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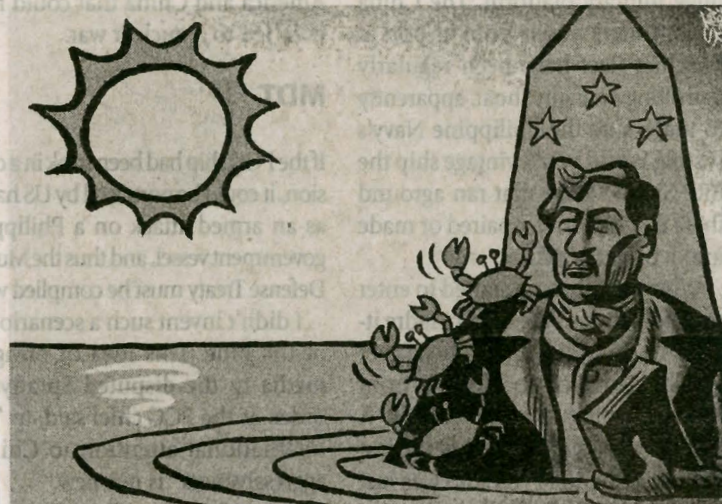
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Climate change as a deadly threat to mankind



"Buhay, kabuhayan at kinabukasan ng bawat Pilipino ang nakataya sa hamon ng nagbabagong klima."

THE quote is taken from the paper presented by Assistant Secretary Rommel Cuenca of the Climate Change Commission at the 16th Philippine Insurance Summit held last April 26, 2023 at the Dusit Thani Hotel. This summit was hosted by the *Insurance Philippines*, the Philippine insurance publication, and the Insurance Institute for Asia and the Pacific.

The topic of climate change has become even more relevant and timely after a series of natural catastrophic events which occurred last year. The unusual weather conditions we are experiencing now are just one of the signs that the effect may be more serious than originally thought of. The summit was graced by the presence of our newly appointed Insurance commissioner, Reynaldo Regalado, and deputy commissioner Erickson Balmes. The keynote speaker was the one and only Dean Tony la Viña of the Manila Observatory and a popular TV personality.



INSURANCE INSIGHTS

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"MING" JACINTO**

strengthening partnerships with important sectors of society. They are ready to guide the pertinent government agency/agencies and the communities in adopting the sustainable practices needed to mitigate severe climate change conditions. Dr. Renato Solidum, the head of the Department of Science and Technology (DoST), correctly said in his presentation that we should be resilient — "reduce various losses before the occurrence of the hazards and insure effective and efficient disaster response, rehabilitation and recovery programs"

The insurance industry has programs and projects which provide protection and mitigate the risks even before they happen. Speakers from the global reinsurance players like the Munich Re and Swiss Re as well as the Howden Brokers and Milliman Consultants have designed solutions and products that can ensure protection just in case these events happen. Solutions like parametric insurance are now being introduced in the global market. The local insurance industry can do an intensive study on how this product can be an alternative to the traditional insurance solutions.



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Various speakers and presenters both from government and the private sector described the various threats that our people and properties can be exposed to because of the worsening climate changes. Typhoons are super strong, flooding cover wider areas and take a long time to recede destroying plants and vegetation that are the source of income of the greater part of our population. There are many initiatives that have been undertaken by both the government and private sector to provide education and funding to places where these are needed most. My colleague in insurance has written extensively about Arise Philippines, the organization whose mission is aligned with the Sendai Framework Disaster and Risk Reduction. Risk management and disaster resilience in all sectors of society should be promoted in all sectors of society and this can be achieved through dissemination of the information by educational institutions.

The Climate Change Commission, an agency under the Office of the President, is tasked with developing the country's strategies, positions and plans on climate change among relevant stakeholders by establishing and

A very interesting part of the Insurance Summit was the panel discussion on the role of each stakeholder in countering the effects of climate change in which various speakers/presenters participated, including veteran media practitioner Ted Torres and a representative from the agricultural sector, Mr. Michael Caballes of the Bukid Amara. We wish we had the whole afternoon to discuss the various issues and solutions presented by the participants.

Listening to all the discussions during the summit clearly gave me the impression that we know what to do and how to do them with regard to the impact of climate change in our country. But the question begging to be asked is how do we put together these ideas. Who will cascade them to the communities, to the people who are the most affected by these harsh conditions? The Climate Change Commission? The DENR? The DILG?



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Waste-to-energy has climate change written all over it

LAST week, the Cebu-based SunStar Cebu newspaper published a report about the massive losses experienced by vegetable farmers in Cebu City's mountain barangay (villages) due to soaring heat and insufficient water supply. The Cebu City government has responded to the crisis by providing additional water hoses, drums to store water, knapsack sprayers, fungicides and pesticides. Whether it will suffice to keep the farmers afloat and ensure adequate supply of vegetables to consumers in Metro Cebu remains to be seen as the end of summer is still weeks away.

Addressing the crisis and its immediate effects is urgent — and so is finding ways to lessen the farmers' vulnerability to weather conditions. While a scorching sun and less rainfall are the common characteristics of summer — why we also call it dry season — climate change has led to more extreme heat while we've gone from little to even less rainfall. Lower than normal rainfall and the faster evapotranspiration — meaning, water in soil and plants evaporates faster due to the higher temperature — is bad news for farmers in Cebu City and elsewhere on Planet Earth. Millions of people on the Horn of Africa (the easternmost part of Africa) are suffering due to the effects of prolonged drought and extreme heat. Says World Weather Attribution in its recently released report: "Climate change has made events like the current drought [in the Horn of Africa] much stronger and more likely; a conservative estimate is that such droughts have become about 100 times more likely." Yes, 100 times.

Considering the threat of climate change, it is reassuring to note that the Asian Development Bank, in its own words, "has placed com-



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bating climate change at the top of its agenda, elevating its climate finance ambition and intensifying its climate endeavors." But as the organization is preparing for its 56th annual meetings which will run from May 2 to 5 at Incheon, South Korea, it must ask itself if climate change is indeed at the top of its agenda. This is because the ADB keeps funding waste-to-energy facilities in a number of countries. These projects aren't simply categorized as solid waste management projects or even as energy-generating projects. No, these incinerator projects are packaged as projects that promote renewable energy and environmental sustainability, projects that mitigate climate change.

Take the Greater Malé Waste-to-Energy Project in the Maldives. The project, in the eyes of the ADB, will "enhance livability and environmental sustainability, including air quality and ocean health in the project area," "mitigate climate change," and "improve infrastructure resilience to disaster and climate risks" (ADB Project Data Sheet). The "bar" against which the ADB is measuring these outcomes is the existing less than optimal garbage collecting, and open dumping and burning of garbage which are indeed polluting air, land and ocean. While the project contains other components of solid waste management than the waste-to-energy plant, the 500-tons-a-day trash burner is its centerpiece.

The area to "benefit" from the waste-to-energy project includes Greater Malé and 32 outlying



■ Years of drought and armed conflict have driven more than 6 million Somalis to the brink of hunger. The International Committee of the Red Cross has provided assistance to hundreds of affected families to adopt fishing, as shown in this March 2023 photo, as an alternative livelihood. Resources of international aid organizations such as ICRC are strained as the effects of climate change get more severe. PHOTO BY ABDIKARIM MOHAMED/ICRC

islands which together are host to some 86 resorts. The Maldives, with a population of about 500,000, is borrowing close to \$100 million for this project.

The World Bank, in contrast, is supporting a project where focus is on finding alternatives to single-use plastics, waste prevention, developing new business models and providing relevant training.

Maldives is a nation whose very physical existence is threatened as a result of rising sea levels, caused by climate change. So it's ironic that a huge, multimillion dollar state-of-the-art waste incinerator, the ultimate symbol of the produce-consume-dispose way of life that has led us to where we are today, will rise in this archipelagic nation.

Is this really the best that the ADB can do, despite its army of experts, its vast resources, its more than five decades of institutional experience, and the fact that its decision-making

process isn't dominated by the need for short-term political expediency? It is in desperate times like these that especially smaller nations, vulnerable communities and concerned citizens look to international organizations for leadership, for long-term perspective and vision. Sadly, the ADB has chosen not to provide such leadership.

We can't combat climate change with incinerators. They are part of the problem, part of the development model that is built on ever expanding production and consumption. Incinerators fit perfectly into this mindless growth trajectory. For Maldives, the end point of this trajectory is to vanish as the sea level rises. For the Horn of Africa, the end point is scorched, barren earth that can't sustain life. For Cebu City's farmers and others for whom it is not yet too late, the current situation must serve as a wake-up call not just to the effects of climate change but its causes as well.



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BORACAY TASK FORCE'S RETURN PITCHED

By MA. STELLA F. ARNALDO
@akosistellaBM

Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR

THE Department of Tourism (DOT) is pushing for the re-establishment of the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) to oversee the management of the popular resort island.

Sources who attended the stakeholders meeting on April 28 at Savoy Hotel with Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco separately told the BUSINESSMIRROR, "She shared that the Task Force will be revived and will finish the projects left over by the previous task force. She'll probably recommend a stakeholder seat." The DOT is just "waiting for the approval of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to reconstitute the task force," said a government source familiar with the matter. As before, the task force will also be composed of

the DOT, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

The BIATF was set up in 2018 to oversee the rehabilitation of the island, which led to the latter's closure for six months, from April 26. Its term ended in June 2022 with the supposed completion of the projects. But among the projects still remaining are the main road and drainage projects, the latter of which was supposed to have been completed by the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (Tieza) in 2019. Due to the pandemic and the turnover of some portions to the Department of Public Works and Highways for implementation, Tieza completion of the drainage project is delayed anew. **(See, "Tieza to resume implementation of at least 82 LGU projects halted by coronavirus pandemic," in the BUSINESSMIRROR, March 8, 2023.)**

Clarification sought

STAKEHOLDERS also raised the possibility of increasing the island's carrying capacity for tourists, which currently stands at 9,215 at any given time. Carrying capacity refers to an ecosystem's ability to support people and other living things without negative effects. The carrying capacity was breached on three days during the recent Lenten break, similar to what happened in 2022.

Stakeholders also sought the "revision or abrogation" of DENR Memorandum Circular 2018-07, which mandates resorts with 40 or more rooms to establish a sewerage treatment plant (STP). Already a controversial issue before its implementation, resort owners pointed out its redundancy "as we are presently disposing treated water to the concessionaires' STP, which operates at only 50 percent of its capacity."

SEE "BORACAY," A2

They also asked for clarification on the use of "temporary structures" within the 25+5 meter easement, which led to the displacement or closure of some resorts, and the removal of lounging chairs, beach beds, and umbrellas on the beach front. One resort manager noted, "Recently, we've observed a concerning trend with our international visitors, particularly those arriving via cruise ships. Upon discovering the lack of beach beds and umbrellas, these guests tend to promptly return to their ships," as reported to them by the local tour operator.

Hyperbaric chamber needed

FRASCO, the sources said, promised to discuss the carrying capacity and other specific environmental issues with the DENR. The tourism chief

made the quick day trip to Boracay, which was celebrating its Love Boracay festival (formerly Laboracay) for the May 1 holiday break.

In its news statement, the DOT said Frasco vowed to prioritize the island for the setup of a hyperbaric chamber. Stakeholders added the agency promised to send the hyperbaric chamber "in 2024 to enhance the diving community in Boracay, also a medical oxygen therapy."

Prior to the pandemic, Boracay received over 2 million visitors, more than half of which were international travelers. Last year, 1.75 million tourists, mostly locals, visited the island, which was among the first destinations to reopen during the pandemic. DOT data showed 687,139 visitors in Boracay from January to April 24 this year.



GMA, Nestlé PH launch Reduce, Reuse, Recycle advocacy campaign through Kalikasanovela series



IN photo from left to right are SPARKLE artists Allen Ansay, Sofia Pablo, Ruru Madrid, and Bianca Umali are joined by Senior Vice President and Head of Corporate Affairs of Nestlé Philippines Jose Uy III, and Vice President and Head of Corporate Affairs and Communications of GMA Network Angel Javier Cruz during the media launch for Kalikasanovela series.

THE plastic waste crisis has been a longstanding environmental problem in the country largely due to the gaps in solid waste management (SWM) systems, including recovery, segregation, and recycling. According to the World Bank, 2.7 million tons of plastic waste is generated in the Philippines each year. The country also has one of the highest rates of mismanaged plastic waste globally, resulting in plastics ending up as litter and in landfills, and eventually leaking into bodies of water.

To help address this, GMA Network and Nestlé Philippines forged a partnership for the planet with the aim to promote proper SWM and engage more Filipinos in building a movement for environmental sustainability through educational content. One of its highlights is the launch of the Kalikasanovela series starring SPARKLE artists.

Through four 30-second videos, GMA and Nestlé PH tapped on the Filipinos' love of entertainment and storytelling to communicate the importance of the 3Rs—reducing, reusing and recycling plastic waste—and inspire consumers to embrace their role as stewards for the planet.

"This marks a milestone as we launch Kalikasanovela, a fusion of our love for storytelling with our love for the

environment. It is our belief in GMA that we need a concerted and cooperative effort to save our Earth and keep it livable. This is why our partnership with Nestlé is very significant for us. With our complementary strengths and the same vision, we hope to encourage as many Filipinos to be more responsible in their everyday living and be kinder to our environment," said Angel Javier Cruz, Vice President and Head of Corporate Affairs and Communications of GMA Network.

Each Kalikasanovela episode makes use of a well-loved Filipino movie and TV series genre to tell a short story about plastic waste. It also shows Nestlé PH's initiatives and milestones in addressing the plastic waste crisis, including upcycling sachets into school chairs, reducing plastic in their product packaging, collecting and diverting over 60 million kilos of plastic waste from the environment, and educating its employees to reduce, reuse, and recycle plastics in their homes.

In celebration of Earth Day, GMA Network and Nestlé Philippines launched the Kalikasanovela last April 17, 2023, wherein— together with Sparkle artists Bianca Umali, Ruru Madrid, and Sofia Pablo who starred in Kalikasanovela episodes Katok, Ibaon, and Sirena, respectively talked about their experiences and learnings from participating in the project.

"As artists, it's our responsibility to use our platforms influence for good, especially when it comes to matters concerning the environment. Being part of the Kalikasanovela series is my way of doing this—by helping spread awareness about the plastic waste problem in the Philippines," said Umali.

For Madrid, it's not enough to just talk about these advocacies, you also have to practice what you preach. "Understanding that if all of us will do small acts to reduce, reuse, and recycle can have a big positive impact on the environment. I know we can do it. We just have to start now."

"Instead of using single-use plastics when I eat out or shop, I bring reusable items to reduce my consumption," Pablo shared. "There are many alternatives to single-use plastics that are readily available in the market from water bottles and utensils to shopping bags. It's up to us to make that choice to help our planet in our own little ways."

Other SPARKLE artists who starred in the series include Sanya Lopez for Paalam, and Allen Ansay for Sirena. You can watch all Kalikasanovela episodes on GMA 7 and the digital platforms of GMA and Nestlé Philippines.

"We thank GMA Network for sharing our vision of a waste-free future. Our goal for the Kalikasanovela series and this partnership as a whole is to inspire more Filipinos to be part of the solution in addressing the plastic waste problem even in ways as simple as reusing, reducing and recycling plastic waste. We have to remember, *tayo ang bida sa ating kwentong pangkalikasan*. Together, we have what it takes to create a better world and shape a waste-free future for our children and for generations to come," said Jose Uy III, SVP & Head of Corporate Affairs of Nestlé Philippines.

Last year, 400 GMA employees, including SPARKLE artists, joined sustainability workshops, and volunteered in coastal cleanup and tree growing activities together with Nestlé PH employees and other partners such as the Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).