meter per person per year. Such a volume is categorized as "absolute scarcity."

Ramon Alikpala, former chair of MWSS and former executive director of NWRB, said that while there was fragmented regulatory framework, water supply and sanitation was not a priority of local chief executives.

Alikpala, who now runs his own consultancy firm Futurewater Asia, also lamented that water was used as a political commodity.

"There are conflicts between local government units and their water districts," he said. "And consumers are caught in the middle of opposing governors and mayors, who appoint unqualified water district members."

Alikpala's support for a national department and regulator for water supply and sanitation was echoed by former agriculture secretary William

Dar—who is now president of the advocacy group Inang Lupa—and Christopher Ilagan, president of Philippine Water Partnership, which is also a not-for-profit group.

Alikpala, Dar and Ilagan were among the experts that NWRB tapped to help in extensive workshops and preparations of reports over the past two years, which culminated in the National Water Summit held in Quezon City on Thursday.

Former environment secretary Elisea Gozun, who facilitated the summit, noted that the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 states that the primary strategy for the water sector is to address the governance and to create that apex water body, referring to the department.

"And when Pagasa raises the El Niño alert, who (which agency) is supposed to prepare the plans to mitigate the effects," Gozun said. "The responses would be disparate, unlike when we prepare for an electricity crisis, the DOE is mobilized and there is clearly a focal entity." INQ



Kaliwa dam project questioned at SC

**By Melvin Gascon
and Julie M. Aurelio**
@Team_Inquirer

Human rights lawyer Neri Colmenares on Friday said that with the release of the official contracts, he would file a petition in the Supreme Court to question the China-funded Kaliwa Dam project which he claimed was laden with terms detrimental to the Filipino people.

The Bayan Muna chair and Makabayan senatorial bet said published documents of the loan agreement for the construction of the dam project follow the same pattern of "onerous" provisions similar to the Chico River project, another

China-funded venture.

"The conditions have been dictated by China, from the interest rates, choice of contractor and workers, an affirmation by the (Department of Justice) secretary on the legality of the loan, confidentiality of the terms of the agreement, and in case of default, China can take over a property of the Philippines in exchange," he said.

'Detrimental to country'

"The (Department of Finance) was forced to release the documents after our exposé that the loan agreement for the Chico River project was detrimental to the country, but a perusal of the agreement for the Kaliwa Dam

only proves what we have been pointing out all along," he said.

According to the website of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), the proposed P18.7-billion New Centennial Water Source Project is meant "to provide water security, reliability and additional supply for Metro Manila."

The loan agreement was supposedly signed during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping in November 2018.

But according to Colmenares, the 25-page "preferential buyer's credit loan agreement" between MWSS and the Export-Import Bank of China is "as onerous" as the loan contract for the P3.2-billion Chico

River Pump Irrigation Project in Kalinga province.

Under the Kaliwa Dam loan agreement, the government supposedly preselected the designated contractor for the dam project—China Energy Engineering Corp., according to Colmenares.

Constitutional violation

"This is a violation of our procurement laws, as well as violation of the Constitution that mandates a preference for Filipino contractors and workers who are equally if not more than qualified," the former lawmaker said.

The Philippine government also "surrendered" the choice of

applicable law and the venue for disputes in favor of China, Colmenares said.

"We dare President Duterte to order the immediate release of all the China loan documents to the public. If not, then they are indeed hiding something and they are fooling the Filipino people," Colmenares said.

But Malacañang said it was open to publicly disclosing the documents related to Kaliwa Dam project as long as it was not covered by any restrictions in the Freedom of Information (FOI) rules.

Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea said the Duterte administration was committed to promoting trans-

parency in government as long as FOI rules allow the release of the documents.

FOI invoked

"This administration early on has made it clear that it will be transparent," Medialdea said in a text message to reporters.

Medialdea made the remarks after lawyer and opposition senatorial candidate Chel Diokno, representing some groups, sent letters to Medialdea and Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. to request official documents related to the project.

Diokno invoked the FOI, saying he wants to check if there are "onerous" provisions in the China-funded proposal. INQ



letters

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water for all

In observance of World Water Day, March 22, Senator Loren Legarda supported the global call to ensure availability and the sustainable management of water to provide for current consumption and conserve for future generations.

This year's celebration carries the theme "Leaving No One Behind," which recognizes the human right entitling everyone, without discrimination, to sufficient, safe, acceptable, accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic use.

"Having safe water means we secure public health. With people dying due to unsafe water and poor sanitation, as well as being displaced or forced to relocate in areas with safe water, we must ensure we afford every human being their basic right to access safe water," Legarda said.

Senator Legarda also expressed, in

light of the water supply shortage in Metro Manila, that authorities must take necessary measures to adapt to climate change impacts, such as increasing temperatures, sea level rise, and changes in rainfall pattern, which could further intensify the effects of El Niño and jeopardize the long-term water supply in the country.

She also reiterated the call for households, offices, businesses, and industries to use water more wisely and recycle used water, as we are already experiencing weak El Niño conditions wherein rainfall is below normal or scarce.

Legarda said that PAGASA confirmed that 2019 is set to be the warmest year on record due to El Niño, which could affect provinces with dry condition (two consecutive months of below normal rainfall conditions or 21-60% reduction), dry spell (three consecutive

months of below normal or two consecutive months of way below normal rainfall conditions or more than 60% reduction), and drought (three consecutive months of way below normal or five consecutive months of below normal rainfall conditions), from March until June this year.

"We must treat this issue as a climate change concern and not just a water supply issue. The El Niño phenomenon is a natural process, but its varying effects are compounded by climate change," Legarda said.

"The La Mesa Dam breaching critical level, the lowest in years, and the dry climate outlook for most of our provinces in light of the weak El Niño and climate change should serve as a reminder for all of us to use our water resources more sustainably, also as a means to protect public health, food security, and ecosystems," Legarda emphasized. - Office of Senator Loren Legarda



Kontrata sa Kaliwa Dam project handang isapubliko ng Palasyo

Nakahanda ang Malacañang na isapubliko ang mga dokumento sa Kaliwa Dam project basta naaayon sa panuntunan ng Freedom of Information o FOI.

Ito ang inihayag ni Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea kasunod ng panawagan ng ilang grupo na isapubliko ng gobyerno ang kasunduang pinasok sa China kaugnay sa nabanggit na proyekto.

Ayon kay Medialdea, may polisiya ang

Duterte administration na maging transparent sa lahat ng mga transaksyon sa gobyerno at susunod sila sa panuntunan ng FOI.

"This administration early on has made it clear that it will be transparent. We will abide by the FOI rules in place. I don't think it is a matter of discretion if the document is covered by the FOI and the procedure is followed," ani Medialdea.

Marami agad ang nagduda sa Kaliwa Dam

project na ang China ang gagawa kaya nais ng ilang grupo na makita ang kontrata o kasunduan para matiyak na hindi madedehado ang bansa at magiging paborable ang proyekto para sa mga Pilipino.

Nabuhay ang usapin sa Kaliwa Dam project makaraang dumanas ng kakapusan ng supply ng tubig ang maraming lugar sa Metro Manila na sineserbisyuhan ng water concessionaire na Manila Water. **(Aileen Taliping)**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



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7 LALAKI SANGKOT SA ILLEGAL QUARRYING SA BULACAN DINAKIP NG NBI

BULACAN – INARESTO ng mga tauhan ng National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) ang pitong kalalakihan na sina Simeon Francisco De Mesa, Jose Genaro Limlengco Catolico, Conrado Flores Sarmiento, Jayson Cadawan Dumlaog, Narciso Nepalea Alcesto, Jr., Rommel Malab Tulayao at Ronnel Cardeno Zacarias na pawang sangkot sa illegal quarrying sa bayan ng Angat.

Ayon sa NBI Environmental Division nagugat ang pag aresto mga

suspek sa reklamo ng isang complainant, laban sa isang Lito Mariano, opisyal ng barangay na umano'y sangkot sa illegal quarrying sa Brgy. Encanto at Brgy. Banaban sa nabanggit na bayan.

Ayon kay Atty. Czar Nuqui, ang pinuno ng Environmental Crime Division (ECD) ng NBI, una na silang nakatanggap ng impormasyon kaugnay sa malaking illegal quarrying site.

Kasama ng NBI ang ilang tauhan ng Mines and Geosciences Bureau ng DENR, sa inilatag

na entrapment operation at nagpanggap na buyer ang isa nilang ahente sa illegal quarrying site.

Kung saan tinatanggap nang isa sa mga trabahador ng quarrying site ang halagang P5 libong piso para sa bini-biling panambak.

Ang quarrying ay napatunayan ng NBI na walang permit mula sa DENR at tanging special permit lamang na inisyu ng Bulacan Environment and Natural Resources na pirmado ni Gobernador Wilhelmino Alvarado.

Nilinaw ng NBI

na depektibo ang naturang permit dahil hindi umano ito dumaan sa Promining Regulatory Board (PRB).

Aabot naman sa higit P7 milyong piso ang halaga ng mga kinumpiska na heavy equipments.

Kasong paglabag sa Section 103 ng Republic Act 7942 ng Philippine Mining act of 1995 na may multa at pagkakakulong na hanggang anim na taon at paglabag sa Republic Act 3019 o Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

THONY ARCENAL



7 huli sa illegal quarrying

Nasakote ng mga ahente ng National Bureau of Investigation ang pitong katao na sangkot sa illegal quarrying sa Bulacan.

Kabilang sa mga naaresto ng NBI-Environmental Crime Division noong Huwebes sa magkahiwalay na lugar sa Encanto, Angat sina Simeon Francisco, Jose Genaro, Conrad Flores, Jayson Caddawan, Narciso Nepales, Rommel Malab, at Ronnel Zaccarias.

Bago ang pagsalakay, nakatanggap umano ng impormasyon ang NBI kaugnay sa ilegal na quarrying sa lugar kaya nagsagawa sila ng surveillance hanggang sa makumpirma ang aktibidad.

Nalaman na dinadala umano ang mga nakukuhang materyal sa Angat-Pandi Road boundary, dalawang kilometro ang layo sa quarrying site.

Kaagad na nakipagkoordinasyon ang NBI sa Mines and Geosciences Bureau, na nagresulta ng operasyon.

Nagpakita ng dokumento ang mga suspek na inisyu ng provincial government, pero sinabi ng NBI at MGB na ilegal ang kanilang mga dokumento.

Sinampahan ng kasong paglabag sa Philippine mining act of 1995 ang mga suspek. (**Juliet de Loza-Cudia**)



659 kilo ng basura nasamsam sa Marinduque river

Aabot sa 659 kilo ng basura ang nakuha ng mga residente sa Boac, Marinduque na na-kiisa sa ginawang paglilinis sa ilog kasabay ng paggunita sa World Water Day.

Isinagawa ang paglilinis noong Biyernes nang umaga, dalawang araw bago ang ika-23 anibersaryo ng Marcopper

Mining Disaster.

Eksaktong alas-sais nang umaga ay nagsimulang maglinis ang higit dalawang libong mga residente, empleyado ng pamahalaan at mga non-government organization.

Nilinis ng mga dumalo ang kahabaan ng 27 kilometrong

Boac River na nasasakupan ng 26 barangay.

Matatandaang ang Boac River ang isa sa pinakanaapektuhan ng Marcopper Mining Disaster noong March 24, 1996 matapos masira ang tunnel ng Marcopper Mining Corporation at kumalat ang mapanganib na kemikal.



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Makiisa sa Earth Hour

Umapela kahapon si Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle sa publiko na saglit na pagpahingahin ang kalikasan sa pakikiisa sa Earth Day 2019 sa Marso 30.

Naniniwala si Tagle na sa pamamagitan ng sabayang pagpapatay ng appliances na de-kuryente sa loob ng isang oras ay tatagal ang buhay ng kalikasan, na para rin naman sa kapakanan ng mamamayan.

Ayon kay Tagle, ang Earth Hour ay idaraos simula 8:30 ng gabi hanggang 9:30 ng gabi sa Marso 30, Sabado.

Sa loob ng naturang isang oras, hinihikayat ang publiko na patayin muna ang kanilang mga ilaw at appliances.

"Mga Kapanalig, ito po si Cardinal Chito Tagle ng Archdiocese of Manila, inaanyayahan ko po kayo na makilahok sa Earth Hour 2019. Ito po ay sa March 30 mula alas 8:30 ng gabi, one hour hanggang 9:30 ng gabi," panawagan ng Cardinal sa panayam ng Radyo Veritas.

"Anong gagawin natin nun?

Medyo patayin muna natin ang mga appliances at mga gamit na may kuryente para pagpahingahin muna natin ang kalikasan. Ang atin pong kalikasan na makapagpapahinga ay magtatagal ang buhay para naman ang ating buhay ay sumagana.

"Sige po simple lang ito, Earth Hour March 30, 8:30 hanggang 9:30 ng gabi."

Ganito rin ang apela ni San Fernando, La Union Bishop Daniel Presto, sinabing dapat na isabuhay ng mga mananampalataya ang adbokasiya at pag-uugaling nais ituro sa mga tao ng Earth Hour.

"Sa little practice na ito ng Earth Hour ay mag-iiba ng attitude sa atin sa mga maliliit na bagay na puwede nating ma-practice sa ating tahanan, office, school, kung saan ay puwede nating mabawasan ang konsumo ng kuryente," ani Presto.

Inisyatibo ng international organization na World Wide Fund for Nature, ang Earth Hour ay taunang isinasagawa sa mundo, simula noong 2007.

Mary Ann Santiago



SABADO, MARSO 23, 2019

BALITA

Sagipin ang kalikasan sa Earth Day Run

PLASTIK o malinis na planeta?

Hindi na kailangan ang mahabang oras para pag-isipan ang kasagutan.

Sa Abril 14 sa MOA ground, muling ilalarga ng National Geographic ang makabuluhang Earth Day Run bilang bahagi ng pagdiwang ng Earth Day at kampanya para labanan ang anumang uri ng polusyon na nakasisira sa Inang Kalikasan.

Ang taunang patakbo naglalayon na pataasin ang kaalaman ng sambayanan sa masamang epekto na idinudulot ng labis at walang katuturang paggamit ng plastic.

Bawat isa ay may katungkulan para mapangalagaan ang kalikasan. Ang inaanyayahan ang lahat, sports enthusiast at running buff na makilahok sa National Geographic's Earth Day run sa pamamagitan ng pagbisita sa www.natgeoearthdayrun.com para sa karagdagan

kaalaman.

Sa pagtataguyod ng Immunomax, inaasahang sasabak sa ika-10 edisyon ng Earth Day Run ang kabuuang 15,000 running enthusiasts na sasabak sa kategorya na 3K, 5K, 10K at 21K.

"We are proud of how Earth Day Run has played a vital role in bringing awareness to environmental issues in the country. Now on our 10th year, we are excited to once again share everyone's passion in caring for one's self and the environment as we run together for the planet. With this year's theme Planet or Plastic, we aim to raise awareness on the effects of single-use plastic and how important it is to take action today. It is our goal to make Earth Day Run a change driver with how people live their lives. By being more conscious of our actions and the footprint we leave behind, we re-commit and strengthen our promise to

help and protect our planet," pahayag ni Charo Espedido, Director at Head of Marketing ng FOX Networks Group Philippines.

Makasaysayan ang paglulunsad ng Earth Day Run 2019 bunsod nang pagbibigay ng kahalagan sa pagiwas sa paggamit ng plastic.

Batay sa pag-aaral may 9 milyon tonelada ng iba't ibang uri ng plastic ang naitatapon sa karagatan at lahat ng anyong tubig sa bansa na nagdudulot ng kasiraan sa tanging yaman ng ban.

Sa isa pang pananaliksik, umaabot sa 450 taon ang mga plastic sa karagatan at iba pang anyong tubig.

Target ng NatGeo na mapigil ang pagdumi ng karagatan dahil sa walang habas na pagtatapon ng mga basura at plastic na umaabot na sa mga baybayin ng karagatan sa bansa.



Duterte signs EO banning junkets for gov't workers

President Duterte has prohibited government officials and employees from taking "travel junkets" and adjusted the rates and allowances for their official foreign and local trips, among others, based on his latest directive.

The President issued Executive Order No. 77 prescribing the new rules and regulations and rates of expenses and allowances for official local and foreign travels of government personnel.

The modified travel regulations and allowances was made upon the recommendation of the Travel Rates Committee following a review of "outdated" travel rates. The President's latest order sought to ensure the new travel rates are "fairly reasonable, cost effective, and within financial capability of

the government."

"All forms of travel junkets shall be strictly prohibited," Duterte said in the order. "The conduct of strategic planning workshops or team building activities abroad shall not be allowed," he added.

The authorized official local or foreign travels will cover those essential to the effective performance of an official or employee's mandates or functions; required to meet the needs of the concerned department or office or "there is a substantial benefit derived by the State;" the presence of the government personnel is critical to the outcome of the meeting, conference, or consultation; and the projected expenses are not excessive or involve minimum expenditure.

The President also "highly" dis-

couraged government personnel from taking a personal leave immediately before or after the official activity. "If travel circumstances such as the nature of activity, purpose, and itinerary, indicate the trip is mainly intended for personal purposes, no part thereof shall be considered as official," he said.

The President asked officials authorized to approve local or foreign travels to minimize travel cost "as far as practicable."

Teleconferencing, videoconferencing, submission of briefs and position papers, and other forms of communications must be explored as alternatives to travel provided they do not compromise national security and confidentiality of official communications. **(Genalyn Kabiling)**



Junkets junked

Filing and taking of personal leaves right before or after an official trip is highly discouraged

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March, enumerates the disallowed travels and the limits on expenses and allowances for trips of government personnel.

Duterte has publicly expressed his distaste for junkets and even fired government officials for allegedly going on excessive trips abroad.

"All forms of junket shall be strictly prohibited. The conduct of strategic planning workshops or team building activities abroad shall not be allowed," Section 19 of the order reads.

"Outdated rates of travel expenses, varying regional differences on local travel costs and other economic and fiscal considerations warrant the review of current rates of expenses and allowances on official travels," the EO added.

The order reminded public workers that any official local and foreign travel should be "fairly reasonable, cost-effective and within the financial capability of the government."

It also stated that filing and taking of personal leaves right before or after an official trip is "highly discouraged" as "this is often used for pleasure and not official business."

EO 77 is in line with a previous memorandum issued on 3 January 2018 stating the guidelines for trips of government officials and personnel.

It was on 19 May 2016, meanwhile, when Mr. Duterte, then president-elect, announced he will scrap the practice of holding "seminars" and sending employees or local government officials to international study trips as these are just a waste of public funds.

The conduct of strategic planning workshops or team-building activities abroad shall not be allowed.

Trips that are allowed under the order are international conferences or meetings which the government has committed to or official missions and assignments which cannot be assigned to officials abroad; scholarships, fellowships, trainings, and studies abroad which are funded by grants or undertaken at a minimal cost by government agencies and speaking engagements or receiving of awards from foreign governments and institutions or international agencies and organizations.

The President also required personnel of agencies to seek approval from their superior for local and foreign travels.

Meanwhile, the Office of the President needs to green-light foreign trips of department secretaries, chairs and members of governing boards and chief executive officers of government corporations and government financial institutions and agencies attached to the office.

Essential travel only

The EO said travel will be considered official if it is essential to the effective performance of an official or employee's mandates or functions; it is required to meet the needs of the department, agency, bureau or office, or there is substantial benefit to be derived by the State; the presence of the official or employee is critical to the outcome of the meeting, conference, seminar, consultation or any official activity to be attended and the projected expenses are not excessive.

The order also encourages other options to minimize travel costs such as video calls and the submission of briefs or position papers instead of actual travel.

A cap on the expenses for local and foreign travels of all government workers and officials from P1,500 to P2,200 a day was also provided under the EO.

For travels abroad, government officials and workers are also allowed to spend up to P3,500 for pre-departure expenses, including the taxi fare, passport processing, immunization and medical laboratory fees, photographs, portage and airport terminal fees.

They are also allowed to seek reimbursement of airport terminal fees upon their return to the country.

Most government workers could only take economy class on trips abroad, if the host country will not provide them with transportation. However, department secretaries, undersecretaries, assistant secretaries and those of equivalent ranks who are traveling on flights for more than four hours can take business class upon approval of the Office of the President, it added.

Travel to countries during the summer and spring seasons will mean \$200 in clothing allowance for staying in a country for one to three months, while \$300 is permitted for a three- to six-month stay and \$400 for more than six months.

However, clothing allowance in connection with study trips to tropical countries should not exceed \$300.

Gov't not stingy

Under the EO, \$200 in clothing allowance is given on travel to a temperate country for up to two weeks during autumn and winter; \$300 for a stay of two weeks to a month and \$400 for more than a month's mission.

Clothing allowance can be granted more than once every two years, but this should not exceed \$400 within a period.

The government will only provide for clothing allowance if donor institutions do not give an amount equal to or more than what the government provides or the government can augment clothing allowances from donor

By Elmer N. Manuel

The days of jet-setting public officials are over as the Palace issued an order barring "junkets" and employees' team-building activities overseas while limits were imposed on local travel.

Executive Order (EO) 77, signed by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea by authority of President Rodrigo Duterte on 15

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institutions that are less than what the government gives.

Government officials may be reimbursed for "necessary entertainment, contributions, flowers, wreaths and the like, when justified by circumstances and in conformity with generally-accepted customs, usages and practices."

Cabinet members and those of equivalent rank may reimburse expenses up to \$1,000, while undersecretaries, assistant secretaries, and those holding lower positions who will head delegations can reimburse expenses up to \$700, \$500 and \$300.

Reports needed

Every personnel authorized to travel must submit reports on the conferences or seminars attended, examinations or investigations conducted or missions he or she joined within 30 days after his or her return.

For Filipino delegations that will represent the country at international conferences or conventions, they are also required to submit a report to the Office of the President through the department secretary, copy furnished the Foreign Affairs Secretary, 30 days after the closing of the event.

Failure to comply with the reportorial requirements shall subject the officials or employees concerned to disciplinary action, according to the order. **Kristina Maralit**



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Searca in meeting for climate change

THE Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca), which manages the Asean Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SF) Strategic Response Fund (ASRF), will participate in the 8th Meeting of the Ad-Hoc Steering Committee on Climate Change and Food Security to be held in Bali, Indonesia on March 28 to 29.

Asean is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"Searca will present its key initiatives on food security in addressing climate change in the Asean member-states (AMS). Likewise, it will share initial gains in the implementation of the ASRF. This includes the implementation of nine projects in eight AMS under its reserved grants and the funding of three grantees to participate in conferences," the agency said in a statement.

Moreover, the initial draft of the paper "Stocktaking of Asean Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals," developed by Roehlano Briones, technical consultant, with support from Searca upon the request of the Asean Secretariat, will be discussed. Inputs and recommendations from the participants will aid in the preparation of the final draft that will be submitted for endorsement by the relevant Asean bodies.

Doris Capistrano, Asean-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC) regional advisor, will provide updates on recent developments on the Asean Multi-Sectoral Framework on Climate Change: Agriculture and Forestry towards Food Security and ASFCC's future support to it. Various Asean working groups and sectoral bodies will share updates on key initiatives and relevant frameworks on climate change.

As a side event of the meeting, the AWG-SF Secretariat will host a meeting of ASFCC partners on March 30 to 31. The meeting will discuss preparations for the Asia Pacific Forestry Week in Incheon, South Korea on June 17 to 21.

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Energy giants spent \$1B on climate lobbying, PR since 2015

PARIS: The five largest publicly listed oil and gas majors have spent \$1 billion since the 2015 Paris climate deal on public relations or lobbying that is "overwhelmingly in conflict" with the landmark accord's goals, a watchdog said on Friday.

Despite outwardly committing to support the Paris agreement and its aim to limit global temperature rises, ExxonMobil, Shell, Chevron, BP and Total spend a total of \$200 million a year on efforts "to operate and expand fossil fuel operations," according to InfluenceMap, a pro-transparency monitor.

Two of the companies — Shell and Chevron — said they rejected the watchdog's findings.

"The fossil fuel sector has ramped up a quite strategic programme of influencing the climate agenda," InfluenceMap Executive Director Dylan Tanner told Agence France-Presse.

"It's a continuum of activity from their lobby trade groups attacking the details of regulations, controlling them all the way up, to controlling the way the media thinks about the oil majors and climate."

The report comes as oil and gas giants added that of the more than \$110 billion the five had earmarked for capital investment in 2019, just \$3.6bn was given over to low-carbon schemes.

The report came one day after the European Parliament was urged to strip ExxonMobil lobbyists of their access, after the US giant failed to attend a hearing where expert witnesses said the oil giant has knowingly misled the public over climate change.

"How can we accept that companies spending hundreds of millions on lobbying against the EU's goal of reaching the Paris agreement are still granted privileged access to decision makers?" said Pascoe Sabido, Corporate Europe Observatory's climate policy researcher, who was not involved in the InfluenceMap report.

The report said Exxon alone spent \$56 million a year on "climate branding" and \$41 million annually on lobbying efforts.

In 2017 the company's shareholders voted to push it to disclose what tougher emissions policies in the wake of Paris would mean for its portfolio.

With the exception of France's Total, each oil major had largely focused cli-

ants are under increasing pressure from shareholders to come clean over how greener lawmaking will impact their business models.

As planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions hit their highest levels in human history in 2018, the five companies wracked up total profits of \$55 billion.

At the same time, the International Panel on Climate Change — composed of the world's leading climate scientists — issued a call for a radical drawdown in fossil fuel use in order to hit the 1.5C (2.7 Fahrenheit) cap laid out in the Paris accord.

InfluenceMap looked at accounts, lobbying registers and communications releases since 2015, and alleged a large gap between the climate commitments companies make and the action they take.

It said all five engaged in lobbying and "narrative capture" through direct contact with lawmakers and officials, spending millions on climate branding, and by employing trade associations to represent the sector's interests in policy discussions.

"The research reveals a trend of carefully devised campaigns of positive messaging combined with negative policy lobbying on climate change," it said.

mate lobbying expenditure in the US, the report said.

Chevron alone has spent more than \$28 million in US political donations since 1990, according to the report.

AFP contacted all five oil and gas companies mentioned in the report for comment.

"We disagree with the assertion that Chevron has engaged in 'climate-related branding and lobbying' that is 'overwhelmingly in conflict' with the Paris Agreement," said a Chevron spokesman.

"We are taking action to address potential climate change risks to our business and investing in technology and low carbon business opportunities that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

A spokeswoman for Shell — which the report said spends \$49 million annually on climate lobbying — said it "firmly rejected" the findings.

"We are very clear about our support for the Paris Agreement, and the steps that we are taking to help meet society's needs for more and cleaner energy," they told AFP.

BP, ExxonMobil and Total did not provide comment to AFP.

AFP



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Haribon, Real LGU sign pact to restore *Kalaw* habitat



■ From left: Haribon Foundation Chief Operating Officer Maria Belinda de la Paz, Mayor Abigail Aquino of Real, Quezon and forester Lupo Telan from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources sign the memorandum of agreement for the Forests for Life movement, a campaign to restore denuded forests in the country. HARIBON PHOTO

CONSERVATION group Haribon Foundation represented by Chief Operating Officer Maria Belinda de la Paz and Mayor Abigail Aquino of Real, Quezon, Lupo Telan as witnessed by forester, recently signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) at the Mayor's Office in Real to restore denuded forests in areas known as the existing habitat of the northern rufous hornbill (*Buceros hydrocorax*), or locally known as *Kalaw*.

Telan is from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Community Environment and Natural Resources Office in Real.

As part of the agreement, 32.56 hectares of deforested land located in the portion of Presidential Proclama-

tion 1636 parcel of land in Barangay Tanauan, Real, will be restored through Haribon's Forests For Life (FFL) movement, a campaign to bring back Philippine forests using native trees.

Five out of the over 30-hectare restoration area will also be the site for the habitat restoration and expansion of the northern rufous hornbill, a new conservation project by Haribon with Philippine-based business process outsourcing company Magellan Solutions.

"There are not many studies that have been done to understand the *kalaw*, including their population and breeding capacity," Haribon Conservation Specialist J. Kahlil Panopio explained. According to

BirdLife International, the northern rufous hornbill that can only be found in the islands of Luzon has been listed as "vulnerable" from to massive habitat degradation and hunting over the past years.

The agreement was also followed by a MoA-signing between the Haribon Foundation represented by de la Paz, Barangay Tanauan Farmers Association President Francisco Elle and captain Rodelio Torres of Barangay Tanauan.

"If there should be a priority, it should be the conservation of the environment because all other services such as economic, social and infrastructure will be futile if we destroy it," said Aquino, the mayor of Real.