

24 April 2023 Monday



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Gov't finding ways to store rainwater to counter dry spell

By BETHEENA UNITE

The government is coming up with ways to store rainwater that could be used during the dry season as a way to manage water resources in the country.

In a statement, Malacañang said the move will be initiated through the National Water Resources Board (NWRB).

"Sa ngayon po ang tinitingnan natin is kung papaano ito ma-divert sa mga facilities na kapag panahon naman ng tag-init ay mapakinabang po natin sa water supply, sa irrigation (For now, we are looking into ways on how to divert the facilities so we can use them to provide water supply and irrigation during dry season)," NWRB Executive Director Sivillo David Jr. said.

David recognized that it would be of great help for the country if it could find ways to store rainwater that would be used during the dry season.

He said it is crucial as they are expecting El Niño to hit the country until next year.

"Ang El Niño Watch po kasi ay ini-issue kapag ini-expect natin within the next six months ay mataas ang probability na magkaroon ng El Niño, and sa kasalukuyan ganoon nga po ang kondisyon (El Niño Watch is being issued if we are expecting a high probability in the next six months and at that's the condition now) and actually we're expecting that to continue next year, until next year, mid next year," Marcelino Villafuerte, chief of the Climate Impact Assessment and Application of the Climatology and Agrometeorology Division, said.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) issued an El Niño Watch last March 23.

Villafuerte said this may be raised to an alert status in May.

Conserve water

David has also appealed to the public to conserve water amid the looming long El Niño phenomenon.

"Mas gusto po nating i-advocate iyong tamang paggamit, water conservation po... Ang publiko ay malaki po ang maitutulong dito sa pamamagitan po ng tamang paggamit ng tubig - iyong water conservation (We are advocating the proper use of water, water conservation. The public can greatly help through water conservation)," he said.

The NWRB chief said they will coordinate with the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) and other State agencies in coming up with tips on conserving water for the public.

The NWRB manages and regulates all water resources and services in the country.

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. had earlier directed different government agencies to make the necessary preparations and come up with a strategy to address the El Niño phenomenon that may hit the country this year until early next year.

Two specific instructions given by the President are the adoption of a whole-of-government or whole-of-nation approach and putting up protocol-based and scientific long-term processes that could be adopted by the country.

The Chief Executive in February approved the creation of a Water Resource Management Office (WRMO) to manage the country's water resources and respond to the current environmental challenges.

The WRMO, which will be under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), will be a transitory body pending the creation of the Department of Water Resources.

Its main functions include formulating and ensuring the implementation of the Integrated Water Management Plan, which will integrate various plans of different agencies.



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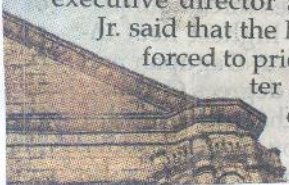
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NWRB to prioritize domestic water supply if...



National Water Resources Board executive director Seville David Jr. said that the NWRB will be forced to prioritize the water allocation for domestic supply once the

level of Angat Dam reaches 180 meters. During a forum over the weekend, David underscored the need to conserve water amid the announcement from the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) that it may

increase the El Niño alert status in May. "If there is El Niño, we expect below normal rainfall. That is why we really need to prepare now that the situation is still normal," he said.

As of 6 a.m. yesterday, the water level at Angat Dam had dropped further to

196.32 meters, 0.20 less compared to its measure of 196.52 on Saturday.

"Once Angat Dam reaches its minimum operating level of 180 meters, we prioritize the domestic supply," David said.

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NWRB From Page 1

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.

David added that currently the NWRB provides 30 cubic meters per second for irrigation while the daily water consumption for Metro Manila is pegged at almost 4,200 million liters.

"We still need to consider that farmers will start the wet cropping season where they need water for irrigation. We also want the dam to recover so that if there is El Niño,

the level of the Angat Dam is at a comfortable level to support the domestic water supply and the irrigation," he added.

According to David, the water consumption for irrigation is bigger compared to domestic use.

"For irrigation the consumption is between 70 and 80 percent while domestic or municipal supply, including the commercial use, the maximum is 20 percent," he noted.

David said that it is important that the public should not waste water as part of conservation measures being pushed by the NWRB.

"When we are washing our hands and brushing our teeth, make sure the water is not wasted. These are simple practices that are not difficult

to do but will be a big help in saving water," he added.

The NWRB has approved 52 cubic meters per second allocation for Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water until May, 2023 to address the water interruption being experienced by customers.

David has said that the country is now more prepared for the possible impact of the El Niño phenomenon compared to the drought experienced in 2019 which led to a water crisis.

He said that the government learned from the El Niño phenomenon where the Angat Dam reached its lowest level of 116 meters in June 2019.

— Bella Cariaso



Water level in 4 Luzon dams drops

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL AND FRANCIS EARL CUETO

THE water level in four major dams in Luzon is down, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

The dams are Angat in Bulacan, La Mesa in Quezon City, San Roque in the Cordillera and Caliraya in Laguna.

As of 6 a.m. Sunday, the level at Angat was 196.32 meters, .20 m lower than the 196.52 m Saturday. Angat Dam supplies about 90 percent of the potable water in Metro Manila and nearby provinces,

and irrigates about 28,000 hectares of farmland in the provinces of Bulacan and Pampanga.

It dropped by 15.68 m from its Normal High Water Level (NHWL) of 212 m.

Angat Dam is now 8.99 m away from 187.33 m, the level required for it to efficiently supply water. **►DropsA2**

■ DROPS FROM A1

Water level in 4 Luzon dams drops

The level at La Mesa Dam decreased to 77.16 m, 2.99 m lower than the 80.15 m NHWL. La Mesa is part of the Angat-Ipo-La Mesa water system, which also supplies water to the National Capital Region.

San Roque's level dropped to 235.77 m, or 44.23 m lower than the normal 280 m.

Caliraya's level dropped by 0.04 m to 286.09 m.

The weather bureau earlier said it was likely to issue an El Niño

alert next month.

In a statement Thursday, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. urged the public to conserve water to minimize the effects of the impending El Niño, which could last until next year.

"It is imperative that we prioritize our water management efforts in light of the impending El Niño. While energy may be reasonable, we must still take precautions to meet the needs of our people," Marcos said.

"We must focus on mitigating the effects of El Niño on agriculture, health care and energy through innovative approaches. Access to water for farmers is essential, and we must prepare for potential health issues that may arise due to the heat and lack of water," he added.

The National Water Resources Board also appealed to the public to conserve water.

"We want to advocate the proper use of water," the agency said.

Pagasa earlier said there was an 80 percent chance that El Niño would hit the country in July and the dry spell might stretch until next year.

The full impact of the weather phenomenon will be felt in January until April.

The El Niño phenomenon is characterized by the abnormal warming of sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean and below-normal rainfall.

Earlier this month, Marcos sought the establishment of a team focused on mitigating the effects of the El Niño phenomenon.



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Every day is Earth Day at SM Supermalls!

1700 children celebrate Earth Day at SM malls nationwide

SM SUPERMALLS, in collaboration with its corporate social responsibility arm, SM Cares, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), local government units and partner schools and organizations joined the rest of the world in celebrating Earth Day at SM malls nationwide on April 22, 2023.

With the theme "Invest In Our Planet, Invest In Our Youth," SM Supermalls and SM Cares lined up various activities that aimed to raise awareness among children and their families about the importance of coming together across various sectors to take care of the environment. SM malls nationwide simultaneously held relevant and impactful celebrations with activities such as Children's Storytelling, Coloring, and Sustainability Tours, gathering 1700 children and 350 employee volunteers. These activities aimed to encourage everyone in the family, particularly the young ones, to protect and respect Mother Earth.

Earth Day is an annual celebration led by the Earth Day Network that puts the spotlight on issues that are affecting the environment. First held in 1970, Earth Day was the result of a need for a unified response against various environmental problems like pollution and resource depletion. Today, the event is considered the biggest environmental movement in the world, with millions joining celebrations every year.

"At SM, every day is Earth Day. However, today we are reminded of our responsibility to protect the planet we live in. We believe that we must all come together and take the necessary steps against this climate crisis and accelerate a greener and more equitable future for everyone."

—Ms. Liza B. Silerio, SM Supermalls Vice President for Corporate Compliance and SM Cares Program Director for the Environment

SM Supermalls featured the art of multi-awarded Filipino artist, sculptor and illustrator, Manuel Baldemor. His works depict the rich cultural aspects of the Philippines and can be found in multiple institutions worldwide. His drawings and Earth Day poem inspired the Earth Day program at SM, reflecting a long-time partnership on SM Cares programs for the environment, starting with his design of SM's first eco bags in 2007.



Children learn about how to protect the environment individually and as a community through art, storytelling and a Sustainability tour around SM malls



Youth participants join forces with SM Supermalls for a sustainable future.



Filipino artist Manuel Baldemor's artistic contribution provide inspiration for the Earth Day program. Joining him at SM City Fairview were DENR NCR Director Mr. Manuel T. Escasura; Quezon City Vice Mayor, Honorable Gian Sotto; Ms. Andrea Villapman, Head of the Quezon City Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Department, Planet CORA's Partnerships Director, Cat Trivino and SM Supermalls executives.

The storytelling activity featured a special Earth Day story based on Baldemor's artworks. The story reflected simple ways children can participate in living sustainably on their own and with their families. Meanwhile, kids and kids-at-heart were welcomed at the coloring activity section. Participants were given art materials and a selection of Baldemor's drawings to color in. Malls used recycled materials in designing the activity areas.

And to cap off the celebration, a sustainability tour was held wherein everyone participated in a guided tour to one or more of the mall's eco-friendly facilities such as the EV charging stations, water recycling treatment plants, waste segregation bins, Plastic Waste Collection booths, E-waste Collection bins and various bicycle amenities.

To highlight the role of collaborating with the public sector in driving environmental programs forward, SM City Fairview hosted the DENR Gawad Taga-ilog Awards photo exhibit, which recognized winning local government units who are leading in protecting Metro Manila's waterways. The agency also further provided 800 tree seedlings to participants and customers through a DENR Community Pan-TREE at SM Megamall, SM Mall of Asia, SM North EDSA, SM City Fairview, SM City Novaliches, SM City Marikina, SM City East Ortigas and SM Southmall.

The Quezon City Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Department also promoted the city's Trash to Cashback program to encourage its citizens to be Eco Warriors and promote recycling.

The Earth Day celebration is just one of the numerous ways that SM is promoting sustainable living among Filipinos, and the company has other programs aimed at helping care for the environment. These are the Trash to Cash Recycling Market held every first Friday and Saturday of the month; daily water recycling systems, and environmental campaigns such as the Green Film Festival, Green Retail Agenda, and the International Coastal Cleanup Drive, just to name a few.

SM Cares is the corporate social responsibility arm of SM Prime Holdings, responsible for initiatives that promote sustainability and the development of the community. SM Cares' advocacies include programs on Women and Breastfeeding Mothers, Persons with Disabilities, Senior Citizens, and Children and Youth, as well as the Bike-Friendly SM initiative, in addition to its Programs on Environment.

To learn more about these, visit www.smsupermalls.com/smcare.



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Real feel



Atty. Jose Ferdinand M. Rojas II

RISING SUN

IT'S still April, Earth Month, and we just celebrated Earth Day last weekend. In the midst of it all, people all over the world are drenched in sweat, lamenting about the unbelievable heat index and real feel numbers. Meantime, in several provinces in the Philippines, people, including schoolchildren, have been literally fainting from the heat and humidity. As a matter of fact, the human threshold for survival is around 50 degrees Celsius. Lately, we've been experiencing dangerous levels in terms of heat index in many places across the nation.

As dire as it may seem, many people still believe that it's easy to dismiss this problem because they can stay in their air-conditioned rooms and cars all day and avoid going out when the sun is at its hottest. We must remember, however, that it does not really stop when summer ends. For example, experts say that El Niño is right around the corner and will bring with it extreme heat,

dangerous tropical cyclones, and a great threat to our coral reefs. Scientists venture to predict that 2024 will most likely be the warmest year on record, globally. This record is currently being held by the year 2016, which followed a very strong El Niño phenomenon. Past experiences point to the same thing happening again. We must, indeed, be ready for El Niño and the year 2024.

As dire as it may seem, many people still believe that it's easy to dismiss this problem because they can stay in their air-conditioned rooms and cars all day and avoid going out when the sun is at its hottest. We must remember, however, that it does not really stop when summer ends. For example, experts say that El Niño is right around the corner and will bring with it extreme heat, dangerous tropical cyclones, and a great threat to our coral reefs. Scientists venture to predict that 2024 will most likely be the warmest year on record, globally.

Despite these natural climate occurrences, humans continue to burn fossil fuels and produce pollution that continuously warms up the planet. We continue to come up with themes to celebrate Earth Month/Earth Day (it's "Invest in Our Planet" this year), but the efforts or actions

are hugely lacking. It is probably high time we realize that the usual Earth Month activities (concerts, clean-up, planting, etc.) are not enough anymore. Sure, they are noble actions but it really shouldn't end there. Every resident of this planet and every nation must do more than what is usually (and easily) done because the climate situation is an emergency situation.

In light of the many meetings that are being carried out in the name of climate change, the many projects that have been/are being launched, and the speeches and press releases written, how much of these are really making an impact and how much are just empty talk? Just locally, looking at the events this month, as well as the government budget for climate-related projects and the actual action being done by both public and private sectors, can we really say we are doing the best we can to protect our environment and mitigate the effects of climate change? It's a burning question that we may want to think about as we agonize through this unbearable summer.



Offshore miners laud approval of tariff pledges under RCEP

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonmayuga
& ANDREA E. SAN JUAN

OFFSHORE mining stakeholders on Sunday welcomed President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s decision to affirm the country's commitments under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) of ASEAN Plus nations.

A free trade agreement (FTA) between the 10-member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its five FTA partners: Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea, RCEP is expected to benefit the Philippines because of the increased trade it would bring to different member economies.

The Offshore Mining Chamber of the Philippines, Inc. (OMCPI) and its member companies seek to mine the country's crucial mineral resources found in the deep seabed in various locations.

The group said these minerals like palladium, manganese, iron, nickel, platinum, copper, silver, gold, lithium, and the elusive rare earth elements (REE) are waiting to be tapped.

"The clean and green mining industry and the various companies under our new blue economy sector (beyond just fishing) may benefit from preferential tariff reductions for our imported industrial goods and equipment from abroad," OMCPI Chairman Dr. Michael Raymond Aragon said in a statement.

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Offshore miners laud approval of tariff pledges under RCEP

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OMCPI is pushing for offshore mining, relatively a new and developing industry in the Philippines.

Aragon pointed out that start-up industries, like the new and clean offshore mining sector, need all the support it can get from the government in order to flourish.

"Since the country's economy is adversely affected by the more than two years of extreme Covid-19 lockdowns complicated by the ongoing geopolitical conflict between Russia and Ukraine, doing business in the Philippines (after the nationwide health emergency has been lifted) is not business as usual. From our budding sector, we need all the support we can get from the government in order for our new blue economy (beyond just fishing) to flourish or prosper. We commend the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for this initiative so Malacañang can act decisively on the matter," Aragon said.

He added that offshore mining is a new high technology, but also a very expensive way to cleanly mine for raw minerals in the deep seabed of the country. He said the Philippines does not possess this high technology, as well as the huge capital needed, and must seek foreign resources to do business in offshore mining.

Offshore mining is entirely different and is a very much cleaner and greener mining process, compared to the usual land-based mining industry currently popular in

the Philippines.

OMCPI and its green mining companies that are pioneers in offshore mining of untapped resources—crucially needed in the electronic and renewable energy sector—will boost the green or clean energy transitions from the old and dirty carbon-based energy sources, eventually helping combat or mitigate climate change

IEC campaigns are key

MEANWHILE, a Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) official has asserted that intensifying information and education campaigns among local stakeholders is crucial in increasing the utilization rate of RCEP.

"That's the most important thing that we should address. Because after the effectivity of the RCEP agreement, we really have to launch and intensify information and education campaign," Allan B. Gepty, DTI Assistant Secretary for Industry Development and Trade Policy and the Philippines's top negotiator for RCEP, told reporters on the sidelines of the event "Breaking Economic Barriers" organized by the British Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines.

Gepty added, "That's why we have to really come up with a lot of publications basically informing stakeholders how to utilize the RCEP agreement and other ASEAN-1 free trade agreements (FTAs) and Philippine bilateral FTAs including our

preferential arrangement like the [EU Generalized System of Preference Plus] EU GSP+." He also underscored the importance of educating stakeholders how to export to these foreign markets.

To complement the launching of workshops, seminars and information campaigns, Gepty said DTI intends to establish international trade assistance centers that can serve as "FTA clinics in strategic regions and provinces" so that the country's stakeholders and businesses could collaborate with these centers and help them utilize these free trade agreements.

While he did not divulge a "utilization rate" for the mega trade deal which the Philippine Senate recently concurred in, Gepty said DTI aims to onboard stakeholders and exporters who deem the RCEP agreement fit and "advantageous" to their product.

"It could be possible that other FTAs are more advantageous to their product. So it would really depend on the FTA that would fit the comparative advantage or the competitiveness of a certain business. But what is important is that we just have to ensure that our exporters, the stakeholders...are using the proper FTA."

On Thursday, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board, chaired by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., approved an executive order (EO) implementing the Philippines's commitments

under the RCEP.

According to Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual, the EO is proposed to be effective on June 2, 2023 to coincide with the end of the 60-day period "after the deposit of the instrument of ratification."

Gepty noted that the EO is a "legal issuance" to implement the country's tariff commitments under the mega trade deal. "If you will note under the RCEP agreement, we have the schedule of tariff commitments so we have to of course comply with that commitment and to do that, we have to issue the necessary EO."

Meanwhile, according to a study published by state think tank Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) in 2021, the country's FTA utilization rate under the Philippines-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (PJEPA) is "alarmingly low" at 16.6 percent.

Citing various studies, the authors said the low FTA utilization rate can be attributed to factors such as "lack of information or knowledge about FTAs, procedural delays, administrative and compliance costs, and availability of other incentives schemes."

To address this, the study called on the government to "ensure that importers have all the available information related to importation under PJEPA and all the other FTAs," especially the micro, small, and medium-sized importers and those in rural areas.

The authors said this might be a challenge for the government due to limited resources; thus, it should "partner with business groups and organize information sessions and workshops to specifically increase the capacity of importers to utilize FTAs."



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'Oil spill forced kids to stop schooling'

By BELLA CARIASO

A majority of children from families displaced by the oil spill from the sunken motor tanker *Princess Empress* were forced to stop schooling due to lack of income, an environmental group said yesterday.

The oil continues to spread almost two months since the *Empress* sank on Feb. 28, according to Gerry Arances, executive director of the Center for Energy, Ecology and Development.

"Aside from damage amounting to billions of pesos and loss of income, the oil spill's largest impact is the loss of livelihood for small fishers," Arances said, noting that 80 percent of the affected residents in Oriental Mindoro are fisherfolks.

"A significant number of affected residents are fisherfolks numbering more than 20,000. The distribution of food packs and cash-for-work is not enough to sustain the needs of the families. Many parents have complained that their children have stopped going to school because they can no longer support their studies. Many of them are in college and this is a sad reality," Arances said.

The leak from the oil tanker persists and threatens the Verde Island Passage (VIP), which is home to vast marine species including sea turtles and sharks.

"As the leak continues, the effect is expected to worsen. Based on science, only 20 percent of the oil is on the surface and 80 percent is underneath, meaning the problem of rehabilitation is huge. It is alarming as this is not the first oil spill in the country," Arances said.

He cited a similar maritime incident in 2006 in Guimaras. It took 13 years for the island-province to recover from the damage caused by the sinking of motor tanker *Solar 1*.

Arances said the owner and charterer of the *Empress* should be made accountable for the destruction in Oriental Mindoro.

Lack of aid decried

Meanwhile, the mayor of Pola town in Oriental Mindoro has criticized what she described as a lack of assistance from the owner of the *Empress*.

Mayor Jennifer Cruz said the insurance claim being given to affected residents was provided under Republic Act 9483 or the Oil Pollution Law, and is not aid from the owner.

"There is no assistance yet from the owner of the ship as the insurance claim is provided

under the anti-pollution law. The owner has nothing to do with it," Cruz said.

She confirmed reports that the residents received expired relief goods from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

"Maybe these were old stocks. Some of the sardines and rice are no longer fit for human consumption. The DSWD advised us to return these for replacement," Cruz said.

Fishermen who received P20,000 assistance from President Marcos have been urged to use the money as start-up capital for alternative sources of income.

"We advised them to start a livelihood program in every barangay, where each one can contribute P500 to P1,000, as the oil spill will continue to affect Pola. We expect this to persist for the next months," Cruz said.

She said the municipal government is planning to acquire sewing machines for the women while the men could fish elsewhere.

"The fishermen can fish in rivers as an alternative livelihood and find other areas where they can sell their catch. The women will sew and sell eco bags," she said.

On Saturday, fisherfolk from oil spill-affected communities and cause-oriented groups gathered in Pola to commemorate Earth Day.



No butts: Cigarette butts destroy beaches' beauty

By CLAUDETH MOCON-CIRIACO
@claudethmc3

HITTING the beach this summer? Don't throw your butt around.

Cigarette butts, that is. This is the appeal by HealthJustice Inc. Legal Consultant Karl Marx Carumba days after the world celebrated Earth Day on April 22.

"Smoking should be prohibited in beaches as smokers tend to discard cigarette butts that are harmful to the environment," Carumba, a lawyer, said as he emphasized the importance of reducing the environmental impact of cigarette butt, a solid waste.

According to the 2020 International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) report, cigarette butts compose the second-top item collected along beaches and waterways worldwide.

Not only that, the plastic part of cigarette butts is also one of the most prevalent forms of litter worldwide.

An estimated 766,571 metric tons of cigarette butts make their way into the environment every year, the report added. It will take up to a decade for a butt to completely degrade, it emphasized.

Meanwhile, tobacco claims eight million lives globally and trashes the environment in the process. Over 6.25 trillion cigarettes are smoked worldwide every year; 531 billion sticks in the Association of Southeast Asian region alone. And most of these are discarded into the environment.

This is in addition to the tobacco smoke that contaminates our air with various toxicants, carcinogens, and pollutants, the toxic fertilizers and pesticides that poison our land

and water and the massive cutting of trees to produce cigarettes, according to HealthJustice. The damage tobacco inflicts on the environment is phenomenal, the nonprofit group added.

Toxic chemicals

ACCORDING to the Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (Seatca), nearly all cigarettes have single-use plastic filters, which provide no health benefit but mislead smokers into thinking such filters reduce health harm.

Seatca added that when discarded after use, cigarette filters leach toxic chemicals into the land and marine ecosystems and harm marine life and biodiversity.

Meanwhile, the Truth Initiative organization reported that when e-cigarette and cigarette waste aren't

disposed of properly, it makes its way into the environment where it ends up polluting water, air and land with toxic chemicals, heavy metals and residual nicotine.

Over a third of cigarette butt-litter ends up in the ocean. Every year, 340 million to 680 million kilograms of cigarette butt-litter are collected, topping the list of most common types of rubbish during coastal cleanups, according to the organization.

Hence, Carumba said HealthJustice is urging the government to provide its citizens with a clean and healthy community and protect the environment against the impact of cigarette butt-waste to fully achieve the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

The WHO FCTC aims to "pro-

tect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke by providing a framework for tobacco control measures to be implemented by its Parties at the national, regional and international levels."

"The responsible disposal of cigarette butts to mitigate the impact of cigarette litter should be strictly implemented," Carumba said. He also lamented that smoking has a pernicious effects.

"A clean environment and a smoke-free environment translates to better health. Imagine the great benefits it will give us if people stop smoking: no cigarette butts littered around us and no illness brought about by tobacco use," he added.



More efficient use of resources reduces waste and pollution, says FAO

NEW YORK—The head of the Food and Agricultural Organization has called for a more efficient use of natural resources to reduce waste and pollution.

“We must use existing biological resources more efficiently, and waste less, instead of relying on finite fossil-based resources,” the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Qu Dongyu, told a high-level event held at the UN General Assembly to commemorate the first-ever International Day of Zero Waste.

Qu said in a video message that as the world population is predicted to grow close to 10 billion people by 2050, there is an immense challenge to meet the rapidly growing global demand for food and non-food agricultural products—projected to increase by up to 56 per cent by 2050.

“To meet this extra demand for agricultural outputs, including food, fiber, fuel and fodder, in an equitable and sustainable way... We must produce and consume in a more sustainable and healthier manner, with fewer inputs,” says Qu, adding that a circular and sustainable economy offers systemic solutions to address these challenges.

The UN official stressed that



A scene of food waste on the street near the Kalimati Vegetable Market in Kathmandu, Nepal, 31 July 2017. **Chris Steele-Perkins/Magnum Photos for FAO**

bio-economy is a current FAO strategic priority to reduce waste and pollution, as it values and promotes responsible production and consumption of renewable natural resources, contributing to climate action, biodiversity conservation and ecosystems restoration.

“For example, waste and residues along agri-food systems can be turned into beneficial products

such as biomaterials, biochemicals, biopharmaceuticals, and bioenergy. In the bio-economy, there is no such thing as waste,” Qu said.

FAO estimates that over 13 percent of global food production is lost between the production and wholesale stages of the supply chain. Furthermore, global data indicates that an additional 17 percent is wasted at the retail, food service and consumer stages. Food

quality is also compromised throughout the entire supply chain.

These losses occur while over 800 million people are undernourished and almost 3.1 billion cannot afford a healthy diet.

Moreover, food loss and waste contribute to 8-10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The FAO chief warned the 193 members of the UN General Assembly that wasting food and non-food agricultural products, as well as inputs like plastics, puts unnecessary pressure on the environment.

“It essentially means that we have wasted land and water resources, we have created pollution and we have emitted greenhouse gases with no purpose,” he said.

Qu urged world leaders to identify the hotspots where losses and waste occur and to urgently address the inefficiencies and inequalities in global agri-food systems to make them more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient and more sustainable.

“Reducing losses and waste will not only contribute to our environment, but increase the availability of fruits and vegetables, and improve access to healthy diets”, he said. **FAO News**