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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



PROTECT IMPORTANT ECOSYSTEM

CAGAYAN DE ORO MAYOR SEEKS HELP FROM OTHER LOCAL GOV'TS TO REHAB

RIVER DAMAGED BY MINING

By **Ryan D. Rosaura**
@InqNational

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY— Mayor Rolando Uy on Friday called for collaborative efforts to rehabilitate the Iponan River, a common resource of the city and adjoining localities, from the massive damage wrought by illegal mining activities.

"The damage caused by illegal mining in Iponan River affects both Cagayan de Oro and Opol town in Misamis Oriental as this is a shared river ecosystem. Let us work together to restore it," Uy said in a statement.

The illegal mining operations along the river again

came to light following a raid last May 13 on a mine site in Opol's villages of Nangcaon and Cauyunan. The operation used heavy equipment and involved five Chinese employing at least 11 locals.

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the illegal operation destroyed more than 7 hectares of forest cover.

Improved coordination

"I hope that the recently conducted joint operation and the succeeding monitoring and rehabilitation efforts will bring about positive changes and bring to life again the Iponan

River," Environment Secretary Antonia Loyzaga said in a statement on Thursday.

Uy said he would want improved coordination between the local governments of the city, Opol town and Misamis Oriental province in rehabilitating mined areas in the critical Iponan River watershed.

Apart from maintaining law enforcement drive against illegal miners, Uy said it is also essential to strengthen development efforts in communities along the river.

The City Local Environment and Natural Resources Office (Clenro) has been monitoring activities in the river through

its Bantay Suba (River Watch) operations, using drone-based mapping technology to aid ground verification.

In its recent report to Task Force Kinaiyahan, a body composed mainly of the Philippine National Police, the Philippine Army, the DENR and the local government, Clenro found traces of extractive activities on the city's side of the river.

The 60-kilometer long river snakes from the hinterlands of Iligan City in Lanao del Norte down to Opol and on to Cagayan de Oro before draining toward Macajalar Bay.

The mountains along the river, especially in the hinter-

lands, have been the subject of massive illegal gold extraction activities in the last two decades, employing the hydraulic mining method that uses high-pressure water trained on the hills to dislodge materials believed to contain mineral deposits. The sediments are then channeled to a sluice box that pans the gold.

Massive siltation

Illegal mining operations had been observed in the villages of Taglimao, Pigsagan, Tuburan and Tumpagon of Cagayan de Oro.

Citing DENR data on the river's water quality monitoring,

local environmentalist Ben-Cyrus Ellorin told the Inquirer that mining in the area peaked in 2010 when its total suspended solids were at 992 mg/liter as against the 50 mg/liter tolerable level.

That indicated massive siltation which, in turn, means increased sluicing activities upstream, Ellorin explained.

The river's "dying state" prompted environmental groups to seek the issuance by the Court of Appeals of a Writ of Kalikasan, which was granted in February 2013. The court directed environmental and law enforcement agencies to act to stop the illegal mining operations in the area. INQ



FOR generations, children and their families in the poverty-stricken province of Camarines Norte, Bicol, have relied on gold mining as their enduring way of life. In this photo taken in December 2016, workers painstakingly sift through soil and debris with their bare hands, utilizing toxic mercury in their search for gold. The hazardous nature of this practice cannot be understated, as severe exposure to mercury can lead to devastating health consequences such as kidney and respiratory failure, palsy and damage to the nervous system, and, in some tragic cases, even death. **BY JANETTE RIBANDO (SPECIALIVE CORRESPONDENT BY HONOR)**



GOLDEN PROMISE

DOST spearheads pilot test of relatively new method to extract minerals from ores sans environmental damage

By MANUEL T. CAYON

DAVAO CITY—The outcome of a government-initiated gold processing method in the mining industry is churning out a promising future for mineral extraction among small-scale operators: No more mercury and cyanide scare to blight people's lives, the river systems and the environment as a whole.

Eight years after the project "Integrated Gold-copper Mineral Processing Pilot Plant in the Regions" was field-tested in October 2015 in Nabunturan, Davao de Oro, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) reported increased earnings for small-

scale miners and the absence of severe environmental pollution associated with small-scale mining in the past.

"The latest performance of the facility has shown that it can increase the earnings of small-scale miners up to 86.5 percent, with

opportunities for further improvement," the DOST told the *BusinessMirror*.

With non-pollutive efficiency to extract gold from the ore and lesser risk of an environmental damage, the new processing method may likely ease the negative impression against small-scale mining and a future gold rush, and offer a better income outlook for people seeking their fortune from small-scale mining operations.

Critical assistance

DOST Region XI Director Anthony Sales said small-scale mining operations continue to thrive alongside corporate mining operations, which are mostly found in mineral-rich Davao de Oro province, formerly called Compostela Valley.

He said the small-scale mining operations still needed critical assistance to avoid polluting the environment because of their reliance on the poisonous mercury and

cyanide to extract gold. "The problem with small-scale mining operations is that these are unregulated or non-regulated. And they cause pollution to the environment, aside from also endangering [the miners'] health," Sales added.

This, he added, is one reason the DOST is embarking on a program called Community-led Non-Cyanide Non-Mercury Mining Technology. The initiative was pilot-tested in Davao de Oro.

Focus on small-scale miners

THE unresolved plight of small-scale miners and the persistent challenge in mass transportation systems are on the spotlight in this year's regional scientific meeting in Mindanao, one of three legs of meetings before the annual national gathering of scientists, researchers and academicians in Manila.

Experts from the Department of Mining of the University of the

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Philippines-Diliman said the initiative would apply the new ore processing method "since this technology extracts double amount of gold than the usual method."

"This also extracts copper from the same ores in a single process," the provincial information office said, quoting UP experts.

New processing

THE Integrated Gold-Copper Mineral Processing Pilot Plant (IGCMPPP) facility in Nabunturan houses a new technology called CLINN-GEM (Community-Led Integrated Non-Cyanide Non-Mercury Gold Extraction Method), which was developed by UP-Diliman and funded by the DOST-Philippine Council for Industry, Energy, and Emerging Technology Research and Development (PCIHERD).

The technology uses various processes, including gravity concentration, flotation and leaching, in addition to the typical crushing and grinding processes.

"The gravity concentration process uses a gravity concentrator and shaking table to recover free gold, which is not associated with other minerals, by taking advantage of the differences in densities between minerals and metals," the DOST said.

In contrast, the flotation process utilizes flotation cells to recover gold associated with sulfide



THE entire CLINN-GEM (Community-Led Integrated Non-Mercury Non-Cyanide Gold Extraction Method) pilot facility assembled at the UP Department of Mining, Metallurgical, and Materials Engineering building, where the entire process takes place, from gold extraction to waste treatment. GLENN LLANETA, UP NPIR (UP/DOCPAN-BETTER END OF ALUMINUM)

minerals by altering their surface properties with the help of Botation reagents such as frothers, collectors and pH adjusters, which increase its hydrophobicity.

This produces a gold concentrate that is fed into the next process, which is leaching. Chlorination leaching is used to recover the gold from the concentrate through the dissolution and eventual precipitation of gold particles.

"Finally, these particles are refined in a furnace to obtain the highest possible purity of gold," it added.

The IGCMPPP facility is composed of six sets of mineral processing packages and 10 laboratory services, all of which are already enrolled in the Provincial Local Revenue Code of Davao de Oro. The team that manages the facility is currently addressing risks and opportunities, including but not limited to increasing inventory buffer of supplies and equipment, adding technical personnel, and other measures to ensure consistent quality of service for the public, the DOST said.

Remaining lab

THE Davao de Oro province wanted the pilot testing of the processing plant to produce positive results "to help small-scale mining communities through the new technologically innovative and pro-environment mineral processing and extractive methods."

"This is a safer method on gold-processing for it uses no harmful chemicals like mercury and cyanide," it said.

The technology was also tested in Benguet, Bicol and the Caraga Region. However, only the Davao de Oro facility has remained operational. "This could be attributed to our different implementation strategy, which involves the active participation of the Provincial Local Government of Davao de Oro (PLGU-DdO) led by Gov. Dorothy Montejó-Gonzaga," the DOST said.

PLGU-DdO has been supporting the project since 2018 through the Green Mining Program implemented by its Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office. The IGCMPPP is managed jointly by DOST XI and PLGU-DdO, "and both agencies have invested in designating a full-time workforce that reports to the facility," the DOST added.

Corporate help

THE facility has not been totally adopted yet by any of the small-scale mining operations existing in Davao de Oro. However, one positive note is that "starting this year, the IGCMPPP has secured the support of Apex Mining Co. Inc. through the initiative of Governor Gonzaga," the DOST said.

The support would be in the form of laboratory supplies to enhance and expand the services of the IGCMPPP laboratory, and immersion and training of small-scale miners to encourage them and build their capacity in adopting the green mining technology.

Despite the improved outlook—earnings of small-scale miners to rise by up to 86.5 percent—the DOST cautioned, "This level of performance cannot be guaranteed for all types of ores mined in Davao de Oro." To address this issue, the IGCMPPP Laboratory will be equipped with P9.65 million worth of equipment, including an X-ray diffractometer and X-ray fluorescence spectrometer, through the DOST OneLab for TED project.

"These two pieces of equipment will be used to thoroughly characterize the ores to be processed in the facility and ensure their profitability," the DOST said.

The IGCMPPP is also involved in researching other green mining strategies and currently has an active collaboration with Mapua Malayan College of Mindanao through a DOST-PCIHERD-funded project entitled "Innovative technology for refractory gold extraction using deep eutectic solvent (DES) and hypochlorite solution."

Issue of concern

ORGANIZERS of the Mindanao Regional Scientific Meeting in April at the Acaña Hotel here identified the small-scale mining as Minahang Bayan, and topped the issues of concern in the region. It has been logged as one of the top five pressing issues in the country that could be addressed through the application of science and technology.

Small-scale mining became a national concern in the 1990s amid the gold rush in the Diwalval mountain mining village in Davao de Oro, formerly Compostela Valley, which gathered as many as 100,000 gold hunters and fortune seekers.

The massive influx of people turned the village, 25 kilometers upland from the town of Monkayo, into a ticking time bomb of lawlessness in shantytowns, with violence frequenting the crisscrossing tunnels. Reports of mine tunnel collapse were regular fare. Meanwhile, in the lowlands, farmers and residents complained of rivers poisoned by mercury and cyanide.

Mercury contamination of the rivers was also detected as far as the Davao del Norte portion of the Davao Gulf, 70 kilometers south of Monkayo. This was further aggravated by the operation of crude rock ore processing plants, called ball mills and cyanide plants, outside the poblacion of Tagum. A University of the Philippines study on the extent of mercury contamination has found the underground waters unfit for drinking.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) said 13 Minahang Bayan currently operate in the Davao Region and 15 others have filed their petition to be declared as such. Aside from these Minahang Bayan, the MGB granted small-scale mining contracts to six operations.

A Minahang Bayan is the government intervention into the unregulated, often destructive, operations of small-scale miners.

Some Minahang Bayan independently operating as small-scale miners could be seen around corporate mines, mostly in Davao de Oro and Davao Oriental. The MGB said there are 18 operations granted with the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement, and one with Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement, 51 applications for exploration permits, eight with exploration permits already and three others granted with mineral processing permit.

"Our objective is to balance the effect to the economy and the benefits that we get for sustaining society as well as the environment," Sales said.

Sales said the DOST will continue to explore ways to alleviate the plight of small-scale miners through this technology.

"I believe this is one way of democratizing science and technology and bringing the technology closer to the people, and to address the pressing problem of the mining industry," Sales said.



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Gov't told: Panaon needs protection

TACLOBAN CITY—An international organization dedicated to protecting the world's oceans has called on the government to declare Panaon Island in Southern Leyte a protected seascape, amid reports of overfishing and other destructive activities. Liza Osorio, acting vice president of Oceana Philippines, said it was urgent for Congress to pass a measure safeguarding all marine resources on Panaon Island. —STORY BY JOEY GABIETA

AB

AMONG COUNTRY'S 50 PRIORITY REEFS

OCEANA: DECLARE PANAON ISLAND A PROTECTED AREA

By Joey Gabieta
@joeygabietaINQ

TACLOBAN CITY—An international organization dedicated to protecting the world's oceans has called on Congress to declare Panaon Island in Southern Leyte a protected seascape amid reports of overfishing and potential destruction of its resources.

Lawyer Liza Osorio, acting vice president of Oceana Philippines, said it is urgent for Congress to pass the proposed measure to protect all marine resources on Panaon Island.

"We call for the urgency of the measure as we race against time in achieving the targets and more importantly, in preserving the integrity of the natural life support system that our coral reefs, mangroves, seagrasses and wetlands provide," she said in a statement released on May 18.

She added: "The destruction of these invaluable havens for the people and wildlife persists, and will get worse if we will continue to lay back and take our own sweet time taking action."

Panaon Island is part of the 50 priority reefs in the world that will likely withstand the devastating impacts of climate change, hence, the urgent need for protection and conservation, said Oceana Philippines.

The island also has coral reefs with up to 60 percent of "very good coral cover," which is way above the national average of 20 percent, the organization added.

According to environmentalists, potential causes of large-scale habitat deterioration, such as the crown-of-thorns starfish, trash and illegal fishing activities, could dramatically change the island's coral reef condition.

Pending bills

Panaon Island is composed of the towns of Liloan, San Francisco, Pintuyan and San Ricardo.

Home to 56,000 people, Panaon Island forms part of the "Coral Triangle," an area of high biodiversity that sprawls across multiple countries in the western Pacific Ocean, ac-

ording to Oceana.

In June 2022, Southern Leyte Representatives Luz Mercado and Christopherson Yap filed separate bills for the declaration of Panaon Island as a protected seascape.

A similar bill was also filed by Sen. Cynthia Villar in the Senate in January 2023.

Osorio said environmentalists are committed to support the initiatives of ensuring that at least 30 percent of the ocean, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed by 2030.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that as of 2022, only about 3.14 million hectares of the country's waters are designated as marine protected areas, a mere 1.42 percent of the country's total marine areas.

"Meeting the target will help in curbing marine biodiversity loss while providing economic benefits, food and water security, climate change adaptation and mitigation for coastal communities that depend on these ecosystems," Osorio said.

"We call for the immediate passage of the bill declaring Panaon Island as a protected seascape because it will move us closer to achieving the set target," she added.

As of January 2023, there are 114 protected areas in the country that have been declared through legislation.

Yap said he was pushing for the declaration of Panaon Island as a protected seascape for the benefit of the future generations.

"The declaration of the Panaon Island as a marine protected area is very important to me as it will ensure that our future generation would be able to experience the island as we experience today, with its diverse marine flora and fauna," he said.

"The formation of a body especially created for its protection would deter commercial vessels from encroaching in municipal waters to do their illegal acts with impunity and keep our most prized reefs from destruction," he added. INQ



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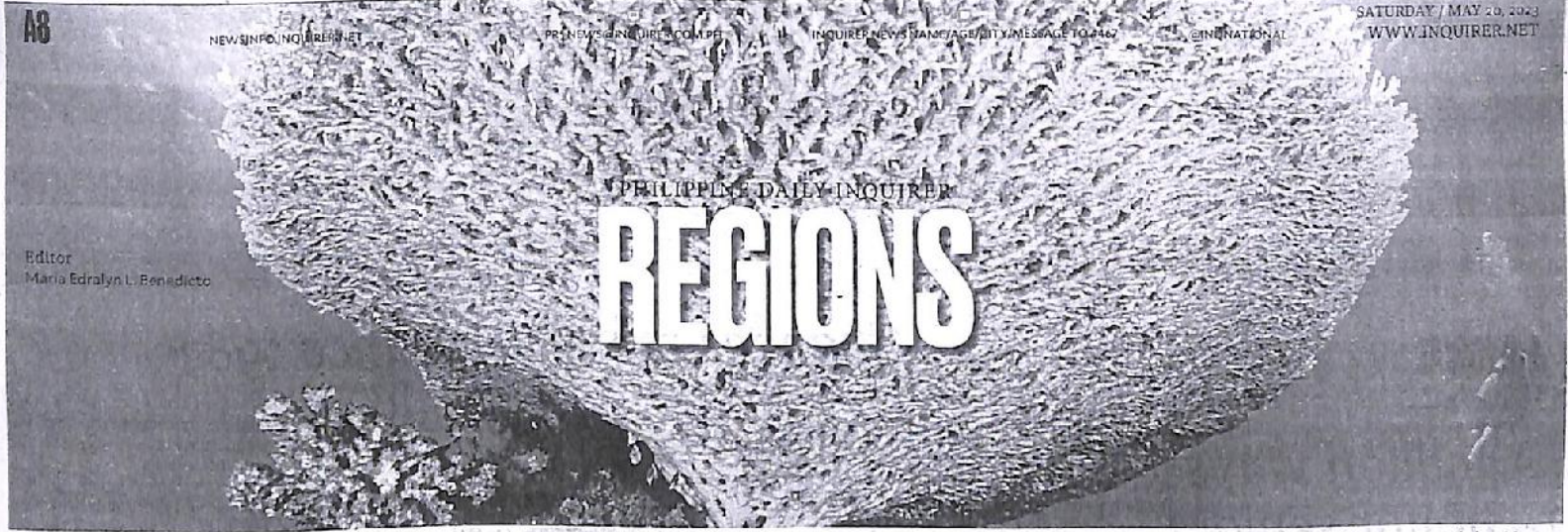
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Editor
Maria Edralyn L. Benedicto

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
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UNDERWATER VIEW A diver from Oceana Philippines swims by a table coral (Acropora) off Panaon Island in Southern Leyte in 2020. Oceana, a marine preservation advocacy group, is backing moves in Congress to declare Panaon Island a protected area. —PHOTO COURTESY OF DANNY OCAMPO OF OCEANA



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Manila Water set to complete P8.2-B Antipolo treatment plant

By RICHMOND MERCURIO

More residents in Antipolo City and nearby towns are expected to benefit starting next month with the completion of Manila Water Co.'s P8.2 billion treatment plant.

The east zone concessionaire is set to complete next month the construction of its Calawis water supply system project which will provide additional 80 million liters per day (MLD) of treated water to 919,784 population in Antipolo City and nearby towns.

The project is composed of the 80 MLD water treatment plant, pumping stations, reservoirs, and 21 kilometers of primary transmission line.

Manila Water said the facility supplies treated water to some areas

of the city including the Antipolo Government Center while preparing to commence full operations.

The raw water for the facility comes from the Tayabasan River in Antipolo City.

Manila Water said the project utilized a technology to significantly reduced footprint requirement and time for construction.

It also used pipe jacking technology, a trenchless method of installing pipes, on a portion of the pipelaying contract and for the two river crossings to bring potable water to the customers.

"Manila Water was able to establish good relationship with relevant local government Units, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Public Works and High-

ways, the affected Indigenous People- the Dumagat Remontados of Antipolo City, and the National Commission of Indigenous People which enabled us to proceed with a successful development of the project," Manila Water senior project manager Vince Siat.

"The project team has ensured that the project complies with all necessary laws and regulations emphasizing the company's adherence to social and environmental sustainability," Siat said.

Manila Water said the Calawis water supply system project is part of the company's water supply masterplan, which aims to ensure water security and supply reliability in the east zone for the next decades, while lessening dependence on Angat Dam.



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Globe-supported TSD facility empowers women waste recyclers

DIGITAL solutions platform Globe has partnered with key stakeholders to raise awareness about the importance

of e-waste management in the country and the critical role that women play in this area.

Titled "Implementation of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) Management Programs for Electric Cooperatives and Safe E-waste Management," the project is a joint undertaking by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (Unido), with funding from the Global Environment Facility.

Integrated Recycling Industries Inc.

and EcoWaste Coalition were engaged by Unido to assist in the implementation of project activities in the e-waste project sites.

A treatment, storage and disposal (TSD) facility in Barangay Dampalit, Malabon City was established through the partnership. Women waste recyclers working in the TSD facility were trained on the dismantling of e-waste and are now equipped with safe and proper e-waste recycling practices. The project created job opportunities and has empowered the women mangangalakal.

Globe provided funding support to the facility by donating a vehicle that will be used for collecting and transporting e-waste generated from

e-waste collection events initiated by the project. Globe also provided e-waste collection bins distributed to

the different office buildings at the DENR-EMB.

Women members of the Samahang Mangangalakal reported gaining more confidence along with the formal setup, better health and safety, and more stable income.

"We take pride in our involvement in this project that not only empowers women, but also helps contribute to proper e-waste management. Our commitment to building a sustainable future drives us to collaborate with our partners in promoting environmental stewardship and community empowerment," Globe Sustainability



■ Through the Globe-supported TSD facility in Malabon, women waste workers learn how to safely dismantle e-waste and get access to job opportunities. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

and Social Responsibility head Apple Evangelista said.

Visit <https://www.globe.com.ph/> for more information.



No water shortage despite El Niño threat, MWSS assures

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) has assured the public that there will be no water shortage in Metro Manila amid the threat posed by El Niño.

MWSS Administrator Leonor Cleofas said they have prepared "for the worst" in anticipation of the possible impacts of El Niño in the capital region.

"We prepare for El Niño whether it is mild, moderate, or strong. We prepare for the worst," Cleofas said at a hearing of the House

Committee on Metro Manila Development on the depleting water supply in the region on Wednesday, May 17.

Cleofas said water interruption occurs since Maynilad lowered its water production in its treatment plant in Putatan, Muntinlupa. She said Maynilad is currently producing 200 million liters per day (MLD), from 300 MLD, due to the "turbid" water of Laguna Lake.

The Laguna Lake Nephelometric Turbidity Units ▶ 4

No water shortage despite El Niño threat, MWSS assures ◀ 1

(NTU) reached 154 last month and this further increased to 233 in the first week of May. In comparison, the optimal range is between 40 to 70 only.

Cleofas said the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) has allotted an additional 52 cubic meters per second (CMS) of water to MWSS to lessen the water interruptions.

Valenzuela 2nd District Rep. Eric Martinez expressed hope that the MWSS' optimism on the state of the water supply in Metro Manila will "hold water."

"That is a bold statement to make, that we're going to overcome this El Niño. Hopefully, that bold statement of yours, ma'am, would really hold water, hopefully in the next few months," he said.

Kaliwa Dam's completion delayed

Meanwhile, the MWSS said the New Centennial Water Source (NCWS)-Kaliwa Dam project is now expected to be completed by the end of December 2026.

Cleofas said a tunnel-boring machine has started tunneling operations in Teresa, Rizal, in a bid to finish the project on the adjusted schedule.

"This is about 22 kilometers and makikita po natin ang (we will see the) tunnel-boring machine in the middle of 2026," Cleofas said during the hearing.

The Kaliwa Dam project is a 63-meter-high reservoir that will hold an initial discharge capacity of 600 MLD of water intended to supply customers in Metro Manila as well as nearby areas that only depend on two

dams in Bulacan.

The original target date for the completion of the project was set in the middle part of 2026.

However, Cleofas said the construction was mainly delayed due to problems on the issuance of the necessary clearances for the project.

The project was put on hold after it was faced by protests from the indigenous peoples (IPs) in the area, particularly the Dumagat-Remontado communities in Rizal and Quezon provinces. The IPs said the project encroaches on their ancestral land.

Cleofas said it took eight years before the MWSS received the Certificate of Precondition from the National Commission on Indigenous People, which certifies that the site covered and affected by any application for concession, license or lease, or production-sharing agreement does not overlap with any ancestral domain area of any indigenous cultural community (ICC) or IPs. (Nicole Magmanlac)



Negotiating for the environment

IT'S
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time
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ment of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) meets with the Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc. (MGFI) to iron out their differences in relation to their 2017 memorandum of agreement (MoA).



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■ CONTRERAS FROM A1 Negotiating for the environment

Resorting to strong-arm tactics, such as the unilateral cancellation of the MoA is not the solution. Indeed, while the DENR has the authority to cancel any privilege it grants to any juridical person, this is never an absolute power. It is a power that can only be exercised for cause and after the contracted party is accorded due process. The DENR may be the principal steward of the environment and all its natural resources, but the 1987 Constitution, like any other constitution, has denied it the power to be the final authority on legal matters. It is the Supreme Court that is given the power to interpret the legality and constitutionality of actions and of agreements.

Besides, it is simply odd that the DENR would penalize MGFI that, on record, has performed its part of the contract well. It has protected the Masungi Georeserve, and has rehabilitated and reforested thousands of hectares of what used to be denuded lands. It has been so successful in its environmental protection work. It is recognized and awarded by international environmental bodies. The infirmities and flaws which DENR finds in the MoA should be dealt with not by the threat of cancellation, but through mature and fair negotiations.

The DENR faults MGFI for operating without clearance from the Indigenous peoples on the areas that are covered by the MoA that are also part of their ancestral domain. This is a failure that can be remedied, more so that DENR entered into the contract willingly in 2017, and as a matter of fact should have ensured that such requirement was met before the late former environment secretary Gina Lopez signed the agreement. There is no justice if the errors committed by DENR through its top officials, who were also most likely acting in good faith and without malice, governed only by the earnest desire to protect the environment, should now be a burden for those whom they have granted the duty to protect Masungi on the government's behalf. Since it was the DENR which failed to



Green tyranny: Why energy transition has stalled

First word

I WANT to focus attention



OBSERVER

YEN MAKABENTA

today on the subject of green tyranny in the climate and energy debate, which I believe is the chief reason why the much-sought transition from fossil fuels to green or renewable energy appears to have stalled, and consequently has left green activists and climate alarmists frustrated.

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Green tyranny: Why energy transition has stalled

I will reproduce two recent editorials from the Issues and Insights (I&I) website. I will quote as well from a by a notable German policy analyst's appreciation of the book "Green Tyranny: Exposing the Totalitarian Roots of the Climate Industrial Complex" by Rupert Darwall, a senior fellow of the Real Clear Policy foundation.

These articles have led me to conclude that green tyranny, the green agenda's onslaught on freedom, is the key explanation for the misbegotten energy transition.

In a May 16, 2023 editorial, "Paper or plastic? Lunatics say we can't have either," issues and insights inveighs against the "petty tyrants" who, having succeeded at banning single-use plastic in some states, are now zeroing in on its replacement — paperbags.

"The Biden administration and the Democratic regime that rules California and other states are so busy banning things that it's hard to keep up with what's allowed, what isn't and what won't be tomorrow or next year. Much of the black list is made up of high-profile targets such as gasoline-powered automobiles, diesel engines, gas stoves and plastic straws. But the prohibitionists work in small ways, too, and it all adds up.

"Scolds and eco-temperance harpies never rest, their eyes always on the lookout for another modern convenience to outlaw. Having successfully interdicted single-use plastic bags in at least eight states, they're now aiming for their only reasonable replacements: paperbags."

"Paper can't be a solution to plastic waste," says the headline of a recent story posted on Canada's CIV News site. New Jersey enacted a paper bag ban last year, the first in the country, because, well, that's just what blue states and cities do now, satisfy the deranged urges of petty tyrants.

The CIV story is as agenda-driven as any NPR article in the US. Various "experts," "researchers" and activists screech and nag about "deforestation and forest degradation," "increased pressure on the world's forests" (caused by the plastic bag bans they have demanded), and "a really critical moment" in which "we need to take steps to keep forests standing." One insisted that consumers have to "rethink and reorient themselves toward a reasonable mind frame."

One activist quoted in the report runs an Australian nonprofit that "works to protect the world's forests by helping" retailers "ensure their packaging doesn't rely on paper and is environmentally friendly." According to her estimates, more than 3 billion trees, "many of which are old-growth and endangered," are cut down "every year to make paper-based products like bags, straws and food containers."

Leaving aside the definitions of "old-growth" and "endangered" which can vary and are entirely subjective, let's take a look at the logic or lack thereof, in this statement. Does this activist and the many like

her think that the industry will see through entire forests with no thought to the future? That one day they'll say, "well, we've cut down all the trees, what do we do now?"

Probably not. But she wants the consumers of her diatribes to believe it.

The truth is that the paper industry plants trees to replace the ones they harvest. In fact, "forests in North America grow significantly more wood than is harvested," says Two Sides North America. Yes, it's a nonprofit that represents companies that "span the graphic communications and paper-based packaging value chain."

But what organization would have better data on logging and planting than one whose members are companies that ... log and plant?

Furthermore, the trees used to replace the harvested wood grow fast.

"In North America, it takes less than two seconds to grow the fiber needed for a standard #10 envelope (on 100 acres of managed forests)," according to Two Sides.

The paper prohibitionists also don't want the public to know that

— According to a research paper in the science journal "Nature," global "tree cover has grown by 2.24 million square kilometers — the size of Texas and Alaska combined — in the last 35 years."

— "The US has more trees now than it did 100 years ago."

— Tree planting has never been so popular as it is today.

— There are more than 3 trillion trees on Earth, not 400 billion. That's "seven times more than scientists previously thought," CBS reported in 2015.

Today's prohibitionists are a mix of eco-zealots, authoritarians, degrowth militants, Marxists, Karens, cranks, prigs, malcontents, virtue signalers and Gaia worshipers. They demand our obedience and take great pleasure in forcing us to conform to their whims. In their twisted minds, it's their world, and the rest of us are just a nuisance for living in it.

Despotic green politicians

In an earlier editorial, the I&I editorial board castigated the "despotic" politicians who unleash "petty tyrannies" on ordinary citizens through green laws and regulations. ("There's no despot as a green politician," July 12, 2022).

"Reports of unrest over environmental policies from the Netherlands and Sri Lanka are much more than novelty news. What is happening in both spots is a lesson that has to be learned quickly. If not, there's deep trouble ahead.

Dutch farmers, whose history of crop yields puts them among the most productive in the world, continue to protest rules that limit their use of nitrogen, a nutrient in commercial fertilizers that converts to nitrous oxide, which is feared as a greenhouse gas

Officials expected them to cut use 50 percent nationally, which means in some regions the reductions will be as high as 95 percent.

The crippled farmers, their survival under attack, are as they should be, revolting.

"Imagine if you're a fifth-generation farmer, living on your land, making a living, being part of the local community" and suddenly there is "basically no future, no future for farming, but also no future for the economic, social, cultural fabric of the countryside." Wyse Sonnema of the Netherlands Agriculture and Horticulture Organization told the Australian media.

"There's a broad sense of frustration, of anger, even despair among farmers at the moment."

But political officials don't care about the effects of their tyranny. They're too dedicated to demonstrating before the world their great green cred.

Don't think that it can't happen here. Canada, which exports tens of billions of dollars of agricultural products to the US every year and is, unfortunately, "led" by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, plans to force nitrogen cuts that will "decimate Canadian farming." And also don't think such a truly rancid idea won't easily make it across the border to Washington and blue state capitals itching to put more restrictions on ostensibly free people to carry out their eco madness.

Meanwhile, a year after announcing the country would become the world's first 100 percent organic nation, Sri Lanka is a "nation wrecked by green agricultural policies." Its agriculture sector is in such ruins that the country is begging Russia and India for fuel, the economy has collapsed, and there's not enough money to buy food. The Sri Lankan president, whose palace was stormed, will leave office Wednesday, and the outgoing prime minister as well as dozens of other politicians have nowhere to live because hungry and desperate protesters have burned down their houses.

"Imagine this country had Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal become law. Its fanatical emissions cuts would have caused energy costs to soar, choked economic growth (it would be worse than it is now), and cost from \$51 trillion to \$93 trillion over its first decade. The Green New Deal was in fact initially conceived not as an environmental protection policy but rather as a "how-do-you-change-the-entire-economy thing."

So far, we've avoided Ocasio-Cortez's reign of terror. But in California, the petty environmental tyrannies, centered on the wars on greenhouse gas emissions and plastics, continue to accumulate — and spread. California residents don't even have the freedom to throw away their food scraps as they see fit ...

Of course, petty tyrannies can quickly and easily grow into totalitarianism. The step from "public servant" to green tyrant is shorter than most of us would think."

Anti-capitalist authoritarians

Finally, the strategy consultant and public policy analyst Rupert Darwall, an economist and historian who has written several books on climate change, has made a provocative thesis that it's not the environment that the "authoritarian" greens care about so much as the destruction of capitalism itself.

Writing about Darwall's "Green Tyranny: Exposing the Totalitarian Roots of the Climate Industrial Complex (EncounterBooks 2017), Wolfgang Muller, executive director of the Institute for Free Enterprise (IUF), a privately funded German free-market think tank, says the book is "a must-read for everyone who cherishes freedom and who wants to know how environmentalism could become so powerful that, in some countries, it seems like a new state religion."

Muller is the general secretary of the European Institute for Climate and Energy, an environmentalist "sceptic" group in Germany. *This is what he wrote of Darwall's book in his blog*

"Rupert Darwall's book about 'the totalitarian roots of the climate industrial complex' is far more than a handbook for 'skeptics.' 'Green Tyranny' is a must-read for every person who cherishes freedom and who wants to know how environmentalism could become so powerful that, in some countries, it seems like a new state religion.

Darwall presents a wealth of details to explain how a powerful Green/Left network managed to occupy key political positions in Europe and the US and to establish (or gain control of) institutions that give them unquestioned authority over the subject. Learning about this development, it is particularly frustrating to read how these institutions were often created by financing from very wealthy donors.

He also explains how the onslaught on freedom happens openly (if unnoticed by the media and general public) by highlighting a crisis of global proportions — such as man-made climate change — which requires solutions that "normal democracies" aren't able to provide. They must be settled by a council of experts, which acts outside the democratic process.

Darwall also examines individual policies designed to stave off climate change. In the case of Germany with its "Energiewende," the effort to decarbonize the economy, he proves that even after billions of dollars in government spending and ever-rising electricity costs for consumers, Germany's CO2 emissions remain basically the same. Meanwhile, the grid's stability has continuously deteriorated. Despite its obvious absence of success, Germany relies more heavily upon wind farms and photovoltaic solar power systems. Darwall concludes that numerous issues pushed by the Greens were merely publicity stunts, resulting mainly in higher costs, less growth and diminished freedom.

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TITLE: *Negotiating for the environment*

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practice due diligence and complete staff work, then it is just fair that it should enable a good faith remedy to the problem. That is the least it can do, instead of throwing under the bus its deceased former secretary.

The alleged constitutional infirmity of the MoA, particularly on the perpetual nature of the agreement, is an issue that ideally can be resolved by both parties mutually agreeing to seek declaratory relief from the court. The text of the MoA implies that the perpetual nature of the agreement is a mere intent, and not an unassailable privilege, more so that there can be found in the text conditions for its termination upon final judgment of the court. More importantly, jointly seeking clarification from the court can enrich jurisprudence, and could even pave the way for a more innovative way of granting privileges to private parties who are more concerned with protecting the environment, instead of engaging in extractive activities.

It should be noted that the Constitution has imposed limitations on access rights amounting to 25 years renewable for another 25 years, but it only enumerated activities that are extractive in character. Its silence on environmental protection activities provides an opening for a more innovative access right to parties solely interested in environmental protection.

This can further provide an opening to establish a new environmental governance and management principle that has long been absent in the Philippines. What prevails right now is the practice of making protection as derivative only from extractive activities. Mining agreements are granted with the condition that recipients of access rights would rehabilitate mined-out sites. Organized communities are granted rights to engage in agroforestry, with the condition that they would protect the landscape. We do not have access instruments that allow a private individual or juridical person to be solely engaged in protection activities.

The only reasonable way to move forward is to revisit the MoA, and correct its infirmities. Since the DENR is the one that finds problems with it, it is but rational and fair for it to provide MGFI guidance on the parameters that should be embodied in the revised MoA. Questions on profit sharing must be addressed, but in the context of the fact, which is barely known to many, that the income-generating ecotourism activity of MGFI occurs in lot 10 which was originally covered by a different agreement. There is reason to treat this endeavor as a separate subject, and for which a special agreement in protected areas can be employed. However, the larger area covered by the MoA which is under protection needs to be covered by a different agreement.

A solution to the problem can only be reached by dialogue and partnership among stakeholders, which is precisely what is provided for in Section 2 of Republic Act (RA) 11038, which amends Section 2 of RA 7586, the law which established the National Integrated Protected Areas System in the country. DENR is, in fact, tasked to be the mediator of all conflicts in relation to the environment and natural resources. It cannot allow itself to become a party to the conflict, which is what is happening now in the Masungi Georeserve, where it appears that it has taken an adversarial stance toward MGFI, with it even refusing to grant an audience to the management of the foundation.

The options to be innovative and creative in protecting our environment are limitless, if only those who are tasked to manage them are not stuck in their inherent biases, and do not succumb to political and profit-seeking pressures. The DENR and the local governments concerned, must allow for negotiations to usher in these possibilities. They do not have to wait for some concerned groups to run to the court and file a petition for the privileges of the writ of kalikasan to compel them.



Tales of songs of unity for the environment: Masungi Georeserve and Kaliwa Dam

THE Masungi Georeserve is a Philippine conservation area situated in the southern Sierra Madre range in Baras, Rizal. It is a 46,310-hectare land of the public domain and embraced are parts of Bulacan, Laguna and Quezon. As a conservation area, it is closed to mining, exploration, development and other activities that might upset its habitat and ecological balance.

Be that as it may, mention should be made of the fact that when the Department of Environment and Natural Resources by virtue of the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 1992 (Republic Act [RA] 7586 or Nipas) designated the area as a strict nature reserve and wildlife sanctuary, the Masungi Georeserve and its surrounding areas were already deforested and plagued with land grabbing, illegal logging and threats of large-scale quarrying despite prohibition.

Among the subsequent development restoration projects affected was the planned conversion of the georeserve into a conservation park. Apart from the geo-park tourist attractions that gained much interest for a while were giant hammocks, eco-trails, man-made steel platforms to view limestones engraved into the mountains of Sierra Madre. Globally, the Masungi



AMBASSADORS' CORNER

**AMADO S.
TOLENTINO JR.**

Georeserve became recognized for its thriving flora and fauna coupled with conservation reforestation and promotion of biodiversity activities as envisioned by the late Gina Lopez when she was environment secretary.

Despite its efforts, however, Masungi Georeserve became the subject of harassment that endangered not only the peace of the protected area but also the lives of innocent park rangers and stakeholders. Worse is the continuing illegal quarrying, squatting and fencing activities that have resulted in irreversible damage to the soil and plants aside from driving animals out of the area. By extracting rocks and minerals from the earth's surface, quarrying increases the risk of flooding, landslides, water loss and biodiversity loss.

There is an abundance of legal processes and procedures applicable to the Masungi Georeserve conservation. Among those are the Rules of Procedure on Environmental Cases; the Continuing Writ of Mandamus; and the Environmental Impact Assessment System.

To date, the Masungi Georeserve remains a protected area under the Nipas Act. But for many, the question persists — "Is the Masungi Georeserve really a place to preserve biodiversity or is it merely a place reserved for exploitation?"

Kaliwa Dam

The water crisis of 2016 brought forth another source to supplement the water needs of Metro Manila — Kaliwa Dam.

As manifested years ago by the Metropolitan Water Sewerage System (MWSS), the Kaliwa Dam project begins with a 60-meter concrete dam at Kaliwa which straddles the boundaries in the uplands of Quezon and Rizal provinces in the east of Manila as well as a 25-kilometer conveyance tunnel and two treatment plants.

Unknown to many is the fact that as early as 1968, Presidential Proclamation 573 had already declared the Kaliwa Watershed Forest Reserve where the dam is to be constructed as a forest reserve. Moreover, Proclamation 1636 (1977) entitled "Declaring as a National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary and Game Preserve a Certain Parcel of Land of the Public Domain Embraced and Situated in the Province of Bulacan, Rizal,

Laguna and Quezon, Island of Luzon," declared a portion of the watershed as a National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary.

In 1992, by virtue of RA 7586, or Nipas Act, the area where the dam was to be constructed had become a "protected area." (Briefly, the Kaliwa Dam project, as thought of, will submerge a huge portion of the Kaliwa watershed.)

Public discussions at the time zeroed in on the fact that as a National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary, the forests and coastlines described in Proclamation 1636 (1977) are key habitats of species of amphibians, birds, fish, mammals and reptiles. Add more the fact that the Kaliwa watershed vegetation provides hectares of residual forests with recorded plant/floral species.

The concern for the relocation of Indigenous communities identified as Dumagats and Remontados under the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA, or RA 8371 (1997) was taken note of.

(NB: The P12.2-billion New Centennial Water Source Kaliwa Project will be completed by mid-2026 and will be able to supply water to Metro Manila households and nearby areas by early 2027, according to the MWSS. The loan project is funded by China through official development assistance.)



THE GREEN TEA
BILLIE DUMALIANG

On May 22, the world celebrates the International Day of Biological Diversity, which aims to shed light on issues surrounding the vast array of plant and animal life on earth.

Biodiversity and its ecosystems are the cornerstone of all life, from which our food, medicine, energy, and water, among others, are derived. This year's theme is "From Agreement to Action: Building Back Biodiversity."

This theme underscores the recent approval of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the urgency for each country-signatory to implement the strategies therein. The Philippines is one of the signatories to the GBF — an agreement between governments to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

Thus, I find it perplexing that parts of the Philippine government have been too keen to scrap the award-winning Masungi Geopark Project, which is leading the way in the restoration of degraded watersheds and habitats in the

Who benefits if Masungi falls?



Panatang Lunlan Coalition calls on Filipinos to #SaveMasungi.

Philippines. This goes against our international commitments in the GBF to "ensure that by 2030 at least 30 percent of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems are under effective restoration."

The Masungi Geopark Project (MGP) has recovered more than 2,000 hectares of degraded watershed areas in the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape, a watershed that is crucial to reducing flood and landslide risk to millions of Filipinos downstream. We can describe the sup-

posedly protected area as "under life support" with only 11 to 20 percent forest left. Masungi's contribution to the reforestation and protection of this area is indispensable, foiling about five major forest invasions in the last five years through vigilance, storytelling, and coalition-building.

Retaliatory attacks against Masungi escalated in September 2022, right after three large-scale quarrying agreements found in the project site in the province of Rizal were canceled by the Department of Environment

and Natural Resources (DENR) in response to widespread public clamor. These attacks include organized disinformation, adverse inquiries by local congressmen, strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP), and fishing for technicalities in the MGP contract.

Despite this, compassionate lawmakers showed support to Masungi through the passage of House Resolution 516 on May 15, 2023 in the House of Representatives' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Committee. The

committee, chaired by Rep. Bro. Eddie Villanueva, congratulated Masungi for receiving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Award in 2022.

Masungi also held a diplomatic reception last May 5, briefing and engaging ambassadors and diplomats from more than six countries about its current situation.

I can only assure you that the Masungi Georeserve Foundation and its partners stand firm in its commitment to protect the Masungi landscape and secure the sanctuary's long-term future.

Speaking not as a trustee of the foundation but as an ordinary Filipino citizen, I truly hope that the DENR Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga does not give in to political pressures, but fights for the environment and its changemakers. For who will benefit from the scrapping of the MGP but the syndicates preying on our defenseless forests?

The author is advocacy officer and trustee of the Masungi Georeserve Foundation, which she co-founded with sister Ann Masungi Georeserve. She is a conservation and geotourism project awarded with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Award in 2022, and the Global Water Changemakers Award in 2021, among others.



Lawmakers show support to Masungi through the passage of House Resolution 516 on May 15, 2023 in the House of Representatives' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Committee.



Ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps with the media call on the concerned citizens to #SaveMasungi.



Isabela youth commits to bioconservation

THE Divilacan Student Advocates for Forest and Environmental Resilience (D-Safer) in the town of Divilacan in Isabela province have committed to conserving marine and forest biodiversity covered by the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park (NSMNP) in said town.

D-Safer President Randy Sogelio said their vision for a more ecologically sound and healthy community is in partnership with the local government unit (LGU) of Divilacan and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley).

"Our one-year-old youth organization has crafted an action plan prioritizing marine biodiversity conservation, native tree growing and waste management activities," Sogelio said.

Municipal ENR officer Arturo Umengan said they need

to sharpen the minds of these young students in environmental leadership as the legacy of protecting the northern Sierra Madre will be passed on to them.

In a recently held youth congress anchored on the theme "Engaging the Youth in Environmental Protection and Conservation," the participants conducted a coastal cleanup and sea turtle monitoring in celebration of the month of the ocean.

Among the resource speakers were representatives from the DENR, LGU, Isabela Provincial Youth Development Office and Isabela Coastal Development Office.

Save the sea turtle

Sogelio said among their priority advocacies is the conservation of marine turtles that

maintain the productivity of coral reef ecosystems to ensure an increased population of fish for the local's food consumption and livelihood.

They will also conduct information drives in 12 villages of Divilacan to campaign for sea turtles conservation.

"We would like to inform our fishermen to immediately release bycatch turtles and not disturb [them] when they come to shore to lay eggs," Sogelio said, adding that D-Safer will also conduct regular cleanup drives along coastlines and within the waterways in their community.

The cleaning up of waterways and their surroundings will mitigate the effect of flooding during heavy rains in the town proper.

The newly formed organization said it will promote the ecotourism spots of Divilacan,

and improve and develop new sites including the Lanai Marine Turtle Nesting Sanctuary in Barangay Bicobian in partnership with the LGU.

Ezekiel Chavez of Divilacan's Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office lauded the youth leaders for their enthusiasm and commitment to safeguard the environment and sustain a cleaner and healthier Divilacan.

Chavez said D-Safer members, which comprised the students of Divilacan National High School, were also taught about disaster preparedness, mitigation and resilience; sustainable ecotourism; ecological solid waste management through the launching of Pinas Basura Buster; the importance of forest and marine ecosystems of NSMNP; and environmental leadership.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO



Envisioning a more ecologically sound and healthy community, members of D-Safer have committed to conserve marine and forest biodiversity within their town covered by the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

CHIT U. JUAN

Time to go out and plant a tree

I remember being gifted with a mahogany seedling many years ago, many years before I found out mahogany is not the preferred species for sustainable forests and biodiversity. I planted it in a small lot I have since sold, so it must be giving some shade to the new lot owners, even if it is not a preferred species of animals and insects. Now we know. But still, we see many mahogany forests as people are not aware of the other endemic or native trees we must be planting.



One only needs to look in Facebook to find groups who share this common interest: preservation of native trees and indigenous varieties. I found such a seedling supplier through lawyer Ipat Luna, who is a conservationist herself. Her name is Lee of Kaleekasan Nursery and she sold me native species like batino, yakal, dao and even one named like our barangay, banaybanay. It may take 20 or so years to see them give shade, but for now, it makes one feel good to know what is native and what is not.

If plans push through, we may be planting coffee trees alongside shade trees under a project with a major telecom company. We are to compute the carbon capture or how much each coffee and shade tree can sequester over time. What gets measured gets done.

Rather than complain about how some people still push for mahogany, we have decided to just plant native species with coffee and then let the mahogany planters figure out they were mistaken at a later time. Yes, it will give you money, but it is not sustainable at all.

Coffee trees are also planted in appropriate elevations – Arabica at higher elevations and Robusta, Liberica (Barako) and Excelsa at relatively lower elevations like Upland Cavite, Lipa and just about anywhere you can find 300 meters above sea level. Now, there are hybrids that can grow on 100 meters above sea level (masl) but the taste profile will differ from those grown at higher places.

So when we see abandoned seedlings by the roadside, we feel bad that these seedlings should have been given away to farmers who would really plant them, and not just farmers to sign off that they were received as free support from an agency or NGO. It takes not only money but time to get these seedlings to “ready to plant” stage.

We always time them to be ready by the rainy

We always time seedlings to be ready for planting by the rainy season, so Nature can freely water them to make them grow properly. After all, we want rain-fed agriculture for many, as water is hard to come by otherwise.

season, so Nature can freely water them to make them grow properly. After all, we want rain-fed agriculture for many, as water is hard to come by otherwise.

But what about forests? Can we plant coffee trees in forests? We surely can, as some youth are doing in Barlig, Mountain Province to preserve their ancestral lands. This group, the Barlig Indigenous Reforestation group, has been lovingly and painstakingly planting one coffee seedling at a time in Liyas, almost two hours by foot from the main highway. They computed that in three to four years, they may be harvesting their own coffee. Meantime, they have to do odd jobs while they wait for their coffee to grow. These projects must be supported, especially by coffee-loving people, rather than support the planting of mahogany and other invasive species.

I remember visiting Kalinga many years ago and the coffee trees were 20 feet high because traditional beliefs kept them from pruning their trees, or the gods may get angry. We, the Philippine Coffee Board (www.philcoffeeboard.com) directors, told them otherwise. Prune your trees, rejuvenate the old ones, we told them. We brought Benguet State University’s Arabica expert Prof. Val Macanes to show them how to do rejuvenation of trees. Hopefully these trees have been more productive after our visit.

In Isabela City, Basilan we saw coffee trees so tall, almost like rubber trees which they have planned to now replace with coffee.

If plans push through, Cong. Mujiv Hataman and his lovely better half, Mayor Sitti Djalila Turabin, will undertake a coffee rehabilitation project in Isabela and other parts of Basilan. We saw beautiful Liberica trees and the Menzi cooperative has already prepared Barako and Excelsa seedlings for this coming planting season.

There are coffee seedlings available in different parts of the country – Arabica for the highlands and Robusta, Liberica or Barako for the lower elevations. All one has to do is approach us for an estimate of how many seedlings can be planted in one hectare and what cash crops can be intercropped with coffee.

In Cavite, we choose bananas and papaya as these give the farmers ready cash even before the coffee starts to bear fruit. In Benguet, they choose pine trees or Alnos, although our Barlig indigenous people find more native species in their ancestral lands.

It’s the time and season for planting, so do it today!



Group seeks accountability on climate issues

THE Climate Change Commission (CCC) is lobbying for climate justice and developed countries' accountability to mitigate the severe impacts of climate change.

During the recent Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) Regional Consultation for Asia, Robert Borje, CCC vice chairperson and executive director urged wealthier nations to make appropriations, lamenting that developing countries that are least responsible for climate change will suffer the most.

Stressing the need to help developing nations adapt to extreme weather disturbances, Borje rallied vulnerable countries to work together for transformational global climate action.

"Allow me to reiterate the importance of working on the principle of climate

justice – for those who are least responsible for climate change, those with the least resources, and those who are most vulnerable and at risk, the world has to do more," Borje said on Friday.

"Conversely – for those most responsible for climate change, with the most resources, they need to do more. For us, this is climate justice."

Borje said climate action should be anchored on the principles of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and climate justice."

He also emphasized the need to put a premium on Global Stocktake, a mechanism assessing global response to climate crisis; accelerated adaptation action; loss and damage from climate change; target to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees

Celsius; and climate financing.

On Wednesday, a World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said that for the first time ever, global temperatures are likely to breach 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming within the next five years.

The WMO also said there is a 98 percent chance that within the next five years, the world will experience the hottest on record, surpassing 2016 when global temperature impacted by about 1.3C (2.3F) of warming.

"It is only through global collective action that we can transform our developing countries' vulnerabilities, and avert, minimize and address existing losses and damages in order to achieve climate resilience," Borje said.



Worse than 'mercury retrograde'

We've been hearing a lot of warnings from friends who are into horoscopes to be careful during "mercury retrograde." It turns out, a more urgent problem is out there, oppressing us daily: Mercury rising. Yes, we've been experiencing (and enduring!) extraordinarily-high temperatures and heat indices in the past few weeks and months.

This is not the same high temperatures of decades past, and so our parents and grandparents cannot tell us to endure it just like how they did it. As climate scientists and weather forecasters would tell us, what's happening is different.

For instance, the heat has been unbearable that many school children have reportedly passed out, and some schools have moved classes outdoors or back to hybrid mode.

Sadly, there's no relief in sight about these rising temperatures in the Philippines and the rest of the world.

This week, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said "global temperatures are likely to surge to record levels in the next five years, fueled by heat-trapping greenhouse gases and a naturally occurring El Niño event."

The world would most likely reach the warmest record temperature in the near future.

"There is a 66 percent likelihood that the annual average near-surface global temperature between 2023 and 2027 will be more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for at least one year. There is a 98 percent likelihood that at least one of the next five years, and the five-year period as a whole, will be the warmest on record," said the WMO.

Would we be able to go back to the temperatures of times past?

Dr. Leon Hermanson, a WMO expert scientist, has this to say: "Global mean temperatures are predicted to continue increasing, moving us away further and further away from the climate we are used to."

A WMO report said that "the

annual mean global near-surface temperature for each year between 2023 and 2027 is predicted to be between 1.1°C and 1.8°C higher than the 1850-1900 average. This is used as a baseline because it was before the emission of greenhouse gases from human and industrial activities."

The proposals to move back the school opening to June should thus be seriously considered. School buildings, offices and houses may

We have to press officials, policy-makers, political parties and business leaders to finally take up climate change as a major existential threat to our lives.

need to be retrofitted or redesigned to be more ventilated and cooler, as we face rising temperatures. How this could be done with minimal or even without traditional air conditioning could be addressed by our experts in engineering and architecture.

But considering the real problem is a global one, the high and oppressive heat indices should compel us as a country to demand and join global actions.

As the WMO stresses, this is a problem that goes beyond individual or even community efforts: "In addition to increasing global temperatures, human-induced greenhouse gases are leading to more ocean heating and acidification, sea ice and glacier melt, sea level rise and more extreme weather."

By extreme weather, it has meant for us super typhoons of up to Category 5, and extraordinarily-strong monsoon rains that we have

never before experienced. Such extreme weather events hit the poorest and most economically-disadvantaged sectors the hardest and have become a constant threat to micro, small and medium-scale enterprises.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions required national and global efforts directed at modern, multinational and transnational corporations, and the conspicuous consumption they promote and profit from.

Even novel ideas such as cryptocurrency has energy consumption and consequently possibly fossil fuel-related problems. It has been reported that Bitcoin alone is estimated to consume 127 terawatt-hours a year — more than many countries, including Norway.

The Philippines signed the Paris Agreement in 2016 and ratified it in 2021. How exactly the Philippines intends to contribute to attaining long-term goal, we're not aware of, as of the moment. But the goal is there: "Reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to limit the global temperature increase in this century to 2 °C while pursuing efforts to limit the increase even further to 1.5 °C, to avoid or reduce adverse impacts and related losses and damages."

This means a lot of campaigning, lobbying, asserting, and doing would be needed. It is not as if corporations would just cooperate and let climate change mitigation affect their bottom lines.

In the meantime, drink your water, give water to others, stay under the shade, read up on climate change, and together with family and friends join movements. We have to press officials, policy-makers, political parties and business leaders to finally take up climate change as a major existential threat to our lives.

With mercury rising, so should our movements rise.



HOTSPOT
TONYO CRUZ



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Apex Mining Embraces Sustainability by Nurturing Adopted Mangrove

To mark Earth Day in April 2023, Apex Mining and its community partners/stakeholders planted 300 Bakauan propagules at its adopted mangrove in Bongabong (Pantukan, Davao de Oro). The clean-up activity that followed yielded 20 sacks of residual waste. According to the United Nation's website, mangrove preservation alone can contribute to the achievement of eight Sustainable Development Goals: no poverty, zero hunger, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water and life on land. Apex Mining's mangrove preservation also supports the initiative of the Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA) of caring for green spaces. In Baguio, Apex Mining, through its subsidiary, Itogon-Suyoc Resources, Inc. (ISRI) has adopted the PMSEA Botanical Garden located inside the Baguio Botanical Garden.

