

DATE : 01 MAY 2019

DAY : Tuesday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



DENR FETES UNDP FOR BIODIVERSITY PROJECT AT MISSION: PHL RITES



UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Enrico Gaveglia receives the Development Aid Partner Award for Biodiversity from Director Crisanta Marlene P. Rodriguez of the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau at the recent Mission: PHL Envoys&Expats Award. ROY DOMINGO

THE United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was recently recognized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for its efforts in biodiversity conservation at the culminating rites of Mission: PHL, the BusinessMirror Envoys & Expats Awards.

UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Enrico Gaveglia received on behalf of the agency the Development Aid Partner Award for Biodiversity from Director Crisanta Marlene P. Rodriguez of the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau.

"Good evening everybody. This is certainly the closest thing to an

Oscar I will ever have. It's an honor. Thanks to BUSINESSMIRROR for this generous award, it's much appreciated on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme.

"The story of development partners is a bit all the same. We are talking about commitment towards sustainable development and several countries do that.

"But it should not be too much about the celebration of ourselves in terms of our commitment. But it's also about those who...will not actually be on stage here. We are talking about those people we are working for, the beneficiaries. We

SEE "DENR," A2

are talking about people that even without an award, every day, work for the sustainable development of their communities and the biodiversity of their environment," Gaveglia said in brief remarks on receiving the recognition.

He thanked the government partners working with UNDP—the Biodiversity Management Bureau, government agencies like the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and Department of Trade and Industry, among others.

Mission: PHL is the first and only recognition awards for the Philippines's best partners in development cooperation. It gives due recognition to the development efforts of countries as represented by their embassies, as well as bilateral and multilateral development aid partners.

Watch for the next round of Mission: PHL, the BUSINESSMIRROR Envoys&Expats Awards in 2021.

Read updates on Mission: PHL in BUSINESSMIRROR's Envoys&Expats Section.



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DWPH

THE rehabilitated Boracay circumferential road is 95% complete as of April 26, according to Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu.

WESTERN VISAYAS: BORACAY, MALAY

Western Visayas economy seen to bounce back after 2018 slowdown due to Boracay closure

THE SIX-MONTH closure of Boracay Island last year contributed significantly to the slowdown of Western Visayas Region's economic growth, but a recovery is expected despite the regulated entry for tourists and stricter rules now being implemented on the island resort. National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Regional Director Ro-Ann A. Bacal said the number of tourists in the region dropped by 15% to 4.9 million in 2018 from 5.8 million the previous year. "The decrease of visitors amounted to almost 900,000 people coming to Region 6, particularly for Boracay. As a result, tourist receipts went down by 18.4%. It also meant 900,000 less passengers for buses, and cars, less customers for hotels, groceries, and less orders for meat, fish, vegetables, foods, spices, and *pasalubong* items," she said last week during the 2018 gross regional domestic product (GRDP) presentation held simultaneously nationwide. Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data shows the Western Visayas 2018 GRDP growth rate dropped to 6.1% from 8.6% in 2017. Boracay's temporary closure, implemented April to October for a major rehabilitation program due to environmental degradation, also meant lesser cargo services, labor requirements, jobs, and money in the pockets that would have been circulating in the economy, Ms. Bacal said. — **Emme Rose S. Santiago**

>> See full story on bit.ly/WVisayasEconomy



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Standard, volunteers join Obando river cleanup

By Charles Dantes

OBANDO, Bulacan—In the pursuit of restoring and cleaning the Obando River, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources helped Barangay Binuangan in Obando, Bulacan to regain the waterway's beauty.

As part of the continuous drive of the Environment department's "Battle for Manila Bay" and in celebration of International Earth Day, DENR persuaded different groups including the **Manila Standard** to join the drive for the beautification of the river last Sunday.

For Barangay Binuangan, a village in the middle of the river, it was a much-needed action to start saving their area and have a much greener outlook in life.

Led by their barangay chairperson, Jerry Santos, and Sangguniang Kabataan head, Krizel Bartolome, residents of Binuangan began unloading their wastes properly and collecting piles of rubbish in their man-

made landfill and watercourse. Then they put it into sacks that will be disposed of in the right dumping ground with the aid of the local government of Obando.

"Within two months, we have collected more than 5,200 sacks of trash and have reduced our household wastes ever since the start of this proper disposal campaign," said Santos in an interview.

As cleaning their area will be no easy feat, Santos remains optimistic that in less than six months, Brgy. Binuangan will reestablish its cleanliness.

"We are happy that many have volunteered to help our village, and we hope this river cleanup continues," he added.

Highlighting the drive, the clean-up party accumulated around 100 sacks of trash within three hours of cleansing the area.

DENR held a program to celebrate Earth Day by having performances from different groups and spreading the word on how to take care of our planet.



Volunteers join **Manila Standard** workers in the river cleanup in Obando, Bulacan.



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NAGSAGAWA ng paglilinis ang mga river warrior ng City Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro)-DENR sa siyudad ng Bacoor sa Cavite sa dalawang creek at dalawang ilog sa Barangay Salinas II.
Kuha ni **DINDO CAPILI**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Removal of illegal Panglao structures lauded

By **DAVE ALBARADO**

TAGBILARAN CITY – The municipal government of Panglao lauded local tourism stakeholders for voluntarily removing illegal structures within the 20-meter salvage zone in Alona Beach.

In a statement, the town government on Tuesday said the demolition that took place Monday was a result of the collaboration and coordination between the local

government and the private sector.

The local government cited the effort of the Panglao Island Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PICCI), Alona Bece Community Association Inc. (ABCAI), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Coastal Resource Management of Panglao, and the Tourism Office of Panglao town.

ABCAI President Uco Trotin said

at least 100 meters of a seawall were removed.

The demolition of a bigger seawall has been postponed because it could endanger resort guests, Trotin said.

The partial demolition was done ahead of government's deadline to tear down the illegal structures by end of May. DENR had given an earlier ultimatum to remove the structures by September.



Resort owners tear down illegal structures on Panglao Island

By Leo Udtohan
@leoudtohanINQ

PANGLAO ISLAND—Resort owners have started tearing down illegal structures, including seawalls and ripraps, within a 20-meter “salvage zone” along the popular Alona Beach on Panglao Island in Bohol province, according to a local business leader.

Panglao, Bohol’s tourism jewel, is teeming with white sand beaches, including the beach named after the late actress Alona Alegre who shot a movie there in the early ’70s.

Angie Hoffman, president of the Panglao Island Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PICCI), said at least 20 establishments along the beach on Monday started complying with the order by Environment Secretary

Roy Cimatu giving them until May 30 to remove the illegal structures.

Willing to cooperate

“We want to show to the government that we are willing to cooperate and we want to make this tourist island sustainable,” Hoffman told the Inquirer.

No pipes illegally discharging wastewater had been found beneath the island’s beachfront, she said.

She said it took a while to remove the illegal structures, especially the seawalls, which would add to the time needed to rehabilitate the beach.

Built to prevent erosion

“It was delayed a little because it was not easy to remove the seawalls,” she said.

According to Hoffman, the seawalls were built by resort owners to prevent erosion during the “habagat,” or southwest monsoon.

Ripraps, or sustaining walls of stones or rocks, strengthened shoreline structures against scouring and erosion.

“These are not just seawalls or ripraps. Owners built them to protect their establishments from the strong waves that eroded the sand,” Hoffman said.

She noted that the monsoon had a different effect on Alona compared with its impact on the other beaches.

“It could do good or bad . . . but we want to comply,” Hoffman said. “So after this, we would see if it was OK with or without the seawall. This is a big risk for all the establishments along Alona Beach.” INQ



ALLURING ALONA The famous Alona Beach on Panglao Island, Bohol province’s top tourist destination, is undergoing a facelift as resort owners try to meet the May 30 government deadline to remove obstructions such as seawalls to show off its alluring white sand. —LEO UDTOHAN



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Editor
Robert Jaworski L. Abaño

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
REGIONS



BEACH REGULATIONS

To ensure the preservation of Boracay island, we are strictly enforcing these regulations:



#BETTERBORACAY

LET US PUSH FOR A BETTER BORACAY!

BETTER BORACAY The ban on drinking, smoking and big parties is strictly enforced on the world famous beach. —ROBERT JAWORSKI L. ABAÑO

Boracay rehab all about following law

'Sustainable tourism' a priority, says DOT secretary

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
@nestorburgosINQ

BORACAY ISLAND, AKLAN—The government is bent on sustaining the gains of the six-month environmental rehabilitation of Boracay as more tourists are returning to the resort island in Malay, Aklan province, according to Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat.

"Sustainable tourism" will remain a priority after Boracay was reopened to tourists in October last year, she said.

"The Philippines is frequently a center of attention when I attend international tourism conferences. They always ask, 'How did you do it [rehabilitate Boracay]?' Puyat said in a press briefing here last week.

"They were impressed because all we did was enforce national laws and local ordinances," she said, citing the enforcement of the ban on smok-

ing and drinking on the beach and other public areas, and enforcement of beach and road easement.

Impressed

"You can see the difference now. Everybody wants to go to Boracay and all are impressed," she said.

Puyat said many less-known destinations had benefited from the diversion of tourists from Boracay during the closure from April 26 to Oct. 25 last year. She cited as examples Siargao and Siquijor islands.

It helped that tourists had been reporting about environmental violations in Boracay on social media, she said.

"People are more conscious about sustainable tourism. They understand that if you follow the law, tourism will be better," Puyat said.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, tourism is sustainable

when it "takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities."

Carrying capacity

Puyat said tourist arrivals, including those during the Holy Week, were within the carrying capacity set by the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF).

The island can accommodate 19,215 tourists at any given time. Daily tourist arrivals should be at an average of 6,405, the BIATF said.

Puyat said the carrying capacity would be followed during the weeklong "#LOVEBoracay" activities to mark the first anniversary of the closure.

The ban on drinking and smoking on the beach and other public places, regulation on noise, as well as the ban on big beach parties would be strictly enforced, she said.

But a group of residents and workers displaced by the island's closure lamented that a year after, many of them were still pleading for assistance from the national government.

"It has been one year and too long for the government to deny the plea for alternative livelihood, food and relief assistance, on-site relocation and rehabilitation sites for the dislocated workers and demolished residents in the island," said Olive Abañera, coordinator of We Are Boracay.

We Are Boracay is composed of mostly vendors, tricycle drivers, masseuses, tour guides and other workers in the informal sector.

While rehabilitation of the island was necessary, the closure was forced on residents, resulting in the dislocation of some 30,000 workers and those with tourist-dependent livelihood, said the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan in Aklan. INQ



DOT adds more, longer close-out dates for cruise-ship visits to Boracay

By MA. STELLA F. ARNALDO @akosistellaBM
Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR

MORE close-out dates for cruise ships sailing to Boracay Island will be instituted by the Department of Tourism (DOT) for this year, and in 2020.

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat said she will be "adding two long weekends" that will prohibit the port calls of cruise ships on Boracay. These will be during the Eid al-Fitr and National Heroes Day holidays in June and August, respectively.

"The problem with Eid al-Fitr is, it moves, because it depends on the moon. They only announce it a few days before [the actual date]. So I've been asking them [other members of the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF)] if we could block off [the close-out period] starting on May 31," she said.

The Eid al-Fitr holiday is supposed to be held on June 3. The National Heroes Day, on the other hand, is on August 26, a Monday. "For sure, we Filipinos, when we find out there's a long weekend, right away we book a flight then go," the tourism chief asserted.

Romulo Puyat said, next year, the close-out period during Holy Week will likely be longer. "It will probably start the Saturday before Holy Week," she said. This year, the Holy Week close-out period began on April 16,

Holy Tuesday, when there were already many local tourists arriving in Boracay. This became a sore point for local residents who complained that Chinese tourists inundated them the day before, because of a port call by the Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines's *MS Voyager*, which carried 3,334 passengers. (See, "Cruise ships barred from visiting Boracay during peak tourist seasons," in the BUSINESSMIRROR, April 25, 2019.)

"Nobody probably thought of [a longer close-out period for Holy Week] because normally, we work up to Wednesday. We didn't realize, even the private-sector representative admitted, the close-out period should have started earlier, i.e., Saturday [before Holy Week]. There are things you realize upon implementation; the good thing is you learn from it." The DOT chairs the cruise-ship assessment committee of the BIATF, and had included private stakeholders in its consultations on the guidelines for port calls.

Romulo Puyat said the committee had actually discussed the possibility

of totally closing off Boracay to cruise ships because of the identified carrying capacity of the island, which is 19,125 tourists at any given time. "But when we talked to the private sector, they told us there are times that there are no tourists, so the tricycle drivers, souvenir shops, etc. will have no income."

She said the DOT will discuss the possibility of just allowing expedition ships, or those that carry just 200 to 300 passengers to visit Boracay. "We will discuss that with the private sector." At present, cruise ships carry-

ing more than 2,000 passengers are prohibited from making port calls on Boracay, starting April 16, 2019.

Romulo Puyat spoke on Tuesday at the Jobs and Women Philippine Tourism Forum at the Philippine International Convention Center, where she outlined how women can further contribute to the growth of the local tourism industry. "True to the logic of today's forum, Filipino women can be empowered by introducing more meaningful job opportunities in the tourism industry,

from micro entrepreneurship to the large-scale industries."

Citing the United Nations World Tourism Organization, she said the majority of people employed in tourism worldwide, both in formal and informal jobs, are women.

She added, the "initiatives of the government translate directly to jobs available for women and opportunities for inclusive advancement of all. Promoting the role of women beyond the opportunities of employment, and moving to key positions

of policy and strategy that can steer the Philippine tourism industry into sustainability. The DOT continues to work toward a progressive and vibrant tourism industry that is inclusive and resilient."

The DOT chief noted that on a regional level, the Philippines has played a central role in advancing the agenda of equality in Asean. The Philippines leads the Asean in its program on Gender Awareness and Development in Tourism. "We have recently finalized the Asean GAD Framework for Tourism, which aims to strengthen the gender institutional capacity of Asean member-states. The said framework is patterned on our own strategy with the inclusion of key regional issues.

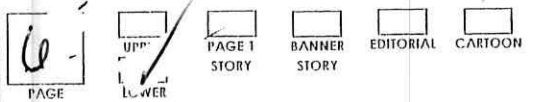
On a personal note, when asked by others "How do you earn the respect of men in the workplace?" Romulo Puyat averred: "As a woman, I believe it's not about earning a man's respect, that's not the priority; it's only a byproduct. The aim is to live a life that has purpose, and with the mindset that you work hard and do your best. When you have something great to offer the world, you'll be surprised to find that it reaches out to you and opens doors, windows, and avenues, no matter the circumstance and hurdles thrown at you."

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority and the International Labor Organization, there were 121,821 establishments in the accommodations and food services sector in 2017, about half of which are run by women.

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Labor, environment groups join trash 'war'

By Joel dela Torre

AT least three labor organizations and an environmental group have joined the growing clamor for the Canadian government to solve once and for all the long-festering garbage dumping issue that has infuriated no less than President Rodrigo Duterte.

Apart from the EcoWaste Coalition (EWC), the Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP), Sentro ng Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO) and the Buklurang Manggagawang Pilipino (BMB) yesterday sought the speedy removal of the illegal wastes out of the Philippines.

Also yesterday, enraged citizens led by the EWC also staged a protest rally outside the Canadian Embassy to echo President Duterte's concern against the Canadian government over the garbage dumping issue.

"We seek Canada's compliance with its responsibil-

ity as 'State of export' to reclaim the wastes illegally sent to the Philippines. Canada's immediate action will show its sincerity toward the effective implementation of the Basel Convention of which it is a party," said ALU-TUCP spokesperson Allan Tanjusay.

Citing the Basel Convention, Tanjusay said that the "State of export" of illegal traffic waste "shall ensure that the wastes in question are taken back by the exporter or the generator or, if necessary, by itself into the State of export... within 30 days from the time the State of export has been informed about the illegal traffic or such other period of time as States concerned may agree."

Josua Mata, SENTRO Secretary-General assailed what he termed as "waste colonialism" that is treating developing countries as dumping ground for wastes and toxics from industrialized economies.

According to BMB chairman Leody de Guzman, Canada should take back their garbage and stop exporting pollution.



DFA chief not keen on shipping back Canada trash

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

Despite President Duterte's order, the country's top diplomat is against shipping tons of Canadian garbage back to its country of origin, saying it would be "too much pollution."

In a tweet, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said he would rather make those responsible for the unwanted importation "miserable for the rest of their natural lives."

"It is our mission to nail those natives who imported Canadian garbage to our country," Locsin said.

"However, we reject the suggestion to ship them out in a container of garbage. That's too much pollution," he said.

He did not offer a suggestion on how the country could get rid of the garbage.

Malacañang said it wanted clarification from Locsin.

"I don't understand. Where will we place the garbage? I think you should address that question to him," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said at a press briefing when told of Locsin's tweet.

"I'll ask him if I see him. But I would suggest you ask him directly," he added.

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) said on Monday they received orders from Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III to return the containers of trash back to Canada by May 15. The garbage arrived in the country in batches beginning in 2013.

The Department of Finance gave the order to the BOC after President Duterte said he would declare "war" on Canada if it would not take back its garbage.

Canada earlier said it was working with the Philippine government for a "timely" resolution of the problem.

"Canada is strongly committed to collaborating with the Philippine government to resolve the waste issue and it is aware of the court decision ordering the importer to ship the garbage back to Canada," its embassy said in a statement.

A joint technical working group, consisting of officials from both countries, is at present resolving the problem.

The BOC, however, said shipping the garbage back to Canada by May 15 would not be easy as there are issues that need to be addressed, like the hundreds of millions of pesos in unpaid demurrage fees.

The 103 containers of garbage are now in separate locations - Port of Subic, Manila International Container Port (MICP) and in a landfill in Tarlac.

"The pullout of these containers reportedly filled with garbage from Canada is not as easy as it looks. There are issues that have to be decided by both governments (Philippines and Canada)," said BOC-Port of Subic (BOC-POS) district collector Maritess Martin. She said the government should be clear about who would shoulder the shipping cost.

In 2016, Manila regional trial court judge Tita Alisuag ordered the importers to return

the garbage to Canada, but Martin said the consignee might already be in hiding.

"When I assumed (the position as POS collector) we already had talks with the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, since the BOC is already requesting for a waiver or to reduce the cost, but SBMA said that it was up to the terminal (Subic Bay International Terminal Corp.)," she said.

She is not sure, she said, if there would be any changes "if President Duterte would order them to consider waiving" the payment of demurrage fees.

Health dangers

The Ecology Center of SBMA is reportedly against the opening of the shipping containers as doing so might lead to health problems.

It was reported earlier that a batch of the garbage shipment consisting of 50 containers had been mis-declared to contain a type of

plastic scrap. It was later found out to contain an assortment of scrap plastic materials.

The shipment was consigned to Chronic Plastics, a company based in Valenzuela City. The shipper was listed as Chronic Inc. of Ontario.

Environmentalists, meanwhile, called on both Canada and the Philippines to ratify the Basel Ban Amendment to prevent future illegal dumping in the country.

The measure aims to protect developing countries from getting shipments of "hazardous and other wastes they were unable to manage in an environmentally sound manner, but continued to receive."

The EcoWaste Coalition stressed that "the dumping of Canadian wastes in the Philippines is immoral and illegal."

"We have patiently waited for years for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to make good on his promise to resolve this long-running dump-

ing controversy," said Aileen Lucero, national coordinator of EcoWaste Coalition.

"When he first came to Manila in 2015, he said a 'Canadian solution' is being developed to address the issue, and when he returned in 2017, he said 'it is now theoretically possible to get (the wastes) back.' It's now second quarter of 2019 and the Canadian wastes are still rotting here," she said.

"We are fed up with failed promises. Now is the time for Canada to announce when exactly are they taking back their garbage in compliance to its obligations under the Basel Convention. The wastes have nowhere to go but Canada where the wastes have to be processed and treated in an environmentally responsible way," she added.

Last Monday, members of the group trooped to the Canadian embassy in Makati City to demand the return of the shipment to Canada.

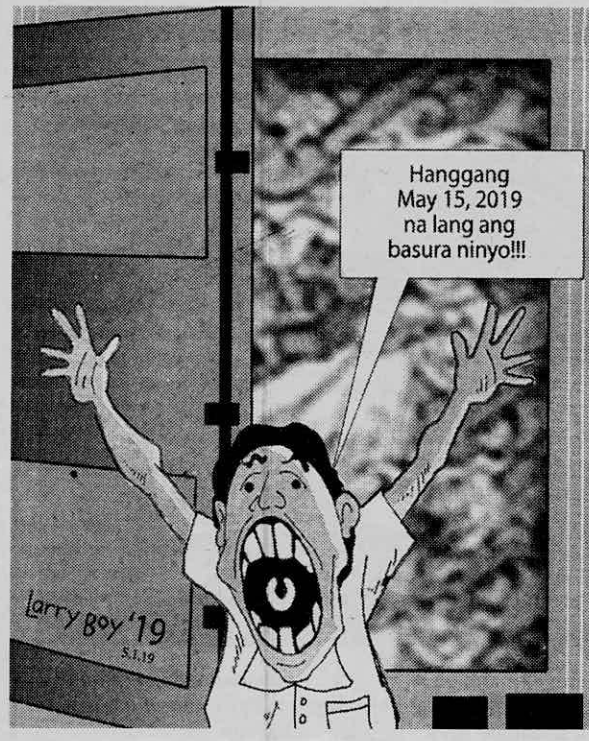
- With Evelyn Macairan, Alexis Romero, Rhodina Villanueva



Editorial

Basura ng Canada lapit nang madispatsa!

KUNG hindi pa nagalit si President Duterte at nagbanta ng “pakikipaggiyera” sa Canada, hindi kikilos ang mga kinaukulan para ibalik ang basurang dinala sa bansa noong 2013-2014. Makaraang magalit ang Presidente noong Abril 23 nang dumalaw sa mga nilindol sa Porac, Pampanga, agad kumilos ang Department of Finance. Inatasan ni DOF Sec. Carlos Dominguez ang Bureau of Customs na ibalik ang basura ng Canada sa pinanggalingan nito bago mag-Mayo 15. Ang mga basura ay kinabibilangan ng adult diapers, electronic garbage, household trash at iba pang non-recyclable wastes.



Unang dumating sa bansa ang mga container noong Hunyo 2013.

Idineklarang mga plastic na basura ang laman ng containers at ang consignee ay ang kompanyang Chronic Plastics na nasa Valenzuela City. Pero nang inspeksiyunin ng Bureau of Customs, nadiskubren ng mga basura at nangangamoy. Bumaliktad ang sikmura ng mga taga-Customs nang buksan ang container. Nabubulok na basurang delikado sa kalusugan ng mamamayan.

Sumunod na taon, may mga dumating pang container ng basura at umaalingasaw din sa baho. Pareho rin ang consignee ng mga basura.

Binatikos ng environment group ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) secretary ng nakaraang Aquino administration kung bakit walang nagawang paraan para maibalik agad sa Canada ang mga basura. Ayon sa report, una raw dineklara ng DENR na toxic at hazardous ang basura pero binawi at sinabing non-toxic ang shipment.

Isang malaking leksiyon ang nangyari na nakapasok sa bansa ang basura at walang ginawang hakbang ang mga namumuno para maibalik sa pinanggalingan. Tumagal pa ng ilang taon bago tuluyang mapagpasyahan ang basurang makapagdudulot pa ng sakit sa mamamayan. Hindi na sana maulit ang nangyaring ito na ginawang bagsakan ng basura ang bansa.



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Let youth drug offenders plant trees



**BUSINESS
OPTION**

**ZOILO P.
DEJARESCO III**

Can the lack of drug rehabilitation facilities and budget for youth drug-offenders need be such a burdensome a community problem? Why not let them plant trees instead- in coordination with the (Department of Agriculture) or its equivalent), LGUs, DENR, and private corporations?

That, Watson, is hitting two birds with one stone.

From 1900, Philippines' forest cover is now down to only 24% (Wikipedia). According to the Forest Management Bureau of the DENR, the nation loses 47,000 hectares of forest cover every year. The culprits are illegal mining, kaingin, mining, tourism and subdivision development and devastation from Mother Nature.

The Philippines is infamous for being one of the most severely deforested areas in the tropics and the worst deforestation happening "during the last 40 years".

Precisely, the "National Greening Program" which was launched in 2011 to 2016 has been extended to the year 2028. The first target was to plant one billion trees. That is how badly we need to reforest our denuded landscape from years of neglect and commercial abuse.

The above-proposed program can provide "free labor" from the youth drug dependents, help in the "greening

of the Philippines" and stop the threatened biodiversity of the nation which had resulted in 46 endangered plant species. That can also provide "health benefits" for the addicts - who instead of being emaciated through chemical abuse can develop strong bodies due to the physically-engaging tree-planting program.

In Malaysia, we learned that individuals, corporations, and multinationals who sponsor (finance) such greening projects can get "tax credits" for the effort. Why not here, dear legislators?

Our elementary science teachers had taught us about trees and their importance in converting the dangerous carbon dioxide in the air emanating from fossil fuels into oxygen and, thus, help cleanse the environment. The process is called photosynthesis. Carbon dioxide from fuels is said to account for half of the woes leading to the earth's severe climate change.

Climate change experts cite the role of trees in preventing landslide and flooding, preserve watersheds for the sources of water needed by humans and mangroves can stop storm surges.

Not very far from our ancestral home once grew lofty, bountiful trees. There was the majestic avocado along the street which dropped its fruits at the slightest dash of the winds -which our helpers converted to avocado shake. There were two caimito trees at the back whose violet-colored fruits just fell on the tin roofs ready for pick-up. There was the sturdy jack fruit tree beside the house whose fruits made for a delicious fruit dessert. And the lowly "kamias" by the garden- used to put more zest to the sinigang broth.

Alas and alack, all of them gone-devoured by commerce and civilization.

The world community, therefore, truly needs to act in unison versus climate change through massive tree planting,

In 2018, in the presence of Her

Royal Highness Princess Sirindhorn, Thailand launched the "Forest of the Future Project" under the "The Billion Tree Campaign". Like us, Thailand's rainforest cover also dropped from over 50% of its land area to only 20% today.

We heard that the Thailand government is encouraging this community-based tree-planting movement, especially in its northern districts. We can replicate some of the things they do there even in our daily activities.

For instance, this summertime, we will see the abundance of fruits in the markets including mango, mangosteen, jack fruit, lanzones, rambutan, durian, etc.. We are enjoined by a circulating social media memo not to throw the seeds of these fruits away.

Instead, we can clean the fruit seeds, dry them and wrap them inside a used newspaper and place them at the back of the car. Whenever one finds "an open barren land be it along the village road, empty motorway or in rural open spaces- throw these seeds away."

They will germinate easily in the coming rainy seasons.

This way, each and every one of us can at least help in erecting a tree every season in our lives and if we multiply that by the millions (people), we shall have contributed in great measure to reclaiming a green Earth and make it worth living again.

"Grain upon a grain- a bread loaf. Stone upon stone, a castle," Let's help a Green Philippines be a reality!

(Bingo Dejaresco, a former banker, is a financial consultant, media practitioner, and book author. He is a Lifetime Member and Chair of the Broadcast Media of FINEX. His views here, however, are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of FINEX. Dejarescbingo@yahoo.com)



MGA BUHAY NA CORAL REEF NATUKLASAN SA MARAMING BAHAGI NG MANILA BAY

NAKAKITA ng pag-asa si Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy A. Cimatu na muling mabubuhay ang Manila Bay matapos matuklasan ang mga buhay na coral sa ilalim ng tubig ng naturang baybayin.

Ayon kay Cimatu na namumuno sa inter-agency Manila Bay Task Force, base sa naging resulta ng pag-aaral, natuklasang may mga coral reefs sa maraming bahagi ng Manila Bay kaya't higit pang pursigido ang gobyerno para sa rehabilitasyon nito.

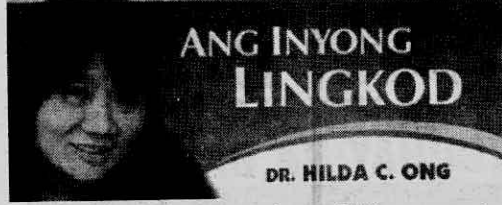
"With the vibrant underwater life still teeming in several areas in Manila Bay, there is hope that we can still revive it to what it used to be,"

anang Cimatu.

Kamakailan ay nagsagawa ng imbentaryo ang Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB) ng DENR at natuklasan na buhay ang coral ecosystems sa Manila Bay kahit na matindi ang environmental at human pressures dito.

Ayon kay ERDB supervising science research specialist Jose Isidro Michael Padin, karamihan sa mga nadiskubrenang corals ay matatagpuan sa Corregidor at Caballo Islands sa probinsya ng Cavite.

"Nearly 72% of the estimated reef area is found in Cavite. The reef sites in Maragondon and few stations in Corregidor and Caballo Islands



DR. HILDA C. ONG

had fair to good live coral cover," sabi pa ni Padin.

Aniya, ang mga coral na ito ay patuloy na naapektuhan ng "sedimentation", "nutrient contamination", pagbaba ng kalidad ng tubig at pangiginisda.

Base sa coastal resource map ng National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA), ang coral cover ng Manila Bay ay umaabot sa 293.68 hectares, hindi pa kasama rito ang lugar ng Mariveles, Bataan.

Sinabi naman ni ERDB Director Sofio Quintana, ang kanilang tanggapan ay nagsasagawa ng "ridge-to-reef" research sa Manila Bay.

"We are seeking for a definite connection among risk

factors. Right now, we are trying to gather more data on informal settler families, air and water quality, and habitat to make scientific studies relevant for future projects," sabi pa nito.

Idinagdag pa ni Quintana, ang ERDB ay patuloy na gumagawa ng "unified framework" para sa naturang proyekto upang maging madali ang ginagawang pag-aaral sa kalagayan ng Manila Bay area.

"We also want to provide reference in the decision process of the policymaking bodies with the data backed-up by research. If there are existing policies, maybe we could harmonize and align researches to these policies," sabi pa ERDB director.



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MORE SUBIC COMPANIES JOIN 'WAR ON WASTE'

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT: More companies based here have joined the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority's (SBMA) "War on Waste" since the start of the Recyclable Collection Event (RCE) project in 2016, SBMA Ecology Center manager Amethya de la Llana said.

"Our business locators now see the benefits of properly disposing of trash. It's orderly and more efficient, as well as economical," de la Llana said during the 6th RCE held at the former mini-golf course along Waterfront Road here.

The participating companies

brought to the event various recyclable items like used car batteries, cardboard and paper scraps and light bulbs.

"It has been our company's initiative to properly dispose of our hazardous wastes, being a company that conducts inspection, verification and tests on various products such as gas, oil and other chemicals," said Marge Lingad, administrative officer of locator SGS Subic Bay Inc.

Lingad said the firm used to outsource treatment of wastes generated by their operation. "But now we found an economi-

cal way to dispose of these and at the same time, help raise funds for the environment," she added.

Recyclable items generated through the SBMA project were sold to recyclers, and proceeds were donated to the ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Foundation, which funds Bantay Kalikasan, an organization that promotes a healthy environment for local communities.

In the recently concluded 6th RCE, the SBMA Ecology Center recognized Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction Co.Ltd. for religiously donating

recyclable trash since the pilot collection event three years ago, as well as for donating recyclable trash worth P32,160 during the previous RCE.

Other companies recognized for their contributions to the recycling project include Subic Truckboy, SGS (Subic Bay) Inc., Broadband Broadcast Services, Nidec Subic Philippines, Sanyo Denki Philippines Inc., Koryo Subic, Subic Bay International Terminal Corp., Wistron Infocomm Phils., Mateen Tokyo International Inc., and Apollo Subic International Trading Corp.

Among the SBMA departments, meanwhile, the Procurement and Property Management Department was recognized for turning in recyclables worth P297,380 at the 5th RCE in November 2018.

In a short program that kicked off the 6th RCE, de la Llana pointed out that when astronauts go to outer space, they experience the "overview effect" where they feel how fragile the earth is.

"I hope we do not have to go to outer space just to realize how fragile the earth is. With the series of earthquakes and

aftershocks, let us help our environment adapt to the changes through environmentally-sound practices," she added.

De la Llana also said recyclable items like old tires, expired medicines, rubber shoes/slippers and used clothes would be accepted in the next collection event.

The RCE is part of the SBMA's War on Waste program that also includes an anti-littering drive, the regulated use of plastic straws and plastic bags for wet products, and a ban of single-use plastics.

PATRICK ROXAS



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Cute or creepy: Why humans love some species, loathe others

PARIS: The Chinese giant salamander, the largest amphibian in the world, is not cute. Weighing as much as an adult human, it has slimy brown skin, a giant mouth curled to a gormless grin, and puny, mistrustful eyes.

It is also one of the world's most endangered species.

And yet, unlike its compatriot the giant panda, the giant salamander rarely makes the news.

Why do some animals strike a chord with humans, prompting them to donate millions towards their conservation, while others draw little more than disgust?

And is a sad-eyed panda really worth saving more than a slimy salamander?

Size, intelligence, behavior, rarity, how closely an animal resembles the human form — all play a part in our reaction to various endangered creatures.

"One of the biggest factors is

'cuteness': physical characteristics such as big eyes and soft features that elicit our parental instincts because they remind us of human infants," Hal Herzog, emeritus professor at West Carolina University's Department of Psychology, told AFP.

An expert in human-animal relationships, Herzog said the dark rings around pandas' eyes trigger humans nurturing instincts.

"Compare that to the Chinese giant salamander," he said. "Google it. It looks like a six-foot-long, 150-pound bag of brown slime with beady little eyes."

The salamanders are a vital part of their ecosystem, just as worms are essential to soil health around the streams and lakes they live in — which is just about everywhere.

Yet, like maggots, rats and snakes, the main instinct they inspire in humans is revulsion.

'Learned' disgust

According to Graham Davey, a specialist in phobias from the University of Sussex's School of Psychology, we learn to revile certain creatures at a young age.

"Disgust is a learned emotion.

Babies are not born with it... it's probably transmitted socially, culturally and within families," he said.

Some animals are reviled due to their resemblance to "primary disgusting things" such as mucus or feces, Davey said, while others are perceived — rightly or wrongly — to pose a direct danger to the beholder.

"In terms of threat to humankind, disease and illness are bigger than being attacked by an animal," he said.

This might explain why most of us don't find lions and bears repellent — they are covered with the same type of soft fur that coat cuddly toys for children, even if it

might be better to avoid one in real life.

An orca by any other name

As with most things, popular culture has a huge effect on how society perceives animals.

Whereas the movie "Free Willy" prompted a wave of sympathy for the protection of endangered orcas, "Arachnophobia" hardly helped spiders' cause.

See also: "Jaws" for sharks.

Even the depiction of fictional creatures can have a knock-on effect on public perception towards certain animals.

Take the main being in "Alien", for example.

"Seeing the one from the first film that had that mucus-y drawl dripping from the alien's mouth... sensitizes people to disgusting things," Davey said.

Nor is it just the public at large who are liable to "speciesism", or discrimination against other species in favor of our own.

A study in 2017 found a strong correla-

tion between society's preferred animals and those most studied in scientific research.

"Maybe that's because it's easier to get money" to study well-known animals, said Frederic Legendre, a researcher at France's National History Museum.

And popular species make money in return, according to Christo Fabricius from WWF — a conservation group indelibly linked to its panda logo.

"Reptiles, for example, are not very marketable," he said.

'Protect species, protect habitat'

Not that favoring certain cute or charismatic species is necessarily a bad thing for conservation.

"When we protect an iconic species, we protect their habitat and therefore all the organisms within it also benefit," said Legendre.

But such species can become a victim of their own popularity.

One recent study suggested that a "virtual" presence of wild animals such as elephants and tigers — be that on computer screens, T-shirts or in children's books — can fool people into thinking they are more common in the wild than they really are.

The populations of most mega-fauna — from hippos to giraffes and gorillas — remain in peril.

Then there's the risk of poaching.

The rarer the species "the more value they provide for traditional medicine, for trophy hunting, and therefore they are poached more often," said Franck Courchamp, an ecologist at France's National Center for Scientific Research.

So the next time you see a picture of a Giant Chinese Salamander, remember that there's more to saving Earth's wild species than looks. **AFP**