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IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service

OceanaGold's FTAA should not be renewed



ON SEPT. 24, 2019, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau endorsed the interim renewal of OceanaGold's financial and technical assistance agreement. The FTAA allows OceanaGold, an Australian company, to continue its mining operations in Didipio, Nueva Vizcaya after the original agreement has expired. This decision was made despite the vehement opposition of indigenous peoples, residents, and local government officials. If granted, the renewal will effectively reverse a Feb. 14, 2017 suspension order issued

“In fact, the mine should be closed.”

by then-secretary of Environment and Natural Resources Gina Lopez. It will reward a company that has trampled national laws and local sentiment with impunity. I echo the demands of affected residents and key officials, including the Provincial Government of Nueva Vizcaya: The FTAA renewal application must be denied, and the mine should be closed.

The MGB's support for an interim renewal of the FTAA flies in the face of reason. A 2018 report authored by the US-based Institute for Policy Studies and MiningWatch Canada documents the harm that the mine has done to the people and environment of Didipio. It analyzes independent studies conducted by international organizations, local NGOs, academic institutions, and government institutions. IPS and

MiningWatch conclude that the mine has had “significant negative impacts on water, forests, land, indigenous peoples, human rights, biodiversity, and human rights.”

I must disclose that one of the authors of the IPS report is related to me. I have also been following this mining operation in the last 25 years as an environmental justice advocate, high level environmental official, and as a law professor. In my view, applying my expertise, the findings of the 2018 report are impeccable. I summarize the key findings below.

Water: “OceanaGold is depleting and contaminating water around the mine, and damaging the watershed downstream leading into the Cagayan river.” The report shows that mining operations has harmed the surrounding environment: “Contamination of waterways near the mine impacting water quality and flora and fauna of these waterways; degradation of agricultural land in surrounding communities; impacts on human health; impacts on downstream waterways leading to the Cagayan Valley.” Many of these findings are backed by a monitoring report conducted by a 2016 Multi-partite Monitoring Team that had input from OceanaGold.

In addition, a 2017 report by the Provincial Government of Nueva Vizcaya states that the Didipio River has “twice the copper concentrate permitted for irrigation use and eight times the maximum level for the survival of organisms.” This supports a 2017 study by the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan) which found that the farmers in the area have had lower yields. The farmers believe that lower yields are due to the toxic contamination of the streams and rivers surrounding the mine. The contamination of surrounding bodies of

Turn to A5



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OceanaGold's...

From A4

waters has significant consequences not only for the residents of Didipio, but all Filipinos.

The Provincial Government declared that the Cagayan Valley is a "consistent agricultural achiever" that "provides 13 percent of the country's palay and 22 percent of the national corn supply." The mine, which is located at the Addalam River that flows into the Cagayan River, endangers the Cagayan Valley's status as the breadbasket of the Philippines.

Forests: "OceanaGold has failed in its obligations around reforestation." Researchers have found that OceanaGold's reforestation sites fall far short of its obligations under the FTAA. For example, most of the trees are too small to survive or are already dying. Furthermore, its tendency to replace cut down native hardwoods with plantation species puts into question the company's commitment to reforestation. In fact, the authors estimate that "estimate that over 100 native hardwood trees have died in the effluent of the OceanaGold's tailings

impoundment..."

Land: "OceanaGold has disregarded the provincial land use plan, has committed illegal land conversion, and has operated in areas beyond its approved project area." To begin with, the Nueva Vizcaya provincial land use plan disallows mining within its jurisdiction. Additionally, there are hectares of alienable and disposable lands within the area covered by the FTAA. These lands, however, can only be used for non-agricultural purposes if it undergoes a process of land conversion. No Order of Conversion has been issued by the Department of Agrarian Reform. The Provincial Government also found that OceanaGold has violated its Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC): "Upon examination of the project map as laid out within given coordinates on the Google Earth, it becomes apparent that OGPI has encroached on areas beyond the extent of the approved project area as determined in the existing ECC, albeit within the FTAA tenement." The expansion of the mining area can only be done requires a new ECC application. There has been no application.

Chemicals: OceanaGold has not disclosed what chemicals have been used or released in the mine. There is reason to believe that toxic chemicals have affected surrounding bodies of water. OceanaGold, however, has not been forthcoming with its hazardous waste management protocol. They have not disclosed the chemicals that have been used. They have not named the "DENR-EMB accredited treaters and transporters" that supposedly handled its hazardous wastes. The IPS-MiningWatch report states: "The damage to trees in the tailings pond and impacts on water quality and biota downstream suggests that chemicals used in, or released through processing, are dangerous to the health of surface waters as well as potentially to groundwater."

In the next column, on Tuesday, I will cite other findings of the Institute for Policy Studies and MiningWatch Canada report that show conclusively that the OceanGold FTAA must not be renewed.

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Tourism outlets sa Puerto Galera, ipasasara

PUERTO GALERA, Oriental Mindoro – Binalaan ng Department of Tourism (DoT) ang lahat ng resort establishment at ibang tourism-related outlet sa Puerto Galera, Mindoro na ipasasara.

Ito ay kung wala silang accreditation mula sa ahensya.

Sa isang pulong na dinaluhan ni DoT-MIMAROPA (Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan) Regional Director Danilo Intong sa nasabing lugar, ipinaliwanag nito na mandatory requirement na ang nasabing akreditasyon kapag magrenew ng mayor's permit at business license ang mga ito.

Nagpapahayag naman ng suporta sa hakbang ang lokal na pamahalaan ng Puerto Galera, gayundin ang Environmental Management Bureau

ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Inoobliga ng nasabing hakbang ang mga establisimiyento na kumuha ng discharge permit para sa three-chamber-no-seepage septic tank.

"We need to comply with these strict government regulations which are mandated in our environmental laws and we, in the local government, will help you in securing those permits subject to your compliance with the standards, otherwise, the government will be constrained to do what they did to Boracay where it ordered the closure of several resorts and businesses as a concrete solution against pollutants in our rivers and sea," ayon sa pahayag ng local government ng nasabing bayan.

Jerry J. Alcayde



51,779 puno itinanim ng DPWH sa Southern Leyte

NAKAPAGTANIM na ang Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) field office sa Tacloban City ng 51,779 puno sa watershed ng Southern Leyte ngayong taon at pinalitan ang nasa 1,492 puno na nabuwal o binunot dahil sa road widening project noong 2017.

Pinalitan ng malawakang tree planting ng iba't ibang mga uri ng puno ang 429 na punong tinanggal noong nagkaroon ng road works sa Maasin City, 418 sa Libagon, 317 sa Macrohon, 133 sa Sogod, 112 sa Bontoc, 64 sa Tomas Oppus, at 19 sa Malitbog town.

"As agreed with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the DPWH is bound to replace 50 trees for each felled tree grown in private or forest land and 100 trees for each naturally grown tree affected by road works," pahayag ni Southern Leyte District Engineer Ma. Margarita Junia sa isang panayam nitong Huwebes.

Naglaan ang DPWH ng P3.2 milyon para sa pagpapalit ng mga puno na naputol dahil sa mga road projects dalawang taon na ang nakalilipas.

Nauna nang kinilala ng DENR ang 9.69 ektarya para sa pagtatanim ng mga ipapalit na puno sa nakaraang taong mga proyekto. Kasalukuyang nagaganap ang pagtatanim ng 16,153 binhi na may alokasyon na P 732,000.

Binigyang kapangyarihan ng DENR ang farmers' association sa mga natamnan na bayan na linangin ang mga bagong tanim na mga binhi, at siguraduhin ang 85 posiyentong survival rate ng mga ito. Isang grupo mula sa DPWH ang binuo upang i-monitor ang mga tinanim na puno.

"Every time we implement projects, we always consider environmental impacts. We cannot immediately proceed with the construction without properly addressing them," ayon kay Junia.

Nangako naman ang opisyal na ipagpapatuloy ang aktibong pagsali ng DPWH sa iba't ibang mga aktibidad ng DENR, tulad ng tree planting at cleanup drives.



Hedcor intensifies reforestation projects

BY LEANDER C. DOMINGO

SOME 500 stakeholders of a renewable energy firm, including partners from local government agencies and media practitioners, have worked together to plant over 15,000 trees covering about 10 hectares of land in northern Luzon and Mindanao.

Cranep Udan, Hedcor environmental initiatives officer, said the planting was conducted recently because "seedlings have higher survival rate if planted during the rainy season."

She said that in northern Luzon, they have planted 8,200 assorted tree seedlings: 3,700 trees were planted in the towns of Tuba and Bineng in Benguet province, 2,200 in

Benguet's Bakun town, 1,500 in Sabangan town in Mountain Province and 1,000 in Ilocos Sur province.

"The trees planted include that of lemon, rambutan, guyabano and coffee among others except in Ilocos Sur, wherein mahogany seedlings were planted," Udan said, adding that all these were made possible through some 300 volun-

teers who planted in 4.24 hectares of land.

In Mindanao, Udan said their volunteers were proactive in reforesting the environment with a total of 7,000 seedlings planted, where 3,500 seedlings were planted in Manolo Fortich town in Bukidnon province and another 3,500 in Davao City.

"We have a total of 5.30 ha. of land area in Manolo Fortich town and Davao City with 200 volunteers who worked together in planting falcata, narra and durian seedlings," she said.

Hedcor is a run-of-river hydropower arm of Aboitiz-Power that operates 21 plants across the country with a total generating capacity of 258.4 megawatts of clean and renewable energy.

Udan said the trees planted

were in addition to the Aboitiz Group's initial goal of 3 million trees by 2015 that they had readily surpassed. The target for 2020 was raised to 9 million trees.

As of the end of 2018, she said the group had planted 6.6 million trees all over the Philippines, and Hedcor is committed to contributing to this effort.

To date, 2.8 million trees were planted by Hedcor with an 87-percent survival rate, Udan said.

"Trees are the world's biggest plants. Justified by its size, trees are one of the largest suppliers of materials for tools and shelter, fruits and other food, and not to mention — oxygen. With these facts alone, it's no question that trees are vital to life," she added.



■ Hedcor volunteers from Davao come together to reforest areas in Baguio district in Davao City. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



The importance of bees

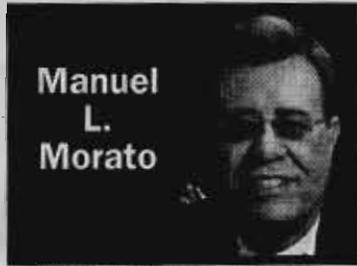
ALLOW me to write about the importance of honey (*o pulot*) galing sa mga bees (*o bubuyog*) for many do not understand how good it is for the body.

I read an article entitled "Why have bees been declared as the most valuable living being on our planet?"

Let me quote a study from the Agriculture Corporation of Chile, in South America: "With the support of the Foundation for Agrarian Innovation (FIA), conducted a study where it was determined that bees are the only living being that is not a carrier of any type of pathogen, regardless of whether it is a fungus, a virus or a bacterium."

In other words, honey from bees is medicinal and is healthy for the body. It kills fungus, viruses and bacteria that may infect our body.

UNCENSORED



Manuel
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"The agriculture of the world depends on 70% of these insects to put it more clearly and directly, we could say that 70 of 100 foods are intervened in favor by bees. Also the pollination that the bees make allows the plants to reproduce, of which millions of animals feed, without them, the fauna would soon begin to disappear."

"The honey produced by bees,

not only serve as food, but also provide many benefits to our health and our skin."

To quote what Albert Einstein: "If the bees disappear, humans would have 4 years to live." That's how important the existence of bees on our lives.

I will continue this topic which is important to us. "But one of the greatest reasons for its disappearance is attributed to the fumigation of crops..."

We must "prohibit, not reduce, the use of pesticides." It tells us to use natural agricultural alternatives.

Deforestation is one of the biggest disasters that can happen to breeding our bees. As trees are cut, the less breeding of honey from bees.

For comments and suggestions email at mlmorato@yahoo.com



RACE TO SAVE RARE BIRD

SULU HORNIBILLS DOWN TO 27 IN THE WILD

By Bong S. Sarmiento
@inqmindanao

DAVAO CITY—Ecologists have launched a project to save the critically endangered Sulu hornbill (*Anthracoceros montani*), one of the world's rarest birds that can only be seen in the Bangsamoro province of Tawi-Tawi.

There are only about 27 mature Sulu hornbills left in the wild, according to a recent count of BirdLife International.

The project, which trains a spotlight on the biodiversity stock in the remaining forests of Tawi-Tawi, was launched recently in the town of Panglima Sugala in cooperation with the local governments and the Philippine Biodiversity Conservation Foundation (PBCF).

Theresa Mundita Lim, executive director of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), said the project to save the Sulu hornbill was also aimed at establishing the bird's ecological links with other bird species in the region.

"Sulu hornbills have a genetic connection with other hornbills that can be found in other countries in Southeast Asia ... [By tapping] into Tawi-Tawi's biodiversity, [we] hope to gain a deeper understanding of the evolution of species in the rest of Asean," said Lim, who formerly headed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Protec-



The Sulu hornbill —ASEAN CENTRE FOR BIODIVERSITY

ted Areas and Wildlife Bureau.

More than 60 percent of the remaining forests in Tawi-Tawi are concentrated in Panglima Sugala, which is considered the home of the Sulu hornbill, said PBCF executive Lisa Paguntalan.

'Place of wonder'

Tawi-Tawi plays a vital role in Asean's efforts at biodiversity conservation as it lies along the borders of the faunal regions of the Philippines and Wallacea, Paguntalan said.

Located between Borneo Island in the west and the Indonesian province of Papua in the east, Wallacea "is a place of wonder, a living laboratory for the study of evolution and a melting pot for faunal genetic

diversity," Paguntalan said.

It was named after the 19th-century English explorer and naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace.

Tawi-Tawi is known to also host terrestrial birds and endemic and migratory water birds, but little is known of these, Lim said.

She said ACB and PBCF would work with local governments in identified sites, line agencies, and schools and universities in Tawi-Tawi to monitor the threatened birds and their status in important forest and migratory sites.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Sulu hornbill, a nonmigratory bird, was "common to abundant in the late 19th century" and now persists with

certainty only in Tawi-Tawi.

In an October 2016 assessment, IUCN expressed the suspicion that the species went through "a very rapid decline over the last 10 years" due to forest loss.

Other threatened species

Tawi-Tawi still hosts a number of bird species endemic to the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries, such as the Asian koel and mangrove blue-flycatcher, said University of the Philippines professor and bird curator Juan Carlos Gonzales.

Apart from the Sulu hornbill, among the threatened species found in Tawi-Tawi are the Christmas island frigate bird (*Fregata andrewsi*), Chinese egret (*Egretta eulophotes*), Great knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*), Sulu bleeding-heart (*Gallicolumba menagei*), and Tawi-Tawi brown dove (*Phapitreron cinereiceps*).

The others are Grey imperial-pigeon (*Ducula pickerlingii*), Philippine spinetail (*Mearnsia picina*), Sulu boobook (*Ninox reyi*), Rufous-lored kingfisher (*Todiramphus winchelli*), Sulu pygmy woodpecker (*Picoides ramsayi*), Philippine cockatoo (*Cacatua haematuropygia*), Sulu racquet-tail (*Prioniturus verticalis*), Celestial monarch (*Hypothymis coelestis*) and Sulu bulbul (*Hypsipetes haynaldi*). INQ



Addressing Metro Manila's water crisis and boosting water security

With both the Angat and La Mesa dams no longer having sufficient capacity, plans of building a third dam have been renewed

By Robert Y. So

March 2019 saw the beginning of a water crisis that affected — and continues to affect — millions of Filipinos in Metro Manila and its surrounding areas. While the immediate cause of this shortage depends on who you ask, everyone agrees on the root of the problem: water supply has become too scarce to meet growing demand.

Recycling and reuse of sewage has been practiced in the Philippines for over a decade.

For the most part, solutions to the crisis are focused on fixing and adjusting supply, specifically the sources of this water. With both the Angat and La Mesa dams no longer having sufficient capacity, plans of building a third dam have been renewed, though not without controversy. The two major water concessionaires for the National Capital Region and its environs have also made internal adjustments as to where they source and how they distribute their water to keep supply as consistent as possible. This includes rotating water availability (a euphemism for rationing) across their respective areas to control demand amid low supply. At any rate, the water interruptions to many were a throwback to the early Nineties when low pressure and rationing were the norm.

Contrary to what officials have said at the start of the crisis, the heavy rains in July and August have not been enough to solve the issue. To this day, several areas in and around Metro Manila are still experiencing water shortages, the long lines to fire stations and water-filled trucks with empty buckets and drums slowly becoming a daily reality once more for many Filipinos.

This all boils down to a grim reminder: the current setup of water supply in Metro Manila is no longer enough to meet the region's needs. With population only continuing to balloon, the demand for water will not lessen anytime soon. And with supply already being insufficient in current conditions, the shortages will only worsen in the future.

In other words, solving this water crisis for the long term means making significant changes to the current set-up.

Changing the standard

For the most part, the flow of water in and out of our households is largely linear. Water in dams and reservoirs is sourced from natural resources such as underground lakes and rain. This is then cleaned and treated before being distributed by concessionaires to their clients, in the case of the various residential areas around Metro Manila, through an underground pipe network. After being used for various purposes, water flows down to drains and undergoes sewage treatment — the quality of which depends on the area — before it is discharged into rivers and seas.

The ongoing water crisis proves that this model is unsustainable, for several reasons beyond the capacity of the dams and reservoirs being too small already for current demand. For one, it is harmful to the environment, what with its continuous extraction of natural resources plus the discharge of untreated sewage into bodies of water (think Manila Bay and Pasig River).

It is also particularly wasteful. The water that flows into a household is extracted from our watersheds and treated by utility companies to the level fit for human consumption — that is, for drinking, cooking, and hygiene. However, only a small fraction of a household's water usage is devoted to those activities. Most of it is being used for applications that don't require that level of quality: such as watering the plants, flushing down toilets and cleaning cars.

Reusing and recycling water

Instead of discharging used water into seas and rivers, we can instead reuse the water for purposes that don't require the highest quality. There are specialized sewage treatment systems that recycle the water that goes down our drains and turn it into water that can be used for various non-potable applications.

Of course, the technology we use to treat the water must be capable of doing so at such a level that it will be safe for skin contact. But this is still going to be far less costly than using drinking water to wash the car. Reusing and recycling sewage not only

reduces the demand of each household for water, but it also makes the entire process more sustainable.

While many Filipinos may think that the capability to recycle and reuse water only applies to first-world countries, recycling and reuse of sewage has been practiced in the Philippines for over a decade. Environmentally responsible developers, who are also among the most prominent businesspersons of the country, have already installed sewage recycling systems in their malls, hotels, resorts, and educational institutions. These generate savings in water charges while contributing to the minimizing of our potable water footprint.

Solving the crisis

Surely, taking this model of recycling water and expanding it on a national level would not only solve Metro Manila's water crisis, but also reduce the country's water pollution. When water is reused, the sewage that would otherwise be discharged to our seas and rivers will be used for various other productive means. It meets current demand without having to build new dams or reservoirs, and it makes more efficient use of current supply without relying on heavy rains.

Of course, that's easier said than done. Unlike the malls and hotels where recycling water is already the norm, implementing the same system to communities and subdivisions means taking into account more sources of sewage and more complex networks of pipelines. There are also regulatory restrictions that make this a more difficult undertaking overall.

However, the availability and effectiveness of this model means that solving the crisis doesn't have to rely on building new dams or rotating water accessibility. With water becoming a more valuable resource, the country should be open to more innovative solutions that adapt to the dynamics of meeting high demand and low supply. And water recycling and reuse may just be the answer everyone is looking for if we are to secure the water needs of generations of Filipinos and sustain the momentum towards the industrialization that now more than ever seems to be within our grasp as a nation.

Keys to increasing climate migrants' resilience

BY JOHN LEO ALGO

GOVERNMENTS must lead the way in reshaping our economic structures to deliver justice to those displaced by the climate crisis, climate and human rights experts said.

In a forum organized by Germany-headquartered policy group Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Philippines, representatives from governments, civil society and media stressed the need to reduce socioeconomic inequalities within and between countries to combat climate change. According to United Nations estimates, doing so would prevent up to 1 billion people from being forced to migrate due to climate change impacts by 2050.

Efleda Bautista, leader of Super Typhoon "Yolanda" (Haiyan) survivors' group People Surge, shared the story of how her community in Tacloban, Leyte struggled to recover from the disaster. While the government provided emergency shelter assistance to some families, around 14,000 coastal families were not given immediate financial aid, which was much needed to install amenities such as water and electricity. Some houses were also built on private lands, making staying there in the long-term contentious, Bautista said.

For months, the survivors had to transfer from makeshift tents to bunkhouses before finally moving to relocation sites. However, Bautista's group found that "there was no provision for water and electricity in the relocation sites, so they [the people] had to go back to their old villages."

The lack of social support forced families to relocate to the mountains, away from their preferred livelihood as fisherfolk. Others chose to return to their old homes near the coasts, which are now classified as no-build zones.

Even years after Yolanda, Bautista's group continues to campaign on behalf of the displaced families that continue to face the super typhoon's aftermath. She criticized the tide embankment project, which the local government started in 2016 to protect communities from storm surges. Not only would it destroy more mangrove forests, but it would also mean that "these people are being threatened by demolitions because they said you have to transfer."

"This is a call for the international community to look into our plight in Eastern Visayas and maybe they can work together that justice will be given to us," she said.

Root causes of a crisis

Lidy Nacpil, regional coordinator of the regional alliance Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and

Development, remarked that the financial drivers of globalization in the past four decades have also led to the increase of climate migrants.

Despite numerous pledges, public and private financial institutions such as the World Bank continue to be "the primary drivers that are still perpetuating and, in fact expanding the fossil fuel industry," she said.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center reported that about 28 million people were newly displaced globally in 2018, the majority of whom are forced to flee their homes from disasters. One-third of all new displacements occurred in the Asia-Pacific region, with a combined 8.5 million people from the Philippines, China, and Indonesia being displaced by weather-related hazards alone.

Despite this, Sonny Africa, executive director of the Philippine-based IBON Foundation, noted the region would observe an increase in its coal consumption partly because of current government policies and economic infrastructure. He emphasized that these "shape how we consume things, how things are produced, how capital is invested . . . how irresponsible, how reckless we plunder the environment."

Nacpil also called out financial institutions for funding solutions, which "are not only false, but they are also slowing down the implementation of real solutions." Furthermore, she noted that the different functions of nature are now being deconstructed and being sold in the trading and stock markets instead of addressing the basic needs of the people.

"It's not about producing energy for people and communities; this is about investing in this area for profit," Nacpil said.

David Boyd, UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and the Environment, stated in a video message that "the most important solution is that we need to deal with our addiction to fossil fuels." Excessive burning of coal, oil, and natural gas not only worsens global warming, but also violates basic human rights to a healthful life.

Investments in renewable energy and adaptation measures have to be accelerated to further reduce socioeconomic inequalities that make frontline communities vulnerable to climate change impacts. However, these efforts would not be enough until countries quickly decarbonize their economies, per Boyd.

"We also need to stop building coal-fired power plants and close down coal-fired electricity-generating facilities," he added.

John Leo Algo is a member of the Climate Tracker and the Haribon Foundation. This article was published through the support of Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and Climate Tracker's Climate Journalism Fellowship.



Bridging communities toward a climate-resilient Philippines

Below is the second part of the presentation delivered during The Manila Times' 3rd Annual Philippine Model Cities and Municipalities with the theme "Building Better Landscapes for the Next Generation" held at New World Manila Bay Hotel.

People's Survival Fund (PSF)

THIS year's Communities for Resilience (CORE) rollout is specifically focused on enhancing Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAPs), which could serve as strong basis and reference for PSF project proposal development.

Since the PSF grant approval and disbursement system was established, the PSF Board has approved the following six climate change adaptation projects amounting to P330 million:

- Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Response as Coping Mechanism to Resiliency in Lanao, Surigao del Sur (P39.08 million)
- Siargao Climate Field School for Farmers and Fisherfolks in Del Carmen, Siargao Islands, Surigao del Norte (P80.7 million)
- Building Resilience through Community-based Ecological Farming in San Francisco, Camotes Island, Cebu (P33.89 million)
- Promoting Resiliency and Climate-Informed Gerona in Tarlac (P38.1 million)
- Establishment and Sustainable Management of River Ecosystem in Kitcharao, Agusan del Norte (P28.5 million)
- Saub Watershed Ecosystem Rehabilitation and Flood Risk Reduction for Increased Resilience in Sarangani (P104 million).



ALL ABOUT CHOICES

LUDWIG O. FEDERIGAN

Through the years, we have simplified documentary requirements for the application process to one letter of intent, accomplished PSF proposal template, reference documents such as LCCAP, Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, Climate and Disaster Risk Assessment and annual investment plans for local government units (LGUs) and certificate of accreditation for local community organizations.

This low-approval rate is attributed to the fact that most of the proposals received by the PSF Board Secretariat at the Department of Finance have been either business-as-usual projects or those kinds usually funded under regular programs of national government agencies, and not climate change adaptation the law asks.

This is why this year we are widening the scope of technical support to LGUs for accessing the PSF. An e-learning platform has been developed, and a series of one-on-one mentoring sessions is set for this quarter. They aim to improve the soundness and worthiness of submitted proposals and to assist LGUs in developing full-blown proposals from their concept notes.

The PSF e-Learning Platform, which runs through an open source learning management system, will be conducted via a 12-week online course for LGUs and community organizations to enhance their knowledge on climate and disaster risk and vulnerability assessment, the PSF and

its approval processes, and other sources of climate finance. There will be two batches per year, which will run from August to October and February to June.

Employing the latest information technology, we are also set to launch the PSF Monitoring and Evaluation System where proponents can track their proposals and submit documents online. In this manner, the process of accessing the fund becomes easier and more convenient and with lesser costs to the proponents. The system will also ensure a more efficient and transparent evaluation and approval process for PSF grants.

Ways forward strategies for LGU engagement in local climate action

As we explore new ways of thinking and doing in order to build the capacity and the climate resilience of our local communities, we hope that together with local government leaders, we could pursue the following:

First, strengthen cooperation between and among the national and local governments and the science and academic community on mainstreaming climate change adaptation and mitigation in local development planning within the region.

In line with this, I am pleased to share with you that we in are pursuing the formation of multi-stakeholder consortiums among national government agencies, state universities and colleges, private universities and research institutes. We see the networking of state universities and colleges and higher education institutions as key to the sustainability of CORE as a capacity building

A conspiracy to destroy planet Earth?

DONALD Trump, if he is not forgotten like a bad nightmare, will probably be remembered as the President Who Kept His Deadly Campaign Promises. Not that politicians are normally liars. Once in office, a political leader finds himself no longer just the leader of his political party but the leader of the whole country. In the case of the US, the President of the United States is leader of the so-called free world; anyway, a leader of the whole world.

It is thus simply weird that President Trump should adopt as the theme and policy of his administration America First. It is as though America were just a former colony of itself, or just like the Philippines. Don't you remember a Philippine president who once had a similar policy? The Carlos P. Garcia administration's policy was "Filipino First," but unlike Trump's, Garcia's slogan did not have an overarching application. Garcia called on the private sector to substitute imported goods with Philippine-made ones, and for the public to patronize the latter. That was about all. It would take Garcia's successor, Diosdado Macapagal, to change the country's National Day from July 4 to June 12. It would take Macapagal's successor, Ferdinand Marcos, to assert the country's sovereignty over the American military installations in the Philippines and considerably reduce the territory occupied by them. And it would take a volcanic eruption of global magnitude for the US to remove its military installations from the country willingly.

A fight fit for a superpower

The US during its last presidential election campaign was yet the only superpower in the world. It therefore surprised everybody when President Trump made good on his campaign promise to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The struggle to save the planet from annihilation and humanity from extinction is obviously and surely a fight fit for a superpower. How can Trump be in denial of the conclusion of all the world's scientists worthy of being called scientists that the dangers of climate change have been bought about by human activity, but that timely action by the peoples, governments and nations of the world can save the planet from annihilation and humanity from extinction? No, President Trump is not stupid. I fear that one cannot exculpate Trump from being possibly the one whom Nostradamus prophesied as the anti-



AMBASSADORS'
CORNER

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Christ, the Devil himself, as shown by his rendering Mr. Muller incapable of clear and courageous English; his turning of the US Senate and the Attorney General into his obsequious lapdogs; mesmerizing the pious denizens of the Bible Belt to turn blind to his serial immoralities, and spellbind others with the hocus-pocus he makes on his tax returns, and forgetful that because all Americans are immigrants or descendants of immigrants, except for the American Indians, Trump's immigration policies lack heart and reason.

Edicts of Mammon

Trump has not simply withdrawn from the Paris Agreement. He has championed the Edicts of Mammon as drawn up by publicists of the fossil fuel companies. He has even appointed representatives of those companies to the helm of the US Environment Policy Administration, mandating them to reverse the initiatives put in place by the previous administration in fulfillment of US commitments under the Climate Change Agreement. The Trump administration is now also penalizing state governments setting tail pipe and other standards to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It has actively prevented international conferences from including climate change in their agenda and output statements.

There is no end, it appears, to what Trump will do to prevent anything from being in the way of the US becoming not only self-sufficient in fossil fuel resources but also the No. 1 producer of oil in the world. Never mind if the US maintains its position as one the biggest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the world. Paradoxically, Trump's position springs from his faith that the technology will be invented to save the planet from climate change. Unfortunately, scientists and engineers doubt that an effective technology can be developed in time before the earth's path to destruction becomes irreversible.

There has been recent evidence that the Trump position on climate change does not only come from a pigheaded denial of science, but from a desire to take advantage of the misfortunes of others. Consider Secretary of State

Mike Pompeo's starting speech at this year's Arctic Council meeting, where members were concerned about the effects of the rapidly shrinking levels of sea ice in the polar region and its inhabitants, except the US delegate.

"The Arctic is at the forefront of opportunity and abundance. It houses 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil, 30 percent of undiscovered gas, an abundance of uranium, rare earth, gold, diamonds and millions of square miles of untapped resources, fisheries galore. ... Steady reductions in sea ice are opening new passages and opportunities for trade. This could potentially slash the time it takes to travel between Asia and the West by 20 days. Arctic sea lanes could become the 21st century Suez and Panama canals." Pompeo focused his speech on the threats of possible competition from Russia and China in the use of these waterways.

Even more startling has been the news of the offer of President Trump to buy Greenland as the future site of a Trump Tower and resorts. He called the Prime Minister of Denmark "nasty" when she told him Greenland was not for sale. Why, pray, would Denmark leave it to the US to exploit the rich natural resources of their territory if they indeed existed?

Catastrophic effects

Absent in all these was concern that the disappearance of the sea ice due to global warming and climate change is causing the extinction of thousands of species and the means of livelihood of indigenous communities. It has also been feared that the melting of the ice caps could release the germs of the bubonic plague and other ancient epidemics that have been buried under the ice.

There is even less concern that the reduction of the sea ice in the polar regions would have catastrophic effects on sea levels and the weather worldwide. Rising sea levels have submerged more and more of neighboring Tuvalu and other islands of the Pacific. In Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, seawater has seeped into rice fields, killing the rice; and rice farmers have switched to growing hay instead. The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is faced with the challenge of developing rice varieties that can withstand saline water.

The catastrophic effects of climate change have already visited all around the world in the form of extremely hot summers and cold winters, in more frequent and destructive storms, and in record heavy rainfall and flooding. Super Typhoon "Yolanda" that

hit Leyte, it seems, was not the worst yet that could befall the Philippines, judging by the hurricane that recently flattened the Bahamas. Thousands have lost their lives, their homes and properties. With governments increasingly unable to cope with the scale of the damage left by these climate change catastrophes, lawyers should be ready to file suits on behalf of victims, holding Mr. Trump and the fossil fuel companies responsible for the sufferings the latter have caused them.

The teenage activist Greta Thunberg, who has inspired a global movement involving young and old calling for action on climate change, hit the target right on center when she criticized in her recent speech at the United Nations leaders and policy-makers "who cared more about money and fairy tales of economic growth than collapsing ecosystems, mass extinctions, and people suffering due to climate change." How can this not be directed at Trump when the US is now the only country outside of the Paris Agreement?

And no leader is more combative and contemptuous about climate defenders than Trump. He mocks Greta in his tweet. Unable to distinguish between climate and weather, he mocked climate scientists in the middle of the last, very cold winter. "What global warming are they taking about?" His attitude reminds one of Nero, singing and playing the lyre while Rome burns, in the 1951 movie "Quo Vadis." The actor who played Nero, Peter Ustinov, had an uncanny resemblance to Trump.

I think it would be a miracle if Trump changes his attitude towards climate change. Ergo, we can only invoke divine justice. Maybe he could be struck by lightning while he gives another of his arrogant, rambling press conferences in the lawn of the White House, dishing out lies, answering criticisms with *argumentum ad hominem* (personal attacks) and *argumentum ad baculum* (fear of force).

How can one rely on the US electorate to dismiss him from office when they elected him the last time despite the better qualifications and the smaller shortcomings of his rival? How can one trust their wisdom when they keep an Electoral College that picks the loser rather than the winner of the popular vote, and when they keep a Second Amendment to their Constitution protecting the owners or holders of weapons of war attacking innocent people in schools, houses of worship and shopping malls?