

30 April 2023 Sunday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**





TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

# 'Threat of El Niño real; conserve, recycle water'

By **BELLA CARIASO**

National Water Resources Board (NWRB) executive director Sevilla David Jr. yesterday said the threat of El Niño is real, as he urged the public to conserve and practice recycling of water.

"That is real. According to PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), there is now 80 percent chance for the El Niño to be felt before the end of the year and it is possible that we will

Turn to Page 4

## Threat From Page 1

experience El Niño until next year, especially during the first quarter," David said.

David echoed the call of Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) Deputy Administrator Jose Dorado Jr. to Metro Manila mayors to pass ordinances to regulate the use of water in golf courses, car wash and swimming pools to address the dwindling water level at Angat Dam.

"In the event we need to manage the supply of water, these are the industries that we will recommend to limit the use of water," David said.

Dorado has said that a golf course uses at least 700 to 1,400 cubic meters of water per month, while each carwash spends 60 to 100 cubic meters per month, enough to supply the water requirement of 2,000 household customers.

"With or without El Niño, we need to conserve water every day as the water supply is not unlimited. Our water requirement also increases because of population development," David said. According to David, residents

should recycle to help conserve water from Angat Dam.

"Our first suggestion is to check whether there are leaks in the households. Let's stop wasting water while brushing our teeth, use a glass, when washing our hands, make sure the water from the faucet is not being wasted," David said.

David noted that the water level of Angat Dam decreases daily by at least 0.3 meters or 30 centimeters.

"Because of the high temperature, the evaporation of water also contributes to the decline of the level of Angat Dam."

As of 6 a.m. on Saturday, the water level of Angat Dam was at 195.51 meters, compared to its previous measure of 195.81 meters. The dam's water level is still 8.98 meters before it reaches its rule curve elevation of 186.53 meters or the level of the dam to be able to fulfill its functions.

David said the government prohibits the use of deep wells.

"We do not allow the use of deep wells as it threatens the environment. At present, we only allow the MWSS to tap deep wells for standby supply," he explained. David said President Marcos has issued a directive to various agen-

cies to address the threat of El Niño.

PAGASA said the El Niño phenomenon could start in the next two to three months.

According to the weather bureau, the severe effect of the drought will start in December 2023 until April 2024. The state agency said it only expects one tropical cyclone in April; one to two each in May and June and two to three each in July, August and September 2023.

"[Marcos] ordered the creation of an El Niño team led by the DILG (Department of the Interior and Local Government) to underscore the importance of the role of the local government units to prepare for the threats of the El Niño. Based on the projection, the rainfall in June, July, August is still normal. We hope that our dams can recover, but we are monitoring the last quarter and early part of 2024 as it's again a summer season. We need to have enough stocks of water," David said.

Angat Dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and provides for the irrigation needs of 25,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga.





UPPER  
 LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

04-30-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

# Australia to provide P3.6B for PHL's marine protection, including WPS

By RIZAL RAOUL REYES

**T**HE Philippines is going to be a significant beneficiary of the Australian government's P3.6-billion maritime program investments in the Indo-Pacific region.

This was disclosed by Australian Embassy Deputy Head of Mission Dr. Moya Collett at a forum billed, "Protecting the Seas: Preserving Biodiversity Through Marine Protection in the West Philippine Sea," organized by the Stratbase ADR Institute.

"Australia's relationship with the Philippines spans defense and security, development and education, trade and investment, and people to people links. One area that is going from strength to strength is our maritime cooperation. Given the importance of maritime security and marine environmental protection to Australia, we are investing P3.6 billion in regional maritime programs and the Philippines is a significant beneficiary," Collett explained in a statement.

"The marine environment is under threat from pollution, climate change and over exploitation. And it is more important than ever that we work together to protect it. We are proud to support the Philippines in its efforts to preserve the marine environment and become more climate change and disaster resilient," she added.

Among the maritime programs Australia is conducting in the country is the funding of a number of coral restoration projects throughout the Philippines, including in Pangasinan, Verde Islands, West Philippine Sea, Palawan and Zambales.

"Australia highly values its maritime partnership with the Philippines, and we will continue to work together to protect maritime biodiversity, which is so important to the health and prosperity of our two nations," Collett said.

Stratbase ADR Institute President Victor Andres Manhit reiterated the need for continued multilateral cooperation among like-minded states, arguing that the conservation and preservation of marine life is a shared responsibility.

"In all these endeavors, the efforts of the national and international community to secure biodiversity and promote tourism must complement and respect the Philippines' 2016 arbitral victory," he said.

Manhit noted that the 2016 arbitral ruling found that China's land reclamation and construction of artificial islands had caused "irreparable harm to the coral reef ecosystem," and permanently destroyed the evidence of the natural conditions of various reefs.

"These unlawful practices are being carried out until the present and continue to cause severe damage to the marine life and ecosystems that make the West Philippine Sea a critical fishing area for the country's food and economic security," Manhit said.

*In her presentation, De La Salle University-Manila Biology Professor Dr. Ma. Carmen Ablan-Lagman underscored the importance of cooperation*





TITLE:

Australia...

PAGE

2/2

04-30-23

DATE



**THE Philippine Sea (right) in east and north of the Philippines, and the West Philippine Sea (left, formerly known as South China Sea) is the name used by the Philippines for parts of the area within its exclusive economic zone.** WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

in ensuring the future of biodiversity in the West Philippine Sea.

"Engage with WPS stakeholders in resource monitoring and cooperation—simple things that scientists can do to put their science into the hands of the locals. And then we have to look also into the development of the community of researchers. Very glad that Australia is here because they have some of the most innovative changes," Lagman said.

"We have to have spatially explicit plans that are open to all regarding the marine protection. We really need it. We do not want biodiversity to be out of the studies, but to have long-term buy-in and know that the benefits of these will take time because you're talking about living organisms. We need to have very spatially explicit pri-

ority driven designs which we can see coming on for the long term," she added.

Similarly, University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute Associate Professor Dr. Deo Florence Onda emphasized the need to invest more on science and research and development, especially in the West Philippine Sea.

"In order to protect the West Philippine Sea, we need to understand how it works and by understanding that we can come up with sustainable, long term, appropriate, management schemes and strategies to protect and intervene in its degradation," Onda explained.

"There is a need for long-term marine scientific research and research and design framework and roadmap in the West Philippine Sea," he said.





## 'Biodiversity research, knowledge-sharing are critical investments for Earth's wellbeing'

**T**HE health of planet Earth is everybody's concern. Last Earth Day, that is yearly held on April 22, biodiversity and environment groups have initiated activities and programs to highlight the need to protect and conserve the Earth and its rich natural resources.

Asean Centre for Biodiversity Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim noted in a statement that biodiversity is the variety of life on earth and the interactions between living organisms and their environment.

"It includes not only the number of species but also their genetic and functional diversity," Lim pointed out.

However, human activities—such as deforestation, habitat destruction, overfishing and pollution—have significantly impacted biodiversity, threatening the survival of many species and disrupting ecosystem services that support human life, she said.

In this year's celebration of Earth Day with the theme "Invest in our Planet," ACB highlighted biodiversity research and knowledge-sharing as critical investments for the planet's sustainability and wellbeing.

According to Lim, understanding biodiversity and its functions is fundamental to developing effective conservation strategies.

"Biodiversity research can provide us with essential knowledge about the distribution,

abundance, and ecology of species and ecosystems, which is necessary to prioritize conservation efforts, formulate and implement relevant policies, identify critical habitats and species, and evaluate the effectiveness of conservation interventions," she explained.

Moreover, studying the interactions between species and their environment can help us understand the ecological processes that maintain ecosystem function and services, such as nutrient cycling, water regulation, and climate regulation—all of which are critical to our survival, she added.

For its part, Greenpeace Philippines and its local volunteer groups in Iloilo celebrated Earth Day by joining activities commemorating the event in Iloilo City and in Capiz City, that highlighted the importance of participation and collaboration with local groups and communities in amplifying calls for climate action, it said in a news release.

Greenpeace volunteers from Iloilo participated in a clean-up and mangrove planting along Iloilo City's esplanade. The event was organized by Sigma Rho Alumni Association, one of the many civil society organizations in the city with advocacies for the environment.

"Iloilo City couldn't have been a more ideal place to start Greenpeace's first official local



**Hooded treepie (*Crypsirina cucullata*) is one of the endemic birds in Myanmar. It is considered as Near Threatened by the IUCN Red List and BirdLife International. PHOTO BY AYE CHAN TUN**



**Greenpeace's mangrove planting along Iloilo City's esplanade. PHOTO BY RHEA JANE PESCADOR**





04-30-23

TITLE:

Biodiversity Research ...

PAGE

10

DATE

volunteer group," said Greenpeace local group leader, Jarrah Brillantes.

"The social movement here is flourishing and there are a lot of local groups here that are advocating for the environment. They are continuously looking for a venue and a tangible approach for promoting environmental protection," Brillantes added.

In Roxas City, Capiz, Greenpeace collaborated with The Tree Huggers Movement Inc. (TTHMI) for the event "Bagtas Kalikasan: Capiz Moving Forward for Mother Earth."

The volunteers joined the march along with other groups. Greenpeace campaigners Oscar Gador and Rhea Jane Mallari also held a workshop on creating climate and urban justice-themed slogans and posters which the participants used during the unity walk for the environment, Greenpeace said.

"We are grateful to The Tree Huggers Movement for inviting Greenpeace to this event," Mallari said. "It is a privilege to share our experience in Greenpeace and encourage the Capiznon youth in expressing their call on the need for climate action in their cities."

TTHMI was founded by volunteers united by their common vision of creating a greener and cleaner Philippines through education and community participation. The group is led by Atty. Emilyn Arboleda-Depon, who has been

recognized for her environmental initiatives, winning in East-West Center Earth Optimism Southeast Asia 2020 and an Eco-Business A-List Most Effective Sustainable Leader in the Asia Pacific Region in 2021.

Utility company, Manila Water, together with its partners, gathered once again in the La Mesa Nature Reserve in Quezon City, marking the second year of its "Lakbay Kalikasan: Hike and Bike for Nature."

Over 120 participants joined the event, which gathered stakeholders from the government and private sectors, hiking and biking enthusiasts, and the public to take part in protecting the environment and the resources that sustain lives by adopting and maintaining trees inside the La Mesa Nature Reserve, Manila Water's news release said.

The hiking featured a 4.5-to-6-kilometer trail, highlighting the biodiversity inside the La Mesa Nature Reserve, while biking took the cyclists to the scenic 9-kilometer trail of the watershed area.

This event was part of Manila Water's move in integrating sustainability in its operations.

Manila Water's 3-point Sustainability Agenda touches majority of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, adhering to calls for action to end environmental abuse and climate change.



**BIKING enthusiasts from the public and private sector joined the Lakbay Kalikasan: Hike and Bike Year 2 in La Mesa Nature Reserve, organized by Manila Water in celebration of Earth Day. MANILA WATER PHOTO**



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The Manila Times



04-30-23

TITLE :

PAGE

DATE

## Legarda pushes 'green growth' for survival

SENATE President Pro Tempore Lorna Regina "Loren" Legarda is urging her fellow public servants to achieve "green growth" for the country as the nation commemorates Earth Day this month.

As the Philippines continues to be included on the top list of countries most affected by climate change in recent years, Legarda, a long-time advocate of the environment, underscored the importance of climate action as "a matter of survival."

She said there was no other

recourse but to usher in green growth and transform the economy toward a low-carbon and climate-resilient path, as she stated during the 5th Singapore Dialogue on Sustainable World Resources in Singapore in 2018.

"We pursue this path only because we know it is the best way to protect our people and climate, but also because we know it will spur economic growth," Legarda said.

**JAVIER JOE ISMAEL**





STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE



04-30-23  
23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

# Kanepackage CSR activities: Making the planet a greener place

By Kenneth M. del Rosario

The Kanepackage Group's promise to deliver the best packaging and cushioning materials is grounded in its sustainability thrust as a company. Going beyond what is expected from a firm in the business of wrapping items, its corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities are geared towards saving resources and helping ensure the planet becomes a much greener place.

It has set a lofty goal for itself, aiming to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. As a company, Kanepackage aims to promote carbon offsets through the reduction of global greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide emissions.

And the company is well on its way to reaching this objective, thanks in large part to its flagship project—mangrove reforestation called KPGreen Earth. Since it started the project in the Visayas region in November 2009 on Olango Island, Lapu-Lapu City in Cebu, Kanepackage has planted and maintained more than 13.4 million mangroves.

In partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), local government units, and the local community, Kanepackage holds mangrove planting and tour activities twice a year.

"It was never about the image of the company. It's about doing what's right. We have to live sustainably as much as we can. There's no other option," said Yoshikazu Kanesaka, the CEO and president of Kanepackage Group.

Kanesaka recalled the first time he brought up the idea of planting mangroves to executives of the mother company in Japan, who were skeptical about the idea.

"I told them that we had to do it because no one else was doing it," he said. "It's a good reminder, too, that while the business of packaging is all about the products, the ones who are behind the production of those are actual people. They are the ones that benefit from a greener environment."

## Spirit of giving back to the planet

The Kanepackage Group's CSR programs are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enumerated by the United Nations to highlight the company's business DNA in valuing the welfare of the people.

In the spirit of giving back to the planet, the company's CSR programs encompass three main themes—the environment, support for the people, and safety and security among the stakeholders.

The KPGreen Earth, for one, helps build a resilient coastal community against climate change, sea-level rise, typhoons, and other natural calamities.

The project came about after a hike at Mt. Takao in Japan, where Kanesaka learned about a Japanese artist who donated 100,000 cedar trees every year. He thought he could do a similar thing in the Philippines, only this time planting mangroves, which are endemic to the area.

After all, planting mangroves in the Philippines makes sense, as it brings lots of economic and environmental benefits. For one, mangroves sustain fisheries and coastal resources, as well as provide opportunities for ecotourism. Mangroves can even be used as house construction material and wood for cooking. The mangroves, too, become a shelter for many fishes, crabs and other marine animals. People used to cut mangroves for cooking/ housing before because of poverty. After KP Mangrove

**The company has planted more than 13.4 million mangroves so far, and expects that number to surpass 15 million by 2025**



The company's CSR is founded on its core business DNA, which values people and the spirit of giving back.

project they stopped cutting mangroves and provide the communities with livelihood projects.

The mangrove planting also has profound benefits to employees as the activity serves as an avenue for employees from other branches to connect with one another, and share their experiences working with the company.

## Partner community involvement

To ensure the protection and proper management of the mangrove plantation, Kanepackage involved communities that regularly plant mangroves and monitor their progress to ensure a high survival and success rate.

"Planting is just the beginning. The mangroves need maintenance and regular clean-ups so they can grow faster and better. This is where the help of the community is essential," Kanesaka said.

Partner communities are also tasked with replacing the dead plants and removing any plastics, seaweed, or other materials that may harm the mangroves. It can't be stressed enough how equally important and essential post-planting management is in a project like this.

In return, they receive corresponding monetary compensation for their efforts. Needless to say, the people in the community appreciate the additional income, which many of them use to send their respective children to school or to put food on the table.

The project continuously motivates members of the community to do their part in managing the



The photo above shows a drone shot of one of the mangrove plantations that the company maintains.

## mangrove project.

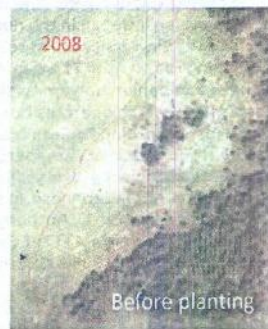
Drone shots of plantation areas show that the mangrove-planting project is an undeniable success. Areas that used to have little to no mangrove presence now teem with thick mangroves, many of which can be considered young forests. Most trees have started to bear fruit, with the number of fish and crabs growing exponentially.

## Research and development

Aside from planting mangroves, the Kanepackage Group also established the Mangrove Research and Development Center, an environmental research center in Cebu, to help in the advancement of scientific knowledge on mangrove rehabilitation and management.

The company also put up a mangrove nursery, where it cultures mangroves for about six months until they are ready for planting.

"It's important to know which species is suited in a particular area. We also have to be careful because planting too many mangroves in one area could potentially do more harm than good. This is why we partnered with the DENR and the local people for this project," Kanesaka said.



The company recently entered into a collaboration project with the Overseas Environmental Cooperation Center Japan to research the possibility of carbon credit through its mangrove project. This project aims to develop a method for quantifying the amount of carbon sequestered by our mangrove project.

Kanesaka said: "Environmental conservation is a shared responsibility among the private sector and government. For our part, we commit to strengthening our efforts to our many CSR activities."





## Climate adaptation seen to reduce excessive heat

REP. Marlyn Alonte (Biñan), chairman of the House Committee on Ecology, suggested on Saturday that climate adaptation was the only way to reduce, if not eliminate, the excessive heat in classrooms, explaining that a temporary solution of air-conditioning products would be an expensive and impractical option.

"The better way is to install heat insulation into the ceilings of all classrooms in public schools, old and new. In other words, climate adaptation is the way," Alonte said.

"Heat insulation would bring down indoor temperatures by a few degrees, significantly reducing the heat stress that students and teachers feel," she added.

Alonte also said that returning school break to the months of April and May was not an option, since it was not based on scientific data about our country's climate and weather patterns.

"The dry season heat is intense in Luzon because it is during this time that our part of the planet Earth is tilted directly to the sun. Other parts of the country do not experience higher temperatures. The climate and weather are different in other parts of the country," Alonte said.

She said that the design solutions might be implemented gradually and at a lower cost as part of the solution to avoid rising electricity bills that could consume each school's maintenance and operational budgets.

"Other affordable design improvements would be the planting of tall shade trees outside the classrooms and installing shade devices like extendable and retractable awnings for more shade just outside each classroom," Alonte said.

"Painting the roofs with light shades of paint will also reduce the heat that the roofs absorb and radiate into the classrooms. There is also the matter of improving ventilation by de-

signing the windows better to allow air to flow in and out of classrooms," she added.

Furthermore, she suggested that existing potable water facilities in schools must be continuously maintained to ensure proper hydration for students and teachers.

"Electricity-powered water stations are not advisable because they add to the electricity bills of schools and need to be cleaned and maintained to ensure water safety and prevent fire," Alonte said.

Heat indices between 41 Celsius and 54 Celsius are deemed "dangerous," as they are likely to produce heat cramps and exhaustion, as well as a heat stroke if activity is done.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) considers temperatures above 54 C to be "extremely dangerous," indicating that heat stroke is imminent.

### Warm and humid temperature to prevail

Most parts of the country are also expected to experience warm and humid temperatures in the next 24 hours, Pagasa said on Saturday.

The weather is brought by the easterlies or the winds coming from the Pacific Ocean that bring warm and humid temperatures.

Weather forecaster Rhea Torres said the most part of Luzon would have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers in the afternoon due to localized thunderstorms.

"No low pressure and weather disturbances inside and outside the Philippine area of responsibility are being monitored today," Torres said.

The intertropical convergence zone (ITCZ) will likely affect the Visayas and Mindanao, especially Eastern Visayas and Caraga.

**MOISES CRUZ AND CLAIRE  
BERNADETTE MONDARES**





TITLE :

PAGE

DATE

## Study: Clouds carry drug-resistant bacteria

FOR a team of Canadian and French researchers, dark clouds on the horizon are potentially ominous not because they signal an approaching storm — but because they were found in a recent study to carry drug-resistant bacteria over long distances.

"These bacteria usually live on the surface of vegetation like leaves, or in soil," lead author Florent Rossi said in a telephone interview Friday.

"We found that they are carried by the wind into the atmosphere and can travel long distances — around the world — at high altitudes in clouds," he told Agence France-Presse.

The discovery was published in last month's edition of the journal *Science of The Total Environment*.

The researchers from Laval University in Quebec City and Clermont Auvergne

University in central France searched for antibiotic-resistant genes from bacteria found in cloud samples.

The samples were taken from an atmospheric research station perched 1,465 meters (4,806 feet) above sea level atop the Puy de Dome summit, a dormant volcano in central France between September 2019 and October 2021.

An analysis of the retrieved mist revealed that they contained between 330 to more than 30,000 bacteria per milliliter of cloud water, for an average of around 8,000 bacteria per milliliter.

They also identified 29 subtypes of antibiotic-resistant genes in the bacteria.

Drug resistance occurs when bacteria are exposed to antibiotics and develop an immunity to them over generations.

➤ **BacteriaA2**

### ■ BACTERIA FROM A1

## Clouds carry drug-resistant

Health authorities have repeatedly warned these adaptations are becoming what the study described as a "major sanitary concern worldwide," making it harder — in some cases impossible — to treat certain bacterial infections as

antibiotics use continues to rise in health care and agriculture.

The study offered no conclusions on the potential health effects of the spread in the atmosphere of antibiotic resistant bacteria — estimating that only

5 percent to 50 percent of the organisms could be alive and potentially active.

But Rossi suggested the risks are likely low.

"The atmosphere is very stressful for bacteria, and most of those we found were environmental bacteria," which are less likely to be harmful to humans, he explained. "So people shouldn't be afraid to

go for a walk in the rain."

"It's unclear if those genes would be transmitted to other bacteria," Rossi added.

Atmospheric monitoring, however, could help pinpoint the sources of drug-resistant bacteria — similar to wastewater tests for Covid-19 and other pathogens — "in order to limit their dispersal," he said. **AFP**